

Report on the 14th Conference of the Groupe des Cartothécaires de LIBER, 31st August to 4th September, Cambridge, United Kingdom

Pete Jones

Defence Geographic Centre
Jervis Building, Elmwood Avenue, Feltham, Middx TW13 7AH United Kingdom
pjones@dgia.mod.uk

Introduction

The 14th conference of the [LIBER Groupe des Cartothécaires](#) was held in Cambridge in what proved to be warm and sunny conditions, very unusual for a late English summer. The conference was excellently organised by the Cambridge University Map Librarian, Anne Taylor, and her backroom team. It built on previous years' strengths and followed tried and tested patterns. The programme was very varied with speakers from a wide range of countries delivering presentations on developments within their own areas or specialisation.

The 2004 Conference theme "Map Collections and GIS or Digital Data - the death of the paper Map?" in some parts echoed the 2002 conference that had started to look at the impact that digital data and archives were beginning to make on collections across the continent. The title was intentionally partially controversial in questioning the death of the paper map, although the subsequent discussions did identify that whilst digital data is certainly all pervasive in the library arena, the demands for traditional paper mapping continue unabated.

One of the major themes that came out of many of the presentations was a desire to better understand the scope and complexity of digital data and also the desire to share experiences wherever possible to ensure that the collections were not all going in different directions. There was also a strong desire to burden-share wherever possible, primarily to avoid the duplication of effort where the same material was under consideration for digitisation either as a means of improving access or as a means of preservation.

The conference

Cambridge was the venue for 2004, the conference being held between 31st August and 4th September. A total of 52 delegates from 18 countries attended, which were 4 more than the previous conference with the same spread of countries. The conference itself was held in the Morison Room at the [Cambridge University Library](#). There were a total of four working sessions on Wednesday 1st and Friday 3rd September, interspersed with a days visit to London, to the collections of the British Library and the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers). On the final day an excursion was arranged to several places of interest in the Fenland area. The registration day and initial business meeting were followed by a tour of the Library and a welcome reception, which was generously sponsored by Ordnance Survey.

Running in parallel with the conference was an exhibition within the library entitled 'Aerial Photography in the Twentieth Century and Beyond'. This was designed by Faith Clark and Chris Going of the Geoinformation Group and consisted of maps and aerial photography, supplemented by a talk by Chris during the first working session. King's College Library and Archive Centre hosted a second, smaller display of documents and maps illustrating the history of the College.

Tuesday 31st August

The first morning of the conference was given over largely to registration, although the Board did hold a working lunch to prepare for the business meeting, which was the first item on the programme. Only 22 of the 52 delegates had arrived by the time of the business meeting and discussions was somewhat limited with many of the critical issues being deferred to the second business meeting scheduled for the Friday afternoon.

Following the business meeting the conference received a total of 14 national reports from Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom. These were all presented at the conference by the national representative - apart from Poland for which a paper only had been provided. These national reports will be published separately on the Groupe des Cartothécaires de LIBER website.

Wednesday 1st September

Hélène Richard, Chairman of the Groupe des Cartothécaires, formally opened the conference. The keynote speaker, David Cobb from Harvard University Library then spoke, his talk being entitled 'Crossroads - Bridging the Digital Divide'. David set the mood and tone for the rest of the conference with a wide-ranging and well-considered paper. He talked about some of the dichotomies that we face as librarians, such as one publisher producing more paper mapping than ever before, while another announces that no more paper products will be available. In considering the role that [GIS](#) has to play, David looked upon it as a dragon - but one that needed to be slayed or petted? Despite not having a Geography Department, Harvard has an extensive Map Library and one of their objectives is to collect 1:50,000 scale mapping over as much of the world as possible. This has inevitably led them to consider how to maintain both paper and digital collections. In a profession not renowned for its responsiveness to change this has been a major challenge. A major concern, which resurfaced throughout the conference, is the nebulous and virtual nature of digital collections. This in turn leads to concerns over just how reliable digital collections are; how long will they remain accessible? The [Harvard Geospatial Library](#) as it is now called is moving increasingly towards the collection of digital data, a fact clearly mirrored in its expenditure with 30% now being spent on non-paper mapping. David did remain solidly upbeat about the future of collections in whatever format and left the conference with the thought that a successful map collection is one where paper and digits sit happily together.

The 1st Working Session was chaired by Henrik Dupont from Denmark and included three presentations by Nick Millea from the Bodleian Library in Oxford, John Moore from Glasgow University and Chris Going to complement the exhibition running simultaneously in the Library.

Nick Millea began the session with a paper on the usage survey that had been carried out in Summer 2003. Subtitled 'a mandate for change?', Nick presented the results of the survey and how he felt it reflected what we have been doing and what we should be doing. A similar survey had been carried out in 1987/88 and Nick was interested to see what changes were noted in the responses. Although the number of responses was lightly disappointing, it did nonetheless provide ample evidence of some significant changes. Although the figures did not provide definite evidence of increasing map usage as predicted by Jan Smits in 1991, there was evidence of a change in expectation of the users in terms of both catalogues and materials. New subjects are now supported by mapping enquiries and whilst 'History' remains the single most requested subject, topics such as 'Environmental change' are increasing in importance. Nick concluded by encouraging the conference to endorse a pan-European project to increase the level of co-operation and collaboration over making material more accessible to a wider audience.

John Moore followed with a thought provoking paper on the current state of map librarianship within British Academic institutions. John has been asked to reflect on the state of academic map libraries on a number of occasions and his latest assessment contained some worrying trends. The [EDINA](#) data centre at Edinburgh University had noted that for its [Digimap](#) service, site representatives were increasingly not map librarians. John himself has also noted that the role of the map librarian in many institutions is becoming marginalised and that other departments may be embracing concepts such as [GIS](#) more readily. Again a willingness to change is required and much can be done, particularly the automation of catalogues and the creation of web pages, both of which will do much to open up access to, and increase awareness of, material. John concluded by encouraging us all to face up to the challenges or else risk becoming 'the corner shop rather than the data supermarket'.

Chris Going concluded the session with a presentation on the roles of aerial photography linked to mapping applications, reflecting the exhibition in the Library.

The 2nd Working Session was chaired by Wolfgang Crom from Germany and included three presentations from Annie Lenchau-Teglers and Vivi Rønsberg from Denmark, Olivier Loiseaux from France and Margit Tohver from Estonia.

Annie and Vivi opened the afternoon session with a presentation on digitised maps in the [Danish Map Collection](#), concentrating primarily on Frederick V's Atlas. As background they explained that the map collection began scanning holdings in 1997, starting with the major indexes of holdings, followed by oversize maps and thirdly Laferi's Atlas, primarily for preservation reasons. In 2003 an exhibition "[Denmark on the World Map](#)" initiated a programme to scan all maps showing Denmark before 1900. The latest project is the digitisation of [Frederick V's Atlas](#) to create a fully accessible digital facsimile. Access to the Atlas is very restricted, so having a digital version will make it much more accessible to as wide a range of users as possible.

Olivier Loiseaux gave a detailed presentation on '[Gallica](#)' the digital library created by the [Bibliothèque nationale de France](#) (BnF). Gallica is one of the largest digital libraries accessible free of charge on internet. It is an encyclopaedic library of multimedia resources covering the Middle Ages through to the early 20th century. It includes text, sound recordings, images and maps. The latest addition to the site is 'Anthology of the collections, a thousand treasures from the BnF'. This selection provides online access to some of the most rare and prestigious documents within the collection. 'Journeys in Africa', which was completed in 2002, includes 80 maps designed to illustrate a sweeping panorama of the African continent from the first explorers to colonial times.

Margit Tohver from the [National Library of Estonia](#) (NLE) concluded the session with a presentation on the digitisation programme of her library. Digitisation has proved to be very popular as it has opened up access to the collection and can act as a means of preservation. Margit did mention, however, that equipment is expensive and needs constantly updating and that digital images are not necessarily permanent and need to be renewed as new storage techniques are developed. Priority for digitisation has been given to material over Estonia, although the choice has also been determined by the age and condition of the material and how widely available it is at other institutions in Estonia. Although the National Library has started the process only recently, good progress has been made and they have had the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other institutions.

Thursday 2nd September

Thursday was spent on a visit to London encompassing [The British Library](#) (BL) and the [Royal Geographical Society](#) (with the Institute of British Geographers). The morning was spent at the British Library, firstly to view the special exhibition of some of the library's treasures, followed by a tour of the building including the Map Library. The afternoon was spent at the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) at Lowther Lodge in Kensington. The delegates received a briefing on the 'Unlocking the Archives' project, a Heritage Lottery Fund-aided project to make the archives more accessible to the public through a major building project which was completed in 2004. This was followed with presentations on the cartographic collections housed in Lowther Lodge and the RGS-IBG Expedition Advisory Centre's Mapping Unit.

Friday 3rd September

Prior to the 3rd Working Session, two of the working groups gave short presentations on recent activities. Wolfgang Crom began with details of the [Working Group for Education](#) activities. He noted that there had been few activities in the last two years. Most of the activities are available via the website, but this needs to be maintained and a 'Reference Works' link has to be added. Jurg Bühler has made several updates to the site and has requested that delegates review and update the 'Who's who' section. Wolfgang also requested any update information on European Cartographic Societies, Names Authorities, National Ordnance Surveys and any other related news.

Steffi Mittenzwei then followed with details of the [Working Group for Central & Eastern Europe](#). The Working Group has tried to identify ways to finance map curator training, but the initiative must

unfortunately be called a failure, as no funding has been forthcoming. There is regular liaison with the Education WG and the website is constantly maintained. Recent developments include the compilation of a bibliography from Slovenia produced by Renata Solar, which will be enhanced with multi-lingual data. Future projects include the maintenance of information and ensuring linguistic consistency. EEC funding will be sought again and may be easier to obtain now that new nations have joined. There is also interest in a project to copy maps over Prussia, initially identifying where material exists in libraries.

The 3rd Working Session was chaired by Jan Werner and included presentations by Chris Fleet from the National Library of Scotland, Ludmila Kildushevskaya and Natalya Kotlenikova from the Russian State Library and Russian National Library respectively, and Henrik Dupont from Denmark.

Chris Fleet provided an update on the use by the [National Library of Scotland](#) of ESRI's [ArcIMS](#) tool for web mapping applications. This is a powerful new graphical search capability that was given crucial impetus by the Ordnance Survey's pan-Government Agreement giving free access to a portfolio of OS products for Government Institutions. The NLS has placed strong emphasis on opening up the collections and this tool has enabled significant improvements in accessibility. The aim was to create a fairly specific application, relatively limited in true GIS terms. This necessitated a steep learning curve, but a range of OS raster data from 1:10,000 to 1:1,000,000 is now available via the web site. This is linked to additional attributes such as a gazetteer and a postcode file allowing more detailed searches.

Ludmila Kildushevskaya and Natalya Kotlenikova covered the latest developments in GIS in Russian national libraries. The majority of the presentation was devoted to the project that has been taking place over the Black Sea. The Black Sea Geographic Information System ([BSGIS](#)) is closely linked to an environmental programme, but also has the aim of providing data for governments, scientists, NGOs, media and the general public. An international working party was established to guide the project and the final product has informed decisions on the protection of resources in the Black Sea basin. A major project within the [National Library of Russia](#) has been the creation of a GIS of the General Map of the Russian Empire of 1734. Problems still exist, however, with most GIS development taking place outside the academic community, primarily because of the high costs and specialised equipment required, which Library budgets do not generally support.

Henrik Dupont gave a presentation on the [Danish Cultural Atlas](#), an open source history of Danish everyday life in the twentieth century. This 'atlas' includes images, texts, film clips, music and recorded voice. By incorporating user feedback and input the created archive will make use of the local public knowledge of resources of historical information and provide a comprehensive history of Danish life. It will also consolidate the contents of several digitised archives into a single searchable database. The whole 'atlas' is underpinned by mapping from the National Survey based on ArcIMS, giving various layers of historical mapping. The project is seen as ground breaking in opening up the archives to users, facilitating collaboration between institutions and being a test bed for innovative design and dissemination.

The final Working Session was chaired by Goran Bäärnhelm and consisted of two presentations by Renata Šolar from the National and University Library of Slovenia, and Lucyna Szaniawskä from the National Library of Poland.

Renata Šolar explained how the [National and University Library of Slovenia](#) is utilising GIS for both its map and pictorial collections, which are kept in a single collection. The development of GIS has been based around the fact that it is a useful framework for organising data from diverse sources according to its geographical location. The Library is also exploring the possibility of using GIS as a tool for creating virtual collections of diverse materials on a map based access. It has also permitted the integration and analysis of historical maps with modern geographical data to identify changes in time. One case study has been the incorporation of views of Ljubljana, with portraits of a famous Slovenian poet F Prešeren and his poem "Zdravljica", which has become the national anthem. The geographic aspects of all three have been linked to both historical and modern mapping.

The final presentation from Lucyna Szaniawskä discussed the project to include index sheets in the Polish National Bibliography of Cartographic Materials. The Polish bibliographic guide has been produced since the mid 1970's and is now a bi-weekly publication that lists all publications issued in Poland or has been produced by a Polish Company or one based in Poland. The first Bibliography of Cartographic Materials is

due for issue in early 2005, produced by the [National Library of Poland](#) and will then be published six-monthly. The current plan is that the national bibliography will register documents received by the National Library as a legal deposit only. The Polish bibliography has been based on the German and Danish bibliographies and will contain indexes for topographic 1:10,000 and 1:50,000 maps, hydrographical 1:50,000 and ecological 1:50,000 mapping.

The excursion

The excursion on Saturday 4th September involved visits to a number of Fenland places of interest, some with mapping interest, some not. The visits started at the Prickwillow Drainage Engine Museum. The Fens or Fenland is the name given to the area north and east of Cambridge, much of it only a matter of a few feet above sea level. Once marshy and virtually unusable for agricultural purposes the area has been extensively drained since the 17th century and is now one of the most fertile farming areas in Britain. Even today the landscape is only maintained by constant pumping. The Prickwillow Museum houses collections of old pumping engines and Fenland implements which gave the delegates a good insight into the history of the region. This was followed by a visit to Oxburgh Hall in Norfolk, a moated manor house built in 1482 by the Bedingfeld Family. Again there were no specific map connections, but the opportunity was taken to explore the house and gardens. The final stop on the tour was at the Wisbech and Fenland Museum, where there was an opportunity to view some of their extensive collection of maps and tour in the library. Following this it was back to Cambridge at the end of a very successful conference.

Web sites referred to in the text

Bibliothèque national de France. <http://www.bnf.fr/>

British Library. <http://www.bl.uk/>

BSGIS - Black Sea Geographic Information System. <http://www.blackseaweb.net/maps/content.htm>

Cambridge University Library. <http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/>

Danish Cultural Atlas. <http://www.kb.dk/kb/dept/ito/dwa/ddaprojekter/kulturatlas/index-en.htm>

Danish Map Collection: <http://www.kb.dk/kb/dept/nbo/kob/index-en.htm>

Digimap. <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap/>

EDINA - Edinburgh Data and Information Access. <http://edina.ac.uk/maps>

ESRI - Environmental Systems Research Institute. <http://www.esri.com/>

ESRI's ArcIMS. <http://www.esri.com/software/arcgis/arcims/index.html>

Exhibition "Denmark on the World Map".
<http://www.kb.dk/kb/dept/nbo/kob/danmarkskort/eng.forsideramme.htm>

Frederik V's Atlas. <http://www.kb.dk/kb/dept/nbo/kob/Fr5Atlas/en.forside.htm>

Gallica. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>

GIS – Geographic Information Systems. <http://www.gis.com/index.html>

Groupe des Cartothécaires de LIBER. <http://www.kb.nl/infolev/liber/intro.htm>

Groupe des Cartothécaires de LIBER - Working Group for Central & Eastern Europe.
<http://www.maps.ethz.ch/gdc-easteurope.html>

Groupe des Cartothécaires de LIBER - Working Group for Education. <http://www.maps.ethz.ch/gdc-education.html>

Harvard Geospatial Library. <http://peters.hul.harvard.edu:8080/HGL/jsp/HGL.jsp>

National and University Library of Slovenia. <http://www.nuk.uni-lj.si/vstop.cgi?jezik=eng>

National Library of Estonia. <http://www.nlib.ee/html/inglise/indexi.html>

National Library of Poland. <http://www.bn.org.pl/>

National Library of Russia. <http://www.nlr.ru:8101/eng/>

National Library of Scotland. <http://www.nls.uk/>

Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers). <http://www.rgs.org/>