# cartographic φ perspectives

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## in this issue

## messages

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As may be guessed from the cover, this issue deals with cartography in the era of the Internet. The cover de–picts the graphic from the home page for this issue (http://maps.unomaha.edu/ NACIS/cp26). The buttons on the interactive graphic may be used to access the links associated with the articles. This is the first time that *Cartographic Perspectives* appears both in paper form and as a web page. We hope the journal will continue to be offered as a com–bination of the two separate mediums.

From modest beginnings as ARPANET in the late 1960's, the Internet has become a major form of communication. Encompassing such diverse services and proto-cols as e-mail, newsgroups, ftp, and the World Wide Web, the Internet is now an integral part of our society. The use of the Internet has expanded rapidly in recent years with the introduction of the World Wide Web. The web integrated the delivery of text, graphics, pictures, sound, and even video clips. It has also made

the distribution of maps more cost-effective and convenient.

It is hard to say how many maps are available through the World Wide Web. Estimates put the number of web servers at 660,000 (early 1997). There are a number of web sites that distribute static maps but much of the effort in web mapping is concentrated on interactive maps. Here, the user can select the area to map and what features to include. Web-based, interactive mapping exists in all forms. One of the most popular is street mapping. For example, the GeoSystems' MapQuest site (http://www.mapquest.com) creates maps of cities in the U.S. centered at any user-specified location and at different scales. Interactive thematic mapping is also possible for mapping census data for cities and counties (http://

www.ciesin.org). Another form of dynamic cartography is exemplified by those sites that offer weather information with new maps presented every hour or less.

The interactive/dynamic mapping sites receive considerable usage. GeoSystems, for example, reports that it creates 800,000 user-specified maps every day, and up to 1000 a minute. Other sites report over 100,000 maps accessed on a daily basis. At least a million, perhaps as many as ten million maps are downloaded through the Internet every day. The Internet has become a major distributor of maps. Moreover, the medium is changing the way maps are presented and used. Its impact on cartography will likely be greater than that of the printing press.
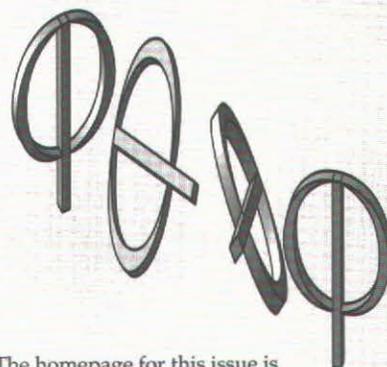
Cartographers criticize the quality of maps that are available through the Internet. In comparison to maps on paper, these maps have a much poorer resolution and many are poorly designed. Indeed, a new medium seems to attract those who can adapt to its technology, and not necessarily people who can contribute significantly to its content. The invention of printing had much the same effect. The T in O map, a biblical view of the earth that entirely left out the western hemisphere, was still widely available in the 16th century because it had been printed. McLuhan's famous motto "the medium is the message" is particularly appropriate to describe the effect of both printing and the Internet.

As we contemplate this new era in cartography, we are at the same time saddened by the deaths of three prominent academic cartographers – Prof. Sherman (Washington) – Prof. Jenks (Kansas) – Prof. Dahlberg (Northern Illinois). All three contributed significantly to the development and growth of academic cartography. Their contributions were in different areas but they shared a commit-

ment to cartography and its development as a form of communication and as a science. Cartography benefitted greatly from their work. All three left a lasting impression on the discipline and we hope to honor these individuals in coming issues of CP.

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