A Tale of Two Gay Guides: The Distinction Between Bob Damron's Address Book and Gaia's Guide

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MAPPING THE GAY GUIDES

CLEMSON CREATIVE INQUIRY

ABSTRACT

This Creative Inquiry project focuses on the distinction between two travel guides that recommended "safe" spaces for LGBTQ+ people during the 1970s and 1980s. While the two have a similar purpose, they vastly differ in who their target audience is and thus affect the "safe spaces" listed in either guide. One, titled *Bob Damron's Address Book* by Bob Damron, is male-centric, while the other, *Gaia's Guide*, was catered toward women. By **digitizing** the travel guides from print to digital media, **transcribing** them by entering addresses, descriptions, and other information, and **geocoding** (or locating) these establishments on a map, one can clearly visualize the apparent differences. *Gaia's Guide* has been noted to show far more intersectionality by including safe spaces for those with disabilities, people of color, and religious organizations compared to *Bob Damron's Address Book*. Furthermore, the transcription data highlights that *Bob Damron's Address Book* frequently centers on bars, restaurants, and a general downtown-related scene, whereas *Gaia's Guide* shows a frequency for support groups, bookstores, cafes, and universities. This also indicates the geographic distinction between the two and the cities each guide centers on, all highlighted through mapping these geocoded areas. Therefore, through the research and data composed, we have found a large distinction between these two guides, implying a vastness within the LGBTQ+ community during this time regarding preferences of location and amenities, as well as how these preferences shift over the decades and in the wake of the AIDS epidemic in the United States.

METHODOLOGY

Digitizing the Media

Firstly, we digitize the address books through scanning of each page, which creates a Historical Dataset that is accessible to other institutions cooperating with Clemson in collecting data from *Bob Damron's Address Book*.



Casino El Camino 517 E. 6th St. **469-9330** (GF,NH,F) 4pm-2am, psychedelic punk jazz lounge

Transcribing the Digitized Media

We then utilize the Historical Dataset, download the dataset, and copy the data in each entry of the two address books into the Airtable Platform which organizes each establishments data by year in sheet-form. We make sure to reference all aspects of the guides: i.e. address, description, establishment type, and the key used by each respective address book.

Blue Flamingo	617 Red River	469-0014 noon-2am, strong coffee served	(GF) (NH) (G) (18+)	Bars & Nightclubs
'Bout Time	960 N. IH-35	832-5339 2pm-2am	(TG) (NH) (S) (*) (MW)	Bars & Nightclubs
Casino El Camino	517 E. 6th St.	4pm-2am, psychedelic punk jazz lounge	(GF) (NH) (F)	Bars & Nightclubs
Chain Drive	504 Willow St.	480-9017 2pm-2am, from 4pm Sun (buffet); also 'Le...	(M) (L) (WC)	Bars & Nightclubs
Charlie's	1301 Lavaca	474-6481 2pm-2am, patio	(D) (S) (YC) (WC) (*) (M)	Bars & Nightclubs

Geocoding the Data

Of the data collected, we then begin to locate where these establishments were exactly, by utilizing addresses, descriptions of the establishments, and searching for any information of the establishment through records on the internet. If no specific location can be found, the general coordinates of the city and state are utilized for the most accurate visual representation.



Mapping the Data

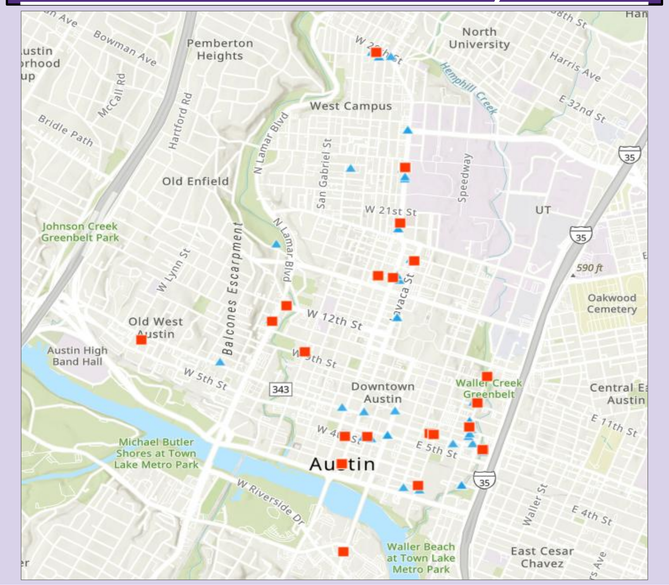
Finally, when the coordinates or general coordinates of each establishment in the address book is found, we utilize ArcGis Mapping Tool to physically locate the location of said establishments and place them on a specific map to highlight the results.

RESULTS

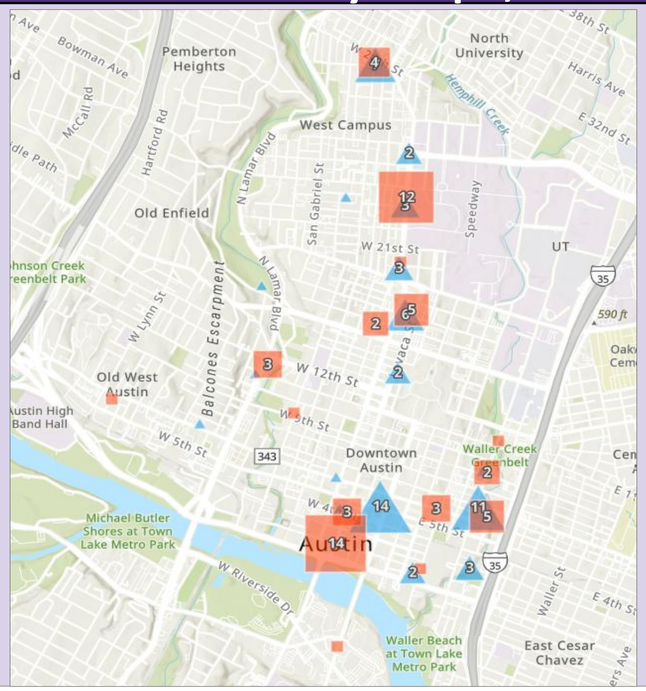
Address Books Mapping Key

- Gaia's Guide
- Bob Damron's Address Book

1975-1989 Coordinates, Austin



1975-1989 Denisty Graph, Austin



Conclusion

As the data indicates, there is a definite variation in which places the address books ater to, even in Austin, where the dataset is substantially smaller than more "gay-friendly" cities such as San Francisco or New York. We can clearly see a higher prevalence of B*ob Damron's Address Book* entries in the downtown area of Austin, highlighting the address book's priority of bars and clubs. Alternatively, *Gaia's Guide* has a high density of downtown, similar to *Bob Damron's Address Book*, but an equally high density in areas such as the UT Austin campus, and additionally varies across the city in areas aside from downtown. This small-scale mapping exemplifies the differences in the two guide's amenity preferences, and how these differences can be clearly seen through mapping, which is completed after organizing the data as seen through our methodology. These key differences offer an important narrative about the areas both gay men and lesbian women feel safe and accepted, and how these areas can be similar, and vastly different from community to community. Additionally, this mapping highlights the growth of the gay-scene over a decade, in the wake of the gay liberation movement, and in the midst of the AIDS epidemic in the United States.

Future Work

The mapping and data collection of these two address books is a component of the "Mapping the Gay Guides" history project. This is a project that includes not just Clemson University, but campuses across the United States, most notably in partnership with California State University, Fullerton. Data sets are continuing to be published as both universities work in tandem, and communicate online to complete these datasets with the help of students within Creative Inquiry programs, graduate students, and other dedicated individuals. In the near future, "Mapping the Gay Guides" plans to publish 175,000 locations recorded in *Bob Damron's Address Book* from the years 1965 to 2005.

While this work mostly focuses on *Bob Damron's Address Book*, the incorporation of *Gaia's Guide* in the later years has offered further insight into the records of the LGBTQ+ community from a historical and social perspective. The same methodology used for this Creative Inquiry project has been utilized over years to ensure in-depth data collection.

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