

ACMLA Student Paper Award

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAPTRADER.NET:
A VENUE FOR THE GLOBAL EXCHANGE OF
DUPLICATE AND UNWANTED MAPS**

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Introduction

MapTrader.net was created to be a centralized map exchange to help rectify the inequities that exist in map collections across the world, and to prevent valuable maps from ending up as landfill. This paper explores the creation, technical underpinnings, and the structure and layout of the website.

Creation

MapTrader.net grew out of the perceived need for a venue where duplicate, unwanted and superseded maps could be exchanged; this perception was based on both personal experience and a series of concurrent discussions on the Maphist and Maps-L listservs. There was clearly a significant need for a way for libraries and collectors to find “good homes for duplicate or unwanted maps” (Cope, 2006). The Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives (ACMLA) had previously sponsored an informal map exchange, but there was some uncertainty expressed as to whether or not this still exists (Woodward, 2006). A survey on the Maps-L listserv underscored the absence of a centralized venue for disposing of duplicates (see Appendix).

My awareness of this lack of a needed venue was reinforced by discussions with the University of Alberta Librarian, David Jones, concerning what could be done with a number of duplicate maps received by the William C. Wonders Map Collection through recent donations. It was clear that while many of these maps were duplicates for this collection, they would be desirable for other collections; all that was needed was a way to bring surplus maps and interested collectors together.

It was rapidly becoming clear that the old adage “one person’s trash is another person’s treasure” was particularly true in the world of map libraries with



President David Jones presents the ACMLA Student Paper Award to Linda McClure, at the CARTO 2007 conference, Montreal. (photo courtesy of Alberta Auringer Wood)

duplicate or unwanted maps. Larger map collections are being flooded with donations of maps, many of which are duplicates or unwanted for other reasons, while smaller collections struggle to maintain their collections with minimal funding. There had to be a way to establish a centralized map exchange to even out these inequities, especially for those duplicates that are “often deemed near-worthless” (Shaw, 2006) by one library, but that would be extremely desirable to another. I began to think about how this need could be met, and decided that the best way was to develop a website which would be freely accessible to map libraries and collectors around the world.

Technical Aspects

The website needed to be structured in a way that was easy to navigate, while still allowing for both expansion and simple updating; it also needed a section, arranged in a logical manner, where members could post what they needed or had to offer. In other words, it needed a balance between being easy to use for visitors while also being easy to maintain behind the scenes.

The software that seemed to best fulfill these requirements was a combination of Joomla! and phpBB, both of which are written in PHP and are capable of using the Open Source database MySQL. Joomla! is an Open Source Content Management System (CMS) which provides a website that can be centrally maintained and updated with ease, while phpBB is an Open Source forum which can also be maintained centrally and allows for a very high level of security against spam and vandals; in addition Joomla! and phpBB can be linked to provide a unified registration and login process. Together they allow secure registrations for those wishing to become members of the community, while at the same time providing an acceptable level of access to those who wish simply to browse the website. In combination, these two systems provide the desired balance between flexibility and security.

The website is currently running on a privately maintained WAMP server, which consists of a Windows XP operating system, an Apache 2.0 web server, MySQL 5 database and PHP 5 scripting. The use of the Open Source software, such as Apache, MySQL and PHP, significantly reduces the costs of running and maintaining the website, while a

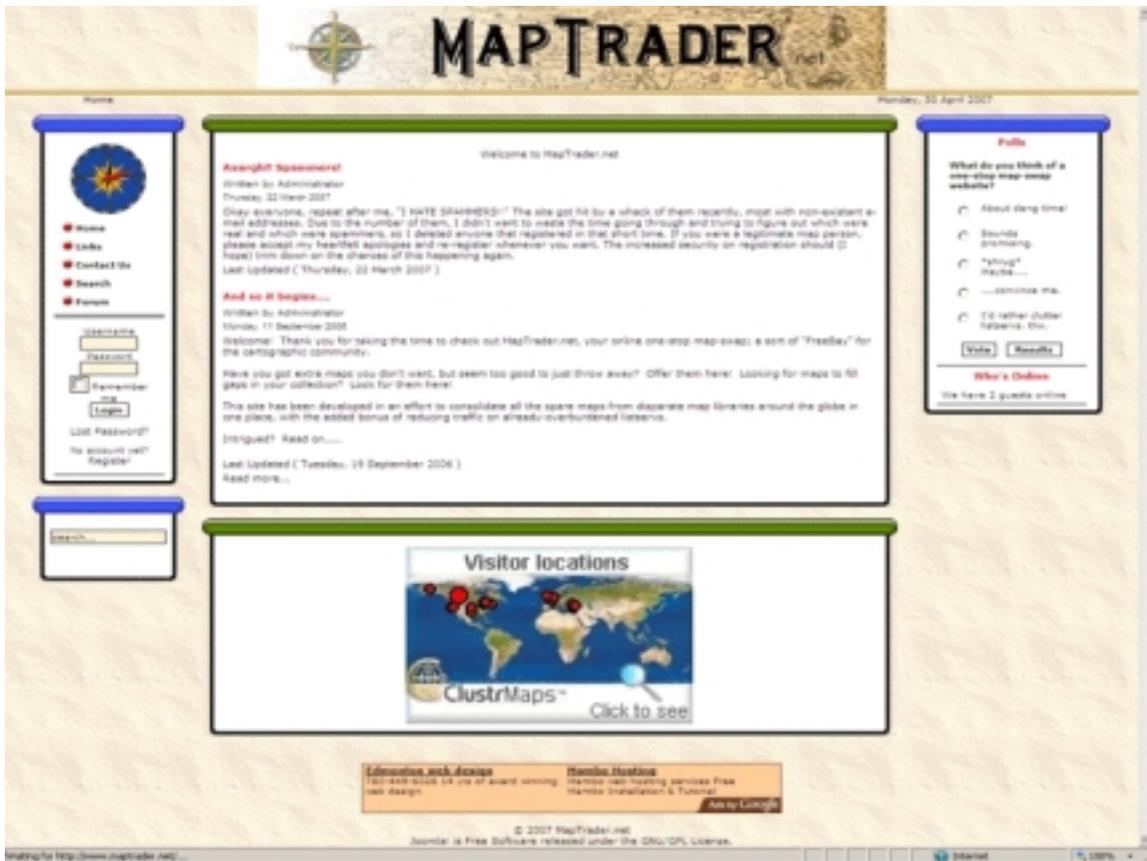


Figure 1. MapTrader website at <http://www.maptrader.net>.

Windows operating system allows for the use of a number of free utilities which are unavailable to other operating systems, such as Linux. Similarly the use of a privately maintained server provides significant savings when compared to the cost of commercially available server space. Although there is some sacrifice in speed with a private server, the financial savings and the increased ease of maintenance more than outweigh this small decrease in website speed. The savings provided by this combination of server and software also allow the website to offer free access and registration.

Layout and Usage

The overall structure of the website consists of an outer "shell" of Joomla! within which is embedded the phpBB forum. Registration for the two sections is linked, so members need only register or login once to access both areas with the same ID and password. The primary function of the Joomla! shell is to provide an overall structure to the website, including a main page which offers announcements and registration or login. It is also significantly less intimidating to first-time visitors than the forum alone would be.

The forum is divided into two main categories: *Maps Wanting Homes* and *Homes Wanting Maps*. The first category is for institutions and individuals who have maps that they wish to "rehome", while the second category is for those who are looking to fill gaps in their collection. Each of these two main sections is then subdivided geographically in a way that is intended to prevent any single subdivision from becoming overwhelmingly large. There is also a template provided to encourage a consistent posting format while at the same time allowing for the maximum information with a minimum of clutter.

The structure provided by a forum allows for each map offered or requested to have its own individual thread within which discussion can take place and be tracked in a coherent manner. It also allows visitors to quickly scan through the main forum page to find the sections of interest, and then dig down into each section for more detail.

Conclusion

Currently the website is designed as a venue to offer only freely donated maps, with shipping costs being the responsibility of the recipient, but there is the

potential to establish a shopping cart system which could conceivably allow for the sale of atlases and more valuable maps in the future. The expandability of the website also allows for inclusion of articles, announcements, and other useful additions which would serve to make it not only a map exchange, but an entire portal for the global map community.

Bibliography

- Cope, A. (2006, August 24). Maphist listserv: Map exchange.
- Shaw, H. (2006, August 24). Maphist listserv: Map exchange.
- Woodward, F. (2006, August 24). Maphist listserv: Map exchange.

Appendix

Subject: RE: MAPS-L: duplicate/superseded and unwanted maps and atlas handling
Date: Wed, 18 Oct 2006 13:17:36 -0400
From: Angie, Maps-L Moderator
To: <maps-l>

Duplicate/superseded and unwanted maps survey results

The survey was intended to determine how map librarians get rid of what they don't want. Not all responses answered the questions exactly as asked so I've done the best to compile the results. There were 12 respondents.

Feel free to send comments to the list.

How does your library handle duplicate/superseded and unwanted maps or atlases?

1) Post to a list to find new home: yes/no -- which lists:

maps-L no 2 yes 7

- yes note: will post to maps-l only if it's a major collection - will not make long elaborate lists

geonet no 3 yes 3

gov docs federal weeding list no 3 yes 1

other (please list)

calmap yes 1

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waml yes 3

UC/Stanford map libraries (closed list) yes 2

amcircle yes 1

Institute of Australian geographers yes 1

Melbourne university staff lists from the appropriate departments yes 1

- note: cost of shipping discourages use of posting to listservs

2) Sell at local book sale: no 4 yes 3

- note: Library policy is that we can sell only items that do not have property stamp; and the book-sale room doesn't have the space for displaying maps except folded ones.

- note: if it's never been property stamped w/our stamp (in other words, if it came from another library or a gift of some sort in the first place), we place it in a pile w/the hopes of selling it at a future map sale.

3) Sell or trade to local map resellers: no 4 yes 1

4) Place on a "freebie" table for patrons to take: no 2 yes 7

- note: put on freebie table when most sheet maps including all gifts and weeds that don't have depository "strings" attached such as superseded charts.

- note: if they don't move off the freebie table, they are recycled

- note: For depository items that have been superseded, we put those in a give away bin.

- note: library bureaucracy was against this too for 'space/security' reasons. I'm fairly bitter about my experience with the bureaucracy on this subject, as librarians were more worried about space/cost than the value of material they were throwing out. The library even locked its disposal bins to ensure staff did not rescue items for their own personal use.

5) Other (please describe)

*Superseded depository maps are generally given away during departmental events (such as the upcoming GIS Day).

*A few categories of federal nautical and aeronautical charts are cut-up when they are

superseded, to prevent people from using outdated charts.

*Depending on their nature (i.e., perceived ubiquity, utility, etc.) dup maps may be given away or offered out to other libraries.

*We follow SuDoc rules when edition is superseded or when we scale down USGS topo maps from certain other states due to space limits.

*Unwanted maps meet their maker (via the recycle bin)

*We are obliged to send withdrawn library books to the university surplus store. There they are sold for \$1 each. Some percentage of the proceeds come back to the library. We have a little more discretion with unwanted gift books that were never part of our collection.

*I've tried selling duplicate gift books on Ebay with proceeds to go to the library. It is a bit of a hassle to post and follow through on shipments though.

*Also, if I have a particularly nice item that isn't good enough to bother selling I might offer it to my department faculty or other people in the library.

*from University of TX at Austin: we give first choice of any duplicate maps to our partner map library at the Perry-Castaneda Library, UT's main library. If they already have a copy (copies) we distribute the maps elsewhere.

*given to local high schools, other provincial university collections (listserv), or the Geography grad students who have a sale each year.

*attractive maps go in the staff lounge and see if anyone took them home. Staff like it for gift wrap

*My favorite is just to put them in the mail to a library that would seem to me to be interested, with cover letter saying, toss into recycle. Example: we're weeding our city-map collection (except for CA), keeping maps only for major cities in each state. I send the city maps we don't need to the major university map collection in a given state.

*If however, it's been property stamped w/our stamp, disposing it is more difficult b/c it's considered state property. We're supposedly supposed to send it to the surplus warehouse for an auction, but we haven't been able to bring ourselves to do that yet, so we're just collecting them in a second pile for now.