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Introduction: Special Issue, Spatial Humanities

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Introduction: Special Issue, Spatial Humanities

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Space and place sit at the core of humanities inquiry—after all, a majority of historical accounts and literary works are set in a particular place and time. With the adoption of digital technologies in humanities research under the umbrella of digital humanities, spatial-oriented research has increasingly been carried out using computational methods and tools. In terms of research workflow, this means that in addition to producing knowledge through scholarly writing, spatial research now employs data modelling, prototyping, and multidisciplinary collaboration as modes of knowledge production. Also known as spatial humanities, this field involves the linking of places and research materials and their visualization on interactive maps. By carrying out this research using computational approaches, spatial humanities takes advantage of the digital medium's processing power and speed to change the type and scale of research questions that humanists can ask—and answer.

From text-to-map conversions to 3D modelling, imaginary cartography, virtual and augmented reality, and beyond, spatial humanities projects embody a wide range of approaches to the study of space and place in the early modern period. This historical era marks the proliferation of maps from being mostly unavailable in the 1400s, and rare objects in the 1500s, to becoming objects of everyday life in many professions in the 1600s.[1] The ubiquity of maps was catalyzed by the development of the printing press, and particularly the use of incised copper plates—that is, intaglio printing—to print maps and atlases, as well as the shift to modern cartography in the mid-1500s that had significant effects on the development of a spatial consciousness in Europe, while fueling colonial and imperialistic ramifications abroad.[2] In a sense, both the early

1. Richard W. Unger, *Ships on Maps: Pictures of Power in Renaissance Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2, dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230282162.

2. Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

modern period and our contemporary world are marked with a heightened attention to space and place owing to significant developments in cartographic technologies and public access, making the intersection of early modern studies and spatial humanities an especially fruitful area of study.

This special issue consists of reviews of ten digital projects at the intersection of spatial humanities and early modern studies. While far from being exhaustive, they offer a rich representation of the various applications of spatial humanities, including projects that directly engage with early modern materials, as well as digital tools. Some reviews address long-standing, large, grant-funded projects, while others focus on emerging and experimental ones. Most projects blur the boundaries of a single genre; in addition to providing digital map visualizations, they also amalgamate elements of archives, editions, markup software, social annotation of text and images, human mobility in space, and more. Together, these projects move beyond the confines of geographical information systems (GIS) into the broader world of web mapping that brings together geolocatable information alongside many media forms for dynamic, interactive experiences.

Reviews in this special issue draw connections between existing discourse in spatial humanities and the projects reviewed, while also highlighting the contributions of projects to the multiple disciplinary fields they relate to. The ease of access to and manipulation of web mapping technologies today challenge the historically often oppressive narratives that maps impose as instruments of colonial power that are passed from the top down and erase customary land boundaries, traditional place names, and other local knowledge by rewriting and contextualizing them (The Down Survey of Ireland). Another review addresses the implications of immersive technology such as guided tours overlaid on lived urban spaces and questions the ways that historical and contemporary worlds can be productively merged together (Hidden Florence). Moving beyond the confines of proper places (referring to existing locations), one project looks at common places (with no reference to the real world at all),[3] illustrated through an imaginary cartography map superimposed with layers of data for exploration where questions of multiple modes of accessibility are raised (Amerasia). Moreover, the special issue points to some scientific breakthroughs

3. Earl Miner, "Common, Proper, and Improper Place," in *Proceedings of the XIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association: Space and Boundaries* (Munich: Iudicium Verlag, 1990).

in cartography in eastern traditions as well western ones (Selden Map of China). It also demonstrates how archival information can be encoded and made more accessible through spatial humanities approaches (DECIMA; Digging into Early Colonial Mexico) that can provide a visual entry point to study the past through meaningful patterns and layers on digital maps (The Atlas of Early Printing; The Grub Street Project). Also addressed in this issue are questions of sustainability, interoperability, documentation, and intellectual labour (The Map of Early Modern London). Finally, the special issue engages a practice that is increasingly common in spatial humanities—the social annotation of texts and images and the co-creation of linked open data (Recogito).

The majority of reviewed projects apply spatial humanities technologies to historical materials. Reviewed by Brendan Kane, The Down Survey of Ireland is a digital project that maps the dispossession of Catholic lands in Ireland by loyalist, parliament forces, which resulted in a massive transfer in landownership from Irish Catholics to English Protestants. The Down Survey of Ireland draws on William Petty's project to quickly and accurately survey land value and ownership. Originally meant as a document to record dispossession and disloyalty, the survey has been ironically reinvented as a tool for reconnecting Irish people with their history and local knowledge. The project itself situates Petty's high quality digitized maps in their historical context and makes them openly available, with opportunities for searching the maps, overlaying them onto Google maps for historical comparison with modern day cartography of Ireland, and connecting with primary and secondary resources that together provide insight into the indigenous experience of the Irish and offer many worthwhile avenues for research. Next is the Selden Map of China (1620), reviewed by Annie Hongping Nie; the map is a significant Ming Dynasty merchant nautical chart, used for trading, that challenges scholarly perceptions of Ming China as isolated, conservative, and inward looking, and situates it relatively accurately in relation to its East Asia and South East Asia neighbours, pointing to the role of China as a primary player in the formation of global trade in the early modern period. Nie details the extraordinary features of the map that combine eastern and western scientific breakthroughs in cartography, as well as the Chinese landscape painting techniques that illustrate topographical features and a deep knowledge of the landscape, vegetation, and local products of many places that appear on the map. In her review, Nie also outlines the significant conservation efforts over several years to restore the damaged

Selden Map that was rediscovered in 2008 before exhibiting it publicly in 2011 and later digitizing it for open access viewing.

Hidden Florence, reviewed by Clément Godbarge, is an immersive app that offers a mobile-guided audio experience through early modern Florence from the perspective of six figures, historical and fictional, who represent different social classes and tell narratives that immerse readers in a deep knowledge of each character's life, fears, and hopes. Every character is designed by drawing on extensive historical research to communicate the political and social history of early modern Florence. For iOS users, it also includes a 3D rendering of the San Pier Maggiore church destroyed in the eighteenth century. In his review, Godbarge highlights the many contributions of Hidden Florence to scholars and members of the public alike, while also reflecting on the implications of using audio guide technologies in lived contemporary urban spaces, suggesting ways to bridge these worlds. Also studying early modern Florence is the Digitally Encoded Census Information & Mapping Archive (DECIMA), reviewed by Andrea Gazzoni. This project georeferences three sixteenth-century censuses of Florence from 1551, 1561, and 1632, and overlays them on a georeferenced historical map of Florence by Stefano Buonsignori (1584). Bringing together census and cartography in a searchable, rich, ArcGIS map with many configurations that correspond to socio-economic factors of the time allows scholars to visually access historical census data of early modern Florence and search thousands of entries in each census, while also clarifying context and vocabulary. DECIMA is also a useful resource for documenting the technologies employed in building a spatial humanities project and contains bibliographic references to affiliated projects and scholarship in the many fields it draws on.

Reviewed by Katherine H. Hart, The Atlas of Early Printing is an interactive digital map that geographically and temporally situates the early history of printing in Europe. This teaching resource traces the history of printing with respect to its cultural and economic context through additional layers that portray trade routes, political borders, paper mills, universities, and other factors. As Hart points out, the resource is built on the depiction of the spread of printing in Febvre and Martin's *L'Apparition du Livre* (The coming of the book, 1958) and draws on multiple other scholarly resources and data in bibliographic catalogues such as the *Incunabula Short Title Catalog* (*ISTC*). Hart highlights the contributions of this project for scholars studying the early

history of printing and spatial humanities. Digging into Early Colonial Mexico: A Large-Scale Computational Analysis of Historical Sources (DECM)—a multidisciplinary project reviewed by Ernesto Priani Saiso—develops digital technologies for historical corpus analysis in the context of the Spanish colonies in America, with a particular focus on *Las relaciones geográficas de la Nueva España* (Geographical reports of New Spain, 1577–85), which constitutes a series of reports on all aspects of daily life in New Spain, New Granada, Peru, and Rio de la Plata. Priani's review focuses on the multifarious digital methodologies applied to studying these reports and the digital resources created from them, including the geographical text analysis tool, the DECM Sixteenth Century Gazetteer, and word-place collocations. According to Priani, they all work together to make accessible digital maps layered with data about various sites and topics for research purposes. At the same time, they serve as highly useful standalone resources for studying historical texts in the fields of digital humanities, history, and archaeology.

The Map of Early Modern London (MoEML), reviewed by David Joseph Wrisley, is a longstanding digital project that records historical urban data about places, as well as people and organizations in early modern London, taken from textual records that focus on the geography of London such as royal processions and mayoral shows. The project invites users to explore this data in multiple ways, including geo-visualizing it on a digitized 1561 Agas map by Ralph Agas or OpenStreetMap base map, as well as through the TEI-XML encoded transcriptions of the text and the MoEML Gazetteer of Early Modern London, which records place names and preserves their variant historical spellings. In his review, Wrisley focuses particularly on how MoEML has modelled the standard for what scholarly infrastructure can look like, not just for studying early modern London but also for sustainability, interoperability, documentation, attribution of intellectual labour, and involvement of graduate and undergraduate students. Amerasia is an imaginative cartography digital project, reviewed by Lauren Beck, which explores the sixteenth-century phenomenon in Europe that imagines America and Asia as overlapping by actually sharing a conjoined geographic space. This exploration is carried out by overlaying a digitized copy of Caspar Vopel's 1545 map that illustrates this imaginative cartography through overlapping places in America and Asia with explanatory materials, translations, transcriptions, and search functionalities. In her review, Beck addresses how digital projects can accompany scholarly research

outputs and provide audiences with interactive, immersive, and potentially expansive modes of scholarly communication beyond more traditional paratexts or appendices published alongside research. Beck also brings to the forefront questions about different modes of accessibility; graduate student participation in digital research projects; and the capacity of digital projects for potential expansion and enrichment.

The Grub Street Project, reviewed by Marta Kvande, explores the production and circulation of texts through a decentralized network model. The project's goal is to explore the connection between texts, places, people, and events in the context of the eighteenth century, treating London as a social text that can be studied through distributed networks. Even though The Grub Street Project was not primarily created for early modern scholarship, Kvande's review focuses on the potential research avenues it facilitates for the field. Her findings show that while the texts and biographical information of the people primarily focus on 1700 and beyond—albeit with a few exceptions—the map section itself yields more promising results, since twenty-two of the thirty-six annotated maps represent London before 1700. These maps can be used for research and pedagogical purposes to learn about the various depictions of London and more specific routes between places on searchable historical maps. Ian Gregory, likewise, discusses social elements in his review of Recogito—an annotation tool for text and images that helps identify named entities, including place names, people, and events. Although the annotation is carried out manually, Recogito applies the initial annotation to other similar named entities, and allows for single or collaborative annotation within the same workspace, thereby significantly speeding up the annotation process. Also assisting with a time-consuming element of annotation is Recogito's connection to several spatial gazetteers that allow the user to georeference place names by connecting them to their locational information within the same environment. Annotated texts and images can be exported in a variety of formats for textual analysis and visualization on digital maps. Gregory points out several advantages of manual annotation, such as close reading and critical engagement with the text, that help make informed decisions about it.

This special issue addresses spatial humanities projects that study literary and historical space and place from a variety of perspectives. In doing so, it points to how existing digital projects deepen our knowledge of early modern space and place, and highlights existing avenues for research that early modern scholars

can pursue. This special issue also demonstrates how digital objects can embed within themselves spatial methodologies, theory, and discourse that form the foundation of humanities-oriented spatial inquiry. In a few years there will be need for another special issue to consider the new technologies, new projects, and new insights that spatial humanities research brings to the early modern period. Here, the reviewers imagine creative and practical ways in which the boundaries of technologies can be pushed even further to accommodate humanities materials and herald new affordances for spatial humanities research.

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downsurvey.tcd.ie.

The seventeenth century was an age of revolutions. Transformative change in a range of human experience—from the political to the economic, the military to the religious—is generally held to have marked the transition from medieval to modern. This understanding of historical development is culturally ingrained and the stuff of secondary school textbooks throughout Europe and North America. Students across borders and languages encounter some version of a narrative linking Bacon and Galileo at the century's start to Leibniz and Newton at its end, tracing how an emergent rational awareness of the natural world and skepticism of received truths from the ancients helped awaken the secular and banish the "darkness" of religious intolerance. In the Anglophone world, particular attention is paid to political change that propelled England toward centuries of global dominance. Historians may still quarrel over dating the transformation from medieval to modern—Is it to be found in the "Puritan Revolution" of the 1640s when a democratizing Parliament triumphed over a tyrannical monarchy, or ca. 1689–90 with the "Glorious Revolution" of William of Orange's defeat of the Catholic James II?—but they agree on the general point: England was merely first in line as western Europe moved inexorably toward the values of liberty, democracy, and tolerance.