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** On the Internet **

A Route to Communication: Google Maps

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Introduction

Using maps in education is nothing new. Students have used maps in classrooms to learn about geography, the weather, or any number of other "traditional" topics associated with maps. With the advent of interactive web applications, online maps are used increasingly as tools for instruction in an even wider area of subjects (cf. Byrne, 2010; Warrensburg Schools, n.d.). In the English language learning class, interactive maps, specifically Google Maps, can provide a number of ways in which students can interact–with each other, and with text and images–in ways that encourage communication and collaboration.

Two ways of using maps in language classrooms are described here. These methods should be adaptable to a number of different teaching environments, and to different levels of students.

Project 1. Exploring Campus

Each summer, our university hosts a six-week English language program for visiting international students. A goal in one class I teach (an integrated skills, advanced level English course) is to encourage students to learn about our campus and to get to know each other quickly, given the short time we will all have together. I created this project in hopes of achieving both.

First, a note: although the Berkeley campus is considered an urban campus, it is in fact, set in a beautiful, large, natural area. There are hundreds of trees, open grassy spaces, and a creek that runs through it. I think that it's important for students to take advantage of this environment while they visit campus.

To this end, for this task, students are put into pairs or groups of three. Each group needs access to one camera (almost all students had camera phones, so this wasn't an issue). They were given 20 minutes to take a short walk on campus, and along their route, identify a tree that interested them. There were three tasks to do during this activity. Students needed to:

- take a photograph of the tree
- ask a passerby to take a photo of them next to the tree they chose

- write 2-3 paragraphs about the tree, then upload the photos and information to a map showing the location of the tree

(Detailed instructions for uploading photos and editing the maps is found in Appendix A).

When students edited the map, they used a tree icon (see more information below on icons) to note the location of the one they chose. Figure 1 shows a map of the trees the students selected.

Figure 1. Locations of Trees Selected by Student Groups

Clicking on any of the trees brings up the text and photos that the students added to the map. Figure 2 is an excerpt of the list of text links associated with the trees. Figure 3 shows what appears when you click on a tree's link.

Cedar Tree

We were looking for the tree which is unique and interesting. And o the way to Sather tower, we finally found the tree whose appearanc was relatively grotesque, week, scrubby. It was the Cedar tree....

hot korean tree

It seems that most trees in Berkeley are straight so the tree we chose looks more special. We chose this tree because of the branch. It was really big. Also the branches were big and thick too. They g...

California Fan Palm Tree - Leo and Gabbie

We decided to choose this particular tree because, although it is really thin, it is also very strong and stable. This tree also called our attention because of its height, which is the same as a ten-...

Shengjie and Elliotts' tree

It's a special and unique tree in the campus of UC Berkeley. It locates just beside the faculty glade, in the middle of the faculty clul and the Birge hall. The tree looks like stones at your first si...

Figure 2. Text Links to Trees

Figure 3. Annotated Tree Entries with Photos

This activity required a number of skills, the most important being collaboration with partners, question-asking of strangers in public places, discussion about their choices and how to write about them, and finally writing.

How to Create a Map

If you have never created a Google Map before, it is important to work through the steps before assigning it to students. You will need to login into a Google account to be able to create a map. If you donít have an account you can create one here: https://www.google.com/accounts/NewAccount. Once you have logged in, go to http://maps.google.com.

The first step is to click on **My Places**, as shown in Figure 4:
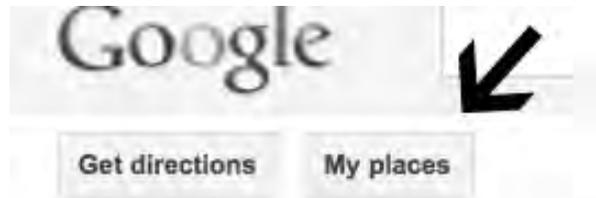
Figure 4. Setting Up a Map, Step 1

This will give you a number of options, but to start a new map, click ìcreate mapî as shown in Figure 5. (To add to or edit a previously created map, choose "My Places".)
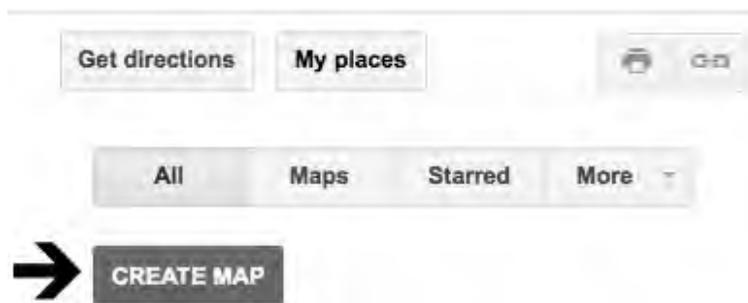

Figure 5. Setting Up a Map, Step 2

This will bring up a window that requires that you give your map a good title and a description. Figure 6 shows some sample text in this box.
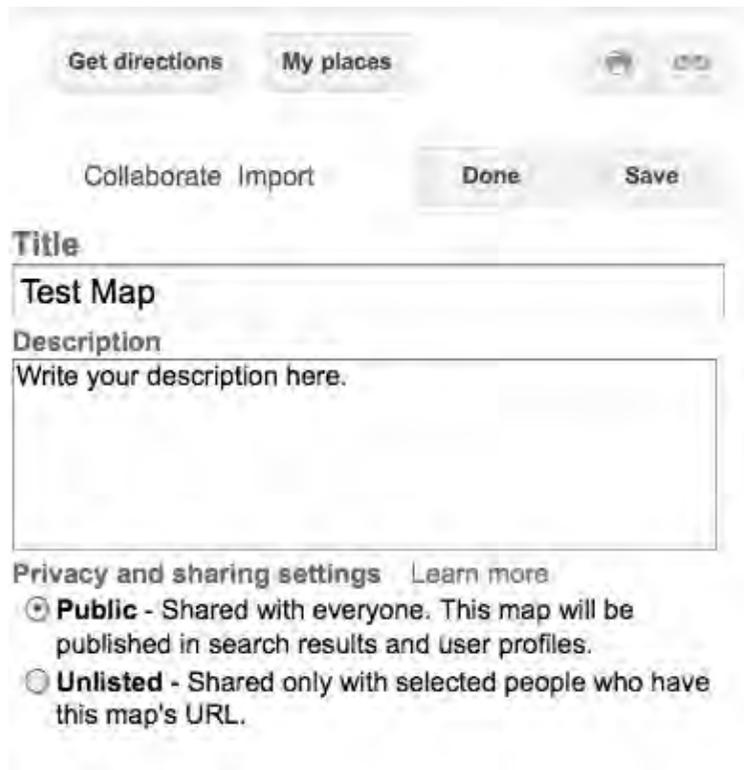
Figure 6. Setting Up a Map, Step 3

Make sure the map is made **public** if you want others to see it. If you click 'unlisted,' you will need to share its URL. See Figure 11 for information on collaboration.

The next step is the important part of the task: selecting locations. To indicate specific locations, click on the marker symbol, shown near the arrow in Figure 7. (This marker is only accessible when you are in 'Edit' mode.)

Figure 7. Setting Up a Map, Step 4

You can customize the marker, choosing icons that symbolize locations in specific ways. Clicking on the marker (see the arrow in Figure 8) brings up a menu of icon choices. The students in the Trees of Berkeley project, as you see in the examples, chose tree icons to show where their trees were located. Figure 9 shows some of the icon options.

Figure 8. Setting Up a Map, Step 5

Figure 9. Some Icon Options

Figure 10 shows the editing options when choosing Rich Text (see Figure 8). A title for the location should be given, as well as a text description, and optionally, images. Rich text formatting allows a variety of format types, as well as links to other locations on the Internet.

Figure 10. Setting Up a Map, Step 6

Google Maps automatically saves your work at regular intervals. When you have finished, you can click the collaborate link (see Figure 6), and designate any others you want to add to the map. You can control the type of access they have to editing the map as well (red arrow). This is shown in Figure 11.
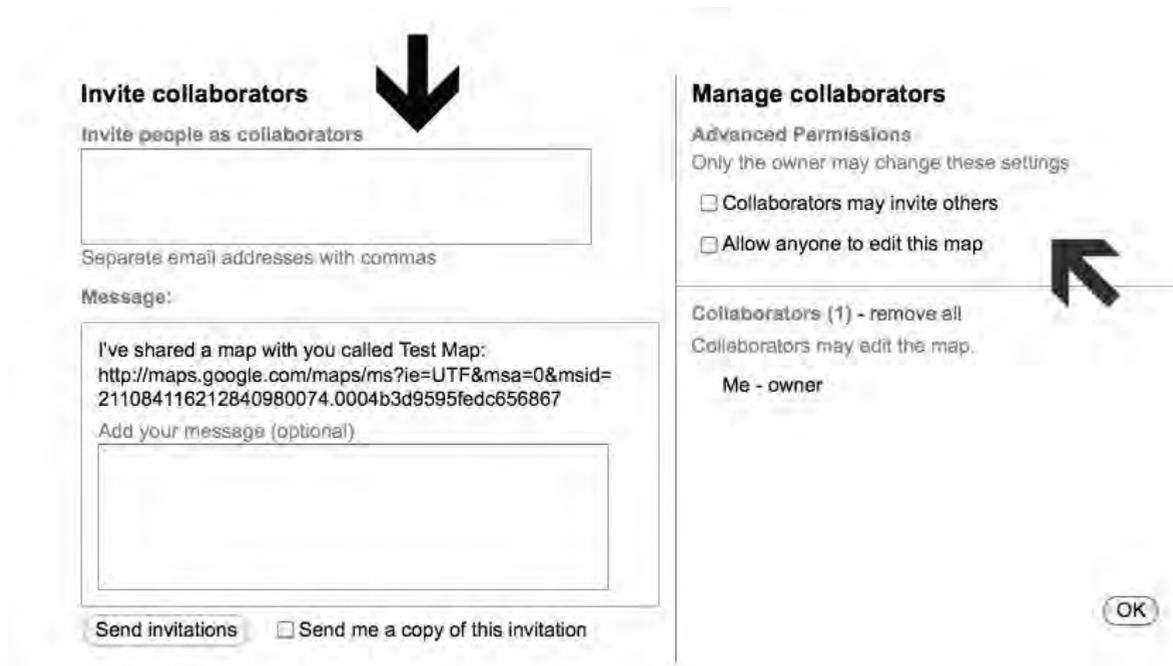

Figure 11. Collaborating on a Map

Project 2: A Literary Map

Maps can be used at different levels. One use is to create maps that coordinate with readings in some way. Woodward (2007), for example, had students contribute to a map that elaborated on the locations in the novel *Whirligig* (the map is available at: http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=117791037111712559535 .000001127080ed4b69333&ll=42.036034,- 87.570648&spn=0.550787,1.295013&z=10&om=1). According to Woodward, " The main character travels to the four corners of the U.S. (on a Greyhound Bus)." The resulting map, as shown, has a large number of different locations along the route of the protagonist's journey.

For a mainstream course, I asked students to do a literary map, one that was different in two ways from Woodward's: first, it focused on locations in one city, rather than on many cities, and students created individual, rather than collaborative maps. These first-year students were asked to create maps that coordinated in some way with the reading of a novel, *A Confederacy of Dunces,* by John Kennedy Toole. This novel is set in New Orleans, Lousiana, a place none of the students had visited. As a way for students to understand the environment of New Orleans, which is discussed extensively in the novel, I asked them to find locations noted in the book on a map, and to look at photographs associated with those locations.

An international student created the following map, using the directions shown above. As shown in Figure 12, the student used different types of icons to indicate the activities that take place in the book at that location.

This map can be accessed at: http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&gl=us&ptab=2&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msi d=211733900663896416594.0004b1268b413ad1aac55

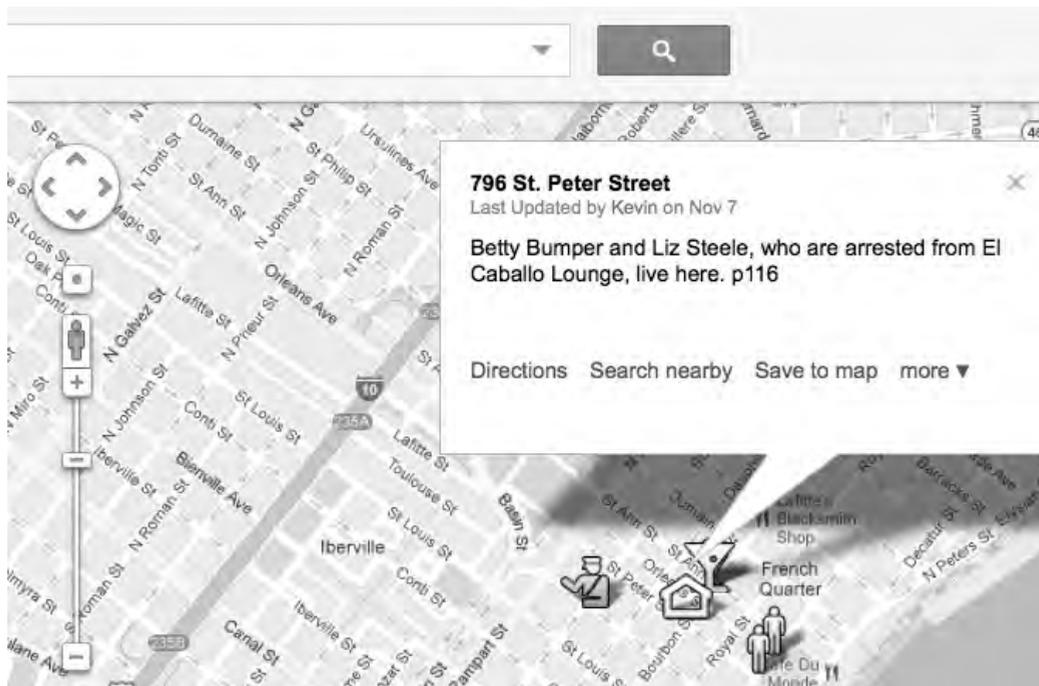**Figure 12. Map Based on *A Confederacy of Dunces***

Figure 13. Student Notations from the Book

Figure 14. Partial Listing of Locations in the Book

Conclusion

Google Maps can provide a variety of ways for students to work collaboratively in ways that encourage reading, writing, speaking, and listening. They also encourage the use of visual materials with text. Maps can be exciting projects, either for individual students, or pair or groupwork. Google provides additional information on their educators' website as well (http://www.google.com/educators/geo.html).

Acknowledgments

References

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Warrensburg Schools. (n.d.) Using Google Maps in education. Available:http://www.warrensburgr6.org/education/components/scrapbook/default.php?sectiondetailid=382.

Woodward, T. (2007). *Whirligig* on MyMaps. *Bionic Teaching,* May 9, 2007. http://bionicteaching.com/?p=235.

Appendix A

How to Add Your Trees

Step 1: Upload your photos

1. Go to http://flickr.com
2. Log in using this information:
    a. Login: esl8@rocketmail.com
    b. Password: ------------
3. At the top of the page, click **Upload.**
    a. Click **choose photos and videos,** and then upload them.
    b. Name your photo with your names (for example, you might call it: Theo & Gabbie).
    c. If you know the type of tree, include it in the description.
    d. Save your photo to the **set** named "Trees of UC Berkeley."
4. Click on your photo until it is its largest. Then *right click* and select "Large".
5. Right click again, and copy the photo's location (URL). Save that information somewhere, as in a Word file. It will look something like this (http://farm7.static.flickr.com/6139/5931810390_44ac92ce65_b.jpg)

Step 2: Add it to the Google Map

I will email you a link to our Google Map, so it is easier, but the link is: http://maps.google.com/maps?msid=203145648572334103432.0004a7e64bcd53725422 d&msa=0&ll=37.873075,-122.258823&spn=0.001613,0.002599&z=19

1. Once you are at the map, click the **Edit** button at the top of the left column.
2. Locate on the Berkeley map the location of your tree.
3. Put a marker down by dragging the symbol that looks like this: to the correct place.
4. Change the blue marker symbol to a tree symbol: Click on the blue symbol and you will see a menu of symbols. Find the tree and click on it.
5. In the **Title** box, write the name of your tree. If you don't know what type of tree it is, put something good there!
6. Now, click on the text that says **Rich Text** .
7. Add your photos by clicking on the photo symbol. You can add more than one photo.
8. Paste or type in the location (URL) of your photo (like the one above that says http://farm7.static.flickr.com/6139/5931810390_44ac92ce65_b.jpg).
9. Next, type in what you wrote about the tree. You may check it for grammar and spelling.
10. Press **Save** and then **Done** when you are finished (at the top of the column on the left).
11. To see others' tree information, click on the trees you see or on the title in the list.