

Creating the Virtual Map Drawer

Toward a New Paradigm

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American Geographical Society Library

Overview

- Quick overview of map collections in the U.S.
- The major paradigm shifts in American map libraries
 - 1990s
 - 2000s
 - Now
- The difficult bits:
 - Managing legacy digital collections into the future
 - Recognizing the library digital divide
 - Remember those print collections?

Map Collections in America

- **Primarily held in academic libraries**
 - **Some large urban public libraries**
 - **Rare map collections held only at some libraries**
- **Largely based on maps produced by the U.S. government**
- **Scanning primarily focused on local/regional maps**
- **Long trend toward closing/discarding map collections**

The American Geographical Society Library

- Culturally and historically significant collection of materials focused on geography, cartography, travel and exploration and the history of these areas
- 600,000+ maps dating from 1452
- 15,000+ atlases dating from 1478
- 600,000+ photos/film negatives
- 16,000 maps in digital collections
 - 30,000+ scanned
- 90,000 photos in digital collections

The First Shift 1990s

- **United States Census Bureau delivers decennial census via CD-Rom**
- **Libraries respond with increasing access to technology and software**
- **Association of Research Libraries launches the ARL GIS Literacy Project**

The Second Shift 2000-2012

- **Some U.S. libraries begin map scanning in the mid-1990s**
 - Major strides made in the early 2000s
- **Costly**
- **Early Debates about:**
 - Microfilming vs. Scanning
 - Color vs. black and white
 - Scanning resolution
 - Storage capacity/cost
 - Long-term viability

The Third Shift Now

- Digital Humanities
 - GIS/Web mapping services
 - New suites of services
 - Research
 - Scholar
 - Digital
 - Collaborations on innovative projects with digital collections: LookHere!
- } Commons

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The Difficult Bits

Managing Legacy Digital Collections: The AGSL Example

- One of the first map libraries in America to begin scanning maps in late 1990s
- No guidance, best practices, etc.
- Inconsistent application of workflows across collections
- Long before georeferencing of digital maps was a thing

What is the role of the library?

- Organizer?
- Collaborator?
- Teacher?
- Leader?
- Service Provider?

All of these?

Library Digital Divide?

HAVES

- Money
- Staff
- Equipment

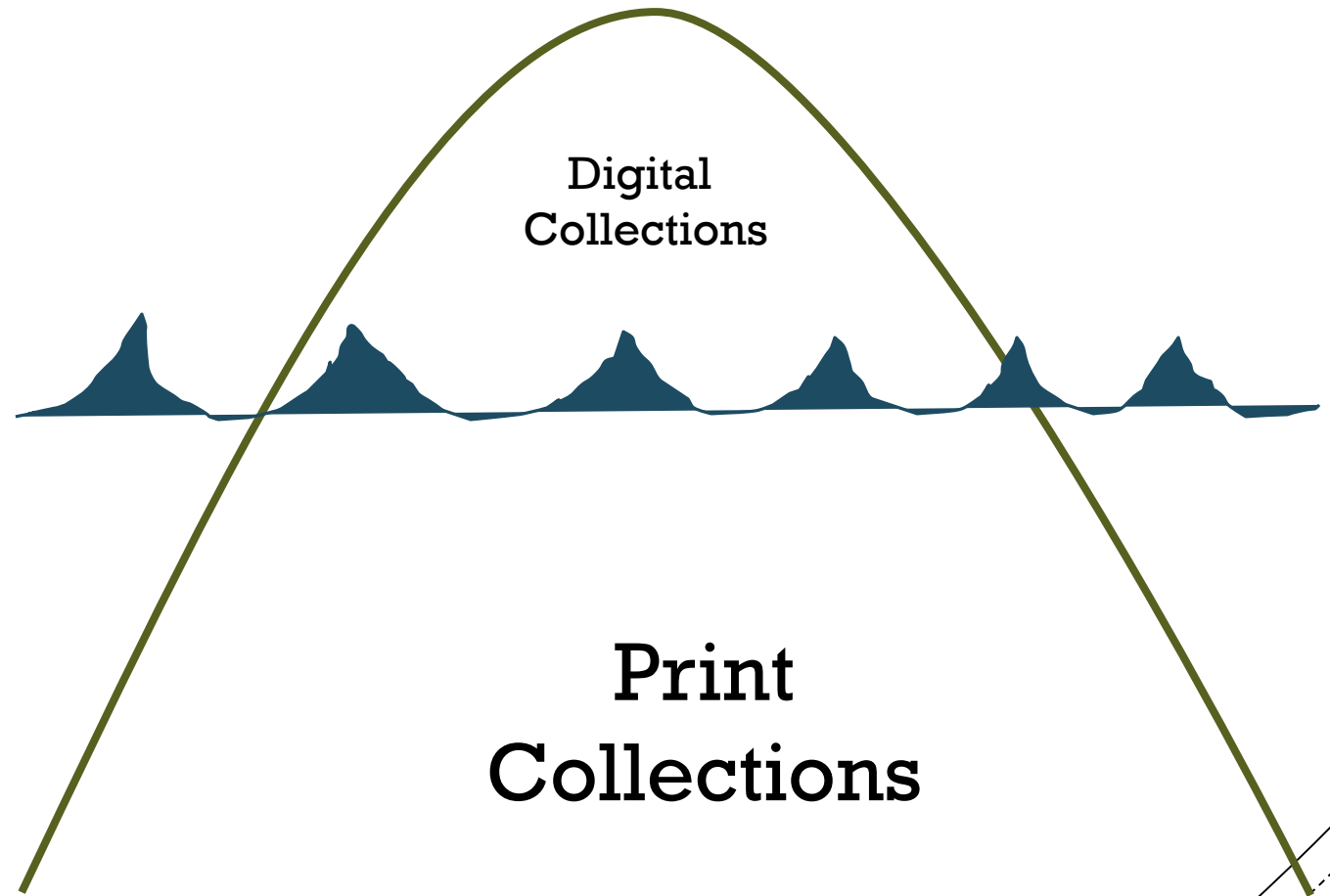
HAVE NOTS

- Little to none of the above

Print Collections

- Advocate for access to undigitized print collections – they are still relevant!
- Careful to not feed into the ‘everything is online’ mentality

What percentage
of collections are
represented
online?



Why is this important?

- Are there historically significant collections living in the shadows because of a lack of funding for creation of digital collections?
- Collaboration opportunities between those who have technology and those who do not?