Ongoing Landscape Research

Using a methodology created by the U.S. National Park Service, the Cultural Landscape Lab (CLL) has identified fifteen discrete "character" landscapes at Wormsloe based on physical characteristics and cultural uses, and has begun organizing information pertaining to each. Substantial fieldwork is needed in order to fully document site features and characteristics. The CLL has maintained a relationship with the University of Georgia (UGA) Center for Remote Mapping Science (CRMS) to integrate newly acquired inventory data with existing data to build a robust database that will yield a richer understanding of the complexities shaping the Wormsloe landscape. Ultimately, the data will be incorporated into a Cultural Landscape Report.

This enormous amount of information must be organized within a framework which permits efficient data retrieval by future research assistants. To assist this process, a streamlined file structure was adopted to enable a more efficient work flow with easy file retrieval, while providing continuity for future research endeavors. The primary focus of the Cultural Landscape Lab team during fall 2012 was the reorganization and relocation of data that has been collected and produced into data themes. Additionally, an exhaustive inventory of all Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data was completed to determine information gaps and establish priority areas for future data processing. From this framework, any additional field-collected data will be added to the GIS database.

Ongoing Field Work

Slave Cabin Landscape
Three site visits were conducted over the course of the semester to assist with future planning initiatives for the proposed research and dormitory complex. During the course of these visits, all significant vegetation (totaling 126 features) and forest boundaries were mapped by Geographic Positioning System (GPS) for the front and rear yards of the existing slave cabin landscape, including the marsh edge. Information was gathered for species type, overall health condition, and diameter at breast height (DBH) for each specimen. CRMS has provided data pertaining to utility locations, recently discovered building footprints, and butterfly research plot locations. The data is currently being compiled into detailed base maps of existing site conditions.

Professor David Spooner of the College of Environment and Design has been contacted to assist with the development of several conceptual design alternatives for the proposed facilities. The CLL has helped facilitate this process by contributing research and base information. From

this base information, a suitability analysis—comprised of overlaying soils, elevation, hydrology, significant historic features, and vegetation data—shall be developed for determining the most appropriate location for the facilities in order to avoid causing irreparable harm to this character-defining cultural landscape.

Estate House and Grounds
Due to the constrained schedule of our site visits, it is often most efficient to utilize field forms in combination with the GPS units for collecting data. As such, any information that was transcribed onto the field forms will need to be added as attributes in GIS; this includes information pertaining to measurements, materiality, feature condition, as well as vegetative type and size. To date, information has been entered for all significant trees found within the gardens and immediate grounds as well as for all garden features. Detailed measurements gathered for the existing house are currently being processed, and shall be incorporated into the existing base plan for the formal gardens once completed.

Future Research Goals
While great strides have been made over the course of this past semester, there is still much work that needs to be done. My primary responsibility for next semester will build upon work that has been conducted over the course of the past academic year for the Estate House and Grounds character area. I will continue to make refinements to the base information that has been compiled for the formal gardens, updating information in GIS for vegetation and hardscape features. A secondary component of my research will focus on exploring additional possibilities for how the information might be broadcast to visitors. As part of my thesis, I am exploring innovative interpretation methods, which leverage the capabilities of GIS and other visualization software. Utilizing the formal gardens as a framework for this exploration, I intend to graphically represent the physical evolution of the gardens over time.