

## Editor's Preface

---

Matthew Restall, *Pennsylvania State University*

Maps are personal. They inscribe onto paper the perceptions of their creators and the experiences of individuals and communities. In doing so, they achieve something alchemical. They take elements and echoes of personal lives and use them to forge something new and perhaps even magical. That something is neither the straightforward text that historians have traditionally sought nor the kind of image that art historians have most commonly studied, and yet maps are both text and image, both a writing system and a visual medium, both graphic texts and coded objects containing their own ciphers. Thus they are now keenly sought and analyzed by the historians and art historians who have recently been building exciting new fields of Mesoamerican and colonial Latin American historical cartography. Those fields are richly represented in this special issue. The guest editors observe in their introduction that “maps are never neutral, objective, or apolitical,” a statement that speaks succinctly to the scholarly potential of these cartographic fields and acts effectively as a challenge to which the contributors to this volume have engagingly risen.

It has thus been a pleasure and an honor to see this special issue evolve from the intriguing set of papers that I heard and saw at the 2011 meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory (ASE); to work with Alexander Hidalgo and John F. López, who have been exemplary guest editors; to publish new work by cartographic scholars as eminent as Dana Leibsohn and Barbara E. Mundy and as brightly promising as Hidalgo, López, and María Castañeda de la Paz; to complete, via this brief preface, a bookend pairing with Thomas B. F. Cummins; and, last but certainly not least, to highlight the dedication of this special issue to Maureen Ahern (1936–2012). A

member of the original ASE panel in Pasadena, California, Maureen was a beloved teacher and gifted scholar who made a lifetime of contributions to panels and volumes such as this one; she would have been delighted to see it come to final fruition.

It is also an honor—but a supremely sad one—to include in this special issue, just as it goes into the final stages of production, an obituary for James Lockhart. Jim was a towering figure of lasting influence on all scholars of colonial Mexico, regardless of their disciplines; in so many ways, this special issue would not have been possible without him.