Professor of the Month: Mark Harrower

Mark Harrower is teaching Geog 170 Map reading and interpretation and Geog 370 Introduction to Cartography

Where are you originally from?
Kingston Ontario – the “Limestone City” founded in 1673.

What got you started in Geography?
My family traveled extensively (we lived in England, Portugal, Greece, Trinidad, etc.) so I was always fascinated by the world, and the ways in which places are different. I also watched many good PBS, BBC, CBC documentaries growing up (e.g., volcanoes, climate, migration, etc.). I also had a love of maps from a very early age … when I was 10, I asked for a bunch of big wall maps for Christmas (and got them, true story).

What are you currently researching?
Broadly, my work is about geographic representation and knowledge construction. Specifically, I’m interested in map animation, Web-based cartography, and geographic visualization.

What passions you in your area of teaching?
That my work can help people to learn new things, or do their work better, and that we have more questions than answer right now in GIScience.

Do you have any advice for undergrads in Geography?
Be prepared to answer (defend!) the inevitable “what is geography good for?” question. And actually have a good answer!

How many places have you lived and where?
Six places long enough to have a new mailing address: Kingston, ON; Toronto, ON; Exeter, England; Victoria, BC; State College, PA; and here.

What’s your favorite place you’ve traveled?
Favorite place: Big Island of Hawaii.

What’s your favorite place in Wisconsin?
State Street.

What are some of your favorite movies?
Some of my favorites are Shawshank Redemption, Lord of the Rings, Amelie, T2.

What’s your favorite food?
Greek food! How can you go wrong when everything starts with olive oil, feta, and basil?

What are some of your favorite bands or groups?
Favorite band or group? Warhols, U2, Radiohead

What’s your favorite animal? Do you have any pets?
Raccoons, with Meerkats a close second.

What’s your favorite place in Wisconsin?
Favorite place: Big Island of Hawaii.

What’s your favorite type of music and a favorite band or group?
College alternative (Coldplay, Dandy Warhols, U2, Radiohead)

Have you ever gotten lost before and where?
Oh sure. Who hasn’t? Sometimes, I even get lost in Science Hall.

Thank you very much for the interview, Prof. Harrower. Would you like to leave us with a favorite quote?
“If a picture is worth a thousand words, a map is worth a thousand pictures.”

Interview and Text by Andrea Nesbit
In 601 A.D., Pope Gregory the First issued a now famous edict to his missionaries concerning the native beliefs and customs of the peoples he hoped to convert. Rather than try to obliterate native peoples’ customs and beliefs, the pope instructed his missionaries to use them. Halloween has its origins in a contracted corruption of All Hallows Eve. November 1, “All Hallows Day” (or “All Saints Day”), is a Catholic day of observance in honor of saints meant to replace Celtic druidic practices.

For the Celts, summer officially ended on October 31 and a great celebration, called Samhain (pronounced Sah-ween), was held. It was the biggest and most significant holiday of the Celtic year. The Celts believed that at the time of Samhain, more so than any other time of the year, the ghosts of the dead were able to mingle with the living, because at Samhain the souls of those who had died during the year traveled into the otherworld. People gathered to sacrifice animals, fruits, and vegetables. They also lit bonfires in honor of the dead, to aid them on their journey, and to keep them away from the living.

The Romans, during their campaigns, adopted the Celtic practices as their own. But in the first century AD, Samhain was assimilated into celebrations of some of the other Roman traditions that took place in October, such as their day to honor Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit and trees. The symbol of Pomona is the apple, which might explain the origin of our modern tradition of bobbing for apples on Halloween. The thrust of the practices also changed over time to become more ritualized. As belief in spirit possession waned, the practice of dressing up like hobgoblins, ghosts, and witches took on a more ceremonial role.

The custom of trick-or-treating is thought to have originated not with the Celts or Romans, but with a ninth-century North-European (German) custom called soul-ing. On November 2, All Souls Day, early Christians would walk from village to village begging for “soul cakes,” made out of square pieces of bread with currants. The more soul cakes the beggars would receive, the more prayers they would promise to say on behalf of the dead relatives of the donors. At the time, it was believed that the dead remained in limbo for a time after death, and that prayer, even by strangers, could expedite a soul’s passage to heaven.

As European immigrants came to America, they brought their varied Halloween customs with them. Because of the rigid Protestant belief systems that characterized early New England, celebration of Halloween in colonial times was extremely limited there. It was much more common in Maryland and the southern colonies. As the beliefs and customs of different European ethnic groups, as well as the American Indians, meshed, a distinctly American version of Halloween began to emerge. The first celebrations included “play parties,” public events held to celebrate the harvest, where neighbors would share stories of the dead, tell each other’s fortunes, dance, and sing. Colonial Halloween festivities also featured the telling of ghost stories and mischievous pranks.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, America was flooded with new immigrants. These new immigrants, especially the millions of Irish fleeing Ireland’s potato famine of 1846, helped to popularize the celebration of Halloween nationally. Soon, Americans began to dress up in costumes and go house to house asking for food or money, a practice that eventually became today’s “trick-or-treat” tradition. A new American tradition was born, and it has continued to grow. Today, Americans spend an estimated $6.9 billion annually on Halloween, making it the country’s second largest commercial holiday.

From the Celts of ancient Europe, to the Romans of the Mediterranean, to the Germans of northern Europe, across the Atlantic to America, and on again to the rest of the world, the evolution of Halloween is not just a historical narrative, but a geographical one as well. As the rituals were adopted in different regions by different cultures, new customs and traditions were added, until today we have a nearly global holiday with a history and geography as complex as the peoples that celebrate it.

Story by Aaron Stephenson

Sources: www.historychannel.com
"The Fantasy and Folklore of All Hallows" by Jack Santino, and "Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things" by Charles Panati

UPCOMING GEOGRAPHY CLUB NEWS AND EVENTS

Meetings for the Fall 2003 semester will be held every 2nd and 4th Monday of every month. We meet at 6:00 p.m. in the Student Lounge, 480-B Science Hall. Meetings are open to everyone.