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Mapping Marshall Notables

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Introduction

Mapping Marshall Notables is a digital humanities project with two goals: creating a publicly available interactive digital resource that displays a mapped dataset of individuals who worked at Marshall Space Flight Center during the Apollo era of the 1960s, and carrying out limited interpretation of this dataset to determine how it might be used in spatial research.

Methods

A dataset of 407 Marshall employees was randomly selected from Charles Lundquist's book *Notables*. Qualitative and quantitative metadata relating to these employees was compiled then entered into Omeka, a web-publishing platform. Then, Omeka's virtual exhibit software Neatline was used to map their home and office locations.

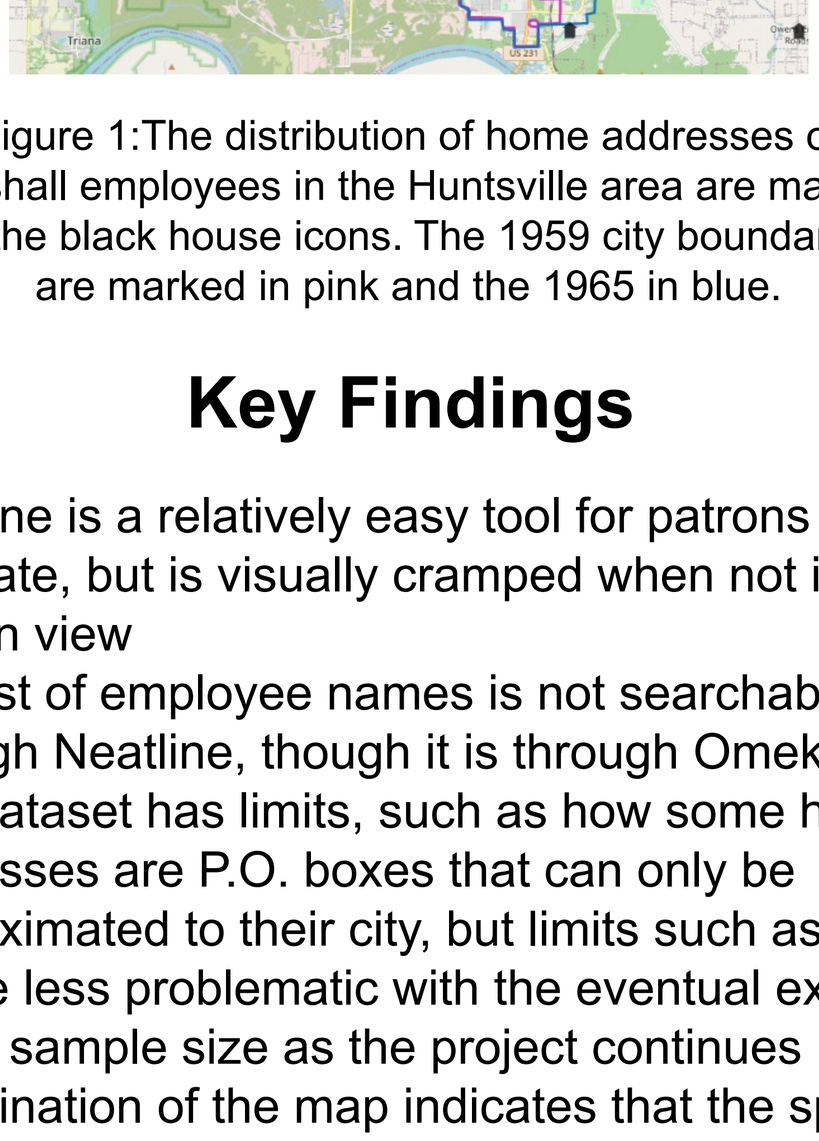
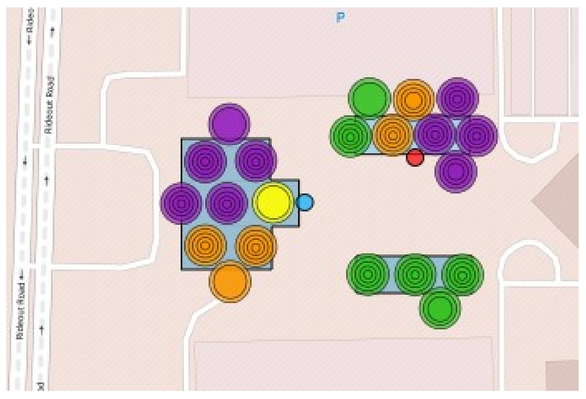


Figure 1:The distribution of home addresses of Marshall employees in the Huntsville area are marked by the black house icons. The 1959 city boundaries are marked in pink and the 1965 in blue.



Figures 2 & 3: Close views of the office locations of Marshall employees. The offices points are color-coded according to the employees' work division.

- Research & Development: Purple
- Industrial Operations: Green
- Staff Offices: Orange
- NASA DOD: Red
- Center Directorate: Yellow
- Unknown: Blue

Impact

The outcome of this research project is twofold: First, it provides a publicly accessible and interactive tool that can be used to examine spatial dispersion of Apollo era workers in the 1960s, a tool which will be expanded in the future to include approximately 8,000 names. Second, it suggests research pathways for future researchers, such as examinations of gender in relation to work division at Marshall and explorations of salary upon home location.

Key Findings

- Neatline is a relatively easy tool for patrons to navigate, but is visually cramped when not in full screen view
- The list of employee names is not searchable through Neatline, though it is through Omeka
- The dataset has limits, such as how some home addresses are P.O. boxes that can only be approximated to their city, but limits such as these will be less problematic with the eventual expansion of the sample size as the project continues
- Examination of the map indicates that the spread of Huntsville's city limits and increase in home construction in the 1960s may correlate with the growth of Marshall Space Flight Center

References

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