

cartographic perspectives

Number 20, Winter 1995

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messages

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Having just completed what many have reported was a most successful meeting with the Canadian Cartographic Association, we might find some useful operational ideas by examining one aspect of the structure of our most successful sister organization.

At its inception, the CCA tried to identify itself with what was considered at the time a broader definition of cartography, one that included all stages of evaluation, compilation, design, production, and uses of maps. It also tried to provide a common professional home not only for groups of cartographers that were not attracted to the then existing professional organizations but also to those who were: surveyors, topographic and government mappers, geographers, and map librarians. These "unfranchised" professionals included those with interests in historical, mathematical and thematic cartography, those in the private sector outside of Ontario, and those doing research, working with statistical data, and computers (Gutsell 1975).

Editor:

Dr. Sona Karentz Andrews
Department of Geography
208 Sabin Hall
3413 N. Downer Avenue
Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Milwaukee, WI 53211
(414) 229-4872
fax: (414) 229-3981
e-mail: sona@csd.uwm.edu.

Assistant Editor

David W. Tilton
Department of Geography
Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Milwaukee, WI 53211
e-mail: tilton@csd.uwm.edu.

Copy Editor
Gretchen Papazian

ISSN 1048-9085
Cartographic Perspectives
is published triannually

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This commitment to a diversity of cartographic interests was reflected structurally in the creation of five Interest Groups labeled: Historical Cartography, Cartographic Education, Map Design and Production, Map Use, and Technology. As times have changed, the names have evolved into the present History of Cartography, Education, Map Design and Use, and Technology (Cartouche 1994, no. 13 and 19).

There have been several advantages of this structure. The Chairs of the respective Interest Groups are part of the Board of Directors and thus are at the center of the discussions which guide the workings and shape the policies of the Association. As Chairs, these people are also charged with the responsibility of making periodic reports to the membership on their interest area, as in the newsletter *Cartouche*, and in organizing a session at each annual meeting. They are also encouraged to organize in their geographic area shorter gatherings, such as a one-day workshop or evening talk, so as to provide members with opportunities to meet professionally at other times and places than at the venue of the Annual Meeting. In this way, the CCA has been able to represent cartographic interests and foster professional activities all across Canada and throughout the year often with a minimum of resources. In a way, the Interest Group Chairs are also the geographically distributed representatives of and contacts for the Association with its membership.

At the individual level, members who stand for election as Interest Group Chairs are asked to briefly describe how they might stimulate activity in some aspect of cartography or in the study or use of maps. Clearly, their statements of intent are important considerations in their election and, more important, it gives those elected

some direction and purpose at the very beginning of their terms of office even though they may end up doing something quite different. Optimally, they may call attention to another way of considering some aspect of our subject and thus provide a focus area to which others may wish to contribute.

There are also some disadvantages to an interest group structure. Most revolve around the facts that (1) people don't divide easily into definite interests and (2) as fashion and technology changes, the Interest Group names may appear to no longer match the real concerns of members.

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about the cover



The cover for this issue was designed and produced by James E. Meacham of the InfoGraphics Laboratory in the Dept. of Geography at the Univ. of Oregon. A portion of *The Elbow Quad, Oregon* geology map was scanned as a 300dpi gray scale TIFF file using Ofoto software and imported into Adobe Photoshop (see pages 56-59 for a discussion of the methods used to produce the map). The image brightness was adjusted in Photoshop and its size was enlarged to 105% and cropped to final size with a bleed on three sides. The TIFF file was placed in an Aldus FreeHand file that contained the CP logo and text. "Paste Inside" was used to fill the image inside the CP logo and the "pen tool" was used to create masks to knockout the fault lines behind the cover text. The negative was created on a Linotronics L300 imagesetter with a 150 lpi screen at a 45 degree angle and a 0.125 inch bleed.

President's Message
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The first point means that there is rarely a well defined group of members who are exclusively devoted to any one interest area, for example, education. This has been demonstrated on several occasions when the Association has asked its members to indicate which of the following statements most accurately described their level of interest in each of the Association's Interest Groups:

1. I am vitally interested in all aspects of this Interest Group and would want to participate actively in it.
2. I am interested in the work of this Interest Group and would, from time to time, like to take part in its activities.
3. I am only mildly interested in this Interest Group but would like to know what activities are taking place.
4. I have no interest at all in knowing about or participating in this Interest Group.

As you might expect in any organization like the CCA, and I believe NACIS as well, where members have broad interests, most had one or two favored Interest Groups, but also had a level 2 or 3 interest in the others. Rarely did they express a level 4 "disinterest." This is what makes both the Association and our Society unique—members have broad interests in things cartographic and in the work of our colleagues, whether or not we are active in the same specific area. As a result, it is difficult to isolate a very stable working core of strong interest and commitment to any one Interest Group.

As to the changes in fashion and technology, I have argued in the past that the appearances of names aren't all that important. What is important is that the Interest Group Chair take an active role in promoting something, even if it isn't very traditional or usual. This is the way new ideas and approaches get started. Given the interrelated nature of most cartographic activities, having varied Interest Groups is actually only a device to insure that different interests and alternate viewpoints are represented at our gatherings. In any given year, these Interest Groups could generate quite different program activities or reflect facets of only one approach to mapping.

In sum, the greatest potential disadvantage of Interest Groups, in my mind anyway, is that they may tend to compartmentalize the subject and thus our members. What we should be doing is finding new ways to integrate our members and to stress our commonality of purpose. By having different people present their view of a general topic area, such as education or map use, we will, over time, get a variety of perspectives which cross a number of traditional subject boundaries. In doing this, we will constantly be receiving new and often challenging perspectives on our discipline which can only foster a greater understanding of our profession and the meaning of our basic frame of reference, cartography.

Given all this, it should not be construed that I am promoting the idea that NACIS should adopt an interest group structure. The CCA Interest Groups were created at a particular time and place to meet a particular need for cartographers and those interested in maps and mapping to find their professional identities and a forum for their self-determination (McGrath 1975, 220). Our situation and needs are quite different but there are some

aspects of the roles played by Interest Groups which might be of value to us.

For one, it is valuable to have people coming onto the Board with some pre-set agendas, i.e., with some sort of immediate goal or role to play. It is very easy to sit and listen while those in the know do all the talking and perhaps all the work. Given the great skills of those who have served, it is easy for one to sit back and watch in fascination for one's full term! At best, it takes a while to get a feel for the way the Society functions. In the long term, having brought people onto the Board to do particular jobs will create a corpus of people who have demonstrated their ability to organize and lead, and have had some exposure to how the Society works. Then, if the Nominating Committee asks them to stand for Vice-President, we know what to expect and they know what they are getting into!

My suggestion is that, through the instrument of the Nominating Committee and in concert with the Board, we encourage members to come forward with specific ideas that they would like to see embodied in some kind of activity at the annual meeting. At present, we elect four new Board members each year for two year terms. The Nominating Committee might consider having one or two of these nominations to stand for what we might call Focus Chairs. These nominees would include in their biographical description a short paragraph describing (1) a particular role they would like to play (or have been asked to play by the Board) or (2) an area of professional interest in which they would like to organize some kind of session, workshop, or discussion at a forthcoming annual meeting.

In a sense, we have had two Society members functioning as Focus Chairs for the Ottawa meeting. Both Patricia Chalk (who

was also on the Board) and Joe Stoll were identified in the Call for Participation with particular program sessions. While they were also working behind the scenes, they made use of the Call to encourage others to come forward and join in their special programs. As you can see, both topics—"Map Projection Programs Under Inspection" and "Is There a Niche for the University Cartographic Lab?"—don't fall naturally under some usual division of cartographic knowledge but cut across a number of concerns for people who both make, use and sell cartographic information. When a few people come forward, as they did for the Ottawa meeting, we are assured a constant supply of attractive ideas surfacing at our meetings. But in their absence, it may be useful that a few Board members have elected mandates in some specific areas in which they are conversant.

As we also attempt to make ourselves more reflective of the geographic part of the Society's name, the role of Focus Chairs can

also be seen in developing contacts and membership in geographic areas where our membership is thin or non-existent, e.g., west of the Mississippi River. To attract membership in these areas, we must be seen as offering activities and opportunities that are of value and interest to these people. By organizing shorter meetings or events, (and with the financial, organizational and perhaps personal assistance of the Society), the Focus Chair can bring a NACIS presence to these areas.

With your approval and encouragement, we can begin to promote this idea more formally. The Officers and the members of the Board always look forward to hearing from you. The more members who become active in our Society, the more will feel it is their organization both in terms of the opportunities for awards and for service that it offers.

Plans are now underway for NACIS XV in Wilmington, NC. It is a lovely setting for an Indian Summer meeting. We are looking

forward to an engaging and diverse program; with your help this will be assured.

Henry W. Castner
NACIS President

References:

The circumstances surrounding the creation and organization of the Canadian Cartographic Association are described in two issues of the *Canadian Cartographer*: Volume 12, #2 for 1975 and Volume 13, #1 for 1976. See in particular:

Gutsell, Bernard V. 1975. Cartographic Commentary: The Canadian Cartographic Association. *Canadian Cartographer*. 12.2: 194-199.

McGrath, Gerald. 1975. Whither Cartography in Canada: From Under-to Over-Representation? *Canadian Cartographer*. 12.2: 217-221. □

At its 1994 Business Meeting (held in Ottawa, Ontario) the NACIS Board decided to encourage individual and corporate contributions to *Cartographic Perspectives*. NACIS would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals for contributions made in 1994.

Ronald Bolton
Jack Dutke
Barbara Fine
Carol Gersmehl
David Holland
Phyllis Kawano
Derrick Mar
Gene McDonough

Matthew McGranaghan
Judy Olson
Gyula Pauer
Charile Rader
Bret Rodgers
Lawrence Slaughter
Alan Stevens
Muriel Strickland

For those interested, contributions can be made at the time of your annual dues renewal or at anytime by sending your contribution to the NACIS Treasurer.
(please make checks payable to *Cartographic Perspectives* and indicate that this is a contribution to the journal)