Archiving Dossier Narrative
Constantinople as Palimpsest
Wesleyan University, Traveler's Lab

Project Catalogue Record: https://osf.io/preprints/bodoarxiv/ehmkx

Persistent Identifier DOI: 10.34055/osf.io/ehmkx

Current Project URL: https://arcg.is/1Kfe5i

Supplemental Materials: osf.io/q2a53/

Launch Date: 02/01/2015

Archive Date: 01/25/2021

Abstract
The *Constantinople as Palimpsest* Project is a collaborative, online, interactive, topographically-indexed teaching encyclopedia of the city of Constantinople from AD 330 to 1453. It was created through and is hosted on the web 2.0 tools of ArcGIS online (https://www.arcgis.com). It is curated by Jesse W. Torgerson (College of Letters, Wesleyan University). It was and is created, maintained, and updated by the co-curatorial, editorial, and design work of research students in the Traveler's Lab at Wesleyan University (https://travelerslab.research.wesleyan.edu). The content was written by undergraduate students as a part of their required coursework for Wesleyan University classes from 2015 to the present. The *Constantinople as Palimpsest* encyclopedia uses the "Map Notes" feature of ArcGIS online to provide click-able notations on a topical series of digital maps of the historical city of Constantinople during the period in which it was the capitol of the Roman Empire (AD 330-1453). These notations are written by students for students as brief encyclopedia entries on the places, structures, items, and events in the history of Constantinople. The goal of the project is to provide a tool to create a historically-informed mental topography in which to imagine figures in and events of Constantinople in a comprehensive and integrated context.

Contributors
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Narrative Section 1. Project Rationale and Scope

The *Constantinople as Palimpsest* (*CAP*) encyclopedia project is designed with a three-part rationale: (1) to provide students with a public-facing accumulative outlet for their coursework in classes on the history of Constantinople as the capitol of the Roman Empire (AD 330-1453); (2) to use this same public-facing outlet to educate both the wider public, and future cohorts of students in said classes; and (3) to provide an open-ended, ongoing collaborative web2.0 platform (via Esri's ArcGIS online suite of tools) for sharing information, practices, and insights between these groups. As a learning tool for the public (including secondary students), college students, and scholars alike, *CaP* offers a tool to create a historically-informed mental topography in which to imagine figures in and events of Constantinople (AD 330-1453) in a comprehensive and integrated context.

CaP is designed to accommodate the collaborative accumulation and re-organization of curated and edited student research projects on specific topics, items, locations, and events (but not persons) in the history of the city of Constantinople as the seat of the Roman Empire. The scope of the project is thus limited only by the survival of records (whether physical or textual) of places and items within Constantinople and its environs

over the course of this period. As the project continues to accumulate content through new student submissions it is the ongoing work of the curatorial and design teams to adapt the organizational structures of the project to accommodate and organize the growth of the content.

Narrative Section 2. Project Trajectory

The project trajectory is described in detail by Jesse W. Torgerson in "Constantinople as a (Pixelated) Palimpsest," *Medieval Studies, Digital Methods* ed. S. Gilsdorf and L. Morreale (ArcHumanities Press, 2021).

Constantinople as Palimpsest was created through an unplanned, heuristic process of experimentation with project-based teaching. It began as a shared folder on ArcGIS.com to allow for collaboration between Jesse W. Torgerson and Marjahn Finlayson (assisted by Dr. Kim Diver, and Dr. Jason Simms) to manage student submissions for the Wesleyan University course *COL 128 – Reimagining East and West: Constantinople between Rome and Istanbul* (Spring 2015). After the course finished, Torgerson curated these submissions onto a single map in order to design the next offering of the course more explicitly around the city of Constantinople itself, and to make this map not only one of the textbooks for the course, but to make it a central goal of the course to direct further student contributions into a collaborative, interactive online map of the city.

In the Spring and Summer of 2017 Connor Cobb (course Teaching Assistant), Nadja Shannon-Dabek (course GIS Assistant), Courtney Robinson (course Image Curator), and Traveler's Lab researchers Nathan Krieger and Caroline Diemer worked with Torgerson to index and edit the research submitted for *COL 128 – Constantinople: From Rome to Istanbul* with the previous course content. This work resulted in the *Constantinople as a Palimpsest* prototype website (https://arcg.is/0e4Lb4). In this website, hosted through the Esri StoryMaps platform (https://storymaps.arcgis.com), the content was presented as a tabulated series of topical maps: Monumental Architecture, Water Infrastructure, Exchange Economy, Administrative Regions, Religious Life-Christian, and Private Life. The project prototype was integrated into the Traveler's Lab, linked and described on the lab website.

In the Spring and Summer of 2020 Nathan Krieger (course Teaching Assistant), and Traveler's Lab researchers Alp Eren and Jonah Skolnik worked with Torgerson to re-index and edit all of the projects submitted for *COL 295 – Constantinople: a Digital Archaeology of Medieval Rome* with the previous course content. From July 2020 through January of 2021, Eren drew a new historical basemap of the City of

Constantinople while Skolnik copy-edited and indexed all content and designed a new format for the content on the StoryMaps platform.

Narrative Section 3. Project-Specific Digital Objects and Platforms

The basemap for *Constantinople as Palimpsest* was drawn by Alp Eren in ArcGIS Desktop. The content for *Constantinople as Palimpsest* was created on a variety of word-processing platforms but all uploaded online using the map notes feature of Esri's arcgis.com. The basemap and map notes were imported to Esri's storymaps.com, which hosts the website for the project via an institutional subscription purchased by Wesleyan University.

Hundreds of digital objects were consulted and linked in the creation of the map notes. The explicit citations are catalogued in the project bibliography.

Narrative Section 4. Actual and Anticipated Outcomes

At the time of archiving (January, 2021), the goals of the project are as follows:
(1) to continue to publish the accumulation of new research content on the city of Constantinople submitted by Wesleyan University students as a part of their coursework.
(2) to pilot use of *Constantinople as Palimpsest* for secondary education through a World History module at Middletown (CT) High School in Fall 2021 or 2022.
(3) to identify partner collaborators at other institutions who would join in assuming co-curatorial duties and in designing courses to garner additional student contributions.
(4) to explore and then develop a new publication model and platform for a scholar-focused version of the project as a web2.0 topographic encycolpedia and bibliography that serves as both an initial research reference work, and as a place to upload new research and references in real time.

Narrative Section 5. Document Statement
License: Creative Commons 4.0 International non-Commertial (summary). Full license at Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Narrative Section 6. Bibliography

Project Bibliography maintained at:
https://github.com/The-Travelers-Lab/Constantinople