

## **San Diego State University Launches MAPS:**

### **An Online Directory to Religious Groups in the San Diego and Tijuana Region**

On Tuesday, July 14, 2009, the Department of Religious Studies at San Diego State University launched its comprehensive, online directory to religious groups in San Diego and Tijuana. Called MAPS (for Metropolitan Area Pluralism Study), the website provides addresses and contact information for more than 1000 religious organizations in the region. The URL for the site is: <http://geoinfo.sdsu.edu/maps/>.

Funded by the President's Leadership Fund and the College of Arts and Letters Critical Thinking Grants Fund, MAPS is co-sponsored by the Department of Religious Studies and the Department of Geography. "Religious Studies has done the legwork to provide the content," according to Project Director Rebecca Moore, "while Geography has provided the technical support in creating an interactive database."

Each listing is linked to GoogleMaps, wherever possible, so that users can quickly find what they are seeking. In addition, more than half of the sites have Google street views so that visitors can also see what the location looks like before they go. Those using the site can also specify a geographic area in order to find a particular denomination within that area.

Research on MAPS began last summer, and has continued throughout the academic year. In Fall 2008, more than 100 students from 4 different Religious Studies classes made a concerted effort to see never-before-visited religious sites. About 150 of the 1000 sites posted online have received student or faculty visits.

While MAPS provides an important resource to the community, as well as to visitors to the region, the long-term goal is to use the database as a way to establish networks between

religious institutions and nonprofits groups that are providing a variety of social services to area residents. “This is just the first step in a much larger project of identifying and documenting religious activities in the region,” said Moore. “We know the site is not yet complete, and hope that people will contact us with additions and corrections. But we also know that this directory is the first of its kind, and so is very important for understanding the wonderful religious diversity that exists in San Diego and Tijuana.”

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