

Historic Maps Come Alive: Research in Geospatial Visualization and Access, Using Google Earth and Yahoo! Map

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Abstract: Libraries, archives and museums contain vast collections of historic maps, atlases and aerial photos. Each tells a story about a place and time. Historic maps are a rich source of information. They show cultural features such as railroads, post offices, schools, cemeteries and often have variations on place names. They also show natural features, such as lakes, rivers, mines and coastlines. The study of historic maps of various periods allows us to understand how the location evolves over time. Opening historic maps and geographically related materials to wider use enhances historical scholarship.

Access to map collections has increased as more institutions are digitizing their collections and making them available over the Internet. Mashups for Yahoo!Map and Google Earth take the access even further, allowing for visualization and unique ways of accessing both individual map sheets and map collections. Map-based search interfaces expand on the concept of the traditional finding aid and allow for search and retrieval of maps as well as geographically related mixed format materials. The presentation includes a showcase and description of research projects at Texas A&M University Libraries and elsewhere which utilize Google Earth, Google Maps, Yahoo!Map and other technologies that expand access and use of historic maps. Approaches to project planning, geographic metadata and outcomes will be discussed.

About the author:

Kathy Weimer is Associate Professor and Coordinator of Map and GIS Collections and Services at Texas A&M University Libraries. She received her master's degree in Library and Information Science from LSU and her bachelor's degree from Texas A & M University. After a year as an Associate at the National Library of Medicine, she worked a dozen years as a cataloger of books, audiovisuals and maps at Texas A & M University. In 2004, she moved into a public services role as Coordinator of Map and GIS Collections and Services.

Kathy leads digital mapping, georeferencing and Google Earth projects, being the curator for the digital version of the Geologic Atlas of the United States as well as other collections. Her research interests include education for map and GIS librarians, digitization of historic maps, the role of repositories and use of web 2.0 technologies for visualization of geographic concepts. She currently serves as Chair of the American Library Association's Map and Geography Round Table and was recently appointed Co-editor of the Journal of Map and Geography Libraries.