

Cartographic Collections

Cartographic Collections: 2008 and Beyond

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In 2006, Chris Thiry and an army of 46 co-editors from around the country edited the 3rd edition of *Guide to U.S. map resources* by the Map and Geography Round Table (MAGERT) of the American Library Association. In the *Guide* one learns that there are at least 566 map libraries in the United States. These range from small map collections such as Alaska's Ketchikan Public Library with 1,500 maps and 10 atlases to the grand New York Public Library with over 400,000 maps and 16,000 atlases or the Harvard Map Collection with 400,000 maps and 9,000 atlases.

In 2000, 714 map collections from 121 different countries (including 72 from the U.S.) were highlighted in the 4th Edition of the *World Directory of Map Collections*, published by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), Section of Geography and Map Libraries and edited by Olivier Loiseaux.

The detailed descriptions in these two directories illustrate that map collections are as varied as the uses of maps themselves. Each map library has unique characteristics; all face similar challenges. There is the need to keep up with rapidly changing technology, adjust priorities based on shrinking budgets, understand and serve the changing information needs of clientele and find creative ways to deal with space limitations.

NACIS and *Cartographic Perspectives* have a long tradition of recognizing the uniqueness of map collections. From NACIS's foundation in 1980 its publications featured many articles about map libraries. In the spring of 1990, *Cartographic Perspectives* launched a column devoted entirely to map libraries and librarians entitled "Map Library Bulletin Board." It was described as a "forum offered to encourage communication among map librarians at a time of rapid technological transition. Questions, comments and announcements are invited."

The column enjoyed a great deal of success over the years. Articles appeared that described collections, unique projects and generally provided an opportunity for map librarians to share information. In the beginning, the general editors of *Cartographic Perspectives* coordinated the articles and submissions. Some years had no submissions while many years had 3-6 articles per year.

Between 1996 and 2003, Melissa Lamont edited the journal and oversaw the inclusion of nineteen articles about map libraries in the U.S., Canada and the United Kingdom.

In 2003, Chris Mixon took over the editorship. He was successful in soliciting many interesting and engaging articles and implementing a name change for the column. The new column name, "Cartographic Collections" more broadly defines the purpose of the column, which is to highlight collections of all types including paper, online and digital spatial data collections. In 2006 Chris's job changed and he had to step down as editor and handed the reigns over to Bob Kibbee and Angie Cope.

In this issue of *Cartographic Perspectives*, Bob and Angie happily announce their joint editorship of the ever vibrant "Cartographic Collections." As a kick off to this next phase, we felt that it would be helpful to know where the column is going by seeing where it's been. This issue features a bibliography of past articles from the "Map Library Bulletin Board" and "Cartographic Collections." The articles demonstrate the wealth of information that has been shared between NACIS members over *Cartographic Perspectives'* eighteen year history.

Bob and Angie have a number of articles lined up for future issues that promise to celebrate the variety and uniqueness of cartographic collections. The IFLA and MAGERT directories demonstrate the variety of collections in existence and "Cartographic Collections" will continue to provide the stories.

The format and content of articles is not limited to broad overviews, although those are certainly welcome. Your description of your collection may alert readers to unique content or new approaches to common problems. We encourage articles on special projects and unique partnerships. There is ongoing interest in all facets of how to bring a collection online, for example, or other issues of digitization. Other topics might include services, special formats, collection development, public relations, preservation — all the elements of managing cartographic collections.

In the past the most of the articles have been submitted from academic collections. We would like to see more submissions from public libraries, society libraries and the collections maintained by commercial vendors. International readers shouldn't be discouraged by the "North American" in NACIS. "Cartographic Collections" encourages submissions from the international community.

Please share your story by contacting Angie at acope@uwm.edu or Bob at rk14@cornell.edu

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