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Introduction: Maps in Libraries as Call for Action. Some Reflections on the Workshop Maps in Libraries 2019

Keywords: map library, map collection, map cataloguing, map metadata, workshop report.

Summary: The paper recapitulates in a short report the workshop *Maps in Libraries 2019*, held at the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies in Regensburg from 13th till 14th March 2019. Summarizing the findings of the workshop, some remarks are put up for discussion, how libraries can improve description and access for cartographic resources.

The Library and its Maps Holdings

The last two editions of e-Perimtron in 2019 result from the *Maps in Libraries 2019* workshop held at the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies in Regensburg (Germany) in March 2019.¹ Explicitly announced as a working meeting, the event primarily addressed practitioners from libraries and curators of map collections. In other words, people who ensure that the rich holdings of maps from libraries are described and processed in such a way that they can be found and used. The focus was not on the presentation of individual collections or on the history of holdings. The main concern, however, was on the questions of how libraries deal with maps (from storage and cataloguing to digital accessibility),² which strategies are chosen to adequately present map collections,³ and finally what users get out of the collections.⁴

A peculiar discrepancy became clear – once again – in the course of *Maps in Libraries 2019*: digitization has attracted a great deal of attention to maps (and other non-book media) from libraries. Made accessible in repositories or special portals, they are easier to find and retrieve – not least because they have left in electronic form the not too barrier-free surroundings of rarale halls and special collections. Zoomable viewers and high-resolution images accentuate them in detail and reveal their multifaceted information content in the form of geographical data. This is why digitized map collections are becoming an experimental field for analytical approaches from the Digital Humanities⁵ and offer the basis for new arrangements, for example via integration in Wikimedia Commons / Wikipedia / Wikidata.

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¹ See <http://geoportost.ios-regensburg.de/mapsinlibraries2019/>; funded by German Research Foundation (DFG) within the project GeoPortOst, <http://geoportost.ios-regensburg.de/>.

² See <http://geoportost.ios-regensburg.de/mapsinlibraries2019/>: Panel 1: The New Collection Paradigm – From Map Libraries to Geospatial Services, and Panel 4: Finding the Place. Metadata and map retrieval.

³ See <http://geoportost.ios-regensburg.de/mapsinlibraries2019/>: Panel 2: Let's space! Georeferencing and user participation.

⁴ See <http://geoportost.ios-regensburg.de/mapsinlibraries2019/>; Panel 3: From Old to New. GIS, tools, and old maps.

⁵ C.f. examples from the Exploring Old Maps workshop series, <http://exploringoldmaps.informatik.uni-wuerzburg.de/>.

On the other hand, the map owners, the libraries, find it difficult to describe and represent them with their very own set of tools. The catalogue as organizing instrument is made for books. For the recording of media that represent spatial concepts verbal indexing proves to be inadequate, or as Wolfgang Crom pointed out in his keynote: “Maps are not always fully acknowledged in libraries. In general, the focus is on old maps and atlases, so maps are often attributed to the collections of manuscripts or historical prints.” (Crom 2019: 117). And this marginalization of maps in library contexts is often reflected in deficits in cataloguing and missing map-specific metadata (c.f. geographical coordinates, scales, projections, etc.).

However, the interest in geographical features for knowledge representation has increased immensely. This can be seen, for example, in the attention paid to geographical authority files and their subsequent use,⁶ but also in considerations as to how location data could be used for bibliographic records. Cartographic media can only profit from this – and of course contribute to it. And map librarians as well as map curators can actively promote these developments and help shape the content in order to achieve accepted standards in map cataloguing that facilitate cross-collection comparison and exchange of information on map holdings.

A Glance on Maps in Libraries 2019

Wolfgang Crom argued in this direction in his keynote speech (Crom 2019), in which he referred to the project Kartenspeicher⁷ as a common portal for German institutions and set a European Geo Information System as a long-term goal.

However, in the first panel, *The New Collection Paradigm – From Map Libraries to Geospatial Services*, the genesis of digital map libraries was presented. Marco van Egmond (University Library Utrecht) offered an overview of various Dutch georeferencing projects (Van Egmond 2019), Chris Fleet (National Library of Scotland Edinburgh) presented the diverse potential of digital map collections as a flagship for libraries (Fleet 2019). Marcey Bidney (American Geographical Society Library at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) has covered a wide range of issues from the first digitization projects in the 1990s, in which it was up to decide whether to scan in grayscale or colour, to today's situation, in which many of the services and features offered in map portals go beyond the classical field of work of libraries. Bidney also pointed out that all digitization measures affect only a small part of the map holdings (boutique digitization?). They are only the tip of the iceberg, whose large mass – printed maps – is still only available in analogue form. She therefore advocated collaborative approaches to digitization, reducing the digital divide between small and large institutions.⁸

In the second panel, experiences were shared with participatory approaches to collect, enhance and improve metadata of digital map collections. The fact that open science and crowdsourcing projects can lead to success and increased visibility was emphasized by all presenters, that community sourcing, as practiced at the SLUB Dresden in the context of the Virtual Map Forum 2.0,⁹ may produce more reliable results, would have to be investigated further. By all means, the georeferencing projects

⁶ C.f. the panel „Geografika“ at the GNDCon 2018, <https://wiki.dnb.de/display/GNDCON2018/GNDCon+2018>.

⁷ <http://kartenspeicher.gbv.de>.

⁸ Slides Marcey Bidney, http://geoportost.ios-regensburg.de/document/mapsinlibraries_bidney.pdf.

⁹ <https://kartenforum.slub-dresden.de/>.

from Zürich,¹⁰ Leiden (Storms 2017), Baden-Württemberg (Weber 2019) and Dresden¹¹ made it clear that the involvement of the public, even if costly, is an opportunity and a gain, sometimes the only possibility to access maps online.

The second keynote speech by Petr Příklad (Klokán Technologies) on March 14th took us into the future of old maps in a digital environment. Příklad introduced technologies that can make maps experiential in a new way. Such that they could be presented as 3D models and made virtually 'walkable'. Příklad sees augmented reality technologies as the next step in further development of geo-services, for example to use globes interactively.¹²

Forward-looking usage scenarios also came up in the third panel. *From Old to New. GIS, tools, and old maps* was the topic. Alexey Frolov (Russian Academy of Sciences Moscow) dealt with the geographical processing of old Russian maps, which are rather schematic landscape drawings (Frolov et al. 2019). Rainer Simon (AIT Austrian Institute of Technology Vienna) co-developed the semantic annotation service Recogito,¹³ which is excellently suited for tagging and annotating old maps using interfaces with Gazetteers (Simon et al. 2019). Mustafa Erdem Kabadayı and Piet Gerrits (Koç University Istanbul) showed how maps for a historical GIS can be used to research transport infrastructures in Southeast Europe. With immense effort in data collection and data homogenization, they achieved impressive results, but pointed out the risk of confusing beautiful visualizations with precise results. It would always depend on the sources and the basic data, which could also contain the risk of mismapping.¹⁴

The last panel *Finding the Place. Metadata and map retrieval* again returned to the library perspective. Marta Kuźma (Military University of Technology Warsaw) took a close look at map metadata in Polish digital libraries and came to a rather sobering conclusion (Kuźma 2019). Petr Žabička and Miloš Páček (Moravian Library Brno) drew on their long experience with groundbreaking map projects and presented amongst others the scale calculator¹⁵ as an important tool for map description (Žabička and Páček 2019). Olga Zhlobinskaya (Russian Presidential Library St. Petersburg) reported on RUSMARC as the basis for recording the collections of the Russian Digital Library (Zhlobinskaya 2019) and Gethin Rees (British Library London) discussed the information architecture for maps (and other digital collections) at the British Library, again clarifying the expectations of libraries with user stories.¹⁶

¹⁰ Slides Roman Walt (ETH Zürich), http://geoportost.ios-regensburg.de/document/mapsinlibraries_walt.pdf.

¹¹ Slides Dominik Stoltz (SLUB Dresden), http://geoportost.ios-regensburg.de/document/mapsinlibraries_stoltz.pdf

¹² Video Petr Příklad, <https://youtu.be/Om0hdp7MNaY>.

¹³ <https://recogito.pelagios.org/>.

¹⁴ Slides Mustafa Erdem Kabadayı, Grigor Boykov, Piet Gerrits, http://geoportost.ios-regensburg.de/document/mapsinlibraries_kabadayi-gerrits-boykov.pdf.

¹⁵ <http://scale-calculator.mzk.cz/>.

¹⁶ Slides Gethin Rees, http://geoportost.ios-regensburg.de/document/mapsinlibraries_rees.pdf.

Maps Calling for Action

To sum up, we can say:

1. Maps are a real treasure for libraries, which must be preserved and cared for. They generate attention, they are widely used and in many cases they serve as a basis for testing new technical approaches (georeferencing, annotation, augmented reality).
2. Map digitization and map georeferencing are a must. Despite financial and personnel costs, digitization ensures that maps from libraries reach their patrons. In addition, it is only digitization providing the basis for adequately highlighting maps and for georeferencing them in order to connect future applications to them. As Mustafa Erdem Kabadayı put it in a nutshell: “Georeferencing is not a luxury, it’s a need.”

However, there are challenges remaining:

1. We need consistent and standardized metadata for maps, with geographical coordinates playing a key role. Collecting and generating these metadata has to be expanded, especially in the library world, and could have a wide impact. In this way, (historical) gazetteer services could be expanded or authority files refined, which would make an important contribution to linked data scenarios.
2. With regard to metadata, the question arises as to who needs which information. Are bounding box coordinates sufficient or does it make sense to go further and follow official standards or, for example, the Inspire Directive?¹⁷ To answer this question, a more intensive exchange with users, GIS communities and national cartographic authorities would be useful.
3. And how do we integrate those data into our library catalogues? Creative exchange is also required in this respect. The fact that geographical coordinates are also relevant for other cataloguing entries (e.g. for books the places of printing and publication) could enable new links and subsequent uses (via authority files) which could point beyond the catalogue (e.g. to Wikicite¹⁸). Geographical search interfaces could also be discussed as modules of innovative discovery systems in libraries.
4. Furthermore, it remains to be discussed how the diverse landscape of map portals and repositories can be managed for a better retrieval. Are services such as OldMapsOnline¹⁹ sufficient or should a cross-institutional metaportal on a national or even international level be recommended? Could a virtual (meta-)library like Europeana²⁰ also be expanded with a map interface for geographica? And how can smaller collections of libraries that have only few resources available for digitization be represented in a better way?

Not to answer these questions isolated, but to play through them together, could, indeed *should*, be discussed and communicated in a follow up session of 2019 *Maps in Libraries*.

¹⁷ <https://inspire.ec.europa.eu/>.

¹⁸ <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/WikiCite>.

¹⁹ <https://www.oldmapsonline.org/>.

²⁰ <https://www.europeana.eu/>.

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