



**BOSTON, MA – August 17, 2024** - *Processing Place: How Computers and Cartographers Redrew our World*, a free public exhibition at the Leventhal Map & Education Center (LMEC) at the Boston Public Library (BPL), will open this fall on September 13, 2024.

Taking a historical approach to the now familiar world of digital mapping, *Processing Place* explores how new computer technologies developed during the twentieth century drove profound changes in environmental management, law and policy, navigation, national defense, and much more. By comparing maps made with computers to those made before and without them, *Processing Place* invites us to rethink the relationships between maps, technology, and society. *Processing Place* is curated by Leventhal Center staff members Ian Spangler, Assistant Curator of Digital & Participatory Geography, and Emily Bowe, Assistant Director.

Centered on how computer maps came to dominate our geographic imagination in the present, *Processing Place* will explore how companies, inventors, and public agencies created the computer mapping systems we now take for granted. The exhibition emphasizes the human role in digital mapmaking, highlighting how people have used computer technologies to encode observations about the world and make arguments through data and information. Visitors to the exhibition will come away seeing the maps on their phones and computer screens in a new light, as the result of decades of innovations and thousands of choices by technologists, designers, and cartographers.

The exhibit will feature maps and other objects from the Leventhal Center's unique collections of the history of computer cartography and digital mapping. In recent years, the Leventhal Center has become one of the leading collecting institutions dedicated to expanding the archive of twentieth century computer cartography and geographic information systems (GIS). As visitors explore early cartographic technologies, innovative uses of digital community mapping projects, and centuries-old data visualizations in *Processing Place*, they will learn how handcraft and human creativity are just as essential to computer-drawn maps as they are to maps on parchment from centuries before.

Maps are just one of the most prominent examples of how computers have radically transformed our experience of space and place. As our society confronts more challenges about what it means to live in a world mediated by digital technologies—from AI to social media—*Processing Place* offers a visually rich and historically informed public conversation about how technology, society, information, and computation came together to "redraw our world."

## Public Access and Programming

As with all programming at the Boston Public Library, admission to *Processing Place* is free to all. Visitors will find information about gallery hours and events, as well as a companion online exhibition, at [leventhalmap.org](http://leventhalmap.org). Guided tours of the gallery are available for free during gallery hours, and K-12, university, and group visits are available by appointment.

Exhibition programs for adults will be available throughout the exhibition, both online and in person. An updated calendar of events and programs associated with *Processing Place* can be found at [leventhalmap.org/event](http://leventhalmap.org/event). *Processing Place* closes March 2025.

## Hours and Exhibition Details

*Processing Place: How Computers and Cartographers Redrew our World* will be open **Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 11 am-5 pm, Wednesdays from 1-7 pm, and Sundays from 1-5pm. Admission is free.** Guided tours are always available by advance request.

- More information on the exhibition, including directions, access and visitor requirements can be found at [leventhalmap.org/exhibitions](http://leventhalmap.org/exhibitions).
- The companion digital exhibition for *Processing Place* can be found at [leventhalmap.org/digital-exhibitions/processing-place/](http://leventhalmap.org/digital-exhibitions/processing-place/).

## Community Events & Educational Visits

Public events and outreach programs during the run of *Processing Place* will include curatorial talks, public articles about featured maps, and hands-on gallery activities. More details on exhibition-related activities will be announced later this fall at [leventhalmap.org/event](http://leventhalmap.org/event).

The Leventhal Map & Education Center offers multiple ways for K-12 students and educators to engage with exhibitions, collections, and critical conversations using maps. Education programs at the Leventhal Center use guided inquiry to explore maps from the collections to encourage students to investigate their relationships to places in the past and present. A guided educational tour of *Processing Place* will encourage students to reflect on their place in the world and how maps capture and represent their lived experiences. More information about K-12 and university educational visits can be found at [leventhalmap.org/education](http://leventhalmap.org/education).

## **Media Contact**

To arrange interviews about *Processing Place*, curator-guided visits to the Leventhal Map and Education Center, or for digital images of exhibition objects, contact the Leventhal Center's Communications and Gallery Coordinator [Julia Williams](mailto:jwilliams@leventhalmap.org), [jwilliams@leventhalmap.org](mailto:jwilliams@leventhalmap.org) / 617-859-2383.

## **About the Leventhal Map & Education Center**

The Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library is an independent nonprofit organization that promotes the public use of more than a quarter million geographic objects for the enjoyment and education of all. Uniquely positioned in a public library, the Leventhal Center offers exhibitions and public talks, groundbreaking educational programs that promote geographic and data literacy, and extensive digital resources.

The Leventhal Center is known for its collection's size and significance and its engagement with K-12 audiences. With a global scope and a regional specialization in Boston and New England, the Center is a leader in exploring the study of places, societies, landscapes and history through the lens of maps and geography.

## **About the Boston Public Library**

Established in 1848, the Boston Public Library is a pioneer of public library service in America. It was the first large, free municipal library in the United States; the first public library to lend books; the first to have a branch library; and the first to have a children's room.

The Boston Public Library of today is a robust system that includes the Central Library in Copley Square, 25 neighborhood branches, the Norman B. Leventhal Map and Education Center, the Kirstein Business Library and Innovation Center, and an archival center, offering public access to world-class special collections of rare books, manuscripts, photographs, and prints, along with rich digital content and online services.

The Boston Public Library serves nearly 4 million visitors per year and millions more online. All its programs and exhibitions are free to all and open to the public. The Boston Public Library is a department of the City of Boston, under the leadership of Mayor Michelle Wu. To learn more, visit [bpl.org](http://bpl.org).