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Original

Georeferencing Roberti Grosseteste Epistolae / Sparavigna, Amelia Carolina. - In: PHILICA. - ISSN 1751-3030. - ELETTRONICO. - 2016:563(2016), pp. 1-4.

Availability:

This version is available at: 11583/2629131 since: 2016-01-25T17:14:01Z

Publisher:

Philica

Published

DOI:

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Georeferencing Roberti Grosseteste Epistolae

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Abstract: In this paper, we are proposing a georeferencing of "Roberti Grosseteste Epistolae", that is, of the Letters written by Robert Grosseteste, one of the most prominent thinkers of the Thirteenth Century, Bishop of Lincoln from 1235 AD till his death, on 9 October 1253. The georeferencing is evidencing the network of the thinker, in particular, his links with other episcopal seats in England. The map we obtain on Google Earth shows the large influence of Grosseteste on his geographic area and political environment.

Keyword: Georeferencing of culture knowledge, Smartphone, Google Earth, GIS.

Georeferencing is the association of something with a location in a map. Then, it is naturally used for any structure that can be related to a geographical area, such as points of interest, monuments, roads, and so on [1]. Usually, the action of georeferencing is made by means of a geographic information system (GIS), designed to capture, store and analyse spatial or geographical data [2]. Therefore, any object can have a reference on a map, that is, a "georeference", like in the scholar articles we find the references for formulas, theories, data and experiments to previous published works. As proposed in [3,4], we can, for instance, georeference the life of scholars, and use GIS for education and for cultural knowledge, and also for teaching sciences too [5-8]. For what concerns the use of GIS in education programs, the effectiveness of it had been addresses and tested in [9]. Reference [9] is dated 2003, and the use of smartphones was not so popular in that year as it is today. Then, we can imagine that a georeferencing of cultural contents can be more appealing now, if it is implemented on a smartphone.

Today, we have a GIS tool that can be used on smartphones and this is the Google Earth. As shown in [4], Google Earth is offering the possibility of virtual tours on historic contents; in the given reference, we have used the life of Isaac Newton, but, of course, the approach can be applied to any other cultural case. In Google Earth, the data can be saved in the KML (Keyhole Markup Language) format, which is the notation of XML language.

Besides linking data to some locations, we can try to investigate the possibility of discover some features concerning the life of scholars and their relevance on coeval society from the geolocation of data on maps. Here, we propose an example. Let us georeference the "Roberti Grosseteste Epistolae", that is, the

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Letters written by Robert Grosseteste, one of the most prominent thinkers of the Thirteenth Century, Bishop of Lincoln from 1235 AD till his death, on 9 October 1253 (the reader can find information on Grosseteste at [10]). His scientific work was very important for the Oxonian school [11-13], and of some of his treatises we have discussed in several papers (among them [14-18]).

The Letters of Grosseteste had been collected in a volume [19]. Let us use of Ref.19 the Contents of the Letters, from page xcvi to page cxxxi. The list is giving the person to which the letter is addressed, and also the address; for instance, Letter CXVI is written to Walter Gray, Archbishop of York. Using the places we find in the abovementioned Contents, and marking them on Google Earth, we have Figure 1. We can compare this map to that shown in the Figure 2, which is giving England under William the Conqueror [20] (this map is "older" than the one necessary for a proper comparison, but very interesting because it is showing main roads too). Georeferencing and comparison to an historical map is evidencing the large network of the thinker, in particular, his links with other episcopal seats in England. It is clear that the influence of Grosseteste on his geographic area and political environment was large, covering England almost completely. The scholarly contributions of Grosseteste were profound and far-reaching several philosophic and scientific schools, but, as told in [21], remarkably Grosseteste "did not allow them to prevent him from taking his pastoral duties seriously". This is clearly evidenced by the georeferencing of his letters.

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Figure 1: Using the addresses of Grosseteste's Letters that we find in [19], and marking them on Google Earth, we have the map given in the Figure. Note that Grosseteste's political network was covering England almost completely.



Figure 2: A part of a historical map of the Dominions of William the Conqueror about 1087. The map is "older" than the one necessary for a proper comparison, but very interesting because it is showing main roads too. Credits: University of Texas at Austin. Historical Atlas by William Shepherd (1923-26).

Information about this Article

This Article was published on 25th January, 2016 at 15:42:20 and has been viewed 3 times.

The full citation for this Article is:

Sparavigna, A. (2016). Georeferencing Roberti Grosseteste Epistolae. PHILICA.COM Article number 563.

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