PROFESSIONAL
SURVEYOR
Magazine
October 2005 Vol. 25 No. 10

Maps In Our Lives

Major New Exhibit Opens at Library of Congress

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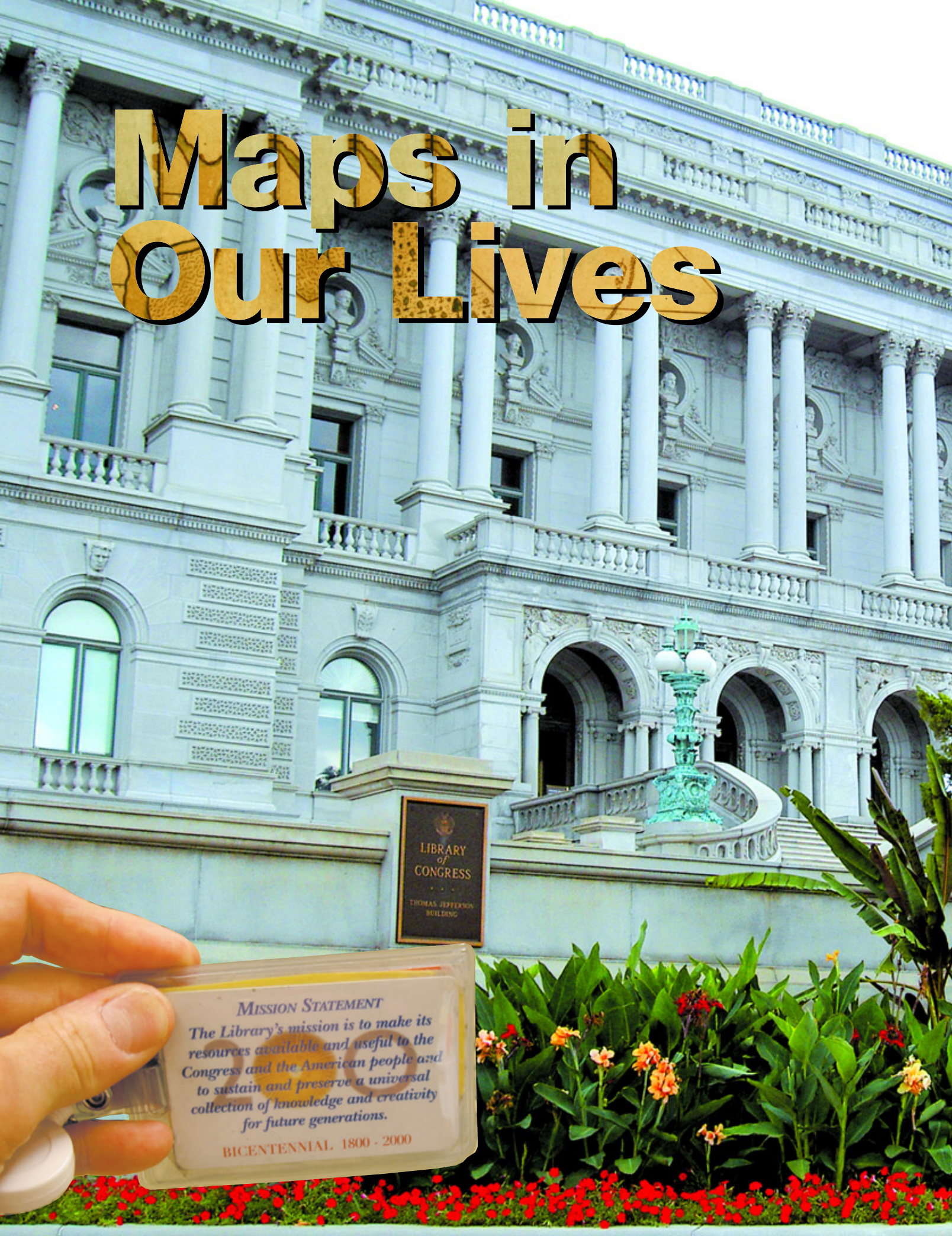
Maps in Our Lives



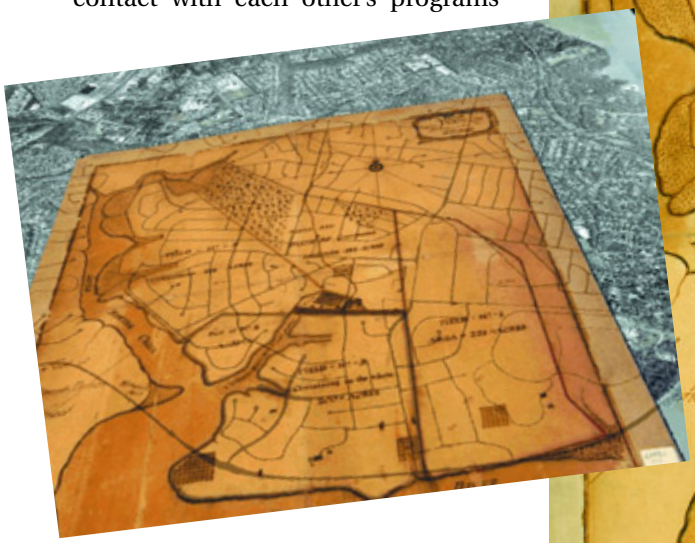
The Exhibit: **"Maps in Our Lives"**
September 14, 2005 – January 26, 2007
Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m.; Saturday 8:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.
James Madison Memorial Building – Library of Congress
101 Independence Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C.
Open to the public free of charge

An Interview with Dr. John R. Hébert Chief, Geography and Map Division Library of Congress

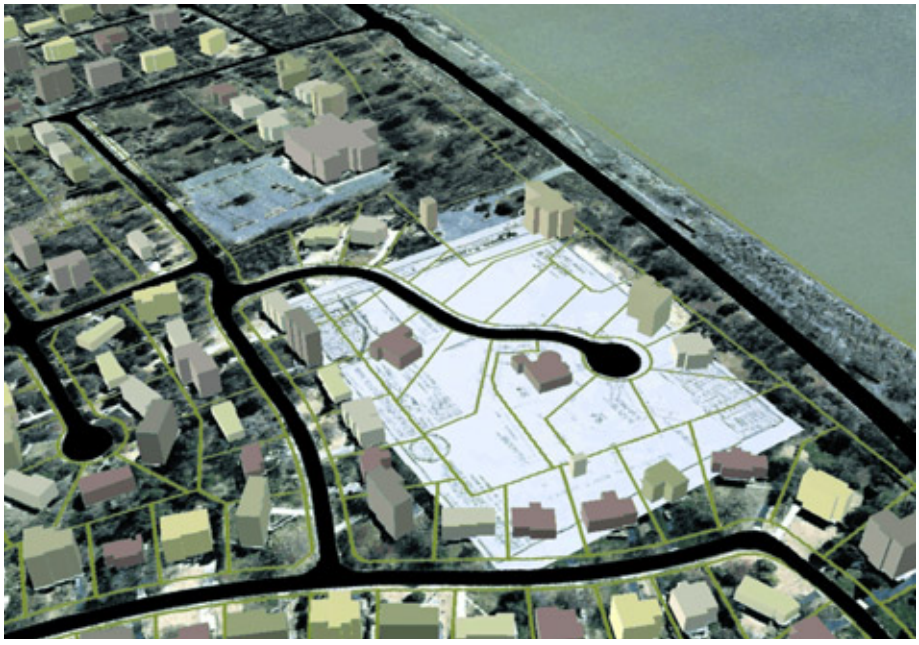
Dr. John R. Hébert is Chief of the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress. He began work in this division in 1969. He is a Latin American historian and geographer, and for a substantial part of his career, was an administrator in the Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress. From 1988 to 1993 he directed the Library of Congress' program in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Columbus' voyage of discovery, *1492: An Ongoing Voyage*. From his initial work in panoramic maps of American cities (1974) to his most recent compilation, Charting Louisiana: 500 Years of Maps (New Orleans: The Historic New Orleans Collection, 2003), Dr. Hébert has concentrated his research efforts and publishing on the historical cartography, especially of the relationship of Spain and the United States along the Gulf Coast, on the history of Spain, France, and England in the Gulf Coast region. A Louisiana native, Dr. Hébert received his B.A. from the University of Southwestern Louisiana (1965), and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Georgetown University (1967 and 1972). He served on the presidential Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Commission and serves on the U.S. Board on Geographic Names and on the Federal Geographic Data Commission.

What is significant about the exhibition "Maps in Our Lives" that opened at the Library of Congress on September 14?
The exhibition is a cooperative venture between the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress and the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping (ACSM). The relationship between the two groups extends over 30 years, with the Geography and Map Division serving as a

recipient of the ACSM map competition winners each year, and with division staff assisting in the judging of annual winners. The exhibition is a natural extension of this ongoing relationship and represents the importance that both institutions remain in contact with each other's programs and mission objectives. In the mid-1980s the Geography and Map Division mounted an exhibition of ACSM map competition winners. This time, the exhibition wishes to describe the currents of mapping as identified in the four major sections of the ACSM umbrella. Representation from the fields of surveying, cartography, geodesy, and geographic information systems appears in the exhibition. With their appearance is the opportunity to address the significance of mapping in our everyday lives, reaching out to a general public who will be introduced not only to the variety of elements comprising cartography but also to the vast resources that can be found in the Geography and Map Division to further one's interests.

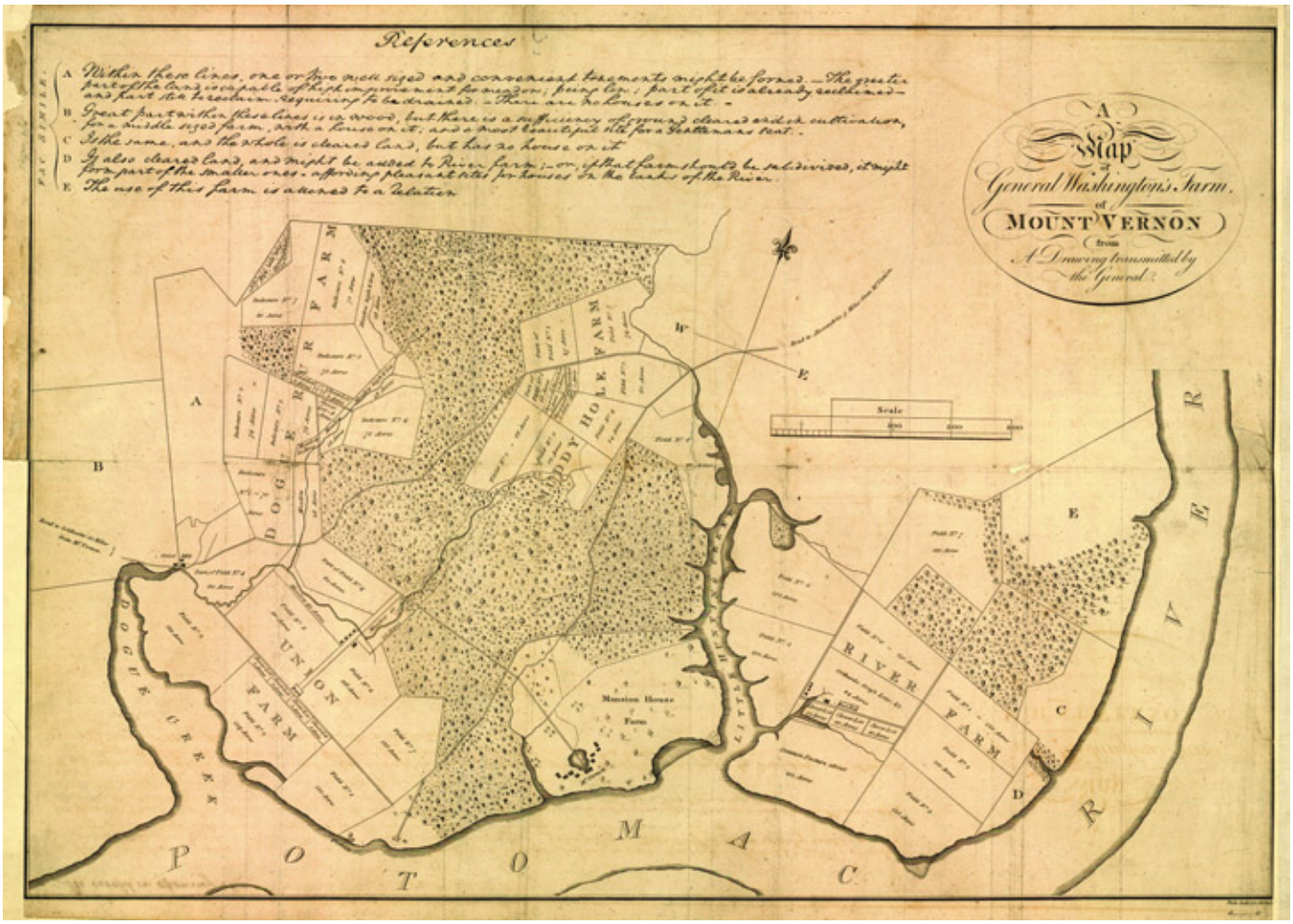


George Washington's original 1766 manuscript plat of his farm on Little Hunting Creek, near Mount Vernon. This map is among 12 original manuscripts, prepared by our first president, that are held in the Geography and Map Division.



A three-dimensional model showing a portion of Washington's 1766 map of the farm on Little Hunting Creek overlaid with modern structures and other evidence of land use.

The exhibition, *Maps in Our Lives*, is divided into the four major segments of ACSM's charge—surveying, cartography, geodesy, and geographic information systems. Through these sections it is the goal of the exhibition to address the functions of each system and to display a number of examples from each so that the public appreciates fully the impact of maps on our daily life.



An 1859 map of Washington's land at Mount Vernon based on original plats and other more recent maps compiled by W. Gillingham. From the collections of the Geography and Map Division.

The surveying segment has chosen to follow the use, over 250 years, of property which belonged to George Washington, our first president, and a well-established surveyor for much of his life.

By showing how an exactly-located piece of land near Mount Vernon changes in use and ownership over time, we can show how surveying successfully links us to the past, while investing its energies in the present.

The cartography section highlights the rich and varied contributions of mapmakers—academic, commercial, federal, and private—in depicting events, locations, and functions of places throughout the globe. Themes from urban planning and transportation routes to interpreting World War II and boundary issues, the cartography section demonstrates that if a piece of land exists, it can be mapped—and mapped in many different ways.

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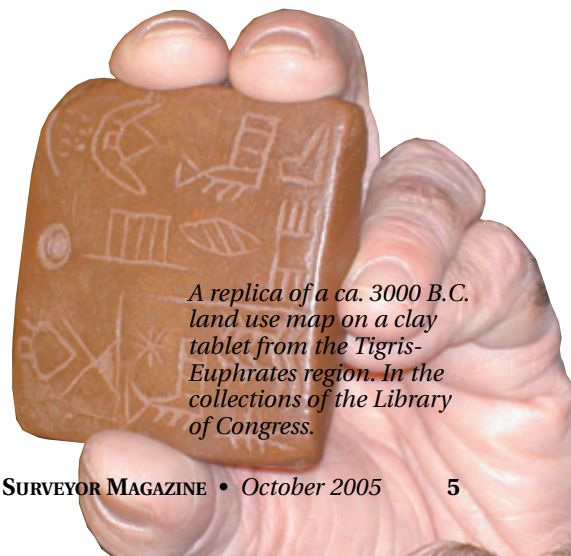
The geodesy segment depicts the manner in which a uniform and geographically correct survey system of the United States was developed and the significance of knowing one's exact location is today, as we have seen introduced in GPS systems for every household use.

The geographic information segment of the exhibition is a continuation of the surveying section, as the modern day extension by the new technology takes contemporary



A replica of a ca. 3000 B.C. land use map on a clay tablet from the Tigris-Euphrates region. In the collections of the Library of Congress.

knowledge and use of George Washington's land in Fairfax County, Virginia and provides a three-dimensional overlay to the varied layers of data that are essential in understanding location and potential use of property.

What is the role of the Library of Congress, and the Geography and Map Division, vis a vis Congress?

The Library of Congress was formed in 1800 to serve as the Library to the Congress of the United States. Over the centuries, it has emerged as the largest research library in the world, acquiring research materials from throughout the world in support of Congress' needs. In addition, it serves as a major research institution available for use by the general public and throughout the world.

The Geography and Map Division is the largest map collection in the world, with some 5.2 million maps, 75,000 atlases, 500 globes and globe gores, 3,000 three-dimensional (raised relief) models and more than 13,000 (and growing) digital maps on compact disk. Its earliest original map dates from the mid-14th century and the earliest example of a map that it holds in a clay tablet reproduction is from 3000 B.C. Tigris Euphrates valley. At the same time, the division has an extensive program to scan original maps for the Web and an active program to prepare maps on demand for Congress.

A map can be drawn anywhere! A powder horn contains a 1762 British map of Habana, Cuba and the Mohawk-Hudson River valley prepared during the French and Indian War. Other examples of maps on powder horns are found in the Geography and Map Division.

A sheet from the 1507 world map by Martin Waldseemuller is the object of interest of Dr. John Hébert, Chief, Geography and Map Division, and Curtis Sumner, Executive Director of ACSM. This 12 sheet world map treasure is the first document on which the name America appears. The only known copy of the map is located in the Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

During a typical year, the Geography and Map Division provides a reproduction of a map to respond to Congressional queries, prepares scanned copies from its large collection for Congress and prepares maps on demand using geographic information systems technology to provide a graphic record where none existed before. The same challenges regarding directions of cartography, in the increasingly digital age, that are impacting the profession also impact the work of the division, as collecting concerns now include considerations regarding access, archiving, serving, and migrations of geospatial data in digital form.

The division serves as a site where issues on legislation are clarified through use of cartography, such as long-term impact of AMTRAK service and where U.S. government agencies and foreign ministries appear to resolve long-term boundary disputes or disaster issues. At the same time, issues relating to the sea coast or sea bottom, the development of urban centers, the movement of people, and locations of families in the 19th century, the numerous conflicts/wars and their outcome by battle, the development of

national parks in the U.S., the construction of railroad, canal, and automobile routes, are topics that are researched routinely in the Geography and Map Division. Its reading room is opened from 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Maps are very much a part of daily life in the Geography and Map Division.

The story of the exhibition related to George Washington is an interesting one and it was chosen because, in the map profession, most of us are aware that our first president's most consistent work throughout his life, was surveying. Examples of his cartographic efforts from the time he was 16 years old until two months before he died are found in the Geography and Map Division. We used George Washington's plats and his property as a jumping-off point in the exhibition to show our maps convey the use of a single parcel of property over time, and that that use could be understood from the

Martin Waldseemuller conducted a survey of this region of the Rhine Valley in the early 16th century. He included this map in his 1513 compilation of Ptolemy's Geographia atlas. John Hessler, Geography and Map Division staff member, is shown discussing the map and the techniques employed by the surveyor.

Ginny Mason, cartographer in the Congressional Cartography Program, Geography and Map Division,is shown reviewing one of her contributions made for Congress using GIS. Ms. Mason is the curator of the G&M/ACSM exhibition, Maps in Our Lives.

confines of the Geography and Map Division collection. Therefore, it is possible to go back into time to uncover what preceded us here, who used the space and how, and to see how that use has changed over time.

Our work on the exhibition was made possible by our close working relationship with ACSM. We both held similar interests and purposes, that is, to provide a rich understanding of *Maps in Our Lives* to a broad audience. That effort is actually daily work for both the G&M Division and the ACSM. Both labor to convince those who need convincing to use maps in their presentations, and in their research to better understand the context of events and actions. And through the exhibition, it is possible to see a representative slice of the types of subjects for which a map tells it better.

The working relationship with the ACSM staff and associates was important for another reason, and that was to establish communications, not only for an exhibition, but also for other matters deemed important to both organizations. Issues regarding the preservation of cartographic expression is

more serious than ever, as new digital manifestations can be changed and lost rapidly. It is the mission of the Geography and Map Division to document the history of cartography, in whatever form it takes. It has the ability to supply a record of the legacy that goes back to at least 3000 B.C. What will be the legacy that the current generation of map makers leave that can be studied 100 years from now? That dilemma of what to collect, how to collect it, how to archive it, how to maintain access to it, is what confronts both those who make and those who collection cartographic expression today.

One of the elements of the exhibition that was most satisfying was the ability to join the historical record, that is, Washington's 1766 survey of his land on Little Hunting Creek, with the current sight today using GIS. It proved to us that this combination of the paper map, the historical map, and the current use of relevant data that goes into the construction of a map, could be carried from one medium to the other without losing its relevance. The future of map collections will be the ability and with what facility through which we can carry information related to a particular place on earth through time. If we can successfully negotiate the need to maintain the past for comparative purposes, and for modeling with the new depictions of geospatial data in digital form, we will have accomplished the ability to maintain the relevance and utility of cartographic data over time.

Between now and January 26, 2007, visitors are invited to view the exhibition, *Maps in Our Lives,* in the corridor of the Geography and Map Division in the James Madison Memorial Building, Library of Congress, Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m.; Saturday 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m. The division is located in the basement of that building, and the exhibition is mounted on the corridor on the basement level outside of the division. The number of objects is roughly 50 pieces, but each piece has its own story and attraction. Maps are that way. They are intended to be studied personally, rather than as part of a general picture.

Therefore, the time needed to see the exhibition can be as little as 30 minutes or as much as several hours, depending on one's interests. Whoever comes will find something in the exhibition to delight and inform oneself. And, for those who come by the exhibition, an invitation is extended to check out the Geography and Map Division reading room where a whole larger world of cartography, surveying, geodesy, and GIS exist.

Photography and interview by Neil Sandler