

# **Earth: From Concept to Production, the Challenges of Producing the Worlds Largest Atlas.**

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The challenge for the team at publishers Millennium House was to produce the largest, most up-to-date atlas in the history of commercial publishing. The atlas Earth was to set a new benchmark in cartographic publishing.

There has been no precedent for a publishing endeavor of this scale—a long-held dream of Gordon Cheers, Director of Millennium House, the international book packager based in Sydney, Australia. Having been involved with previous atlases that addressed different market needs, Gordon's objective was to showcase the planet as a never-before seen time capsule of places, people, culture and history that would be unique in the history of publishing.

Earth may indeed be the last atlas of this scale ever to be produced. The end result is spectacular and, in the opinion of this presenter, Damien Demaj, without equal.

This presentation on Earth will focus on the Royal Blue limited edition of 2,000 copies, each book containing 576 pages, weighing with its slipcase 34 kg (75 lb). Damien will present a rare and detailed insight into the challenges faced in producing and co-ordinating the cartography for an atlas of this scale.

The presentation will also include an overview of the production of the book, with an indication of how the material—cartographic, photographic and editorial—was obtained and controlled to ensure that all of the content attained the highest standard.

He will discuss the design principles behind the book, and the task of obtaining and purchasing copyright-free and up-to-date map data. One particular challenge was the sourcing of 'local' cartographers for each area with very specific regional expertise who were to provide the detailed mapping needed for the larger than normal-sized atlas maps.

Damien will also outline how the data for the book was selected—in particular the quality, format and currency of the data used in the atlas. He will discuss the questions covered in the 'Supplier Questionnaire' document that was issued to each cartographer to assess their suitability for the project.

He will also detail the theory and development of the map style sheet as well as the process of co-ordinating the research for the textual and photographic content, and the editing of the overall project. Another of the challenges was ensuring there was a consistency between the text and maps.

Damien will also discuss the cartographic workflow, and the atlas's specifications and necessarily extremely detailed map brief and gazetteer brief. Because we chose to work with 'local' cartographers around the globe, a tyranny of time and distance arose. In addition, many of these

cartographers did not have English as their native language; this provided complications in obtaining, and subsequently checking, the data. This process had to be dealt with in a relatively short period of time. The compilation and checking of the gazetteer was another challenge that will be analysed in depth.

Special mention will be given to the reproduction issues that arose including colour separation and preparation of the files for the printer. The reproduction house commissioned for this work had not dealt with a project of this magnitude before. How this was resolved, as well as the tasks faced by the printer-binder of Earth will also be addressed. The Royal Blue edition is too large to be bound by machine and had to be hand bound. The high standard of quality demanded by Millennium House introduced a further level of complexity.

In the final part of the presentation Damien will discuss the reaction of the public, and the publishing world, to Earth. He will also look at what the future holds for conventional atlases and discuss traditional versus electronic mapping. He will conclude by touching on the legacy of this publishing project for Millennium House and discuss the ways it plans to develop its on-going cartographic publishing program.