Marion County Heritage Map Project

Amanda Rees
David Buxton
Dustin Colman
Skyler Corbin
Trelle Cotton
Paula Crawford-Corrick
Chandler Garrett

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Abstract
With the soft opening of Pasaquan, Marion County’s visionary art environment, in summer 2016, and its grand opening by Columbus State University in fall 2016, the Marion County Chamber of Commerce requested that the Columbus Community Geography Center partner to develop a heritage tour map of the county for welcome centers across the state. This small rural county of 8,700 residences, 60% white, 30% black and 7.5% Hispanic. One fifth of the population live below the poverty level. It recently lost several hundred jobs with the closure of the local chicken processing plant. Plans to launch a tourism program is understood to be of great importance to the community. CSU’s Dr. Amanda Rees, Professor of Geography, and Professor Chuck Lawson, Department of Art, College of the Arts joined forces to create a heritage tour map of Buena Vista and Marion County.

Geography students ran a community workshop to identify twenty-one county and city heritage sites for inclusion. They researched and wrote short descriptions for the map and extended histories for an accompanying web page to be accessed from the map with a QR code. Students also produced an accurate map of each site and the major roads and other primary physical features of the county and city.

Graphic design students then received the map text and GIS maps of the county and the city. Students designed three “roughs” of the map for external review. The first review included Marion County leaders, state tourism representatives, and several faculty in art, GIS and geography. The roughs were then refined and presented again to a group of reviewers. This project proved to be a good fit for CSU’s QEP “Real World Problems Solving” project in its testing phase in spring 2016. This interdisciplinary “service learning” project offered high impact educational practices, fieldwork, student-led heritage workshop in Marion County, critical feedback from community members on writing, and design. This interdisciplinary project was aligned with CSU’s mission to support alternative pedagogical approaches to address the needs of millennial learners.

Recommended Citation