

## Project Team

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## Project Title

Mapping Museums: An Interactive Resource for Teaching and Study

## Audience

Students in the course, *Introduction to the Museum: Past and Present*

## Pedagogical Issue

In the course, "Introduction to the Museum: Past and Present", topics concerning museum study seem to demand more than a slideshow presentation of images to present concepts, which is the way they are traditionally covered. It is difficult to present the complexities relating to museum study, such as how collections are organized in a space, the history of collections through time, and meaning in a broader social context. In this particular survey course, the subject matter that is covered is vast and the level of depth in which to delve is also a concern.

## Solution

The solution to these issues will be provided by developing a site in the Interactive Map Tool (a multimedia development tool created at the CER). In the Interactive Map Tool site, ten museum case studies will be created for presentation in class and for students to explore out of the classroom. The site brings spatial context to the images presented in the course by allowing hotspots, representing media, to be placed on an image such as a museum's floor plan. Content within the site can be organized in such a way that the various aspects of what makes a museum collection complex are presented with clarity. For the final project, each student will be given a choice to create a region in the site or to write a paper focused on a case study to assess their knowledge of the subject. For those who choose to create content in the site, their content may be added to the collection of museum case studies for future semesters.

## Technologies Used

Interactive Maptool

## Project Abstract

With the support of the Technology Fellowship Program, we intend to develop a teaching tool for a core course in the new Program in Museums and Society, which will be offered every other fall beginning in 2007 (389.201, "Introduction to the Museum: Past and Present"). Our proposal addresses two key challenges presented by this course: how to bring focus to a broad and far reaching topic, and how to facilitate understanding of a complex, multi-dimensional subject, namely the museum itself. We plan to build ten interactive "case study" museums, using the CER's Interactive Map Tool, to assist students in visualizing these structures in their architectural, historical, and narrative complexities. This "museum database" addresses several pedagogical concerns. First is the challenge of imaging something as complicated and changeable as a museum so that students can comprehend and analyze it effectively, in both its spatial and temporal complexities. By layering various views and different historical moments, the Map Tool can communicate the evolving relationships between structure, content, and meaning much more effectively than a simple slide presentation. Our second pedagogical concern addresses the

balance between breadth and depth in a survey course. Our case studies have been chosen to bring focus and precision to a vast subject, so there is common ground for discussion as we contemplate wide ranging issues. For example, a layered map of the Smithsonian—the sequence of building, placement of structures, and organization of one or two key installations—will help ground a larger conversation on the relationship between museums, nationalism, and historic consciousness. We will use the Map Tool to develop a museum “template” that can be repurposed for future courses. The final project for this course will ask students to research a museum and build their own “case study,” thus adding to our own database.