Mapping of Asian Collections: Google Maps Possibilities & Limitations

1. Introduction
This document aims to educate us about technical possibilities and limitations, and:
- enable us to communicate more effectively with technical partners;
- save time and money;
- ensure the final product is accessible, useful and scalable.
It looks at the practicalities of implementing a Google Map embedded on the ASEMUS website with an interface that enables users to visualize locations of Asian collections by:
- Type
- Country
- Region

2. Preliminary Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries, Regions, Collection Types</th>
<th>Museums</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;Collections from 19 Asian <strong>countries</strong></td>
<td>Museum du quai Branly, Paris, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;Three <strong>regions:</strong></td>
<td>NUSMuseum, Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Museum, Warsaw, Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muzium Negara, Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Museum of Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20 <strong>Collection types</strong>, plus others</td>
<td>National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Tools

**Google’s Spreadsheet Mapper 2.0**
- A powerful free Google tool for mapping up to 400 locations
- Six ready-made balloon designs to quickly create attractive placemarks

**Google Docs Spreadsheet**
- Gdocs integrates with the Spreadsheet Mapper 2.0
- culture360.org already uses Gdocs

**Google Maps API Styled Map Wizard**
- Allows developers to easily change colors, features etc shown on maps to highlight themes more clearly.
- It addresses one of the key usability issues for mapping projects.
- **Other Map Styling options**

**Google Analytics**
- Tracks visitors on maps enabling genuine assessment of the value/success of the project
- GA needs to be setup to track “Events” to obtain useful data

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4. Working examples of Google Map projects

4.1 The World Justice Map has what I would describe as two layers. The first layer, as shown above, allows users to click on an organisation and an Info Bubble will popup. If the blue “Gov2u” link is clicked, it takes users to a page on the site describing the organisation.

The second layer is called “Data”. It draws on available data sets, e.g. the “Corruption Perception Index”. When the option is checked the map changes dynamically to show nations perceived to be corrupt in a darker color, and a lighter color if considered less corrupt.

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4.2 **AnyPlace** is a fantastic example of using Google Maps API and the Open Source CollectiveAccess, a Web-based software to catalogue, manage & Publish museum & archival collections, which has been widely adopted by museums across Europe & the USA.

The AnyPlace platform is available for purchase, **but it costs US$20,000**. (A bargain for a city or institution wanting to setup a mapping portal based on historical archives, like [http://www.philaplace.org/](http://www.philaplace.org/). Something NHB should consider)

Viewing the **“Map” section** of AnyPlace, offers insights on how ASEMUS could structure its map interface. The project could create search by "Collection Origin" (Country/Region) and "Collection Type" and show the related Museums on the map in Asia & Europe.

5. **ASEMUS Project Layer 1: Museum Layer**

After reviewing Google’s Spreadsheet Mapper 2.0 tool, I think the implementation of the Museum layer of this project (see 4.1 “first layer” World Justice Map above) is very straightforward.

A working example can be set up with six museums.

Two or three new pages on the ASEUMS site would need to be set up to provide a good linked working example.

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6. ASEMUS Project Layer 2: Collections Mapping Layer
The development of the second layer (See AnyPlace Map section example above), is more involved and would require expert advice to setup a good interface. Also see point 8 below.

7. Considering Possible Additions in the Future
Informing developers that the map may be used to show other data sets in the future, would be time & cost effective.

A three tab display could be used to map (See example below)
- Asian collections
- Museum professionals & expertise
- Mapping of museum-related projects & engagements across Asia & Europe

8. To Embed or not to Embed!
Ideally, it would be best to embed the map with full functionality into the ASEMUS site. Lero9 have mentioned, in email communication, this is quite difficult.

Lero9 July 28: “We are not experts in the google API and custom coding for it, so we would need to research our options first. To implement the mapping project like this would probably require a budget of around 100 hours. ($10,000)

As Lero9 are not experts I think contacting another company like ubilabs.net, who are Qualified Google Developers for Google Maps JS API, or Night Kitchen Interactive, creators of AnyPlace, is a good option. A second opinion is always good, and things change fast on the Internet.

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Several free plugins are available to embed Google Maps into the ASEMUS site:

- [http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/google-map-shortcode/screenshots/](http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/google-map-shortcode/screenshots/)
- [http://www.wpmayor.com/posts/plugin-reviews/best-google-maps-plugins-for-wordpress/](http://www.wpmayor.com/posts/plugin-reviews/best-google-maps-plugins-for-wordpress/)
- [http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/google-maps-v3-shortcode/](http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/google-maps-v3-shortcode/)

I recommend testing some of these plugins to see how they work, and if they could be useful to the project.

10. Extras
10.1 Animated Google Map Pins
At the 2011 Google I/O conference, Google introduced animations for map pins. The feature adds a small layer of interactivity which improves user experience.

- [See examples here](#)

10.2 Useful Videos
- [Google I/O 2011: Secrets and surprises of the Google Geo APIs](#)
- [Google I/O 2011: Speedy Maps (How to optimize Google maps for speed)](#)
- [Mapping with Google Spreadsheet Mapper 2.0](#)
- [Google Earth Outreach YouTube Channel](#)
- [What is Google My Maps and how do I use it?](#)

10.3 Useful Links
- [Meeting for the Mapping of Asian Collections Project](#)
- [Ubilabs: Google Maps API - Best Practices](#)
- [Google Maps API Family](#)
- [Using Spreadsheet Mapper 2.0 with Google Earth & Google Maps](#)
- [Create a map from a published Google Spreadsheet](#)
- [AnyPlace: a reusable platform for mapping and sharing history](#)
- [PhilaPlace to AnyPlace: Building a Reusable Community Platform for Mapping and Sharing History](#)
- [Creating an Online Digital Consortium for Historic Collections](#)
- [Putting Museum Collections on the Map: Application of Geographic Information Systems](#)
- [Google My Maps User Guide](#)