The Public Mapping Project
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The Public Mapping Project builds upon the conviction that an engaged public can create better governance by being active participants in public policy making. Our focus is *redistricting*, the periodic redrawing of district boundaries to achieve better representation—or at least that’s the idea. Seemingly arcane requirements demand analyses of large amounts of data manipulated by tricky software applications. A steep technological learning curve serves politicians’ interests, since it shuts the public out of the process, allowing those in power to draw districts that meet their goals, with little public oversight. We wish to lower these technological barriers and foster greater public participation and transparency whenever states and cities draw their legislative boundaries.

Many people share our vision and helped make it a reality. Public mapping cannot exist without the public, so foremost,
we would like to thank the hundreds, if not thousands, of people who have drawn their own maps using our District Builder software or similar applications. Their creativity helped reveal how to build better districts. We are also grateful to the many teachers and professors who brought public mapping into their classrooms and volunteered their time to help their students learn and participate in this vital democratic process.

We could not have done our work without generous support from donors. Larry Hansen at the Joyce Foundation was an early supporter of redistricting reform action, and we remember him with deep fondness. Daniel Goroff at the Sloan Foundation has been instrumental in providing support for DistrictBuilder’s development. Other organizations that have contributed support include the William Penn Foundation, the Judy Ford Wason Center for Public Policy at Christopher Newport University, and Amazon Corporation. Robert Cheetham and the crew at Azavea Corporation took the lead in developing our software. It would not exist without their extensive—and sometimes even pro bono—efforts.

Much of our work in educating the public on redistricting arose from a collaboration with the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University. Justin Levitt, now at Loyola Law School, authored the A Citizen’s Guide to Redistricting and maintains the All About Redistricting website. Other Brennan Center collaborators include Kesha Gaskins, Michael Li, Myna Perez, and Wendy Weiser.
Thomas Mann arranged for us to become Visiting Fellows at the Brookings Institution, and he and Norm Ornstein at the American Enterprise Institute served as co-chairs of our advisory board. Other advisory board members who graciously donated their time include Mike Fortner, Republican Illinois State Representative (95th District); Carling Dinker, staff member to Democratic U.S. Representative John Tanner (TN-8); Mary Wilson, past president of the League of Women Voters; Derek Cressman, then the western regional director of state operations, Common Cause; Gerry Hebert, executive director and director of litigation of the Campaign Legal Center; Nancy Bekavac, director of Scientists and Engineers for America; Leah Rush, executive director of the Midwest Democracy Network; Anthony Fairfax, president of Census Channel; Karin Mac Donald, director of the California Statewide Database at the Institute for Government Studies, University of California, Berkeley; and Kim Brace, president of Elections Data Services.

Leah Rush deserves special mention. She helped us coordinate with Midwest Democracy Network’s members as we promoted public mapping education and opportunities in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. We wish we could name all the members of the MDN who assisted us in this effort, and we would especially like to thank Catherine Turcer with Ohio Common Cause; Cynthia Canary with Illinois Campaign for Political Reform; Mike
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Michael McDonald served as lead author, authored early versions of the manuscript and was responsible for redrafting the manuscript in its current form; Micah Altman and Michael McDonald co-led in the conception of the work, including the core ideas, analytical framework, and statement of research questions. All authors contributed to research and analysis and to the writing process through direct writing, critical review, and commentary.

Our mentors cultivated our interest in redistricting. Gary King brought us together by hiring us as his research associates at Harvard University. We are deeply indebted to other scholars: Bruce Cain at Stanford University; Gary Cox at Stanford University; Bernard Grofman at University of California, Irvine; Morgan Kousser at California Institute of Technology; David Lublin at American University, Arthur Lupia at the University of Michigan; Daniel Smith at the
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