

The Places & Spaces: Mapping Science comes to Virginia Tech at the University Libraries

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The University Libraries is pleased to announce that it will be hosting the [Places & Spaces: Mapping Science](#) exhibit on the 4th floor of Newman Library from August 21 through November 16, 2017.

The [exhibit](#) is a multimedia visual and sensory extravaganza of data visualization and design that consists of over 100 exciting static and interactive visualizations ranging from the late 15th Century to the present. Topics range from [Claudius Ptolemy's Cosmographia World Map](#) to an example of several ground-breaking geospatial concepts and mathematical proofs in a single visualization. Modern examples include New York City-based artist, [Ward Shelley's "History of Science Fiction"](#), which traces the literary history of the science fiction genre from its roots to 2011, when the map was first released to the public. The maps serve as fantastic examples of the intersection of art, design, and visualization.

In addition to science maps, the exhibit features three sets of interactive macroscopes, including a set newly added to the exhibit collection. A microscope is a software tool that allows viewers to see patterns in both large and small scale; it allows us to see that which is “at once too great, too slow, and too complex for our eyes” (Joël de Rosnay, *The Microscope: a New World Scientific System*). Macroscopes also encourage viewers to interact with the exhibit; visitors to the exhibit can explore these macroscopes through large, multi-touch displays. While hosted by VT, the exhibit will debut four brand new macroscopes:

- [The Cosmic Web](#)
- [Histograms](#) – view the history of the world visualized via Wikipedia
- [Megaregions of the US](#) – explore commuter regions across the US
- [Science Paths](#) – explore the randomness of scientific success

Additional microscope sets include ‘[Macroscopes for Interacting with Science](#)’ and ‘[Macroscopes for Making Sense of Science](#).’

The exhibit, curated by the [Cyberinfrastructure for Network Science Center](#) at Indiana University and created by Dr. Katy Börner, includes over 100 science maps and a variety of interactive and multimedia elements meant to “to inspire cross-disciplinary discussion on how to best track and communicate scholarly activity and scientific progress on a global scale.” Tracking the contours of human knowledge and experience, these maps present new ways of understanding science and scholarship, creating new insights and connections along the way.

“Hosting this exhibit shows the Libraries’ ongoing support for sparking new connections across science and scholarship and for supporting multi-disciplinary research,” said Andi Ogier, Director of Data Services in the University Libraries. “This exhibit tracks the topography of the research landscape and presents it in a distinctly visual, and beautiful, form that encourages creating knowledge from the consideration of new perspectives. We hope this exhibit will resonate and inspire faculty and students who are engaging across destination areas and strategic growth areas.”

The opening of Places and Spaces in Newman Library coincides with the launch of the Data Visualization Studio, a space on the second floor of Newman Library, where students and faculty have access to the latest tools and software in data visualization. “Maps have proven a timeless means of communicating spatial data visually, in unique and sometimes profound ways,” said Patrick Tomlin, Director of Learning Environments in the University Libraries. “Like the exhibit, the mission of our new studio is to highlight the importance of understanding and representing data visually. Through the studio, we aim to make it easier for researchers to hone their skills in data visualization, without necessarily having any previous experience in that area. Whether getting help from staff to prepare a chart for a class presentation or using the studio to run more complex research simulations, we want the studio to be a place where Virginia Tech students can harness the power—and beauty—of visualizing information for themselves.”

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