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Features: Summer 2025

Feature Editor: Georgia Brown

Hi WAML, this is my last Features! I will still be staying involved with WAML in my role as the Communications Committee Chair. I'm excited to announce Emma Slayton, the Data Education Librarian at Carnegie Mellon University (eslayton@andrew.cmu.edu), is taking over starting with the fall issue. My last Feature is an interview with Emma, so you can get to know her before she begins her new role:

Interview

Georgia: How long have you been a map librarian / GIS librarian / data librarian?

Emma: I started at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) in 2017 as part of the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program to focus primarily on data visualization. I did my PhD in GIS, so I had just come from doing an intense GIS focused degree. Also, I was fortunate enough to come in about a month after Jessica Benner joined the staff at CMU as well. Both of us recognized that we had done research using GIS, were big map nerds, and realized that there wasn't a lot of institutional support at CMU for working with maps. Since there wasn't any general GIS support for students and because of our love of teaching and our interest in supporting students directly, we decided to create a GIS program in the libraries together. We got to start it ourselves, which was pretty exciting.

Once I got here, I realized that libraries, especially at CMU, are kind of a choose your own adventure scenario. Starting our own GIS program led to questions like, "How do we support GIS at an institution that doesn't have a geography program? At an institution that hasn't had a long history of supporting GIS? What spatial questions do our students have, and what do they need access to? Also, considering that we don't have a map collection or a data repository, how are we able to connect students to these resources?"

Those questions really linked to my interest, which I've taken into all aspects of my work here, which is, how do we get people to think about literacies. How do we get



students to ask the critical questions that are so fundamental to not only their success as students, but also as full civic members in society. I think that's especially true for their understanding of where they fit spatially into their world as well.

Georgia: Why did you get your PhD in GIS? What led you to that path?

Emma: I have always been really interested in storytelling, and when I was a kid, I was really interested in history and archeology. Thinking about, "What did people do in the past? How did they make sense of their lives?"

So, when I went to college and found out that you can actually study archeology, I was like, "Sweet!" And my other major was creative writing. Again, these joint aspects of storytelling like, "How do we think about the ways we discussed the past? How do we think about the ways that we engage with these questions?" A lot of my interest was in thinking about connections across space. In undergrad, I was really interested in thinking about the connections between mainland and island people. Questions like, "How are people using the sea? How are you building connections across divides? What does it mean to be in your locality versus? What does it mean to connect to people and your broader environment? How are you using the environment to make your life sustainable?" All of those kinds of fun, archeology questions that are all very spatially focused.

When I went into doing my graduate work, it just made sense to start using GIS to answer questions like, "How do we pinpoint the connection between people and space and process their movement through space in particular? How are people building cognitive maps?" How people discuss these things is always really interesting to me. I ended up doing a lot of work around navigation in my research and building maps that showcase and dissect that process. That work is how I got into GIS and ended up making a lot of really, I'm sure, awful looking maps for my dissertation. It also helps to be able to critically see a lot of different kinds of maps. I always say that archeology likes to pilfer from other disciplines. So, it makes a lot of sense that we have a relationship to geography and the way things are spatially constructed, which is how I got into map making.

It dovetailed really well with my mission here at CMU, which was to understand and support data visualization because maps are also inherently very visual. Students struggle with being able to correctly interpret or build graphs and maps. Maps are a very specialized skill set – not only to build but to read. I don't think we do a lot of



training in map building anymore because we've offloaded the discussion of movement or the understanding of space to apps or computers.

Georgia: Why did you want to take over the Features?

Emma: I've been around WAML a lot without being directly a part of the organizing board. I did a bit to help plan one of the WAML virtual conferences a while ago. But it's always been one of my interests, through working with past president, Jessica Benner, so closely. Also, through the Role of Libraries Geography and GIS Education (ROLGGE), that I started with Jessica, I've been getting to know a lot of people from WAML and really liking the community.

Through this process, understanding the importance of what it means to work together as a community, especially now, when understanding spatial relationships can be so important to understand identity and critical thinking in general. I was really excited to find a way into the community that would actually let me learn about the community and not just volunteer, but actually have my job being like, "Let's find out more about what's coming up. What do people think about being a part of WAML? What do they find value in?" I think getting the opportunity to interview people as part of features editor, and also just getting to see all the notifications that come up about what's new and exciting is a great way to double dip. So, I not only get to learn more about WAML for myself, but also to help other people learn about WAML, which will be exciting!

Georgia: What is one of your favorite parts of your job?

Emma: I think my favorite thing to do in my job is to show is to get students to start questioning what they see in maps. It's really exciting. So, part of the instruction that I do is to show students bad maps and get them to think about, "Why is it a bad map? Who made the map? What is the question they're trying to answer with the map and the bias that they're showing through it?" I also get them to think about how they're answering that question. I don't think students are typically challenged to break that down. To get to see them be like, "Oh. Oh, okay, yeah, it is confusing," rather than treating it as a source of authority is really great.

That instruction leads to one of the other things that I love about my job, which is getting to do consultations around map design and help them build a better map. Usually, they find out about me through one of my workshops, and we do some discussion of critiquing maps. Then, they come to me and be like, this is what I've

made. We talk about it, and I try to get them to see: “What is the critical thing that I want to showcase about this quick question? What about my research is meaningful to me? Also to the public that I’m trying to communicate it to? How do we dissect and build maps?” You see their design process evolve, and it is really exciting.

Conferences & Meetings

August 11–15, 2025 – Los Angeles Ian Fowler (Curator of Maps, History, and Government Information; New York Public Library) will be teaching a California Rare Book School course on the *History of Cartography* at UCLA. This course is designed to provide a general overview of the history of mapping in the western world as well as the use of cartographic resources in modern day teaching and research.

August 13, 2025 – Virtual Geo4Lib Community Meeting

August 17-22, 2025 – Vancouver, Canada – 32nd International Cartographic Conference (ICC 2025)

September 10, 2025 – Virtual Geo4Lib Community Meeting

September 11-14, 2025 – Portland, Maine The 42nd International Map Collectors’ Society annual symposium will be at the Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education, 314 Forest Ave. We will also be working with the University of Southern Maine facilities. The conference title is *Reflections and New Perspectives on Mapping Maine, New England and Maritime Canada* and click here for the complete program. The program opens with an evening reception and possible keynote lecture on Thursday. Friday and Saturday will be lectures during the day and dinner on your own. Sunday, the final day, will be a behind the scenes tour and “Treasures of the Collection” in the morning. Then lunch and time to tour Portland in the afternoon. Closing banquet that night. There will be a post-symposium three-day tour of Bar Harbor and Acadia National Forest Monday through Wednesday, September 15-17th. Click here to register. Contact Libby Bischof <elizabeth.bischof(at)maine.edu> for more information.

September 25-26, 2025 – Virtual Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) Conference (Pre-conference September 18, 2025)

September 29-October 3, 2025 – Virtual IIIF Consortium – September 2025 IIIF Online Training (5-Day Course)



October 3-4, 2025 – Arlington, Texas To commemorate Dianne Powell , her collecting and leadership at the Texas Map Society and other organizations, the University of Texas at Arlington and the Texas Map Society are organizing a joint event. On October 3 (Friday), UTA Special Collections will host a Tribute Panel of fellow collectors and map historians to discuss the contemporary trajectory of map collecting and institutional collections. On October 4 (Saturday), the TMS Fall Meeting will highlight Dianne's collecting by presentations on selected items she donated to UTA. Until the program is announced, logistical questions regarding the Tribute on October 3 can be directed to Rosalinda Sanders <rosalinda.sanders(at)uta.edu> and regarding the TMS Fall Meeting to Dr. Mylynka Cardona <mylynka.cardona(at)etamu.edu>.

October 8, 2025 – Virtual Geo4Lib Community Meeting

October 8-10, 2025 – Stanford The David Rumsey Map Center will host the fifth biennial *Barry Lawrence Ruderman Conference on Cartography*. The conference, themed *Above and Below*, will feature talks on cartography of anything but the earth's surface, from the ocean depths to the stars. To stay in the loop about the conference theme and speakers over the coming months, please sign up for the Ruderman Conference mailing list.

October 15-18, 2025 – Louisville, KY NACIS (North American Cartographic Information Society) Annual Conference. Map Gallery & Student Print and Dynamic Map Competitions submissions due August 31, 2025

October 16-18, 2025 – Chicago (Hybrid) The Newberry Library, 60 W Walton St., will be hosting the *22nd Kenneth Nebenzahl, Jr. Lectures in the History of Cartography*. The theme will be "Mapping from Mexico: New Narratives for the History of Cartography". This program will be held in-person at the Newberry and livestreamed on Zoom. Additional registration, schedule, and speaker information will be released as the event nears.

October 23-25, 2025 – Denver The Society for the History of Discoveries *annual conference* will be hosted by the Rocky Mountain Map Society and the Denver Public Library, with opening reception the evening of October 23rd, and program October 24th and 25th. The theme will be *Mountains as Sites of Myth, Barriers, and Exploration.* Additional information from Cortney Berg, SHD Secretary: <cberg(at)gradcenter.cuny.edu>.



October 31-November 1, 2025 – Winston-Salem, North Carolina (Hybrid) Registration is open for *Mapping American Expansion,* a two day seminar and Map Fair at The Museum Of Early Southern Decorative Arts in Winston-Salem. Moderated by Margaret Pritchard, Former Curator of Prints, Maps, and Wallpaper at Colonial Williamsburg, lecturers will include JC McElveen, Wesley Brown, and Chet Van Duzer. Concurrent with the seminar, a select group of dealers will be exhibiting maps for sale. A list of speakers, topics, dealers, and registration details (in-person or virtual) are available at https://mesda.org/program/map-seminar/.

November 24-29, 2025 – Virtual IIIF Consortium – November 2025 IIIF Online Training (5-Day Course)

November 12, 2025 – Virtual Geo4Lib Community Meeting

2026 – Austin, TX – The next Geo4LibCamp will be in 2026 hosted by the University of Texas at Austin with date TBD.

Talks & Webinars

August 5, 2025 – Denver (Hybrid) The Rocky Mountain Map Society will meet at 5:30 PM MT in History Colorado Center. Program will be in the Martin Room, on the 4th floor. Mark S. Hanson purchased a cabin in Tarryall Valley where Mark began field mapping and researching the area's mining history, eventually leading to his book *Tarryall Gold: From Rush to Hush* which he will discuss. We will offer this program in person and via Zoom. To attend by Zoom, click here when program starts.

August 12, 2025 – Washington (Online) Join Library of Congress reference librarians for an introduction to the Geography and Map collections at the Library of Congress. The session will be 3:00-4:00 pm (Eastern). This orientation session, aimed at the general public, will highlight a wide range of cartographic formats and subject matter. The focus of the session will be on maps and online resources available to all patrons any time or place in the world. Topics covered will also include search tips and tricks, research and collection guides, ways to engage with the collections online, and how to prepare for a future trip to the reading room. After the presentation, staff look forward to answering additional questions from attendees. Register for this session.

August 12 & 13, 2025 – Virtual IIIF Consortium Glycerine Image Annotation:



Infrastructure Integration Framework. Three times slots available.

August 14, 2025 – Virtual Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) Preservation Steward Collection Inventories: Requirements and Guidance 2:00 pm ET

September 18, 2025 – Washington The Geography & Map Division of Library of Congress and Philip Lee Phillips Society will have a *Map Mixer.* Meet in person at Library of Congress, Madison Hall, First Floor, Madison Building, adjacent to the main entrance from 2:00-4:00 PM. Join fellow map lovers and Library supporters for an afternoon of exploration, conversation, and connection. Geography & Map Division staff will present a curated selection of their favorite maps from the Library's collections. Come mingle with fellow enthusiasts and enjoy light refreshments while learning about Philip Lee Phillips Society initiatives and celebrating cartography.

September 23, 2025 – Denver (Hybrid) The Rocky Mountain Map Society is planning for a presentation by Susan Schulten. Further details to be announced.

October 14, 2025 – Washington (Online) Hosted by the Washington Map Society, this Zoom meeting is presented in partnership with the California, Chicago, New York, Philip Lee Phillips, Rocky Mountain, and Texas Map Societies. Anyone interested in participating in the meeting must RSVP to John Docktor at washmap(at)gmail.com in order to receive the meeting ID and passcode. Meeting will start at 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 6:00 PM Central Time, 5:00 PM Mountain Time, and 4:00 PM Pacific Time. Henrik Dupont (Map Curator at The Royal Library, Denmark) will discuss *Mapping of Greenland, from 1700-2025*.

November 13, 2025 – Washington (Online) Hosted by the Washington Map Society, this Zoom meeting is presented in partnership with the California, Chicago, New York, Philip Lee Phillips, Rocky Mountain, and Texas Map Societies. Anyone interested in participating in the meeting must RSVP to John Docktor at washmap(at)gmail.com in order to receive the meeting ID and passcode. Meeting will start at 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 6:00 PM Central Time, 5:00 PM Mountain Time, and 4:00 PM Pacific Time. Ronald S. Gibbs, MD (President California Map Society) will speak about *The American Revolution Told in Ten Maps.*

November 19, 2025 – Washington Join with The Geography & Map Division of Library of Congress for the *26th annual Geospatial Information Systems Day*.



Additional details to be announced.

December 11, 2025 – Washington (Online) Hosted by the Washington Map Society, this Zoom meeting is presented in partnership with the California, Chicago, New York, Philip Lee Phillips, Rocky Mountain, and Texas Map Societies. Anyone interested in participating in the meeting must RSVP to John Docktor at washmap(at)gmail.com in order to receive the meeting ID and passcode. Meeting will start at 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 6:00 PM Central Time, 5:00 PM Mountain Time, and 4:00 PM Pacific Time. Tom Harper (Lead Curator of Antiquarian Mapping, The British Library) will speak about an *Overview of the British Library's New Map Exhibition, "Secret Maps"*.

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