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### University of Virginia Landscape Studies Initiative

The UVA Center for Cultural Landscapes, in partnership with the School of Architecture, the College of Arts and Sciences, the University Libraries, and the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH), announces the launch of the University of Virginia Landscape Studies Initiative with a planning grant from the The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and additional support from the Jefferson Trust and the UVA Provost. The Landscape Studies Initiative will catalyze the research of scholars, teachers, students, writers, and practitioners in the areas of anthropology, archaeology, architecture, art history, cultural history, engineering, environmental planning, geography, landscape architecture, and several disciplines in the social and natural sciences. The Initiative will eventually grow to include digital humanities projects and research initiatives, curricular programs, field studies, professional development programs, annual book prizes, and occasional book reprints in conjunction with partner organizations. It will establish the University of Virginia as a pre-eminent university for landscape studies through access to rare archival materials in a library setting, as well as the development of advanced digital resources that enable enhanced interpretation of word, image, and design. The initiative will further an understanding of the meaning of place through new research and curricular programs that combine close readings of primary texts, drawings, photographs, maps, and models with field-based experiential learning and innovative spatial visualizations.

The UVA Landscape Studies Initiative builds on four strengths within the University of Virginia: the School of Architecture's Center for Cultural Landscapes, the Sara Shallenberger Brown Cultural Landscapes & Sites Initiative, the Environmental Humanities initiative within the College of Arts & Sciences, and the digital humanities expertise of the University Libraries and IATH. Over the past year, deeper collaboration between these areas has been catalyzed by conversations with Elizabeth Barlow Rogers around the donation of her rare book collection in landscape history and the creation of an information architecture around her 2001 publication *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History*. Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, a landscape scholar, advocate, founding Director of the Central Park Conservancy and current President of the Foundation for Landscape Studies, has been working with Merrill D. Peterson Professor of Landscape Architecture Elizabeth Meyer and her colleague, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture Michael Lee, to explore the goals of this initiative's first phase. Rogers's book, the most highly regarded textbook on the history of landscape design, "considers what the evolution of human interaction with the land reveals about the values of cultures that planned and built them." As such, it provides an excellent chronological and thematic conceptualization through which our initiative will seamlessly weave the humanities, biophysical and social sciences, and design disciplines together.

Meyer and Lee will lead the collaborative design and development of a new interface for texts, maps, narratives, and experience of significant cultural landscapes that builds on the thematic structure of Rogers's book to offer insights into human and non-human entanglements. Under their leadership, the initiative will launch with a dual pilot project – the simultaneous study of Central Park, New York and Park Muskau, Germany – and associated curriculum. The pilot studies will be test beds for the larger project, in two distinctive respects. First, they will allow us to investigate these two sites as nodal points that bring the many intellectual threads of the Landscape Studies digital resource together. Second, they will allow interdisciplinary faculty teams to develop a pedagogical model that uses the Landscape Studies digital resource in the classroom.