Karl Grossner is currently serving as Technical Director of World-Historical Gazetteer (WHG), a three-year NEH-funded project collaboratively conceived and designed at the University of Pittsburgh’s World History Center. He received a PhD in Geography at UC Santa Barbara in 2010, and worked within the Center for Spatial Studies from its founding in 2008 through 2011. Karl’s research interests concern “computing place” for historical scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, including knowledge representations in databases, Linked Open Data, and the diachronic analyses of place they afford.

**Perspective**

The widely noted spatial turn in the humanities continues unabated, and in fact is gathering momentum. Researchers in numerous fields, including history, literature, fine arts, linguistics, cultural heritage, philology, and archaeology, are including geographic and/or explicitly spatial perspectives in their work. This GeoHumanities research is largely historical, and in most cases an initial goal is mapping references to places gathered from relevant texts and tabular data. That geographic window on phenomena of interest is often followed by some type of spatial analysis. A significant hurdle in this process is resolving the place names found in historical sources to locations. The further back in time one goes, the harder it is to discover geographic coordinates by reliably matching those names with records in modern gazetteer resources like GeoNames, Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN), or Wikidata. While there are a handful of historical gazetteers and historical GIS projects, they are typically focused on a single country or region/period combination. The World-Historical Gazetteer project, as an aggregator of linked open gazetteer data for all regions and periods in history, will offer programmatic and graphical search services having more comprehensive spatial-temporal coverage than any existing resource. It is a scholarly resource, in that virtually all indexed place records are attestations of places derived from cited historical source material.

The project has a further goal of indexing annotation data for what we are calling “traces”—historical entities of any kind with spatial-temporal footprints of interest. This linking of research objects (people, events, texts) by means of place will enable not only directed search, but serendipitous discovery in rich “place portal” pages on the WHG web site, pedagogical applications, and many kinds of “platial” analyses.