# M A P P I N G Local KNOWLEDGE



Little

ALL SEAS



# Unit II: Mapping Your Neighborhood

### Unit III: Neighborhood Walking Tour and Map-Making Workshop



Introduction

4



8. Defining Neighborhood Boundaries



10. Making a Neighborhood Мар



12. Landmarks, Edges, and Paths



Walking Tour

:



20. Making a Class Map





24. Surveying the Neighborhood



Unit V:

Other Ways of

28. Photography Workshop (Optional)



Mapping Local Knowledge is a curriculum designed by the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities. This curriculum is a component of Local Libraries/Local Knowledge, a program that aims to bring together students, teachers, librarians, urban planners, and community activists to create visual representations of the neighborhoods of Los Angeles. Mapping Local Knowledge presents ideas that teachers can use to help their students broaden their understanding of local history and the culture of neighborhoods. The information-gathering techniques and map-making methods introduced in the curriculum will enable students to capture the personal histories and contemporary impressions that make each neighborhood unique. The maps that students create can reveal a neighborhood that is not visible to an outsider.

Mapping Local Knowledge consists of nine lessons divided among five units. These lessons can stand alone or be integrated into existing curriculum and classroom goals. The curriculum is highly interdisciplinary, involving urban design, social studies, geography, history, and photography.

This curriculum was designed and tested by the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, in collaboration with the Los Angeles Public Library, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, and numerous community leaders and educators. It has been implemented in four high schools in Los Angeles, with students from grades nine through twelve in a wide range of classes and subjects.

# Unit I: Defining a Place



The overall goal of Mapping Local Knowledge is to engage students in a project that will encourage them to appreciate and celebrate the unique cultural and urban landscape of their neighborhood. In this curriculum, students focus on their school neighborhoods. To begin this process, students need to understand and to be able to define their environment. How do students view their school neighborhood? Where does it begin and end, and how is it located in relation to the larger city? A student's knowledge about a place is constrained by a number of factors, including access to transportation, the distance between home and school, and the length of time the student has lived in a particular neighborhood. We found in Los Angeles that many students have only a vague sense of where they live in relation to the city as a whole, and they do not easily see themselves as part of a neighborhood structure. Their sense of space is even more limited when they travel long distances every day to reach school. Mapping Local Knowledge begins with an introduction to the study of place and a gathering of basic data about the school's environs.

Overview

2|3



### Introduction

#### Lesson Summary

This lesson introduces the Mapping Local Knowledge project and presents specific terms used in the project, including map, place, neighborhood, and boundaries. Central to this lesson is a discussion of the basic concept of local knowledge — a deep, insider perspective on the history and culture of a neighborhood. Local knowledge stands in contrast to other, familiar sources of information, including textbooks, newspapers, and other media, and the traditional methods of geographical research. Local knowledge, when shared with others, becomes a common narrative of cultural experience. Many of the students who have participated in the development of this project commented that their understanding of a neighborhood was often overshadowed by outside knowledge, especially negative reports in the media about crime and other problems. This project encourages students to begin with the information they have internalized as local residents and to share these observations

with other students as a way of cataloging the information. Students are empowered to view their own experiences as an important source of local knowledge and to understand their role as researchers and reporters. Students will use local knowledge as they work together to define the boundaries and general characteristics of their school neighborhood.

#### **Objectives**

1. Students will describe the character of their school neighborhood.

#### **Key Terms**

1. Local knowledge. Local knowledge refers to the infomation about a particular place that is known by its residents. This knowledge is developed through familiarity with a specific place and through the daily activities of residents. Local knowledge includes information about the people who live in a neighborhood, the boundaries of the neighborhood, its important places (such as parks, buildings, or monuments), common and segregated areas, and issues of safety and ease of movement. 2. Neighborhood. A neighborhood is a geographically recognizable area. Although neighborhoods are often defined by a municipality, they are also self-defined by common residential characteristics, including race or ethnicity, the ages and types of buildings, and land use, whether residential, industrial, or commercial.

3. Boundaries. Boundaries define the limits of a neighborhood. These boundaries can be natural (rivers or mountains), man-made (freeways or areas of specific land use), or municipal (including street signs and other city signs).

#### Lesson Plan

1. Introduce the project, key terms, and concepts.

2. Discuss students' understanding of their school neighborhood, using these questions:

•How do you locate or characterize a neighborhood? What are the types of information someone would need in order to find their way around this school neighborhood? Where might you find this information? Is it all on maps, or is some of it information that only you (or others in the neighborhood) know?

- •What do the residents of a neighborhood know that others might not? What do high school students know that older or younger residents might not?
- •Are there stories about the neighborhood that others don't know and are there stories we don't want to tell? What do others know or think about the neighborhood that you know is false?

3. With the students divided into four groups, have them describe their school and its neighborhood as specific places with boundaries and characteristics. Each of the groups will work on one of the following topics: defining boundaries of the school; describing the school (including important places and various areas or zones); defining the boundaries of the neighborhood; and describing the neighborhood (using the same parameters as for the school).

*Overview* 

# Unit II: Mapping Your Neighborhood





One of the most valuable sources of information about a place is a map. Maps, at any scale, can record information as disparate as physical characteristics, economic and demographic data, and social or cultural features. Like any other source of information, though, maps reflect the biases of their creators and cannot alone describe a place accurately. This unit emphasizes the way maps can be used to structure and marshal information to tell a particular story. When maps are created by residents of a neighborhood, they serve as an important narrative of



life in that place. Students can create maps that portray certain aspects of their school neighborhood; in this project students concentrate on the place-based clues to the neighborhood's cultural and social life.



### Defining Neighborhood Boundaries

#### Lesson Summary

In this lesson students will begin to compile the information needed to create the neighborhood map. This lesson is primarily an activity workshop, although the lesson begins with an introductory discussion on the meaning of neighborhood boundaries and shared space. Responding to a series of discussion questions, students will begin to envision their school neighborhood as a collectively produced space marked by key places and boundaries. Beginning with a map of the greater neighborhood surrounding the school site, students will work in small groups to collectively determine the boundaries of the school neighborhood. In the next lesson these group maps will be used to establish agreed-upon boundaries for a base map.

#### **Objectives**

1. Students will be able to discuss the notion of boundaries and the shared spaces within those boundaries.

2. Students will be able to use street maps to locate the school neighborhood and to annotate these maps with their own understanding of the neighborhood.

**3.** Students will begin to develop a base map of the neighborhood for use in later lessons.



#### **Materials and Resources**

1. A street map of the area around the school, enlarged and photocopied onto acetate for use with an overhead projector.

2. Copies of the map on acetate for each of the student groups.

3. Washable markers for annotating the maps.

#### Key Terms

1. Neighborhood and boundaries (from Lesson 1).

2. Shared spaces. Places where the people in a neighborhood gather in public, such as parks, street corners, malls, schools, and so on.

**3.** *Map.* A visual documentation of a place that highlights specific information (municipal boundaries, social characteristics, streets and freeways, land use, historical data).

#### Lesson Plan

1. The class begins with an introductory discussion about the meaning of boundaries and shared spaces. Clues for determining the boundaries of the school neighborhood are the locations of important centers of activity, including intersections, parks, churches, schools, historic buildings, and monuments.

2. Using the following discussion questions, have students develop the information needed to locate the neighborhood on the street map:

•Starting from the school, how far can you travel and still feel you are in the immediate school area? •How much farther can you go and still feel you are in the same neighborhood?

•Where is the real center of your everyday life? Is it within one of the areas you have already identified?

•How do you know where the boundaries of these areas are? Are they defined by the municipality, or are they flexible, defined by the residents?

•Do these boundaries serve to isolate certain groups or keep them out of a particular place?

**3.** Divide students into small groups, each with a copy of the street map on acetate.

4. Building on the information gathered during the discussion (and during the previous lesson), have the students draw the boundaries of the school neighborhood on the street map. This neighborhood should include the area where most students live, the school grounds, and landmarks such as shopping centers and parks.



# Making a Neighborhood Map

#### **Lesson Summary**

Beginning with the maps created in Lesson 2, students will create a base map for a walking tour. Students will first present the maps they created in Lesson 2 and discuss overlapping areas and areas that appear on some but not all maps. Then students will agree on the boundaries for the base map, which will be drawn on the enlarged acetate street map from Lesson 2.

#### **Objectives**

1. Students will create a base map using the information developed in Lesson 2.

2. Students will refine their map-making skills.

#### **Materials and Resources**

- 1. Overhead projector.
- 2. Group maps developed in Lesson 2.
- 3. Enlarged acetate street map from Lesson 2.
- 4. Washable markers for annotating the large map.

#### Lesson Plan

1. Each student group will present the map it created in Lesson 2 on the overhead projector. Students will explain their decision-making process and talk about the key features that they have mapped. Students should discuss the differences between the maps and talk about the various reasons for these differences, identifying areas that are common to all the maps and those that appear on some but not others. These differences are often the result of the distance that many students must travel between home and school or their sense of belonging in particular areas within the school neighborhood. The following are some possible discussion questions:

- •What areas of the neighborhood are represented on all group maps? What areas appear on some but not others? Are any areas left out?
- •Do different groups occupy the areas not represented on every map?
- •Have we defined a core neighborhood? How big is it?

•Is this a walkable area, or do you need a car to get around?

2. After each group has presented its map, layer the maps on the overhead projector so that common areas are clearly visible.

3. Have the class reach a consensus on the boundaries of the neighborhood.

4. Create the base map by drawing these boundaries on a final sheet of acetate.



## Landmarks, Edges, and Paths

#### Lesson Summary

This lesson introduces students to the urban design and mapping terminology necessary for creating the neighborhood maps. The Mapping Local Knowledge curriculum aims not only to elicit information from students about their neighborhood, but to place this information within an urban design context. Students will learn how to categorize different places in their neighborhood by listing them and then, using simple observations — this place is busy, there are mostly stores on this block, everybody knows that church — they will assign these places to one of five categories: landmarks, nodes or centers, paths, districts, or edges. Finally, students, working in groups, will begin to locate these places on their group maps.

#### Objectives

**1**. Students will list significant places in the school neighborhood.

2. Students will become familiar with the urban design terms used to identify significant places in a neighborhood.

**3.** Students will use these terms to explain and categorize the significant places they have listed.

4. Students will plot these places on the base map created in Lesson 3.

#### **Key Terms**

1. Landmarks. Landmarks are places everyone in the neighborhood can identify. Often they are places of cultural or historical significance. They may also simply be places that are easily recognizable or visible, places that help you know where you are in a neighborhood. Examples of landmarks include: churches, schools, or other public buildings; monuments or examples of public art; and buildings that stand out on a street. Usually landmarks are places that most people in the neighborhood recognize, although an individual may also have a personal landmark, which is often a favorite place in a neighborhood, such as a shop, a house, or even a tree.

2. Nodes or centers. Nodes or centers are places where activity occurs, places where people gather. Like landmarks, nodes are places that many people recognize and that many people use. It is possible to identify a node by asking "Is this a place where you will find other people?" Some places, like schools, are both landmarks (because they stand out) and nodes (because they are centers of activity).

3. Districts. Districts are areas of a neighborhood where similar activities or buildings are located. The most common kinds of districts are residential (mostly houses) or commercial (mostly stores). You might also find industrial districts, recreational districts (parks, playgrounds, and gyms), and cultural districts (places known for their ethnic character). Because many parts of a neighborhood have more than one use, districts may overlap. 4. Paths. Paths are routes that people take across a neighborhood. Although streets are the most obvious type of path, alleys, sidewalks, and freeways are also paths. In mapping a neighborhood, students should look for the major paths — paths that connect the nodes in a neighborhood.

5. Edges. Neighborhoods are bounded by edges. These are lines in the neighborhood that are not easily crossed. Freeways are major edges, since there are only a few points where you can cross under or over the freeway. Vacant lots, wide streets, or fences surrounding places like factories, malls, or other large buildings may also be edges.

#### **Materials and Resources**

- 1. The acetate base map from Lesson 3.
- 2. Butcher paper.
- 3. Washable markers for annotating the map.

#### Lesson Plan

1. To begin the lesson, list on the butcher paper the students' suggestions for the major places in their neighborhood. This should be a very open list, including important buildings, parks, intersections, streets anything that students notice as they walk or drive down the street. This part of the lesson can be begun as a homework assignment, with students recording the places they note as they walk to and from school or the places they visit on the weekends. 2. Describe the five kinds of places that will be used to categorize the information for a map. If possible, give examples from the student list as you describe each of these five types of places. Visual aids such as slides or photographs can be used to illustrate these types of places.

**3.** Have students categorize the places they have listed. As they work they may also think of other places in the neighborhood that fit into these categories.



4. Describe the symbols used by urban designers to identify these types of places on a map. Using the symbols, add these places to the base map. The symbols below have been developed by urban designers.





Landmarks: Place a triangle on the map to indicate a landmark.



Nodes: Mark nodes with a star or asterisk.

Use the symbols on the maps and place the labels to the side and above. Make it clear,

# Unit III: Neighborhood Walking Tour and Map-Making Workshop



## Overview



Now that the students have created a base map defining the school neighborhood and key areas, it is important to test the map with actual experience. This unit is designed in two parts: a walking tour of the neighborhood (which may take longer than one class period) and a map-making workshop. These activities will give students the opportu-

nity to see their neighborhood with newly trained eyes, noticing areas they may have overlooked. Whereas earlier lessons relied on students' memories (or, perhaps, notes taken as they walked or rode through the neighborhood), the walking tour leads them into the neighborhood as trained observers.



# Walking Tour

#### Lesson Summary

During a tour of the school neighborhood, students will visit the easily accessible places identified in previous lessons. The goal of the tour is to locate these places within the neighborhood. The route should include the most important or culturally significant areas in the neighborhood. Students should be encouraged to identify other evidence of the cultural life of these neighborhoods, including examples of public art (murals and monuments). Students should document their tour in as many ways as possible, including note taking, photography, and drawing. Tours can be developed with the help of people who know the neighborhood well; these people can also be excellent tour leaders. Community organizations are a good source for volunteers. Care should be taken to ensure that the route can be easily covered in an hour.

#### **Objectives**

**1**. Students will explore the school neighborhood on foot.

2. During the tour, students will check the information recorded on a tour map against the actual sites they pass.

3. Students will take notes and photographs (photographs are optional) to document the neighborhood.

#### **Materials and Resources**

1. Simple tour maps of the neighborhood, one for each group of students. These maps can be a photocopy of the base map from Lesson 3, or, if possible, a simpler map made by tracing the key streets, boundaries, and landmarks from the base map onto another piece of paper.

2. Pens, paper, and clipboards for each student.

3. Disposable cameras (optional).



#### Lesson Plan

1. Divide the students into small groups and assign the following tasks within each group: group leader, map reader and annotator, note taker, and photographer. The group leader ensures that the group stops at all possibly important sites and that the group stays together. The map reader points out where each site is on the map and circles its location, or places a star on the map to indicate a new site, and writes down a name for each place. The note taker records on sheets of paper any descriptive information about each place (name, use, and appearance). If cameras are used, the photographer takes photos of these places, plus general shots of the neighborhood (see Lesson 8).

2. As the groups reach each place on the tour map, each student should stop and record as much information about the place as possible. Students should describe the look of the building, any activity occurring at the site, any details they know about its history, and any other observations.

**3.** In addition to the places previously recorded on the tour map, students should be encouraged to note additional landmarks, nodes, paths, districts, and edges.

4. At the completion of the walking tour, students return to the classroom with annotated maps and cameras.



# Making a Class Map

#### **Lesson Summary**

[Note: this lesson can be completed on the same day as the tour.]

Working in groups, students will transfer the information from their tour maps onto clean copies of the tour map, using the symbols learned in Lesson 4. Students will also add symbols for new sites as well as notes and photographs taken on the tour. Students should strive for a map that is readable, useful, and graphically interesting. Students will then work together to review each group's work. The completed maps will document the students' views of the neighborhood.

#### **Objectives**

1. Students will learn how to edit information to describe neighborhood places.

2. Students will practice graphic design techniques to make informative maps.

#### **Materials and Resources**

1. Maps and notes from the tour.

2. Copies of the tour map (either the simplified map suggested in Lesson 5 or the base map from Lesson 3). Enlarge these maps as much as possible (most copy stores can do copies as large as 24 by 36 inches).

3. Markers.

4. Photographs from the tour (if any).

5. Scissors for cutting the photographs.

6. Glue sticks for adhering the photographs to the map.

7. A sheet showing the urban design symbols presented in Lesson 4.

#### Lesson Plan

1. Working in groups (either those formed for the tour or, if more appropriate, a number of larger groups), students will combine all the information gathered on the tour and record it on a map. Using markers, students should transfer the locations of landmarks and other places onto the map, using the urban design symbols learned in Lesson 4. These elements should be placed on the map to correspond with their location in the neighborhood. Students may find it necessary to place more than one symbol at a given location (such as a street corner that is both a node and the site of a landmark). Different colors may help distinguish separate symbols.

2. Students should label these locations, using notes made during the tour. These descriptions should include the name of the building or place and a short phrase describing its importance. Students may note, for example, that a park is the place where they gather after school to play basketball or that a church is the oldest in the area and one attended by most families in the neighborhood. Descriptions should reflect students' impressions of the neighborhood. To keep the maps readable, students may choose to place all the labels in the margin surrounding the map and draw lines from these labels to the appropriate location.

3. If the students have taken photos, these can be pasted on the maps (either in their entirety or cut up, as for a collage). These photos may correspond to listed sites or may be more general photographs of the neighborhood or of students.

**4**. The final maps are then presented to the entire class, so that students can compare different representations of the same place.

# **Unit IV:** Perceptions of the Neighborhood





Although this curriculum emphasizes the students' own knowledge of the school neighborhood, the perspectives of others living in the neighborhood can fill in some of the gaps in the information collected by students in the course of creating their neighborhood maps. Using a questionnaire created by the class, students will expand their knowledge of the school neighborhood through interviews with family, neighbors, and others.



### Surveying the Neighborhood

#### Lesson Summary

After the maps of the school neighborhood are completed, students are ready to place this information into a larger context by comparing their information with information gathered from their neighbors and families. This unit introduces students to basic survey techniques. which can provide a way of starting a dialogue with others about the area. Students will prepare a questionnaire that will be used to fill in the gaps in their knowledge about the neighborhood. The information will contribute to a larger social and historical context for the students' maps. Local shopkeepers, librarians, and other community leaders are important potential interview subjects, particularly for students who are recent arrivals in the neighborhood. Other potential interview subjects are family members, such as grandparents, who have lived or worked in the neighborhood for several years.

#### **Objectives**

1. Students will learn about the usefulness of surveys as a historical research tool.

2. Students will create a questionnaire designed to expand their knowledge of the culture and history of the neighborhood.

**3.** Using the questionnaire, students will interview those who live or work in the neighborhood.

#### **Materials and Resources**

1. Sample questionnaire, including copies for the students.

#### **Key Terms**

1. Survey. A survey is a research method that uses questionnaires and interviews to gather information.

#### Lesson Plan

1. The class should begin with an overview of survey methods and uses. Questionnaires allow researchers to ask similar questions of many different people so that answers can be compared; in addition, they encourage interviewers to concentrate on the most important information about a given topic. The purpose of the survey in Mapping Local Knowledge is to add to the information already incorporated in the maps and to bring in fresh perspectives about the neighborhood. 2. Have the students discuss the questions they would like to see on the questionnaire. Using the sample as a guide, students can generate their own questions about the history and culture of their school neighborhood. Emphasize that these should be open-ended questions that encourage more than a "yes" or "no" answer. Students should be careful to define their questions narrowly, so that the people they interview can answer easily.

3. After the sample questionnaire has been reviewed and new questions have been proposed, students should edit the new questions to five to seven questionnaire items. Have all the students write down these final questions, or have them typed and distributed.

4. Students should test the questionnaire on one another so that difficult or confusing questions can be corrected.

5. Students may choose to interview in teams of two or more, particularly if they are planning to interview people outside their own families. Students who prefer to interview someone they know well (such as a family member) may not need to work in teams.

#### Sample Questionnaire

- 1. How long have you lived in this neighborhood?
- 2. How would you describe this neighborhood to an outsider?
- 3. Is the neighborhood safe, diverse, or changing?
- 4. Where does the neighborhood begin and end?
- 5. Is it easy to identify? How?
- 6. What is the main street of this neighborhood?
- 7. What one place sums up this neighborhood for you?

8. Do you know any important stories about the history of this place?

# **Unit V:** Other Ways of Documenting a Place



**Overview** 

In this final unit, students will learn other techniques of documenting a place and will prepare a final report on the project. Students will see that they have collected a great deal of valuable information about the neighborhood. This unit allows students to review ways of sharing information with others.

26 27



# Photography Workshop (Optional)

#### Lesson Summary

Although photography has become one of the most basic ways of documenting a place or neighborhood, many high school students have few, if any, opportunities to take photographs. This lesson introduces students to basic photography techniques and offers ways of integrating photographs of a place into the larger project. To familiarize themselves with the practice of photography, students are encouraged to photograph anything (people or places) that typify life in the school neighborhood. Since the emphasis of this lesson is on photography as a method of documentation rather than on photographic skills, disposable cameras are recommended. These cameras are increasingly accessible and are an inexpensive way to introduce students to photography. They come with film and flash, and can be easily operated by high school students. They require little skill and can be used without fear of breaking or damaging the camera. Since students may find the practice of photography intimidating, it may be useful to have them work in groups and share a camera.

#### **Objectives**

1. Students will learn basic photography techniques, using simple disposable cameras.

2. Students will learn how to use photographs to tell the story of their neighborhood.

**3.** Students will write captions for their photographs that reflect their understanding of the neighborhood.

#### **Materials and Resources**

1. Disposable cameras.

2. Paper and pencils.

#### Lesson Plan

1. Begin the class with a discussion of the elements and uses of photography. Points to consider include:

• Photography is one way of collecting and interpreting data. Photographs such as those in newspapers or magazines tell a particular story by focusing on specific information.

- •Photographs are messages with two elements: content and composition. Content is the visual information the elements that the photographer decides to include in the photograph; composition is the way those elements are arranged in the photograph. Students' snapshots should tell a story, and students should determine what the story of a photograph is before they snap the picture.
- •There are a number of ways content and composition define the message of a photograph. The story of a photograph can be changed by standing nearer or farther from the subject, standing in a certain place to use a particular background or amount of light, or taking a picture with or without the subject's knowledge. Some parts of a picture are hard to control (especially when taking a picture on the street), but students should stop and think about what the picture will look like and what it might say before they take the picture.

•Photography is used in this project to add to what students (and others) see in the school neighborhood.

There is no right or wrong story to tell. Photography is fun and creative, and it allows students to express a personal point of view.

2. Have the students talk about the kinds of photographs they might take. Subjects might include their house and family, themselves and their friends, their favorite places in the neighborhood, the neighborhood's main streets, and activities in the neighborhood.

3. Distribute the cameras (to each student or group) and set a schedule for turning the cameras back in.

4. After the cameras have been returned and the photographs developed, have students choose five or six photographs that are especially important for telling the story of their neighborhood. Then have students write short captions for each photograph. These captions will be used in their final reports.

5. Remaining photographs can be used on the maps, as discussed in Lesson 6.



### **Final Report**

#### Lesson Summary

Over the past eight lessons, students involved with the Mapping Local Knowledge curriculum have amassed a great deal of new information about the history and culture of their school neighborhoods. This information, in turn, reveals much about the students themselves. In this final activity, students will collate this information and create individual final reports. If web facilities are available, students can create these final projects on internet web sites with the help of teachers at the school or at community technology centers. Materials can also be easily collected in a binder or other folder.

#### **Elements of the Final Report**

1. Description of the school neighborhood. Have each student write a one- or two-paragraph description of the neighborhood: where it is, who lives there, what it looks like, and how long the student has been a part of the neighborhood.

2. Base map. Have students copy the map created in Lesson 3.

**3.** Tour map. Students should also include a copy of the map their group created after the walking tour, plus any notes or drawings produced while they were walking.

4. Photographs and captions. Have students paste each of the five or six photographs they selected on a separate page and add the caption at the bottom of the page.

5. Final assessment of the project. As a way of analyzing the project (both from the students' perspective and for assistance in planning future uses of the curriculum), have each student write a short (one-page) description of the project that stresses his or her impressions and suggestions.