The University of Chicago Map Collection, which holds more than 380,000 sheets, is one of the largest university map libraries in North America. The Collection was founded in 1929. The Collection's first curators aimed in particular to amass contemporary maps. With substantial funds at their disposal, they made a serious attempt to acquire all then-available topographic map sets, especially but not exclusively for Europe, Canada, and the United States. They also did what they could to obtain urban and geology maps, again concentrating on Europe and North America. Much of what is unique to the Collection stems from this early collecting activity. There are numerous detailed topos from the early 20th century that are held by few other libraries. There are also a very large number of city maps (including planning maps) from the 1920s and 1930s that may not be held anywhere else. The early curators also acquired older maps. Several thousand historical maps were purchased from the John Crerar Library in 1929. Additional historical maps were added throughout the 1930s and a certain number of older maps were transferred from the existing central library when the Collection was founded. But, in general, the collection of early maps is not as strong as that in many other major libraries. Given the continued focus of faculty interest in the modern world and the growth of the nearby Newberry Library after World War II as a center of the study of cartography, there has never been any need to put much emphasis in this area. The Map Collection had little financial support between the late 1930s and early 1970s, but, after World War II, it ranked quite high in the Army Map Service's distribution lists and during the 1950s and 1960s, the Collection acquired large numbers of maps of the Soviet Union, Japan and India, largely through the efforts of Professors Chauncy Harris and Norton Ginsburg of the Department of Geography and Maureen Patterson of the Library. Since the 1970s, some effort has been put into building on the Collection's strengths. Topographic maps of many parts of the world have been acquired. The Map Collection now has 1:50,000 topographic coverage for most of Western Europe, Southern Canada, and Mexico. It has purchased contemporary topographic sets for Latin America as well as for other parts of the Third World, as available. Recently, it has been taking advantage of the release of topographic maps from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It has, for example, acquired 1:200,000 Soviet topos of most of the populated parts of the former USSR, much of the Middle East, and a large part of China. Considerable effort has also been put into updating holdings of urban and geology maps. One of the Collection's peculiarities is that its holdings were, until recently, entirely
uncataloged. But, in recent years, Map staff have begun the process of rectifying this situation. As of the early fall of 1996, there were about 11,750 map records in the University of Chicago's on-line catalog. However, since the Collection holds between 75 and 80,000 titles, there is a long way to go. Cataloging Department policy has dictated that only about a quarter of the records (mostly, those with LC copy) are considered to have been "finished." Only "finished" records are reported to OCLC.

The Map Collection has been acquiring digital cartographic data since 1992. It holds two major software packages, Sammamish GeoSight Professional and ArcView 2.1. With its ability to generate maps from depository data, the Sammamish program has been the most frequently used software in the Collection. In addition to the standard U.S. government materials and ESRI data sets, the Map Collection has also acquired some Chicago-area digital data. The Collection has also installed Paradox and Dbform, data-base management programs that can be used to manipulate data, and Macromedia Freehand, a drawing program. The Collection also holds some stand-alone mapping packages--including Street Atlas USA and Global Explorer--that contain both data and software.

The Map Collection has a site on the World Wide Web. Its URL is http://www.lib.uchicago.edu:80/LibInfo/Libraries/Maps. From here you can navigate to a list of some of the major sources of cartographic and spatial data available over the Internet (http://www.lib.uchicago.edu:80/LibInfo/Libraries/Maps/mapweb.html) as well as to set of Chicago 1990 census maps prepared by Map Collection staff (http://www.lib.uchicago.edu:80/LibInfo/Libraries/Maps/chimaps.html).

The Collection houses approximately 1500 atlases and several hundred reference books. There is also a small travel collection. This contains both classics (e.g., WPA guides, Baedekers) and a representative selection of contemporary guidebooks as well as thousands of current travel brochures.

The Map Collection is located on B-Level of the Joseph Regenstein Library, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago 60637. Hours are Monday to Friday, 12 to 5.

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