Final Report Executive Summary

During the fall of 2015 and the spring of 2016 a project team was formed to work towards the FY16 Action:

*Supply up-to-date geospatial data equipment, data resources, and dedicated staff to provide service across disciplines in the use of geospatial data and to promote the ULS' role as a campus hub for geospatial data activity and expertise.*

The group gathered information, most significantly through in-person interviews with at least 14 GIS and spatial data stakeholders at Pitt, and created a report of findings and recommendations.

Key Findings

- At Pitt, the landscape of GIS, spatial analysis, and mapping can be characterized as a decentralized network of academic departments and research centers.
- There is no single academic center for GIS, but there are several schools, departments, programs, and centers that have strong, consistent activity around GIS, including incorporating GIS to some degree in course offerings.
- Below this first tier group of academic units is another tier that includes a diverse group of disciplines. The units in this second tier show increasing interest in geospatial data and techniques, but usually lack explicit GIS and mapping instruction in courses.
- Several of the "first tier" campus units maintain their own computer labs that support geospatial and GIS work. However, these labs are departmental and generally not available to people from outside the unit.
- Overall, the value and role of hardware in labs may be changing. The fact that many students prefer to use their own devices makes some faculty and students cautious about the value of labs in general.
- Work happening in this area is diverse and widespread: we identified at least seven distinct clusters of activity around GIS, mapping, and spatial data across a wide variety of disciplines.
- The portion of current ULS employee positions dedicated to GIS support amounts to probably no more than .3FTE. *(Note: these positions are currently vacant.)* At this level, one library specialist recorded 45 GIS consults between September 2015 and June 2016.
- Needs at Pitt around GIS and spatial data services and support can be grouped into two main categories: 1) in-person support and training, and 2) facilitating information exchange and social connections.
- Access to computer hardware in a lab configuration remains important, but we consistently heard space needs expressed from a slightly different angle: faculty and students we spoke with are looking for a space than can serve as a hub for geospatial support and a place that will support social interaction.
Large format printing for maps and spatial visualizations was a service and equipment need that came up in many discussions.

The ULS maintains a GIS LibGuide and several other related LibGuides covering Geology, maps, topographic maps, and Pittsburgh census information. These appear to be adequate means of supporting discovery and access needs.

Local data, and in particular historic geospatial data that is often inherent in archival and special collections materials, is a strong and mostly unmet need.

Several faculty members observed "a lot of data is being created at Pitt that just disappears," and mentioned student work as particularly vulnerable.

Summary of Recommendations:

- **Overall:** Position the ULS as a hub and connection point for spatial information use, GIS, and mapping at Pitt.
- **Frame ULS support more broadly than "GIS" to include expertise in spatial information, spatial literacy, spatial analysis, GIS, mapping, and pedagogical support for the above.
- **Establish an organizational structure, staffing, and service model to support the following needs:**
  - deep expertise around spatial information, GIS, and mapping;
  - disciplinary perspectives on spatial information; and
  - robust availability at a public-facing service point.

We recommend the following structure and service model to address the stated needs:

- A Data Librarian with a specialization in spatial information, GIS, and mapping.
- A GIS Service Team, led by the Data Librarian, including Liaison librarians whose subject areas frequently include geospatial / GIS / mapping activity.
- A cohort of specialized student workers to provide a high degree of in-person, frontline support for GIS and spatial data work.

- **Build community by offering programming, events, training, and outreach to faculty and students, and by advocating for a vibrant GIS community and infrastructure at the university.**
- Maintain a small lab of 6-12 machines equipped with GIS software; use this lab as a service point for drop-in consultation and small group/individual consultation and support.
- On a trial basis, offer large-format printing through a cost-recovery fee model.
- Encourage use of the Digital Scholarship Commons and its screens for presentations, programming, and events that highlight spatial and map-based learning and research.
- Continue to keep GIS, map, and spatial data LibGuides current and aligned with user needs.
- Enrich appropriate ULS archives and special collections material with geospatial metadata.
- Create a Pitt project showcase and resource hub to support discovery of activity, projects, and people working with spatial information, GIS, and mapping at the university.
- Connect ULS GIS service to ULS research data management initiatives.
- Support the deposit of spatial data to D-Scholarship@Pitt and the Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center.