

Mapping the Southwest Project: Putting the Region's Maps Online

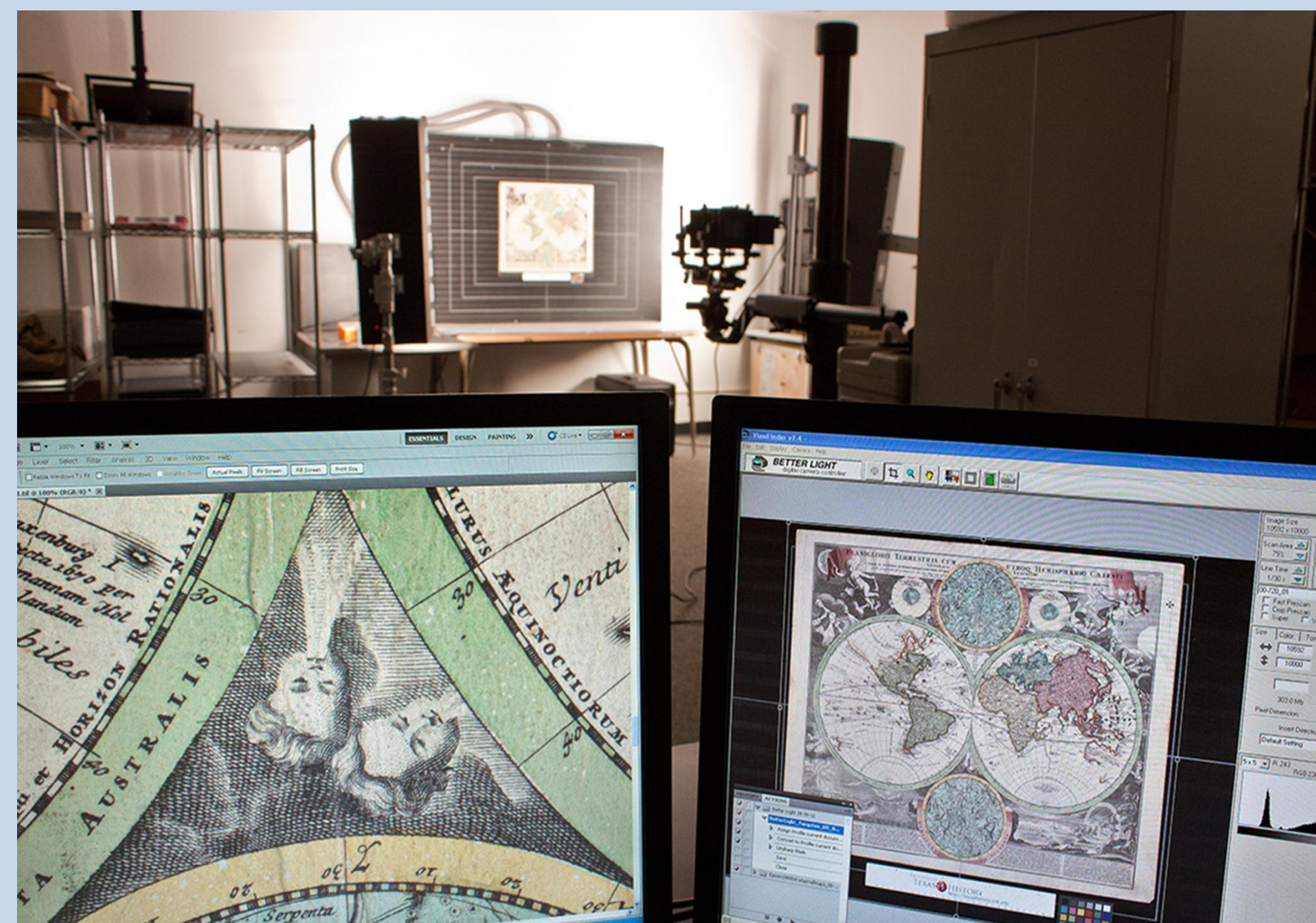


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Background

Mapping the Southwest is a 3-year project (2010 to 2013) funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) We the People grant. The University of North Texas (UNT) Libraries partnered with the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) Library's Special Collections to digitize 5,000 historically-significant and rare maps. The collection includes maps dating from 1493 to the present and features noted cartographers. While containing maps of all parts of the world, the collection particularly emphasizes the region of the Gulf Coast and the Greater Southwest.



Better Light Super 8K-2 scanning back

Preparation of Physical Map for Scanning

Project Plan

The overall work plan consists of six major work areas.

1. Catalog maps without existing MARC records.
2. Prepare the maps for transport.
3. Capture and process digital images of the maps.
4. Create software to automate import of MARC data to populate the metadata template.
5. Create or enhance metadata.
6. Assess quality of the digital images, cataloging, and metadata.

Workflow and Equipment

- Better Light Scanning System
 - Better Light Super 8K-2 scanning back
 - 4 x 5 camera with an array of changeable lenses
 - Heavy-duty studio stand with versatile head
 - High Intensity Discharge (HID) lights
 - Vacuum easel
- Ensure the long-term access and preservation of the maps by creating a high quality product
 - Tiff (uncompressed)
 - RGB color (24-bit)



Challenges

- Digitization of large-format items presents many challenges:
 - Inter-institutional differences in priorities, workflows, etc.
 - Map handling/scanning: *folded, oversized, and fragile maps*
 - Equipment maintenance and software updates
 - Metadata and related workflow issues



The MSW Collection as of May 2013
<http://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/UTAM/browse/>

Impact and Lessons Learned

- The UNT-UTA collaborative project was able to meet the challenges and share the rich cartography collections of the region widely:
 - All of the digitized maps are available online for free public access
 - 80,000+ uses from all over the world
- Besides showcasing the cartography of the region, it promotes best practices:
 - Advance the capacity of academic libraries to reliably curate and provide seamless access to such large-format items

Project Contacts

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