CAPTURING GLOCALITY: ONLINE MAPPING CIRCA 2005

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This thesis explores the sources, motivations, and consequences of online mapping activities, circa 2005. First, this paper posits that online mapping, defined as mapping software applications and associated cultural practices that utilize the Internet as a primary infrastructural component, arises as an information retrieval technology, twice-over. Its technological ancestors are *maps of information* in the form of Web-based information retrieval technologies that comprise search engines and website classification systems, and *maps of territories* in the form of geographic information retrieval technologies originating with remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems software. Online mapping is a product of the convergence of these technologies which each had reached a critical tipping point with regard to data management. A main contention of this paper is that to reduce and manage excessive amounts of information, each adopted strategies that retailored both Web-based and geographic information management to focus on the *local* as the site for globally scoped information retrieval. Secondarily, while the cultural practice of mapping remains, above all, a matter of representation, this paper asserts that online mapping departs radically from traditional cartography. Online maps forsake the techniques and precepts of visual representation, as typified in centralized, perspectival systems of optics that aspire to global extent. Instead, engaging distributed, data-centric systems that operate locally, online maps achieve representation through technologies of informatic capture. Three case studies (Google Maps, map hacks and mashups, and folksonomy-based neighborhood maps) employ this representational mode to produce *maps of glocalities*, indicating a cultural shift toward merging dominantly optical and dominantly informational worldviews, and toward infusing global networks with local practices.