

ICT in Heritage Research

ICA has recently approved the formation of a new Working Group (WG) on Digital Technologies in Cartographic Heritage. The philosophy behind the group is simple but challenging: to study the possibilities afforded by modern digital Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in observing and using our rich cartographic heritage. In doing so, the long history of cartography and maps, a very important and continual component of world cultural heritage, acquires a new dimension and broadens its audience considerably.

Current international policies and projects relating to cultural issues (for example EU initiatives on digital heritage) need young researchers familiar with contemporary technologies. However, the actual investigations have to bring together two worlds of cartography; one dealing with its humanistic component and involving learned and literate historians, the other addressed by scientists and engineers of cartography concerned with everyday practice and cartographic technologies. This distinction has historical roots in the earliest definition of "cartography", when cartographe (French) meant the "historian of maps" and cartographer (English) was the "mapmaker". Further back in history still, ambiguity arose from the differing conception of "writing the earth" (in Greek; means both the textual and the graphical description) as expressed by Eratosthenes, Strabo and Ptolemy.

So the new WG has been proposed not only to organise the field of cartographic heritage, but also to stimulate cartographic dialogue between humanities and sciences. This will involve various topics: the humanities and technological issues relating to the transformation of early maps, atlases, globes and other cartographic documents into digital form. Also cartometric and thematic research on old maps using digital tools, and digital methods for the preservation and restoration of old maps, atlases and globes. Digital assistance for the work of map curators, including networking, archiving, retrieval and virtual libraries will also be addressed, as will access by users to cartographic heritage, including use of the internet. Enhancing ICT in teaching and diffusing the history of maps to the general public will be a further topic.

We have initiated a WG website (link below) and organised the First International Workshop on Digital Approaches to Cartographic Heritage, to be held in Thessaloniki, Greece, on 18th and 19th May 2006. This event is sponsored by the Museum of Byzantine Culture at Thessaloniki and the new international Web journal e-Perimetreon on sciences and technologies relating to the history of cartography and maps (link below).

<https://www.gim-international.com/content/article/ict-in-heritage-research>
