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Thomas Crimmel is an undergraduate student in the department of Geography at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Crimmel currently works under Dr. Anabel Ford at the MesoAmerican Research Center (MARC) assisting with technical details of mapping the ancient Maya city of El Pilar with LiDAR technology. In addition to this, he also helped create and now maintains the data hosted on the Maya Forest Atlas (marc-ucsb.opendata.arcgis.com), an online repository of the centers data made public. He had a central role in developing the web-based atlas and is currently working on developing a similar repository for Dr. Swati Chattopadhyay and her research. Crimmel, in addition to leading a team of eight undergraduates at MARC and taking a full load of classes, is currently working to understand ancient Maya subsistence strategies through GIS based models. In the next couple of years, he plans to complete his degree, work a season in Belize, and take his work into graduate school.

Position Statement

For the past 20 years, Dr. Anabel Ford and her team at the MesoAmerican Research Center have been collecting data at the ancient Maya city of El Pilar on the border of Peten, Guatemala and Cayo, Belize. The UCSB Maya Forest GIS is a compilation of disparate yet comparative data on the tropical lowlands of Mesoamerica that serve as a basis for the center’s work. Working with the UCSB Library’s Geospatial Data Curator Tom Brittnacher, we have identified key areas of weakness and target areas for improvement in the development of the Maya Forest GIS. Our Digital Data Acquisition and Testing for Archiving, DDATA, is developing a standard protocol designed to build and integrate a useable, consistent, and well-documented file naming and storage system for our GIS. Implementing our DDATA protocol will ensure that the UCSB Maya Forest GIS has consistency and validity for use on the El Pilar project. More importantly, the success of the DDATA protocol will serve as a model tool for research professionals who are ready to effectively utilize and share their stored spatial data.