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Accidental Map Librarian, Maps and Map Collection Management - The Basics

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Accidental Map Librarian
Maps and Map Collection Management—the Basics

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MAGIRT has a LibGuide with a lot more information on the topics we are going to talk about. Cartographic material includes electronic as well as paper maps, but another person will speak about that, and we’re not going to talk about remote sensing images, either.
First we’re going to talk about the important parts of a map. Scale is the ratio of distances on the map to the actual distances they represent. A scale of 1:24,000 means that 1 inch on the map represents 24,000 inches on the ground or an area approximately 6 miles by 8 miles. Maps with a smaller number to the right of the colon cover a, relatively speaking, smaller area in greater detail than maps with a larger number to the right of the colon do. A map with a scale of 1:250,000 covers an area about 100 miles by 120 miles with less detail.
Coordinates are points of latitude and longitude. Latitude is the distance north or south of the equator. Longitude is the east-west position of a point on the earth.
Latitude lines are always the same distance apart—they are parallels. Lines of longitude get closer together as they get nearer to the poles.
Projection is a system to transfer the latitudes and longitudes in order to render the curved surface of the earth, which is three-dimensional, onto a two-dimensional piece of paper.
Relief is a representation of the elevation of the surface of the earth. Here the elevation is represented by contours and spot heights.
There are many types of maps. We’ll mention some of the most common types. A political map shows where the boundaries of countries, states, territories, and counties are.
Geological maps show the layers of rocks and minerals under the surface of the earth.
Thematic maps show a specific topic or theme. This is a map of earthquake epicenters in Nevada.
Cadastral maps have to do with land ownership. One form of cadastral maps is plat maps, which show land boundaries and subdivisions.
Charts are a specific form of map, showing navigation through a fluid—nautical charts are for water navigation and aeronautical charts for navigation through the air. Nautical charts are also called hydrographic charts.
Road maps show roads.
Topographic maps are a type of physical map. They show the features of the earth’s surface. They are also called relief maps. On the other hand, planimetric maps are maps that don’t show relief.
Tourist maps show points of interest and other information of value to tourists. This is a map of Las Vegas in 1947. Very often they are titled by the publisher as a tourist map.
First we need to acquire maps. GeoKatalog is useful for finding out what topographic, scientific, and thematic maps have been published, indexes to various map series, and for map publisher names and cities. A basic map collection needs at least one or two world atlases. There are recommendations for world atlases in the MAGIRT LibGuide. There are also atlases published by Delorme or Benchmark for most states. A map library needs a geographical dictionary such as *Merriam-Webster’s Geographical Dictionary*. A gazetteer is a list of geographic names with references to where those places are located and sometimes descriptive information. It’s useful to have a world gazetteer such as the *Columbia Gazetteer of the World* and a gazetteer for your state or region. A basic map collection should also have a collection of maps of the county the library is in and city maps of the city the library is located in and/or of nearby cities. Aerial photographs of the vicinity of the urban area in which your library is located and also of the county (as your budget allows) are also useful to have. Digital data will be covered by the next speaker.
Weeding is part of collection development. There are many reasons to weed items from your collection:

- It allows you to deselect dated or obsolete items,
- It allows you to deselect damaged items,
- It allows you to get rid of duplicate items,
- It allows you to get rid of items that do not fit the library’s collection policy,
- It allows you to address space issues.

Weeding can also be very controversial, particularly if it is not done purposefully, selectively and with care. You may have heard of the director of the Urbana Free Library in Urbana, IL, who last year was forced from her job after what many in the community considered to be a poorly planned and overly-aggressive weeding project.
Weeding considerations for map collections

• Determine what gets used and what doesn’t
• Determine if there are online equivalents
• Consult:
  – with other librarians/subject liaisons at your library
  – with other libraries in your area with map collections
  – with your FDLP regional coordinator
• Offer weeded maps to other institutions, BUT know your institution’s requirements regarding disposal of purchased materials

The first thing to do when planning a weeding project is to determine what part of your map collection gets used and what does not. Most likely you will find that local maps in general are the most heavily used, with those of states bordering yours a close second. Give strong consideration to keeping old or superseded editions of maps as well, particularly those of your state and the bordering states, as researchers are often interested in seeing how an area has changed over time.

Determine if there are online equivalents and if so, whether or not they will meet your users’ needs. For example, all editions of the USGS maps and map series have been scanned and are available to download for free – Hallie will discuss this in the reference section of this program.

Consult with other librarians/subject liaisons at your institution, particularly those responsible for such disciplines as geology, geography, urban planning, architecture or landscape architecture, as all of these subjects have an interest in maps and may be able to offer you a different perspective on what is important to keep in your collection.

Consider consulting with libraries in your area as well, particularly those with substantial map collections, to see what they hold and to determine if there needs to be more than one copy of certain maps or types of maps - particularly for states other than yours - in the area.

If you are a federal depository library, make sure you consult your regional depository coordinator about your state’s discard process before you weed depository maps.

Once you have decided what and when to weed, consider posting your lists of discarded maps on both GOVDOC-L and MAPS-L, particularly if you have old editions of
USGS topographic maps; other libraries may be interested in filling in gaps in their map collections. But make sure you know your institution’s requirements regarding the disposal of library materials – if you are at a public institution there may be rules or even laws regarding the disposal of purchased items.
Next we need to catalog the maps. Patrons won't use a map if they don't know the library owns it. Cataloging improves access for patrons and staff. It provides for interlibrary loan and for less wear and tear on the maps, it lessens waste of staff time, it makes automated circulation and inventory control possible, and it makes lists and bibliographies faster to prepare. Use a standardized classification scheme such as Library of Congress’s G schedule or Dewey. Don’t wait to classify them until you have a lot—start when you have no more than a 100. Sheets in a map series are classified by the call number for the series as a whole. Each individual sheet does not receive an individual class number. Topographic maps can be arranged by title on the sheet within their call number. The cataloging manual Cartographic Materials is not going to be updated for RDA, but it is still a useful work. LC’s map cataloging manual is outdated, but they will be publishing a new version totally online.
Next we need to preserve the maps. Preservation processes need to be reversible. Encapsulation refers to sandwiching the map between two sheets of Mylar to protect it. Don’t laminate maps unless you don’t care about preserving them. The pieces of Mylar can be held together by sealing the edges with double-sided tape, by sealing the edges with heat, or by sealing them ultrasonically. Ultrasonic welders are very expensive. Heat encapsulators cost about $2,000 on the low and $19,000 on the high end.
These are companies that sell preservation supplies and give good customer service. William Minter makes the ultrasonic encapsulator. These URLs are on the MAGIRT Basic Map Librarianship LibGuide.
Next we need to store the maps. There are various ways to store maps. It is difficult to get folders out of vertical cases, especially when the folders are full. Here is an example of a map folder. Maps can also be stored in compact shelving. There is moveable compact shelving. Here is a video of moving map cases.
Here are sources for map cases. These are also in the MAGIRT LibGuide.

- Mayline Company
- Ulrich Planfiling Equipment Corp.
- Archive Designs, Inc. (used to be Stacor)
- Spacesaver Corporation (compact shelving)
Now we will talk about how to help your patrons find the maps they want. If your maps are classified by the Library of Congress G schedule, you can go to your map shelves and find the type of map you want. The call number range for Nevada maps is G4350-4354. General maps of Nevada will have the G4350 call number.
G4351 is for maps that have a particular theme like roads or geology or earthquakes. A letter and number combination that stands for that theme goes after the main part of the call number. For example, roads are P2, geology is C5, earthquakes are C55, and plat maps are G46.
G4352 is for an area like the Nevada Test Site. This is a map of rock types at the Test Site. The number is followed by a Cutter number for the area. The number for the Test Site, which is now the Nevada National Security Site, is N42. The Cutters for a theme can be put after the Cutters for the area such as C34 for this map for groundwater. These number and letter combinations are set by the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress.
G4353 is for a county. All the counties in Nevada have their own Cutter numbers. This is a map of Lincoln County before it was divided into Clark and Lincoln Counties. The Cutter for Lincoln County is L5 and the Cutter for Clark County is C6. Once again, the Cutters for a theme can be put after the Cutters for the county.
G4354 is for a city. Cities in Nevada have their own Cutter numbers. This is a map of the Strip. The Cutter for Las Vegas is L35. The Strip actually has its own Cutter which goes after a colon after the Cutter for Las Vegas. It’s 2S8. Once again, the Cutters for a theme can be put after the Cutters for the cities.
The date in a call number for a map is not the date the map was published. The date in the call number is the date of the what the map is showing. For example, if a map showed the locations of all the Civil War battles that took place in 1864 but the map was published in 2014, the date in the call number would be 1864 not 2014. There is a place for the date of publication in the bibliographic record for a map. Last is a Cutter for the entity responsible for not just publishing the map but for the intellectual content of the map. These are called Cutter numbers because they were invented by Charles Ammi Cutter.
Sometimes a map takes up more than one sheet. A map might be made of plastic or tracing cloth or be a blue-line print. Another common note is the fact that there are inset maps—like US maps with little maps showing Alaska and Hawaii. Subject headings tend to be [place name] followed by –Maps. An example of another name would be if there was more than one cartographer involved in making the map.
Another useful skill for a map librarian is how to date an undated map. There is an online atlas of county boundary changes for Nevada. I have a book of the history of street names in Clark County. My library has a database of casinos. There are online histories of different institutions. A person can compare the map with a map of a known date. History books and books about place names are helpful.
This is a clock that was made by a company from a topographic map. The company marked on the map where our house is, so they had to use a map from 1963 or after as that is when our subdivision was started. I wanted to know the date of the map they used. There is a golf course our neighborhood is centered around, and it has changed names several times. It was the Stardust Country Club when it opened in 1961, and its name was changed to the Sahara-Nevada Country Club in 1969. It’s still Stardust Country Club on the clock, so it has to be before 1969. We have a 1967 Las Vegas topo in our online catalog, so I’m guessing that’s the year of this map.
Another thing a person can do with maps is to make exhibits with them. Historical events all happened in a place, so maps can be used to enhance exhibits on historical events. This was part of an exhibit on the attack on Pearl Harbor. Displaying maps also will increase interest in your map collection.
An exhibit about mapping territories

Here’s an exhibit about mapping ownership of areas
Copies of local land survey maps in an exhibit in New Hampshire
This was an exhibit about geology and products that come from the earth.
Here’s an exhibit about last summer’s Olympics. This could be done for an anniversary of a historical event.
This exhibit uses a map to show where the cowboys in the National Finals Rodeo are from.
This is part of an exhibit on bird paintings that has to do with the scientific observations that came from Army exploring parties and from surveying for routes of the transcontinental railroad.
Maps illustrate historical events

More of the same exhibit
Maps can be hung from picture rails. This could be done with framed maps.
Core competencies are the skills that someone needs to perform a particular job involving maps. A MAGIRT subcommittee has written core competencies for GIS, which stands for Geographic Information Systems, Librarians, Map Librarians, and for Map Cataloging and Metadata Librarians. There is a link to that document in the LibGuide.
Continuing Education

- Map librarian groups—MAGIRT, WAML, NACIS
- Email discussion group--MAGIRT
- Listservs—MAPS-L, GOVDOC-L, GIS4LIB
- Other journals:

  *Journal of Map & Geography Libraries.* Edited by Paige Andrew and Katherine H. Weimer. (Taylor & Francis, c2004-). 3 issues a year.

WAML is the Western Association of Map Libraries. It has a Map Librarians’ Toolbox with more information on its website. MAGIRT and WAML both have lists of map librarians people may contact for help. There are also electronic discussion lists and MAGIRT’s email discussion group where people can ask questions. NACIS is North American Cartographic Interest Society. All these map librarian groups have journals and/or newsletters.
Credits

All of the images are from University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries’ Special Collections, and most are from our digital map project:

http://digital.library.unlv.edu/collections/maps
Follow-up Webinar

July 21, 2014
3:00 p.m. Eastern
Noon Pacific

Does anyone have questions? If you have additional questions, there will be a MAGIRT webinar on this topic in July. Also feel free to email us if you have more questions.
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