



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

After a brief sojourn into the important question of ethics within cartography, handled by our excellent guest editors Nat Case and Aileen Buckley, I am once more taking the editorial reins to welcome you to issue 106 of *Cartographic Perspectives*, our second of 2025. This issue contains three pieces that went through our formal peer-review process, six reviews (of five books), and an intriguing entry in our *Views on Cartographic Education* section entitled “Map Projections Don’t Have to be Hard.” Across the board, I’m excited to bring all of these writings to you and hope that you find as much joy, interest, and sometimes consternation in them as I have shepherding them through our editorial process.

If there is one theme I see running through this issue, it remains that age old question of “What exactly *is* a map?” What makes a map a map, and not something else? How does one define “mappiness”? While, at times, this may seem akin to enumerating angels dancing on a pinhead, I think the long-standing, sometimes heated debates around this topic that continue to crop up across varied academic disciplines and fields of practice demonstrate that—at its heart—it remains a discussion worth having, one that touches upon both ontological and epistemological issues.

In this issue, we first have Matthew Edney responding to Denil’s (issue 104) response to Edney’s (issue 98) response to Denil (also issue 98) who was, of course, writing in response to Edney (specifically his 2019 book, *Cartography: The Ideal and Its History*). Edney takes pains to correct what he argues are, at times, elisions and distortions of his own arguments around *what is a map*. Personally, I have found this discussion fascinating and, judging by download metrics on our website, so have many of our readers. However, given the lengthy back-and-forth, I do feel a different format, as well as opening the discussion to more direct input from other members of our community, would help it to move forward. Ultimately, *we don’t have to agree* on what makes a map a map (or what is or isn’t a map!) and I view that as a strength of our discipline and practice—different folks engage with cartography in different ways in different places and at different times. Perhaps what’s next could be a round-table or a special issue on this discussion; I would certainly want both Mark and Matthew involved, but I am very open to hearing from the wider CP reading community as to where they’d like to see this ongoing debate go next.

On the heels of our issue on ethics, Timothy Prestby contributes a wonderful piece on why people do or do not *trust* maps (though he does offer his own definition of maps along the way!). Drawing from media studies and communication psychology, Prestby provides an

overview of existing studies and an analysis of work that remains to be done on this important topic. Our third peer-reviewed article in this issue comes from Léa Denieul-Pinsky, and examines the roles we, as cartographers, might play in *maintaining* maps, through the lens of Léa's experience working with the Kaneshatà:ke Land Defense mapping project. This article contains perhaps my favorite passage in this entire issue: "[m]uch like outdated satellites lingering in the Earth's orbit after their operational lifespan, these online maps have become a part of a growing collection of junk" (28). While this piece focuses on the role of maintenance in indigenous and decolonial mapping efforts, Léa's observations and resulting discussion open a space for all cartographers to reflect on the legacy of their projects. What happens to all the maps we make? This question seems of particular importance as we increasingly rely upon a networked miasma of code libraries and data repositories outside of our direct control to build our increasingly digital products.

On the other side of the spectrum from digital obsolescence, we find the first entry into the *Views on Cartographic Education* section since Daniel Huffman has graciously taken over its editorship. In it, Fritz Kessler offers the outline to and resources for a *hand-drawn* projection exercise entitled "Map Projections *Don't* Have to be Hard." I was, frankly, blown away as—having arrived as a cartography professor long after the advent of digital tools—I had not considered teaching projections through such a manual process. While I'm not sure if the exercise transforms (pun intended) projections into something "easy," I know for certain that I will be using it in my upcoming classes this fall and encourage other readers to do the same (or to simply work through it for their own edification).

Finally, we have six reviews in this issue, spanning five works that run the gamut of cartographic interest. Shriya Malhotra and Aimée C. Quinn provide complementary (and complimentary) reviews of the *Radical Atlas of Ferguson, USA*. Both find it a provocative and necessary reminder of the power of maps and the horrors of racial capitalism. Michael Sparks reviews the new *Teaching Mathematics Using Interactive Mapping*, a book I find of particular interest given my own research at the intersection of the two. While noting the work suffers from a somewhat superficial focus at times (in particular, Michael would like to see more on projections; if only the authors had known they need not be hard), Michael finds it an exemplary attempt to demonstrate to students the "real-world relevance of mathematical concepts" (70).

Ally Shah provides a review of *The Art of Terrestrial Diagrams in Early China* and Lucy Haggard has written one for *The Cognitive Life of Maps*. While disparate topics in some ways, what I found striking was how both engage with the core idea of *what is a map*. Shah details how Wang explores the difference between maps and diagrams and comes to a conclusion with which I'm uncertain many cartographers would agree; meanwhile, Haggard examines how the philosopher, Roberto Casati, defines maps in terms of representational accuracy and cognitive reasoning—again, resulting in a series of distinctions that I think might cause controversy among cartographers. The reviewers find both works well researched, well written, and worth the time to read—and, I'd argue, they help reiterate my point above: that the question of *what is a map* spans time, place, and discipline.

Our final review, by Daniel Cole, is of *A History of The Railroad in 100 Maps* and finds it likely of more interest to railroad aficionados than cartographers per se. Amusingly enough,

both Wang and Casati make exceptions for rail and subway maps as being “not maps” due to their divorce from accurate representation (Wang, in particular, suggests that Vignelli’s classic 1972 New York subway map is more akin to the diagrammatic *ditu* than to a map).

I know that no one reads *Cartographic Perspectives* for my editorial introductions, so I will end here before this one grows longer. However, I would like to, first, thank you all for your continued support for and engagement with *Cartographic Perspectives*. It remains an honor to serve as your editor and I do encourage you to reach out with ideas or feedback; and, finally, I would like to assure you that we continue to revise and make improvements to our policies behind the scenes. We will have more on this front shortly. Once more, thank you and keep mapping.

Best,
Jim Thatcher

