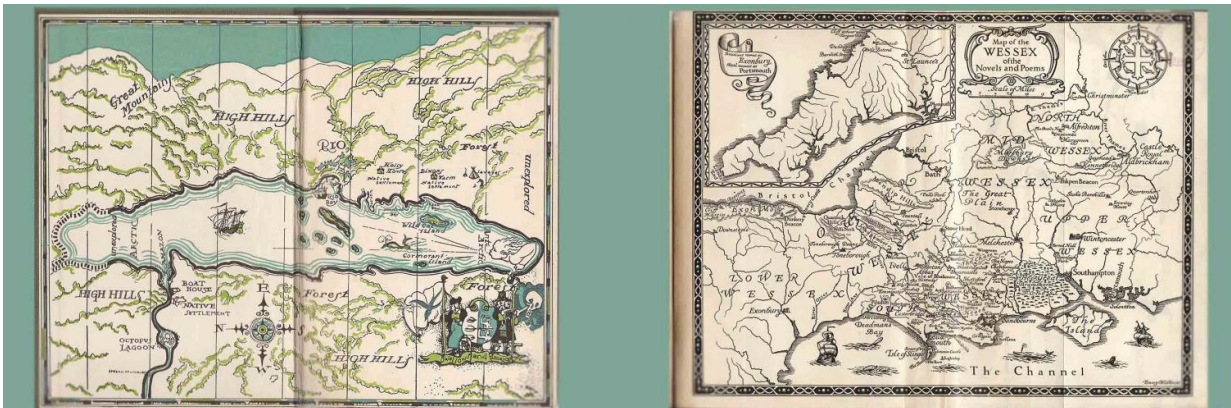


Mapping project will open up new routes to uncharted territory

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Credit: Lancaster University

What if fictional places in books, such as Middlemarch, Treasure Island, Barsetshire and Gormenghast, could be generated as maps and even 3D visualisations out of the text itself?

Now a pioneering project, led by Lancaster University, will set out to do just that following the announcement of a £914,000 grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

The three-year project travels into uncharted territory which will provide a range of exciting and imaginative teaching resources including three dimensional and Minecraft versions of the fictional settings.

It will take literary mapping to a whole new level by focusing on a selection of imaginary spaces from a variety of famous literary texts and, using geographic information systems (GIS) to capture, store, manipulate, analyse and present spatial and geographic data, create an array of interactive and 3-D outputs.

The innovative project is the brainchild of Professor Sally Bushell, the Head of English Literature and Creative Writing at Lancaster University.

"Of course cult texts such as 'The Lord of the Rings' have been mapped and made into games but gaming platforms have not been used for great classic works of literature before," explains Professor Bushell. "The model will open up and transform the field within literary mapping. We will use three dimensional platforms for the literary text - it's so obvious and it makes text so much more accessible."

So far literary mapping has focused on 'real places' such as Oliver Twist's Victorian London or Jane Austen's England.

"This project takes the idea 'out of this world' literally," added Professor Bushell. "If it's fictional how do you map and visualise it? How do you create an authentic map for a text that has no real corresponding world - an entirely fictional space? That's right at the heart of this project."

"We aim to generate a way of creating a map with place names and the right terrain and landscapes as a 3D version of the literary text. It is authentic because it's generated out of the text."

At the same time, the project does not seek to 'replace' the text with its virtual equivalent but to integrate reading and mapping in a circular model that moves between reading the text, mapping or visualising it, and returning to the text in a new way.

The project will focus on five different kinds of fictional space including:

- The integration of real and fictional places to create an imaginative region such as Wild Cat Island in *Swallows and Amazons*
- Fictional universes that have no direct point of reference in the world such as Trollope's *Barsetshire* and Tolkien's *Middle Earth*
- Bridged texts - an initial real world setting which frames a journey into an imaginary space and a return home such as Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

Each text will then be mapped to varying degrees.

The project will enable, for the first time, a complete analysis of space and place of literary texts using the digital medium, through a combination of corpus linguistics and natural language processing and 3D modelling.

The first year of the project will see the team focused on examining huge swathes of [text](#) to sketch out correlations between verbal and visual elements from both literary/linguistic and data visualisation perspectives. These findings will be converted into XML, a computer language format.

The second year will see texts being narrowed down and an integration of the data and the software particularly the GIS and data visualisation and other 3D modelling and interactive animation tools to create a set of gazetteers.

The third year will culminate in the creation of game platforms using game engine software. The team will focus on qualitative mapping and its visualisation, selecting key texts and passages for in-depth analysis

and 'mapping out the unmappable' using 3D and other software.

Primary outputs will be the digital mapping tools and methodology, a major website, academic articles, a book, an outreach programme in schools and an interactive exhibition.

"This has a massive impact for schools as we will be creating a lot of educational resources," added Professor Bushell. "We will use gaming for high level exploration and build in interpretational and analytical tasks and link the gaming to textual analysis and education so the user is moving between visualisation and reading."

The [project](#), entitled 'Creating a Chronotopic Ground for the Mapping of Literary Texts: Innovative Data Visualisation and Spatial Interpretation in the Digital Medium', involves academics from Edinburgh University, University College London, Manchester Metropolitan University, Sunderland and Chester.

Lancaster University is a leading player in the field of Spatial Humanities.

Provided by Lancaster University

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