

UW Cartography Students win NACIS Competition

On October 10, 2004, a team of UW–Madison geography students took the winning prize in the annual North American Cartographic Information Society (NACIS) Web and Animated Map Contest for the first time. This competition recognizes excellence in the use of the Web as a medium for cartographic communication. Of particular interest are innovative and creative uses of Web technology to display either animated or interactive maps. The map, created by David Bratz, Aaron Stephenson and Zach Nienow, is entitled “Commercial Air Disasters of the Lower 48 United States 1950-2003” and can be accessed via <http://www.badgermaps.com>

The map was originally created for Geography 575: Animated and Web-based Mapping. It took the entire second half of the spring semester to complete, with the map layout and programming design taking the longest. As the deadline grew nearer, the team was forced to spend three entire days in the lab in room M376, 48 of those hours consecutively. Aside from the heckling of the other teams that left at midnight and returned at 8:00 a.m. the next day, those last hours weren't entirely unbearable and pizza was ordered in at multiple times.

To get the map ready for the NACIS competition in the fall, some significant redesign was undertaken by Aaron and Dave (Zach had graduated in May). Aaron spent a few dozen hours perfecting the programming and getting all the various animated objects to play nicely together, while poor Dave again gave up all of his free time for the first half of the semester to ensure a win for UW–Madison. It was doubtless that Dave's perfectionism won the competition, but it was an exceptional effort by the entire team, and it couldn't have happened without the excellent instruction of Professor Mark Harrower and TA Ben Sheesley.

Written by Aaron Stephenson



NACIS winning-map by Dave Bratz, Aaron Stephenson and Zach Nienow. View their map at <http://www.badgermaps.com>

Robinson, from page 1.

Arthur Robinson was born in 1915, the son of a college history professor. Growing up, his family moved from university town to university town, until Robinson himself entered college. Earning a bachelor's degree at Miami University (Ohio) and a masters degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he started his PhD work at the Ohio State University around 1940. Soon after, through various connections he had, Robinson was offered and took a job in Washington D.C. with the mapping division of the government's Coordinator of Information agency (a precursor to the CIA). After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Robinson found that the government's infrastructure for handling mapping information was highly undeveloped. Moving to the forefront, he soon took the head job in the mapping division, guiding it to produce literally thousands of maps for the war effort until the Japanese defeat in 1945. In the process, Robinson traveled to both the Quebec and the Cairo Conferences of World War II. At Quebec, he was informed that a map was desperately needed to demarcate what would become East and West Germany. So, pulling a historic "all-nighter", Robinson paged through old National Geographic maps and drew the line along pre-existing administrative boundaries, trying not to break up families and neighborhoods. In the morning the conference officials accepted the map, whose lines came to separate the two Germans for more than 50 years.

Despite his success in Washington, Robinson didn't like working for the government, and, after the war, took an associate professorship at UW–Madison while he finished his PhD. From there, he rose to the "legend" status his name invokes today, carrying with him the disciplines of geography and cartography and the reputations of UW–Madison and Science Hall. While Robinson helped bring the Geography Department at UW into the present, David Woodward helped it look back on the past with the prestigious History of Cartography Project.

Though many students today benefit from the great work of these two men, too many don't know of the esteem and history their Science Hall classrooms have housed over the years. As we move forward through the rest of this Fall 2004 semester, I ask that you take the time to remember the giants upon whose shoulders we stand, and please stop by the Arthur H. Robinson Map Library (Room 310 Science Hall, where a memorial for both Woodward and Robinson was held on November 19th) and the History of Cartography Project (Room 470 Science Hall), to get a taste of these men's grand accomplishments. Because, with such a history, it is a wise thing for the department to know and remember its roots.

Written by Ben Spaier

MADISON GEOGRAPHIC

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History Claims Another Geographic Great

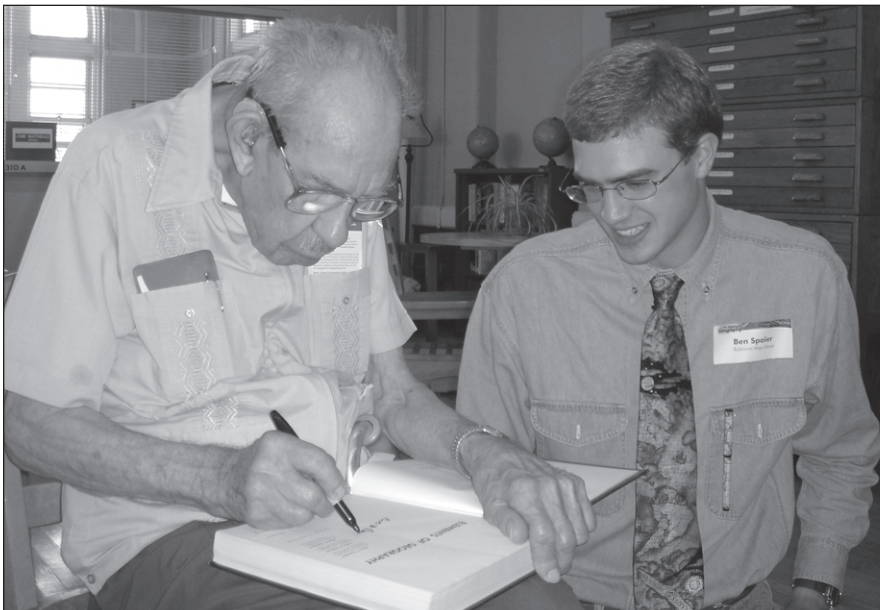
A REFLECTION ON THE PASSING OF PROF. EMERITUS ARTHUR H. ROBINSON

In the wake of Professor David Woodward's passing on August 25th of this year, I and the rest of the staff at the A. H. Robinson Map Library (RML) were still forced to prepare for our big event coming on September 1st. Along with the State Cartographer's Office and the rest of Science Hall's third floor, we had a beginning-of-the-year open house scheduled to showcase all the changes and renovations which had taken place over the summer. The day of the Open House was pleasant, showing off our newly tidied library to numerous visitors, but we had one guest who took center stage. Arthur H. Robinson himself, the man our library's name echoes, walked slowly in on a cane and sat down. At first the 89-year-old Robinson seemed frail, but once seated his mind proved sturdy and keen. I knew him from our library's name, and from the famed Robinson world map projection which the National Geographic Society has used for its maps, but I didn't entirely know what to expect from meeting him in person.

Though slowed by his many years, I met a kind and humble man who graciously signed the textbook I had practically thrust into his hands. For a geography student to be able to meet such a widely respected living legend of the discipline was a real privilege, and a thought passed through my mind that I should try to learn a little more about Robinson and Science Hall's history.

Well, like I said, that was on September 1st of this year. After a short-lived illness, Professor Emeritus Arthur H. Robinson died on October 10th, 2004. This left me and others at the Robinson Library solemnly wondering about the life of the man who'd briefed our presence barely six weeks earlier. Taking a little initiative, I listened to an hour of the 1981 interview with Robinson which the UW Library's Oral History Project archives possessed, and I found out more than I expected.

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Professor Emeritus Arthur H. Robinson signs Ben Spaier's book.

UPCOMING GEOGRAPHY CLUB NEWS AND EVENTS

UNDERGRADUATE ADVISING November 22nd and 23rd

Don't know what to take or do you want to know more about the geography classes being offered next semester? Having trouble understanding the requirements for the geography major?

The Geography Club will be holding open advising for undergraduates on Monday, Nov. 22nd and Tuesday, Nov. 23rd from 11:30 to 1:30. Look for our table on the first floor underneath the bulletin boards. All students are welcome.

NEXT MEETING Monday, November 22nd

Meet in the faculty lounge at 6:30 p.m. for our last formal meeting of the semester! We'll be wrapping up some remaining details for the spring and reassigning some duties, so now is a great time to get involved.

SENIOR SEND-OFF DINNER Monday, December 13th

Keeping with tradition, we'll be taking our December graduates out to dinner. The place has yet to be decided, so keep your eyes peeled for the details.