Boston Streets: Mapping Directory Data
Six-month report to the IMLS
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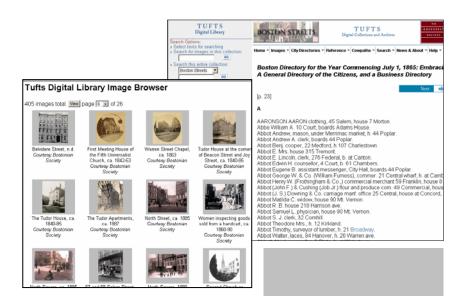

Fig. 1: Prototype of Boston Streets web interface.

The first six months of **Boston Streets: Mapping Directory Data** has focused on gathering, converting, and developing data sources that will be used throughout the project. Initial design work and construction of the web interface is underway, including the image and information geographic access and contextualization tool, which we've affectionately dubbed "Cowpaths." A planned system for material and data transfers from the Bostonian Society to the Tufts Digital Library (DL) repository was also implemented successfully. Project staff has been hired to carry out the scanning and data entry preparation and work is moving forward on schedule.

Early in October, eight historic maps of Boston from the Bostonian Society Library's collection were selected, scanned, and geo-referenced in preparation for use with Cowpaths. These maps range in time from 1844 through 1950 and offer a clear view of Boston's physical growth. Additional maps have been identified for inclusion in the virtual atlas, with arrangements currently being made for their conversion.

Three city directories for Boston (1865, 1885, and 1905) have been scanned, cleaned and sent for data entry. Two other directories (1925 and 1945) are currently being scanned. Due to the density of information on each page, original data entry cost estimates were significantly lower than the actual cost of digitizing ten directories spanning the years 1865-1955. We have decided to focus our resources on scanning and converting directories at twenty-year intervals while we investigate additional funding sources for the remaining directories. In addition to delivering the full text of the personal information in each directory, we will also be able to provide the scanned images of advertisements from those directories no longer under copyright. The page images were scanned for the first three directories and are currently being cataloged. A full text searchable directory from 1865 is available on our development site.

More than 600 hundred images have been scanned, cataloged and transferred to the Tufts DL from the Bostonian Society Library. These images are currently browsable using Boston Streets prototype web interface, which also creates implicit links to the 1865 directory, which are being generated at the user's request.

The text of the 1865 city directory has been returned from Digital Divide Data, the firm with which we contract to convert the texts to digital form using double-key data entry. The 1865 files have successfully passed through the initial mark up process, following SGML TEI P4 standards. Both XML and GDMS formats are also being reviewed as potential schemas for the structured mark-up that will allow the data to be used as a resource for the geographic information and image access tool.

All digital objects associated with the project will be stored in the Tufts Digital Library's FEDORA repository. Image files area stored as uncompressed tiff files. All object metadata is generated to conform to METS (Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard.

After attending the IMLS outcome-based evaluation training session in December, project staff established a relationship with Tufts University's Institutional Research department in order to develop effective feedback mechanisms for gathering information from users of the web interface component.

An early version of the web interface for project tools and content is available on our development site: http://yngve.lib.tufts.edu/bostonstreets. The first public version of the Cowpaths interface will be released in late March. It will have

limited functionality but will demonstrate the potential of the project and advertise future enhancements.

In addition to continuing with the activities outlined above, the next six months will focus on interface tool development and disseminating information about the availability of the site and the resources to our identified user groups. In the spring, we begin public demonstrations of the project. The first one in March will be for a group of local Boston historical societies. We hope this presentation will nurture further collaborations. Then, in April, we will present Boston Streets as part of a digitization project showcase for the Boston Library Consortium.

We will continue to develop functionality in the Cowpaths too using feedback gathered from the public demonstrations and planned focus groups. We will also research the possibility of making the city directory information available as a dataset.