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Revising *Humbead's Revised Map of the World*: Taking a Virtual Folk Music World Into Virtual Reality

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Humbead's Revised Map of the World reimagines the globe from the perspective of the West Coast folk scene and merging hippie counterculture. First printed in 1968, with subsequent iterations produced in 1969 and 1970, it was created by Rick Shubb and Earl Crabb, two Bay Area folk music aficionados. Like Saul Steinberg's famous *New Yorker* magazine cover *View of the World from 9th Avenue*, published in 1976, *Humbead's* is meant to be a funny artifact that cartographically distorts Euclidean space and Mercator projection in order to suggest a more accurate "mattering map." It presents a folk pangea in which centers of the folk revival border each other while the "rest of the world" is a tiny island off to the side. Numerous other gags and in-jokes appear on the map. Around its edges, it also contains over 800 names in its "population," some expected, others quite surprising, some famous, others obscure.



Fig. 1. Rick Shubb and Earl Crabb, *Humbead's Revised Map of the World*, 1968.

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What would it mean to create a “virtual reality” out of this imaginary world that proposes a more accurate perceptual representation of the world from the vantage point of the folk revival? Could virtual reality produce new ways of experiencing the mattering in this “mattering map” for both aficionados and newcomers to the cultural history of the 1960s folk revival? Since it is a map fundamentally shaped and influenced by music, how can virtual reality adopt *sound* as well as visual data to bring this map more vividly to “life” so that a visitor to this virtual world might enter into it more evocatively? So too, how might virtual reality best handle densities of information such as the 800 names surrounding the map of the many details on the map itself? And how might virtual reality effectively and playfully address the zany humor of the map? Finally, how might a virtual visit to Humbead’s Revised Map of the World manifest itself in various modes of virtual reality: not only an online environment, but also a virtual reality room (with or without headsets) in a museum gallery exhibit?

As a historian, my explorations of virtual reality with *Humbead’s Revised Map of the World* remain very preliminary—just a few investigations using Google TiltBrush and an Oculus Rift headset along with a lot of conceptual thinking about how virtual reality might allow the historically curious to more deeply investigate the cultural history of the folk revival. How might we activate the history of *Humbead’s Revised Map of the World* and the folk revival from which it arose by quite literally (or, wait, is it virtually?) enabling the public to walk around on and in it, to interact with it? Can we inhabit this artifact, and if so how can we do so most effectively to investigate the history and significance of its details and overall vision of a “revised” world?

In this demonstration at the 6th Annual RIT Frameless Labs XR Symposium on Friday, November 19th, participants can explore the map in Google Tilt Brush. Exploration and potential collaboration by technologists and anyone interested in the project is heartily welcome. Overall, through interdisciplinary interaction and development, the goal of the project is to enter into the map as it gets revised yet again into a virtual reality object through which—and in which—we might better perceive, investigate, and explore the contents and meanings of *Humbead’s Revised Map of the World*, the 1960s folk music revival, and post-World War II American cultural history as a whole.

For more, see *Revising Humbead’s Revised Map of the World: Mapping Cultural Data in the Sixties Folk Music Revival*, <https://www.michaeljkramer.net/revising-humbeads-revised-map-of-the-world-digitally-remapping-the-sixties-folk-music-revival>.

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