THE SPATIAL HUMANITIES IN THE FIVE COLLEGES

Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke, Smith, & the University of Massachusetts

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Smith College

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Digital Humanities

- A plethora of new tools and methods for transforming and studying the materials of traditional humanities research, e.g.
  - OCR and text encoding
  - Digital photography, now with GPS
  - 2D and 3D scanning
Spatial Humanities

- Geospatial relationships are consequential in many aspects of the humanities.
- Many of these new tools, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), make it significantly easier to collect, analyze, and understand spatial data embedded in digital materials.
Digital humanities work began several years ago, by building a mapping platform for urban and cultural studies called *Cityscapes*.

- Navigation through streets and terrain;
- Overlaying historical maps;
- Creating place marks linking photos, sound clips, videos, and textual commentary;
- A type of collaborative presentation.

**Tokyo, Paris, Berlin ...**
Online maps for various projects:

- **Pioneer Valley Soundscapes**: a project exploring the connection between sound and place by documenting the musical communities and acoustic terrain of the Pioneer Valley in Western Massachusetts. [Google Maps & Fusion Tables]

- **Beyond Shangri-La**: an oral history project combining the history and culture of Tibet, past and present, with the personal stories of Tibetans residing in Western Massachusetts. [ArcGIS Online]
A semester course, *Cities, Schools, and Space*:

- Urban studies and educational history, designed to
  - visualize the spatial evolution of inequality in urban communities (in particular Cambridge, Massachusetts);
  - analyze past, present, and future strategies to equalize educational opportunity in American cities.

- A research “tutorial” exposing students to:
  - archival analysis;
  - oral interviews;
  - GIS.
Smith College Projects 1
Smith College Projects 2
Smith College Projects 3

**SCRIPT:**

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- key ruins of the peninsula and structures from ancient and American art significance.

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- **1 Site:** The Red house (corbel vaults?)
  - Named because of red border along the portico
  - Small temple set on a raised platform with stairway
  - Private rear chamber
  - Heavy stone blocks (like the traditional block masonry of the Peten)
  - Missing the fine cut masonry of the Puuc
  - Specialized boot-shaped stones are not used for vaulting and the arched doorway is not present at Chichén like it is at Uxmal

- **Global Pair #1:** Corbeled gallery in the walls of the citadel, Tiryns, Greece ca. 1400-1200 BCE
Foundation Support for DH

- The National Endowment for the Humanities has established an **Office of Digital Humanities**, supporting Institutes for Advanced Topics in DH such as **Spatial Narrative and Deep Maps: Explorations in the Spatial Humanities**.

- The **Five College Consortium** in 2011 began a **Digital Humanities Initiative** with support from the **Mellon Foundation**.

From John Corrigan, *Words in Space: GIS, Data Mining, and the Visual Display of Religion*
Five College DH Grants

- The Five Colleges: 2,200 faculty members and 30,000 students in western Massachusetts.
- Received three grants from the Five Colleges:
  - Expanding *Cityscapes* to Other Institutions and Usages
  - Digitizing Historic Maps
  - *Workshop on Spatial Techniques for the Digital Humanities*
Spatial Techniques for the DH

- We (together with Cory Keeler) developed a faculty workshop focusing on the activities, content, and media of interest to humanists.

- Goals:
  - Demonstrate local examples;
  - Inspire with expert presentation;
  - Provide hands-on learning;
  - Promote networking, discussion, and discovery.

- Grant helped pay for our own education!
### Survey of Five College Humanists

#### To determine content of workshop:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georeferencing (Positioning scanned maps)</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>*****</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cartography (Preparing maps for publication)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>*****</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative Mapping (Multi-user mapping)</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mash-ups (Combining data with a web map)</td>
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<td>3D visualization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geotagging (Assigning coordinates to photos)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>*****</td>
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<td>Data Publishing (Attaching metadata)</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other visualizations of data</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Animation of geotemporal data</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Network Mapping &amp; Analysis</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spatial Statistics</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cartograms (Distorting spatial regions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crowd Sourcing</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Conversion (Between different formats)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>*****</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geocoding (Street-addressed data)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>*****</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPS - Global Positioning System</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geoparsing (identifying place names in text)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>*****</td>
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DH Workshop

- Two days in August 2012

- Eight themed sessions:
  - Relatively simple approaches on the first day: Google Docs+Maps, Cityscapes, Hypercities, Google Earth
  - More complex techniques on the second day: ArcGIS

- 20 faculty from four of the Five Colleges

- Keynote presentation...
Exploring the Spatial Humanities

Spatial Techniques for the Digital Humanities
13 Aug 2012

Merrick Lex Berman

China Historical GIS Project [CHGIS]
Center for Geographical Analysis
Harvard University
The workshop design, duration, and venue were appropriate.

All found the sessions somewhat or very useful/interesting for their teaching or research.

Some participants found the computer exercises rather tedious, but acknowledged the benefit in knowing details of the techniques.

Several planned to incorporate what they learned in their research or teaching, and expressed interest in additional assistance.
The Future

- We expect to see more projects coming our way.
- Faculty at the other colleges besides Amherst and Smith don’t have the same type of support!
- New grants available: perhaps a workshop for support people?
Digital Humanities Resources

- Many examples of digital humanities are discussed and catalogued at sites like:
  - [http://dhcommons.org/projects](http://dhcommons.org/projects)
  - [http://www.digitalhumanities.org/](http://www.digitalhumanities.org/)

- A cascade of **new books** address the subject, in particular the **spatial humanities**.