

Digital Projects from the Evans Map Room at Dartmouth College

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DARTMOUTH COLLEGE LIBRARY'S dedicated map collection originated during the tenure of Nathaniel L. Goodrich, who served as the Librarian of the College from 1912 to 1950. Housed in the bright and sunny Evans Map Room, it provides cartographic coverage for the entire world, and has grown over the years from 31,000 items in 1946 to almost 200,000 by 2014. Additionally, atlases of all subjects and sizes are scattered throughout the Library's other collections.

When I arrived at Dartmouth and began working with the map collection, I saw how many people used our collection of New Hampshire Sanborn maps, which is unique to Dartmouth College within the state: the Library of Congress deposited a duplicate set here many years ago. When I previously worked at the John R. Borchert Map Library at the University of Minnesota, patrons weren't allowed to touch the actual maps—they instead had to use microfilm versions.

Because the New Hampshire Sanborn collection was so heavily used, I wondered if there was a way to make the maps more available digitally, and decided that we should digitize them all. Scanning the maps was not a problem, as we have a large-format roll-type scanner. But the decision to digitize them left us with more decisions to make: what format or formats would we offer, at what resolution we would scan the maps, how would we store them, and how would we advertise the availability of these new digital files? This project happened before the Library had a digital collection infrastructure, and so we didn't have any pre-existing guidelines to use.

We eventually decided to offer two different image formats: JPEG and TIFF. We scanned the maps at 300 dpi for both formats, which we felt was a good resolution because it could provide lots of detail without creating files



Figure 1. Entrance to the Evans Map Room in Baker/Berry Library.

that would be too big to manipulate. We stored the files on compact discs, creating separate discs for each town's maps; this gave us a portable format that also made it easier for us to copy and distribute maps based on geographic location. We didn't have an organized method of advertising these new digital files outside of a Library News item. However, as we received new questions about the Sanborn collection, we told potential users about the scanned images.

It took several months of dedicated work from Peter Allen and several of our student workers to scan all of our Sanborn maps and write the files to multiple discs. These discs made it very easy for us to supply users with the new digital images of the maps, while also protecting the paper maps from the previously heavy use they had received.

Once our Library eventually created a more formal digital infrastructure, we used the scanned Sanborn maps as our first digital map collection. Because we had decided on certain criteria for originally scanning those maps, they helped define what was acceptable for use within the

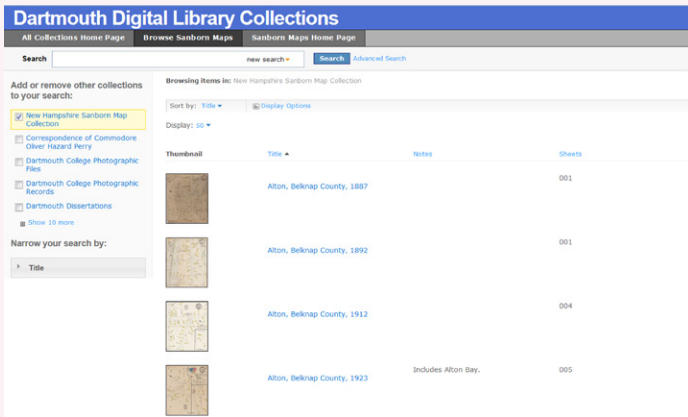


Figure 3. The New Hampshire Sanborn Collection web page.

new infrastructure. All the digital projects team needed to do was upload our scans into our new system, CONTENTdm. Once loaded and verified, I created an opening page to explain the collection and also provided examples of how researchers used Sanborn maps.

Once we finished the Sanborn collection, we looked at our other maps to find more unique, small collections we could digitize. Our set of maps of Dartmouth College itself and the Town of Hanover receive heavy use. As the College sits within the town boundaries, most maps of one contain the other—both are permanently linked.



Figure 4. Early map of Hanover, New Hampshire (ca. 1700).



Figure 5. Map of the Second College Grant (1880).

This time, because we now had a digital infrastructure within which to work, we had a more formal set of procedures for creating new collections. I created a proposal for the Dartmouth College/Hanover map collection. Once the digital projects group approved the proposal, we formed a group to oversee this new project, including members from the Evans Map Room, the Preservation Department, and the Cataloging & Metadata Department. The Cataloging & Metadata Department created a list of maps from both the online catalog and our card catalog. Using that list, I looked at each map to determine whether it should be included in the digital collection. I also added missed maps to the list. Missed maps are those we found while physically handling each map.



Figure 6. Map of New Hampshire (1770).

Once a week, the Preservation Department picked up 15 to 20 maps and looked them over to see if they needed preservation. While they were in Preservation, Cataloging & Metadata also looked over the maps to include missing information on the list, and also steadily worked on creating individual catalog records for each digital item, as well as a record for the entire set. Once those two departments finished, Preservation returned the maps to the map room for scanning. Once a month, the group convened to chart our progress and resolve any outstanding issues. In about one year, we examined over 200 maps, and eventually the digital Hanover/Dartmouth College collection contained 178 of them.

Following this project, I next submitted a proposal to create a collection for the state of New Hampshire. This was a much larger collection, and eventually contained 615 maps. One reason for the collection's size is that it included several different maps sets, including a geologic set, flood plain and flood prone sets, and various USGS sets at different scales. We did not, however, include the

individual cities and towns in the state; that is the latest digital map collection we are working on.

All of these new digital collections are unique to Dartmouth and to the state of New Hampshire. I felt these were important artifacts and that they needed to be made available digitally. Hanover and Dartmouth may be in the middle of the state, but we're not exactly close to anything, and it's a trek for many people to get here. Making these collections digital opens them up to everyone, everywhere.

Many thanks to Peter Allen, Danada Dinsmore, William Ghezzi, Deborah Howe, Christina McCarthy, Barbara Sgraves, and Stephanie Wolff who helped make these collections digital.

WEB SITES

The Sanborn Map Collection: www.dartmouth.edu/~library/digital/collections/maps/sanbornmaps/index.html

The Hanover, NH Map Collection: libarchive.dartmouth.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/hanmaps

The Granite State Map Collection: www.dartmouth.edu/~library/digital/collections/maps/granitemaps/index.html

The Evans Map Room: www.dartmouth.edu/~library/maproom

Dartmouth College Library: library.dartmouth.edu

The Dartmouth Digital Library Program: www.dartmouth.edu/~library/digital

Dartmouth College: dartmouth.edu

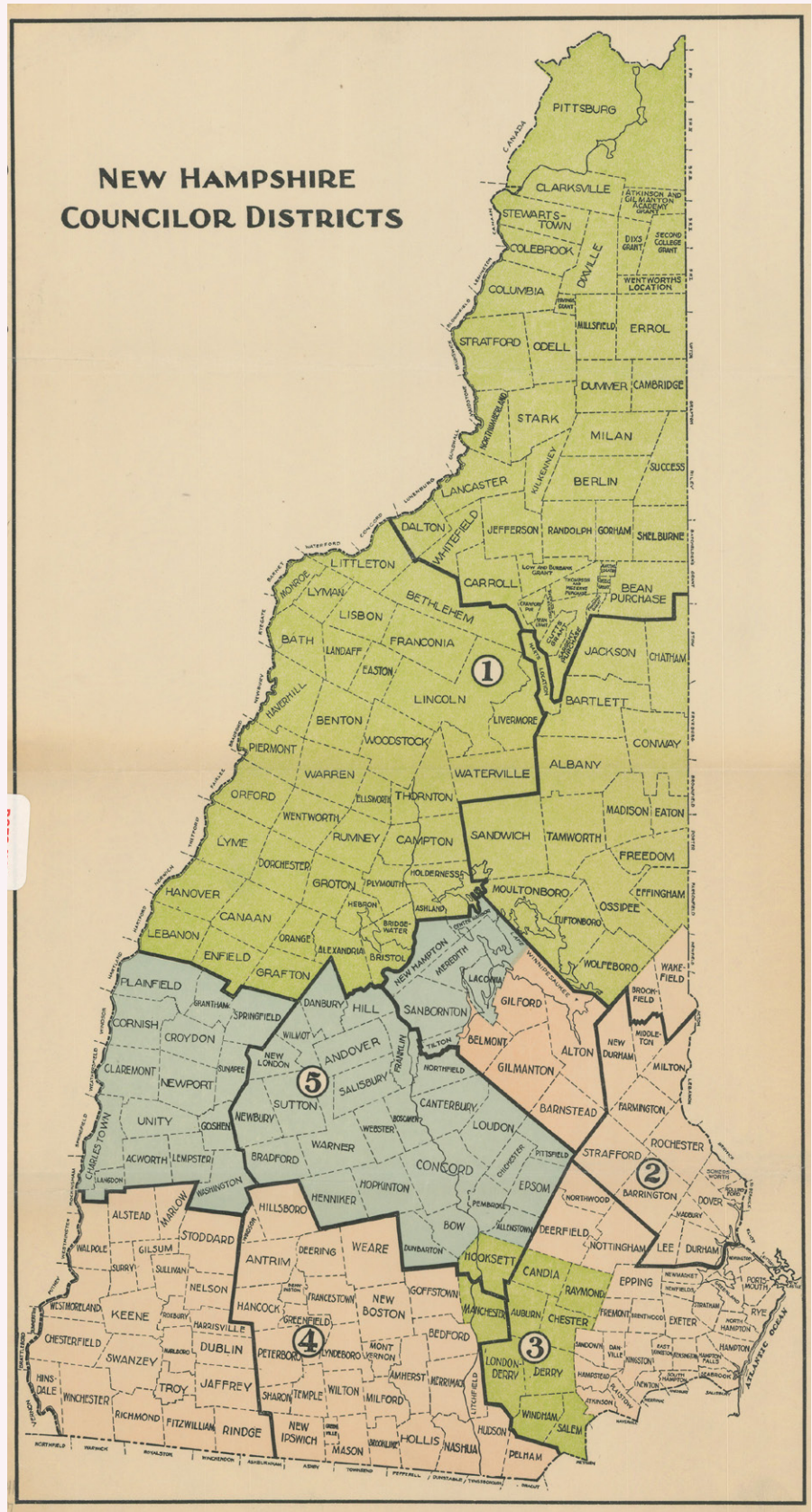


Figure 7. Map of New Hampshire (1900).



Figure 8. Map of the White Mountains, New Hampshire.