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Mapping Marshall Notables

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Final Proposal

Mapping Marshall Notables

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Adjunct Mentor: Caroline Gibbons, Digital Projects Specialist, Special Collections, Salmon Library

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Project Description

The student will work with UAH mentors to create a publicly available digital resource based on data contained in *Notables: Marshall Space Flight Center History and Reference Directory,* a UAH-published work compiled by the late Charles Lundquist. The student will develop the project using Omeka, a web publishing platform for sharing digital collections and creating online exhibits. The student will use Neatline Maps, an Omeka plugin, to plot the home and office locations of each individual. In addition, the student will analyze spatial and historical patterns revealed in the project.

Charles Lundquist compiled *Notables* in an effort to document the people who worked at the Marshall Space Flight Center during the Apollo era of the 1960's. The work contains names, home addresses, and work assignments for more than 8,000 employees, all harvested from publicly available sources. This project will lead to multiple valuable outcomes, including the creation of a community resource for those seeking information on their family members' roles in the Apollo program. Additionally, converting the data to a keyword-searchable format will allow for powerful search capabilities and will enhance quantitative analysis of the dataset. Providing a visual interpretive element will provide additional possibilities for qualitative analysis of the data through the lens of spatial distribution. The digitization of this data may also help answer historical questions about geographic distribution patterns related to race, class, and gender in North Alabama during the Apollo era. At the time of this writing, the UAH Archives and Special Collections has created a template for the project and has begun testing data entry.

Specific Duties, Contributions and Outcomes

The student will have an assigned workspace in UAH Special Collections for the duration of the project. Special Collections is open 9 to 4 Monday through Friday, during which time the student will work on the project. Grimsley will provide guidance on research and digital humanities methods, while Adjunct Mentor Caroline Gibbons will train the student on the needed digital tools. At the beginning of the summer, Grimsley will meet with the student to provide an overview of digital humanities projects and discuss the project design and goals. Gibbons will

then introduce the student to Omeka and provide instruction on how to write metadata, convert the individual entries into Dublin Core metadata in an Excel spreadsheet, and enter the completed data into Omeka. The student will then plot each point on a digital map. With over 8,000 entries in *Notables*, it will be impossible for the student to enter all of the data, but the goal is for the student to enter and plot 1,000 individual names. The student will use this limited dataset to draw initial conclusions based on the spatial representation of the data and write a three- to five-page synopsis of their findings, which will provide the basis of their research poster and any future presentations or publications.

The student will create an interactive, searchable map of the individuals listed in *Notables* using Omeka and Neatline which will be publically available on the UAH Archives website. The student will be learning and practicing historical research, metadata analysis, digital humanities best practices, and academic writing skills. The mentors will work with the student to assist them in finding a venue to share the research with the public in addition to creating the RCEU poster. Possible venues for their work may include the Society of Alabama Archivists Annual Meeting, the Alabama Historical Association Annual Meeting, the Von Braun Symposium, or the International Astronautical Congress. Students may be co-authors of journal articles based on this project.

Student selection criteria

Any academic rank from freshman to senior. History, English, aerospace engineering, sociology majors or science, technology and society or public history minors are preferred; related disciplines considered.

Faculty mentorship

The student will have access to one of the faculty mentors daily during the ten week period. A weekly team meeting will be held to report on progress, provide feedback and provide a time for open discussion. Mentors will also discuss possible tangible outcomes with the student such as future poster presentations, conference presentations, or publications.