

IU professor curates mapping exhibit

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One hundred maps and 10 years later, IU professor Katy Börner has completed a mapping exhibit entitled "Places and Spaces: Mapping Science."

"Places and Spaces" takes a microscopic look at scientific and human activities from a broad range of research topics, according to an IU release.

Börner, an information visualization specialist, was lead curator of the exhibit, which featured a total of 236 mapmakers' works, according to a University release. The mapmakers came from 68 cities in 16 different countries and represented a total of 30 different scientific disciplines.

"Maps have guided mankind's explorations for centuries," Börner said. "In the information age, key opportunities for discovery and innovation reside in knowledge and expertise spaces, and maps of science help us navigate, manage, understand and exploit these spaces."

Ten maps were made every year, and all 100 were displayed together for the first time last month at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Fla., according to the release.

Some of the topics featured are science maps for kids, the history of science fiction, the environment and the state of the polar bear. All were designed to help the layperson understand the enormous amount of data scientists generate, Börner said.

Hung side by side, the maps would be the length of two football fields.

Börner is IU's Victor H. Yngve professor of information science in the School of Informatics and Computing.

Todd Theiault, editor and co-curator of the exhibit, and designer Samuel Mills, both of whom work at the IU-Bloomington Cyberinfrastructure for Network Science Center, worked with the mapmakers to aid in making the maps for the general public.

"Places and Spaces" is currently being exhibited at the University of Miami where Börner will be lecturing for the rest of the semester on visualizing data and its confluence in the arts, sciences and everyday life, according to the University.

Next, the exhibit will be displayed for five months at Northwestern University on its Chicago campus.

Previously, the unfinished exhibit was displayed annually in hundreds of venues in 23 countries. Most notably, it has been on display at the New York Public Library and has been a mobile exhibit on a passenger train that traveled across Germany, according to the University.

Several IU faculty and staff were among the mapmakers for the exhibit.

Among them, Y.Y. Ahn, assistant professor of informatics, collaborated on "Pulse of the Nation," which used Twitter to time-stamp mood variations across the United States.

With the maps completed, both the exhibit team and an international advisory board will move on to the next phase of the exhibit, which will focus on interactive tools and online services to empower users to both read maps and to visualize their own data.

Kathrine Schulze

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