Location, Location, Location

Thomas M. Lucas, S.J.
In November 1786, the tidewater clergymen met and took stock. Their former affiliation as members of the Society of Jesus had been canonically dissolved with the papal suppression of the order in 1773. They asked themselves hard questions: how could they maintain some kind of ties among themselves, how best to contribute apostolically to the Roman Catholic experiment in the new United States? After prayer and research, they did what their Jesuit instincts and training urged them to do: they found the right site, and decided to open a school.

The right site was Maryland's largest tobacco port, a prosperous village called George Town on the Potomac River, a crossroads that five years later was incorporated into a new federal city planned as the new nation's capital. In 1791 one student enrolled in Georgetown Academy. By the time the federal government was transferred to Washington City's "streets without buildings" in 1800, the Academy's seventy-five students occupied two good-sized buildings constructed by ex-Jesuits in the nearby village. Ignatius Loyola himself couldn't have chosen a better place to begin.

In choosing to found a school in a strategic place, the ex-Jesuits of Maryland responded to a deep tug emanating from their Ignatian DNA. They did what the order's founder had taught his followers to do 220

Thomas M. Lucas, S.J., is founding chair of the University of San Francisco's department of fine and performing arts. He is author of Landmarking: City, Church, and Jesuit Urban Strategy (1997).
years before: they carefully assessed the needs of the situation, then sought and found the means and the right place to do their work. They secured a convenient site—the commodo luogo that Ignatius referred to more than a hundred times in his correspondence—then set to work raising money, rafters, and people’s consciousness.¹

America’s church needed to train leaders, clerical and lay. It needed visibility in a country where there was no established religion. It needed an intellectually credible platform from which it could reach out to the Church’s members and to other influential people. The Academy on the Pawtomack was a response to these needs, the beginning of experiment in which we are still engaged today.

The Taproot

It took Ignatius seventy-six letters and ten years to cinch the deal. Grand Duke of Tuscany Cosimo II and his flighty, casino-addicted Spanish bride Eleonora of Toledo toyed with Ignatius, one day insisting that they might want a college in their capital city of Florence, then, distracted by a hunting trip or the hinterlands or pressure from the burghers of lesser cities, suggesting that Pisa or Prato would be better—and cheaper—sites for such an enterprise. Ignatius, master of the mystical life, reached back into his preconversion training as a Spanish courtier to instruct his Jesuit ambassadors to the grand ducal court on the niceties of Spanish etiquette. He removed Jesuits who scolded the royals, rearranged assignments for one who won the grand duchess’ favor, and sent him detailed instructions about how they should tease Electora with accounts of the Infanta Juana of Spain’s generosity to the Society.

Ignatius spelled out his reasons for wanting to locate his college in downtown Florence rather than in the less important cities of Pisa and Prato. His arguments form a brief case-statement for the Jesuits “preferential option” for urban ministry:

The arguments that you must present to her Excellency the Duchess for establishing that the college be located at Florence rather than at Pisa:

First, Because a house has already been offered in Florence.

Second, Because it will be of greater public advantage for the city of Florence; since thus its younger sons who cannot be sent afar can be taught by Ours [the Jesuits] in humanities, and thus will be better prepared to go later to Pisa, where advanced courses are taught to those already prepared and more capable.

Third, Because it is very important that the children of Florence, from their early years, should be taught Christian doctrine and good morals together with their letters, and receive that good seed which with maturity will produce fruits of great virtue, as we see already in Messina, Palermo, and other places where, using this same method in our colleges, admirable fruit is borne even in the tender years of the citizens’ sons.

Fourth, Because there is a greater number of poor people in Florence who, not being able to pay teachers nor go to Pisa, will have the convenience of studying in Florence at least the fundamentals of Latin and Greek.

Fifth, Because in Florence, there will be greater opportunity to aid the populace with confessions and preaching.

Sixth, Because being closer to the rulers in Florence than in Pisa, they will better understand the proceedings of the college. (150)

The Jesuit rationale of urban ministry is clearly laid out in these six points. All classes of people are to be served, from the scions of the royal family to the poor who cannot afford to send their children for costly private instruction. Although the primary motivation for the new foundation is educational, the Society’s ordinary ministries of the Word figure importantly in the equation of greater service to greater numbers and, hence, the “greater service of God.” Finally, the document stresses cooperation with local authorities for the “edification” of the city.

After seventy-six letters and ten years of diplomatic struggle, Ignatius got exactly what he wanted: the downtown church of S. Giovannino next to the Medici Palace,

¹ The fundamental thesis about Jesuit urbanism is laid out in my book, Landmarking. For the sake of brevity, I will refer throughout the present article to texts as they are cited in that book, rather than to the many original Latin, Spanish, and Italian sources that are fully footnoted there. All page numbers cited in the text refer to Landmarking, unless otherwise noted. For commodo luogo see pp. 136-142, and 175-193.
in the shadow of the Medici family church of S. Lorenzo, one block from the Duomo, with enough land to build a college and residence (148-51).

Almost everyone approaches the writings of a saint with some degree of trepidation: the prospect of being overwhelmed by pieties and platitudes is daunting even to the religious person. What characterizes Ignatius' writings and continues to intrigue us today in his approach to life, however, is sturdy practicality rather than high-blown spiritual rhetoric. Only about five percent of Ignatius's 6,800 extant letters can be classified as spiritual instruction, but there are more than 2,300 references to sitting, strategy, and financial issues relevant to the order's urban mission (134-36, 175-3). The archives of Ignatius's correspondence can be seen to serve as the prototype for the files of any AJCU school's development or advancement office.

**Discernment for Education**

Ignatius is a spirituality of discernment, of focused listening to needs, of ordering and subordinating goods, of making strategic choices. Nowhere is this pattern of discernment better demonstrated than in the Jesuits' move into education.

Contrary to popular mythology, the Society of Jesus was not founded to run schools or acquire real estate. Ignatius and his first companions, some of the best educated Catholic clerics of the early sixteenth century, recognized that the Church and the world had many diverse needs, and that it needed a corps of flexible, well-trained ministers to address those needs. The Society's first charter, the Formula of the Institute, sketches the apostolic goals of the order schematically:

to strive especially for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine and for the propagation of the faith by the ministry of the word, by Spiritual Exercises, by works of charity, and expressly by the education of children and unlearned persons in Christianity and the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful through hearing confessions. (112-14)

The first Jesuits identified their fundamental ministry as talking to people, "spiritual conversation" with the lettered and unlettered, the rich and the needy, popes and prostitutes. An international group from the start, they envisioned a peripatetic, radically cosmopolitan ministry for themselves predicated on only two fixed criteria: the greater glory of God and the greater good that can be done for one's neighbor.

Coming from diverse countries and provinces and not knowing which regions to go to or to stay in, among the faithful or unbelievers, we made this promise or vow that His Holiness might distribute or send us for the greater glory of God our Lord, in accordance with our promise and intention to travel through the world, and if we did not find the desired spiritual fruit.
in one city or the other, to pass on to another and yet another, and so on and so forth, going about through cities and other particular places for the greater glory of God our Lord and the greater spiritual profit of souls. (108)

Although the first Jesuits were committed to training their own recruits and to teaching catechism to children and the unlettered, discerned utility and external pressure rather than a deliberate, strategic decision occasioned their move into the classroom (116-19).

As early as 1543 (three years after the Society's first papal approbation), Jesuits began teaching a variety of subjects at a missionary seminary for boys at Goa, and the Order assumed responsibility for the institution in 1548. At about the same time, the imperial court and the Catholic bishops of Germany began to put great pressure on the Jesuits to provide professors for theology faculties decimated by Reformation defections.

In November 1545, at Duke Francisco Borgia’s insistence, non-Jesuit students were admitted to the Society’s seminary in Gandia, and received instruction alongside the scholastics. At Borgia’s request, Paul III chartered the school as a university.

While Borgia’s powerful personality played a decisive role in the founding of the collegium mixtum at Gandia, civic need and the appeals of friends led to the establishment of the first Jesuit school designed specifically for lay students. The magistrates of the city of Messina joined forces with the Viceroy Don Juan de Vega and his wife Doña Leonora Osorio, who had actively supported the Society’s charitable works in Rome before their transfer to Sicily. They appealed directly to Ignatius:

This noble city has a great desire to have some very well educated and highly religious persons of your same Company who, through their teaching and evangelical works are most helpful to the Christian republic, that they might teach, preach, and bear that fruit they are accustomed to bear wherever they decide to dwell. (117)

The city fathers asked for teachers of theology, the arts, grammar, rhetoric, and ethics. Ignatius sent an international group of some of his most promising men, and the enterprise began in the spring of 1548.

The decades that followed the opening of the Collegio S. Nicolò in Messina saw a rapid, even extravagant flowering of Jesuit colleges. By the time Ignatius died in 1556, forty-six colleges were open in Europe’s most important Catholic cities, and he had approved the foundation of at least eight more in Eastern Europe, Mexico City, Malta, Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Cyprus. Seventy-five years later the Jesuits directed a worldwide network of 443 colleges and fifty-six seminaries (Lucas, Saint Site 140-41).

Part VII of the Jesuit Constitutions, written by Ignatius in the midst of the first and unprecedented explosion of schools, is an extended reflection on mission and ministry. It proposes an interlocking series of criteria for judging importance of works and choosing a place to work. The norms are shot through with sturdy realism that always aims at maximizing impact. Long before the invention of modern social science, Ignatius had figured out the multiplier effect. Work that will last is to be chosen over transitory “hit and run” ministry. Work that impacts large numbers of people is generally to be chosen over work that is focused on individuals, unless the individuals in question are in positions of great influence and can make the effects spread more widely. “Great nations such as the Indies, important cities, and universities which are generally attended by numerous persons who by being aided themselves can become laborers for the help of others” were deemed ideal target locations (195-97).

What emerged from these norms is a clear-cut “preferential option” for urban settings for Jesuit works in the developed world.” Cities that needed colleges and major existing universities, located perforce in an urban setting, were the chosen arenas for the multiform ministries sketched out in the Formula and fleshed out in the programs of the Constitutions. The urban setting provided the greatest diversity of possibility “where the greater fruit will probably be reaped through the means that the Society uses.” The city provided a critical mass of population, wealth, apostolic needs and opportunities, possibilities for spiritual, social, and pastoral ministries, public preaching and private conversations, the long-range social impact of work with those who have power to effect systemic change, and the promise of reforming a world by educating its youth.

While the early Society explored and exploited other pastoral models (non-affiliated urban residences, social and pastoral centers, and retreat houses), the con-
The Jesuits' network of free schools for boys of all classes has been called Europe's first systematic attempt to provide education to a substantial portion of the urban population. Conveniently located downtown college complex with a church, Jesuit residence, large lecture halls, meeting rooms, and theater, quickly became the archetype for Jesuit installations around the world. Colleges for lay students in major cities would serve a variety of ends: they would make it easier to attract recruits and finance the order's formation efforts, while bringing quality Christian formation to the sons of all classes of urban dwellers. Colleges provided the Society with stable platforms and adequate facilities for its urban ministries of spiritual conversation, and raised the Society's profile within the cities where colleges were founded.

The first Jesuits came to see education as a work of charity in the fullest sense: "We accept for classes and literary studies everybody, poor and rich, free of charge and for charity's sake, without accepting any remuneration," Ignatius wrote in a letter to the whole Society. He insisted that there be "no distinction between rich and poor students." Admission was based on ability alone, with the ability to read and write as the only entrance criterion. Students from all social classes studied together. The Jesuits' network of free schools for boys of all classes has been called Europe's first systematic attempt to provide education to a substantial portion of the urban population. The Jesuits even had to ignore complaints from some of their benefactors who argued that providing a liberal education to the lower classes would deprive the city of artisans and craftsmen.

Firmly grounded in the humanistic traditions of the Renaissance, the Jesuits moreover believed in the moral power of education for the good of the city and for its reform. "If we see to the education of youth in letters and morality, then great help for the republic will follow, for good priests, good senators, and good citizens of every class come from these efforts." Echoes of this manifesto can be heard in the prospectus for Georgetown Academy composed in 1786—"The object of the proposed Institution is to unite the means of communicating Sciences with an effectual Provision for guarding and preserving the Morals of Youth"—and in the late twentieth-century rhetoric of our mission statements. ²

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² Landmarking, p. 117, n. 34. For the Georgetown prospectus, see Daley, pp. 34-35.
Transplanted to America

Jesuit education in the U.S. began in earnest with the restoration of the Society of Jesus in the early 19th century. The order began to grow again after its papal rehabilitation in 1814, often in European climes that were decidedly hostile to it. The Jesuits were perceived as—and, in some cases indeed were—reactionary, ultramontane, or allied to the Ancien Régime. Both corporately and individually, Jesuits were often exiled from their homelands. Those who came to North America found other Jesuits who had come at the invitation of the local hierarchy or under missionary obedience. Like so many others in the 19th century, they found refuge and immense opportunity in the United States.

Looking for Catholic populations to serve, they followed the waves of immigrants and adventurers that rolled across the new continent. They went wherever there was sufficient population, became schoolmasters and pastors, in many cases taking over ailing schools from local bishops, in others founding entirely new institutions. From the center of the country they spread outwards in all directions: to the traditional Protestant population centers of the northeast and eastern seaboard, the frontiers of the Rocky Mountain Mission expanded by Gold Rush, to the rapidly industrializing Great Lakes and North Central region. Only the traditionally non-Catholic south and the sparsely populated southwest eluded them, although institutions did spring up in Mobile and New Orleans.

The Jesuits who founded these institutions were mostly city boys: Frenchmen, Italians, and Germans, the occasional Slav or Englishman. They’d been trained in Liege, Rome, or Munich, even a few in Russia and Poland. As time went on, they recruited their own native-born North American members, children of the immigrant populations they served in their urban schools.

Wherever they could, they settled downtown or as close to it as possible: across from City Hall in Baltimore, on the waterfront in Detroit and St. Louis. In some cases—Spring Hill, Fordham’s Rose Hill, and Omaha, for example—suburban property was deeded to the Jesuits by the local bishop or local benefactors, and in boomtowns like gold-rush San Francisco, they bought a small lot on the edge of the sprawl. “Here let us build and wait,” Fr. Antonio Maraschi wrote in 1855. “This will be the center of a great city.” Fifteen years later taxes and property values had so escalated that the Italian fathers had to sell their property in order to move their college to larger site, across from City Hall (5-8).
The demands of American capitalism and the rigorous demands of the classically inspired Ratio Studiorum were clearly at odds. Around the country the traditional curriculum of the Ratio frequently ran a distant second to the “commercial” course that emphasized business and sciences rather than classical literature and arts. Again and again the Fathers metaphorically wrung their hands in their consultations and in letters to Rome, but the market forced them to adapt both curriculum and pedagogy. Laboratories and “scientific cabinets” were built alongside libraries and theaters in the colleges. Courses in geology and engineering, law and business, medicine and dentistry were added to curricula.

The teaching of theology and philosophy was of course never abandoned. Traditional religious practices and devotions were fostered in the churches and chapels attached to the colleges, frequently to the chagrin of local diocesan clergy who accused the Jesuits of alienating the affections—and collection revenues—of students and their parents. The Sodalities, lay student organizations that dated back to the late 16th century in Jesuit colleges, combined catechesis, devotions, and a commitment to works of charity and serving the poor and needy (see Chatellier).

In the early twentieth-century, the transplanted European Jesuit College continued to evolve as it became rooted in American soil. Across the country, the continental model of high school and college joined in a single institution bifurcated into freestanding and autonomous entities on different campuses. This split, together with the increased curricular demands on facilities, the American mania for sports, and the advent of easy transportation by automobile and streetcar, led many downtown Jesuit colleges to relocate to larger campuses outside the urban core. More often than not, the high school kept the older downtown campus. In all these cases, the campuses that moved out of downtown have been engulfed in the sprawl that has characterized late twentieth century urban America.

Ramifications

In the time of St. Ignatius cities were, by modern standards, tiny: in 1556, Rome had 50,000 inhabitants, and Paris had 300,000. To put it another way, Rome was the size of Fairfield, and Paris was twenty-five percent smaller than Spokane. In that world where all but the very richest moved around town on foot, a centrally located church and college was a real boon, a very pow-

erful drawing card. Mutatis mutandis, the same was true for early Jesuit colleges in the United States.

In a world of Edge Cities and the World Wide Web, the question of place is precisely that: a question and a challenge. How does a small-to-medium-sized liberal arts college relate to a metropolis of six or eight or twenty million inhabitants? How does such an institution, growing out of a religious tradition and a defined moral stance that believes in the redemptive power of education, engage in meaningful dialogue with a multicultural environment that challenges and frequently rejects its core values? How do we deal with demographic shifts like the population boom in the “Sunbelt”? Is the idea of a campus still meaningful or sustainable? Wouldn’t it be more efficient and economical to forget about buildings and build a virtual campus, or network of e-campuses, on the Internet?

There are no quick or easy answers to any of these pressing philosophical and pedagogical questions. In this reflection on location, though, I’d like to suggest that a few fundamental ideals from our tradition and an exploration of a few new possibilities might serve us well in the new century.

The AJCU website gives a useful if not particularly grandiloquent distillation of our 28 mission statements:

Jesuit education is based on a 450-year-old tradition that includes: a world-affirming spirituality which includes an emphasis on the linkage between religious values and a rigorous education; a holistic world-view that has traditionally included an emphasis on the liberal arts, while also being committed to professional education; a focus on individual attention for students in and out of the classroom; a consistent pursuit of excellence; and education for leadership and service.

<http://www.jcunet.edu/doc/fact/fact.htm>

“Cur a Personalis”

In light of this brief summary, the short answer to the questions outlined above seems to point to the importance of a place, or places of human encounter. For most of us who work in the classroom, the “individual attention” given to (and truth be told, received from) students is what gets us into the car in the morning to come to campus. Those encounters happen in the class-
room, studio or lab, in our offices, at the campus coffeehouse. They happen years later when we encounter a former student. Granted these encounters can and do sometimes happen over e-mail or the phone. Still, the facts of human dynamics and our system's fundamental affirmation of respect for the other as a participant in a learning process rather than a consumer makes unmediated contact—literally, without intervening media—an undeniable value.

**Widening the circle**

For this reason many of our institutions have embarked on ambitious extension programs that take our faculty and programs off-site. In a nation of Edge Cities and monstrous commutes, it's frequently more efficient to bring the faculty to students than to bring students, especially those enrolled in continuing education or graduate programs, to a central campus. So, to cite but a few examples: Loyola in Baltimore creates a bridgehead in Columbia, Maryland, the planned city of the future; Gonzaga takes education programs to Western Canada and Hawaii; USF goes to San Ramon and Phoenix; Loyola New Orleans and Spring Hill's theology faculties commute all over the South; Regis Denver, to cite one wag, sets up shop in every strip mall in the Great Basin. An informal survey shows that most of our schools have more than one campus, and the vast majority has extension programs that reach beyond the campus boundaries. All of these are in addition to important international programs in Rome, Florence, Madrid, Louvain, and, most recently, Beijing.

In theory, it's a fine idea to move off the main campus. What many conversations with colleagues around the country suggest, though, is that institutions need to be very conscious of issues of mission and identity when dealing with remote programs. No one doubts that we can deliver packages of instruction effectively on our traditional campuses or afield, either in person or electronically. Yet there are larger questions of inculturation of faculty and students. While we sometimes grapple uneasily with mission and identity issues at the "main" campus, those questions can even more easily get lost in the shuffle, or ignored entirely, without a critical mass of regular faculty, administrators, staff, and students keeping them alive through dialogue. Without deep reflection on those questions, and commitment to engaging and forging new responses to the tradition from which we spring, we risk becoming first-rate diploma mills or glorified correspondence schools.  

**Technology and Networking**

One of the last letters Ignatius wrote was a final approval for the purchase of a very expensive state-of-the-art printing press for the Collegio Romano, his flagship educational institution in Rome. After beta-testing the software (and sending back fonts because they were illegible), the dying mystic purchased a very expensive piece of equipment so that instructional media (a.k.a. books and pamphlets) could be published in-house for several different Jesuit colleges in Rome and elsewhere. So innovative educational technology has been part of our tradition since the start (133, n15).

The question of electronic distance education is in its infancy, and has only recently been addressed through the formation of an AJCU taskforce. For most of our campuses it is an expensive dream that we are unwilling to confront awake and with our checkbooks in hand. Obvious, nagging questions of degrees of interactivity, effective pedagogy, and expense dominate the foreground of the dream. More intriguing is the background image that only begins to emerge from the shadows: the image of a hyper-university as worldwide network of personal relationships between faculty and students in this country and in the other 125 similar yet unique Jesuit institutions of higher education in major cities around the globe.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the AJCU schools enjoy phenomenal demographic advantages (see chart). Eleven of the schools are located within the eight largest metropolitan regions of the United States. Only seven of the twenty-eight are located in cities with a population of fewer than one million inhabitants, and only two of the member schools are located in a city smaller than 100,000. According to AJCU, about 188,000 students are enrolled in the member colleges and universities. With the right kind of networking, we could reach out not only to one another, but also to underserved populations and regions of the country and world. The network potential is enough to make ATT—or Ignatius—weep.

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4 AJCU is promising a new portal for its Jesuit Distance Learning Network at <http://www.jnet.edu>. It was not yet active at the time of this writing.
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Of course, nothing comes free, and that makes the administrations of our institutions nervous. Even before figuring out the technical details, the greatest hurdle to overcome in any networking scheme will be overcoming institutional aversion—often bordering on paranoia—about sharing lists and information. To cite but one telling example: there are almost 1.4 million living alumni of the AJCU schools, but no common directory exists, because the University of X is afraid that College Y might fish in its benefactor pool. While some progress is being made by the various disciplinary conferences of the AJCU, leadership in collaboration has to come from the top. Presidents and their cabinets need to stop acting like the barons of France and their courts, and more like members of a collegium. If the immense potential of this network is ever to be tapped in anything more than a superficial way, nothing less than a major paradigm shift is called for: from the prevailing vision of twenty-eight independent and competing principalities to, minimally, a model of a confederation of sister institutions that...
share the same goals, aspirations, and challenges. Absent such a shift, our networking will remain at the level of some amusing and expensive technological bells and whistles.

**Service and the Community**

The dramatic growth of service learning and community outreach initiatives in our institutions is perhaps the most encouraging urban development of the past decade. In such programs, a new model of engaged pedagogy is evolving, a recommitment to a “world affirming spirituality” that links religious and social values to education, to a “holistic world view,” and to “education for leadership and service.” Our institutions are not, need not, and cannot be pervasively sectarian as they were in former years. While we no longer march our students into mandatory chapel services, we are marching them out to the streets of our cities. Our schools’ commitment to the values of the Gospel is seen nowhere so clearly as in the thousands of students, faculty, and staff who are engaging their communities to learn from the experience of their neighbors and to serve those in need. The AJCU website posts a forty-two-page document entitled *A Directory of Service Programs on Jesuit Campuses in the United States.* It should be required reading for all, especially those who decry our institutions’ loss of soul or vision. Such programs incarnate Ignatius’s belief in the profound moral power of education for the student, for the good of the city he or she lives in, and for its inhabitants.

Ignatius insisted over and again that Jesuit colleges needed, and could only thrive, “in conversation with the city.” That conversation will take many forms in the 21st century: dialogues of scholarship and service, cultural critique and construction, technology and the demands of *cura personalis* will take us into fascinating old and new places. Lecture halls won’t disappear, nor will campus or University chapels, but city planning board meeting rooms, neighborhood service projects, and meetings across the street and across the Internet will help to define the urban presence of our twenty-eight schools. The foresight of our founders, the generosity of our alumni, and the vision of Ignatius have endowed us with powerful cultural positioning and enviable physical locations from which to continue our dialogue with the city, with our students, colleagues, and sister institutions. It’s up to us to keep the conversation going.

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**Works Cited**


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<http://www.ajcunet.edu/doc/service/service.htm>. The document is also available in printed form from AJCU.