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## COMMISSION CHAIRS

## Cognitive Visualisation

sara.fabrikant@geo.uzh.ch

## Map Design

kfield@esri.com

## Art &amp; Cartography

scaquard@gmail.com

## History of Cartography

elri@worldonline.co.za

## Map Projections

mlapaine@geof.hr

## Theoretical Cartography

qydu@whu.edu.cn

## Data Quality

chenxy@ecit.cn

## Atlases

peter.jordan@oeaw.ac.at

## Mapping from Remote Sensor Imagery

xyang@tsu.edu

## Geospatial Analysis and Modeling

bin.jiang@hig.se

## Geovisualisation

gennady.andrienko@iais.fraunhofer.de

## Maps and the Internet

rcammack@mail.unomaha.edu

## Ubiquitous Cartography

arikawa@csis.u-tokyo.ac.jp

## Digital Technologies in Cartographic Heritage

livier@topo.auth.gr

## Open Source Geospatial Technologies

suchith.anand@nottingham.ac.uk

## Generalisation and Multiple Representation

dirk.burghardt@tu-dresden.de

## Planetary Cartography

hhargita@gmail.com

## Mountain Cartography

karol.kriz@univie.ac.at

## Neocartography

s.l.chilton@mdx.ac.uk

## Maps and Graphics for Blind and Partially Sighted People

acoll@utem.cl

## Maps and Society

chris.perkins@manchester.ac.uk

## Use and User Issues

elzakker@itc.nl

## Cartography and Children

jesus@map.elte.hu

## Education and Training

dave.fairbairn@newcastle.ac.uk

## GI for Sustainability

vstikunov@yandex.ru

## Map Production and Geobusiness

philippe.demaeyer@ugent.be

## Cartography in Early Warning and Crises Management

undatra@yahoo.com

## Geoinformation Infrastructures and Standards

acooper@csir.co.za

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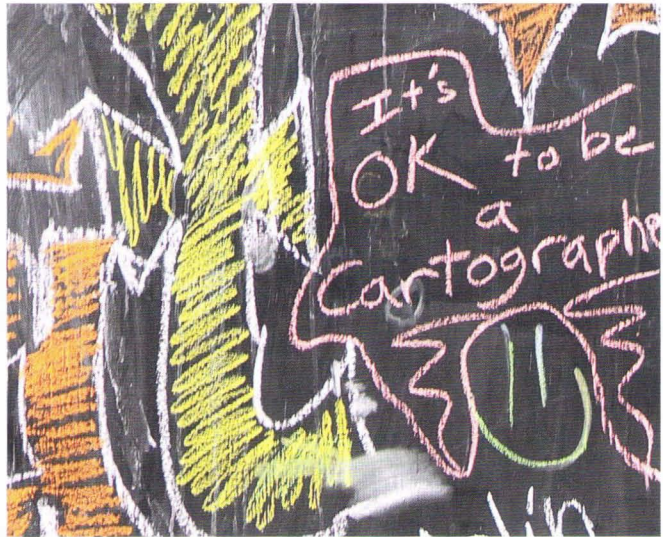
David Fairbairn, Newcastle University, UK

## It's OK to Be a Cartographer!

Last month's ICA column in this magazine gave a taste of the excellent organisation and content of the 26<sup>th</sup> International Cartographic Conference in Dresden, Germany. The column touched on one of the main 'take-away messages' of the conference, as promoted by ICA president Professor Georg Gartner and used for the title of this month's column. In his opening address to the conference, the president examined the nature of contemporary cartography and, in particular, the way in which the discipline is perceived by the outside world.

In his speech he argued that there is considerable confusion about the status, relevance and importance of cartography. While the term 'map' is popular and used regularly in the media, featuring in major business debates between major software companies and in mass-market applications related to new technologies such as mobile devices, the term 'cartography' can provoke the question, "Is that still around?". It is not unlikely that anyone involved in making maps nowadays will call themselves something other than a 'cartographer'.

Furthermore, Professor Gartner suggested that the enormous relevance of the ever-growing amount of geodata and geoinformation can only truly be 'unleashed' when it becomes accessible to human users. This means trying to package it in such a way that allows it to be perceived, 'digested' and used, and thus communicated simply. This, he suggested, was and is exactly the aim of cartography, and its contribution. Maps are most



*Graffiti spotted in Dresden, August 2013.*

successful at being the interface between spatial data and human users. They introduce order into information based on spatial attributes, they engage to explore, they can be entertaining, they help users to become spatially aware, they tell stories, they help us to position ourselves in a particular topic by showing entities and their interrelationships.

Without this contribution, humans would be somehow 'spatially blind'. Maps enable us to answer space-related questions. Maps can be used to support spatial behaviour. Cartography is clearly needed in order to enable spatial thinking, spatial planning, spatial reasoning or decision-making, and maps are the most successful and powerful instruments to enable spatial awareness.

By looking at these arguments as ways to describe the importance of cartography as a discipline and the enormous drive and popularity cartography gains from using and applying modern technologies,

Professor Gartner concluded that a) cartography is relevant, b) cartography is attractive, and c) cartography is highly contemporary. There is no need to step back or hide away as a cartographer, but rather we should counteract the question above by stating that cartography is very much "still around". It is of the highest importance and benefit that cartography and cartographers actively contribute their skills, knowledge, methods and research to all geospatial domains. ◀

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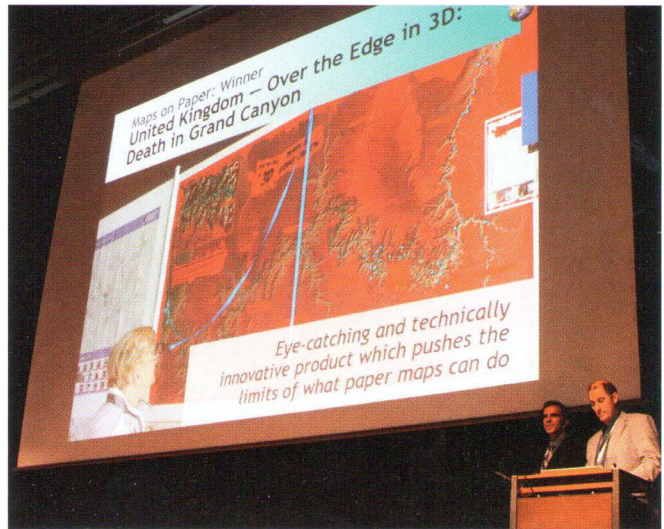
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David Fairbairn, Newcastle University, UK

## Embracing the Spirit of 'Maptember'

The scope of ICA's interests covers all aspects involved in creating, using, studying and recording maps and spatial databases – the disciplines of cartography. In his summary of the year 2013, presented on the association's website, ICA president Georg Gartner highlights "a most successful year for cartography" with activities on offer addressing all of these aspects. One period of last year which demonstrated such activity, in production, application and research in maps and spatial data handling, was the month of September. This was promoted, in the UK, as 'Maptember' and it encompassed a host of conferences and meetings of interest to map enthusiasts. 17 events were promoted through the [www.maptember.org](http://www.maptember.org) website, and the most dedicated cartographer could 'bookend' this rich period of mapping-oriented indulgence with two additional dates – the International Cartographic Conference in Dresden (25-30 August, as reported on in December's *GIM International*) and the meeting of the North American Cartographic Information Society held in Greenville, South Carolina (9-11 October).

Despite living in the distant west of the USA, Ken Field, the editor of *The Cartographic Journal* (an official ICA affiliate journal), was by far the most resolute attendee at this range of events. One of the results of this dedicated commitment is a thoughtful and highly recommended editorial in the journal's final edition for 2013, discussing the nature of the meetings which constituted Maptember as well as broader issues of the future of cartography. From his unique position, Field was



An example of forward-looking cartography: Ken Field's winning entry in the overall paper map awards ceremony at the Dresden ICC, August 2013 (Dirk Burghardt and Corné van Elzakker, jury chairs, officiating).

able to present insightful and valuable comments about the organisation of meetings, publicity and attracting attendees, the content of – and presentation methods for – conferences, the nature of related events and mechanisms (including awards competitions, map displays, Twitter feeds and social media engagement), the role of newcomers and 'old hands', the value of face-to-face contact, and the sheer number of events and publications. Useful from a generic perspective, his comments should be considered by all those who have organising the best future for cartography at heart.

On a wider note, we move into 2014 noting that this is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of some of the most momentous events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the period (1989 and into 1990) during which political change came, with varying degrees of disorder and outcome, to Budapest, Gdansk, Beijing, Berlin, Prague, Bucharest, Cape Town and Moscow. John

Simpson, the BBC's distinguished foreign correspondent, was present in each of these cities during those heady times, probably the only such person in the world. His perspective, from this unique standpoint, was presented in an excellent volume of remembrances of the events, *Despatches from the Barricades*.

The lesson, both from Simpson's book and Field's editorial, is that the most valuable perspectives come from those who engage with a topic in the widest possible way – in content, and geographically. The future of cartography relies on a successful integration of communities which held their separate events during Maptember, but which have so much in common. ICA will continue to look forward to embrace the breadth of all aspects of our discipline. ◀

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undatra@yahoo.com

**Geoinformation Infrastructures and Standards**  
acooper@csir.co.za

## GIM CORRESPONDENT

David Fairbairn, Newcastle University, UK

# Art and Cartography – Addressing Creativity and Mapping

The ICA's Working Group on Art and Cartography (extant from 2008 to 2011) was transformed into a mature Commission at the last General Assembly, giving it a four-year period (2011 to 2015) to address a number of terms of reference and develop a programme of activities. The commission is led by Canadian geographer Sébastien Caquard, with Barbara Piatti of ETH Zurich Institute of Cartography and Geoinformation as vice-chair.

The commission last met at the Dresden ICC in August 2013. In a pre-conference workshop, run jointly with the Commission on Maps and Society, the links between maps and the artistic elements of video games and 'other worlds' construction were explored. As digital and mobile-based gaming becomes more sophisticated and more content-rich, the need to create artificial or augmented environments becomes more important, and the resultant maps of such environments are interesting additions to the cartographic oeuvre. The use of games to help in teaching geography and introducing schoolchildren to the concepts of mapping and GIS was also considered at the workshop.

In addition to contributing several papers to the main conference proceedings, the commission took the opportunity of having the world's cartographers in Dresden to present a session entitled 'Movie Cartography and Narratives'. This included a collective film 'MDMD – A Multi-Dimensional Mapping Device' showing the opportunities for developing cartographic representation and communication through the medium of film. The interaction of art and artistic



The Reformed World, by Ruth Watson (installation at a previous Art and Cartography meeting, Vienna, Austria, February 2008).

endeavour with cartography was explored in additional sessions which examined how map production and map design could benefit from the widening possibilities which artistic influence can bring. There were further presentations on the relationship between mapping and non-graphical artistic work, including written literature and the recording of emotions and other senses (including smell).

The commission's terms of reference include developing and publishing books and a recent volume, *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place* edited by Julia Hallam and Les Roberts, gives an opportunity for cartographers from the commission to reach out more to the film community.

The commission will organise a symposium this year investigating further aspects of the relationship between literature and cartography. *Mapping stories: Methodological and Technological Issues* will take

place at Concordia University, Montréal, Canada on 12-13 May [1]. It will address questions such as 'What are the strengths and limitations of numerical approaches for mapping emotions and senses?', 'How can new methods for automatic recording and objective analysis of stories and literature still preserve the individuality expressed therein?', and 'How can we reconcile the abstract and imaginary space of stories with reality, its topography and its maps?'. This colloquium will be presented in French, in an attempt to widen the scope of the commission's work, and examine the wide-ranging French-language literature which has a long tradition of writing stories with topographic and place-related themes.

The commission is charged with promoting diverse activities and outcomes (e.g. festivals, public lectures, performances, exhibitions, screenings, etc.). This includes facilitating installations with associated annotated catalogues, developing multiple forms of expression (e.g. blogs, exhibits), and facilitating and disseminating a range of further publications [2].

## MORE INFORMATION

1. <http://bit.ly/1jKXoyD>
2. <http://artcarto.wordpress.com>  
[www.icaci.org](http://www.icaci.org)





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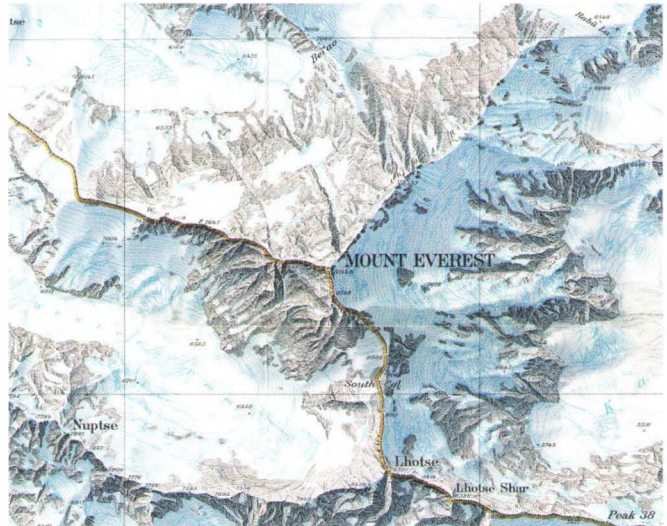
David Fairbairn, Newcastle University, UK

# Maps – Cartes – Design – Dessiner

Good design and better mapping are core to effective cartography. Information in a well-designed map will be rapidly recovered, unambiguous, easily recalled and ultimately inspire confidence in both the product and the action that results from the map's use. The ICA Commission on Map Design acts as a forum for discussion, exchange of ideas and the development and spread of the principles and practice of high-quality, effective cartographic design.

One of the Commission's objectives for the 2011-2015 period has been to "develop a map design website as a focal resource for researchers in map design and map-makers of all kinds". It is clear that this Commission uses the web effectively as a means of presenting and commenting on examples of good design. The ambitious manifestation of that commitment is evident at [mapdesign.icaci.org/](http://mapdesign.icaci.org/) which is a website dedicated to presenting one example of good and interesting cartographic design for each day of 2014. At the end of the year a portfolio of 365 maps, with commentary, will have been created – an excellent resource for those who want to learn about and appreciate what makes a good map. This compendium will cover the breadth of cartographic practice to illustrate and emphasise the importance of map design in classic and contemporary cartography. Both traditional printed maps and the best of internet cartography are represented.

The series started with a predictable nod to the classic London Underground map/diagram developed by Beck in the 1930s. There are further classics in the examples which follow: Map 3 is a



Extract from National Geographic Society map of Mount Everest by Bradford Washburn.

work of fine art by Jasper Johns, currently hanging in the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, showing the impact of geography on the work of a modern artist; Map 6 is an example of the groundbreaking work of Charles Minard in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – not the masterful Napoleonic Army graphic, but a similar flowline map showing coal exports. However, there is ample representation for 21<sup>st</sup> century cartography also: Map 8 including video to show the dynamic nature of ship traffic in the Baltic Sea presents innovative design and uses the map to tell a story and speculate on the future; Map 24 is a fascinatingly simple, and simply fascinating, map of the racial geography of the USA from the 2010 census. Map 42 is a timeless representation of Everest illustrating the creativity of topographic cartographers, while Map 16 shows how cartographic skills can be effective in the most constrained circumstances. Ruslan Enikeev's 2012 map of the internet (Map 40) stands alongside educational products (e.g. Map 19), propaganda

documents (e.g. Map 38), historical works (e.g. Map 43), novel media for mapping (e.g. Map 37), personal attempts to describe the environment (e.g. Map 14), and a host of other types of cartographic design. This website merits repeat visits as the number of maps increases daily.

The intention of this repository is to be a barometer for modern map-making, to supply inspiration for those who seek ideas for how to map their data, and also to improve the public's appreciation of, and demand for, quality in maps. ◀

## MORE INFORMATION

1. <http://mapdesign.icaci.org/category/mapcarte/>  
[www.icaci.org](http://www.icaci.org)