

1ALB2206

Journal of the North American Cartographic Information Society

# cartographic perspectives

Number 31, Fall 1998

## in this issue

### FEATURED ARTICLES

Content Analysis, Semiotics, and Social Semiotics for  
Cartographic Analysis: Interpreting Geospatial Representations 4  
*Myke Gluck*

Teaching and Learning Focus Group Skills: A Classroom 26  
Example Evaluating Map Design  
*Judy M. Olson, Lesha Broomes, Scott Drzyzga, Geoffrey Jiunn Der Duh,  
Lisa K. Dygert, Jill Hallden, Amy K. Lobben, Alison Philpotts, Ian Sims,  
Jennifer Ware*

### SOFTWARE REVIEW

QSR NUD\*IST and ATLAS/ti 37  
*Jodi Vender and Trudy Suchan*

### BOOK REVIEWS

Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American 40  
Mapmaking and Map Use  
*Jovanka R. Ristic*

Flattening the Earth, Two Thousand Years of Map Projections 44  
*Zehdreh Allen-Lafayette*

Maps and Politics 44  
*Valerie Krejcie*

### CARTOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES

Maps.com: Solving the Base Map Problem Online 46  
*Bill Spicer*

MAP LIBRARY BULLETIN BOARD JUN 07 1999 49

NACIS NEWS 53

## messages

### FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

The papers published here were presented at the 1998 Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting in a session on Qualitative Methods and Reasoning in Cartographic Research, sponsored by the Cartography Specialty Group. The AAG session featured current qualitative research on cartographic topics and cartographic materials: interviews by telephone and in person, focus groups for map critique, and critical analysis of both maps as components of corporate annual reports and projects that share geographic data on the Web.

Specifically, the participants in the AAG session and topics they presented were: Mark Monmonier on "Probing the Practices of Experienced Map Authors with Partly-Structured Telephone Interviews;" Trudy Suchan, "It's only my Opinion But...Interviews on Everyday Conceptions of

(continued on page 3)

NACIS WEB SITE  
[www.nacis.org](http://www.nacis.org)

from the Guest Editor  
continued from page 1

Rural;" Judy Olson on "Teaching and Learning Focus Group Skills: A Classroom Example;" Myke Gluck, "Content Analysis, Semiotics, and Social Semiotics for Cartographic Analysis: Interpreting Geospatial Representations; and Barbara Poore, "What are the Benefits of Sharing Geographic Data? Qualitative Approaches."

Barbara's paper was a speculative piece that she has not yet pursued further. Mark's how-to for telephone interviews with subject experts who are map users but not cartographers is covered in part elsewhere (Monmonier and Johnson 1991). Myke's paper is the lead article in this issue of *Cartographic Perspectives*. Myke proposes methods for analyzing maps as images in corporate annual reports, and is an example of research studying diverse forms of representation for diverse audiences. Judy's paper, with nine student co-authors, also is presented in this issue. It is a how-to for classroom use of focus groups, with a map as the object of study. My own AAG presentation included an anecdotal portion on in-person interviews plus a discussion of analysis tools for non-numeric data. In lieu of the anecdotal portion, which did not lend itself to formalization for print, I provide (at the end of this introduction) published resources that give practical guidance in conducting interviews. The latter part of my

AAG presentation has been developed into a lengthy qualitative-data-analysis software review, co-authored with JoAnn Vender, for this issue of *CP*.

Qualitative methods garner data that are words or images, not numbers. Qualitative analysis also most often are done on, and presented with, words or images. As I have pursued the topic of qualitative methods in cartographic research, I have heard both criticism that qualitative methods used by cartographers are too casual to "count" as research and that cartographers using qualitative methods in research "count" too much, meaning that we rely too much on the quantitative paradigm for rules of evidence and validity in analysis. Further criticism focuses on failing to situate our qualitative research within a specific philosophical or political paradigm.

But debate on "proper" qualitative research, occurring in any discipline where qualitative methods are being broached, should not discourage use of qualitative methods in our research. Together, the papers at the AAG session in Boston demonstrated that qualitative research methods can help us develop and conduct cartographic research in expanded real-world environments, with both novice and expert—and especially non-cartographic—participants, in natural settings. I hope the growing body of qualitative research in cartography, in this issue of *Cartographic Perspectives* and elsewhere

in the geographic literature (Suchan and Brewer 1999), will prompt you to think about incorporating non-numeric data, real-world materials and situations, and participants beyond the readily-available students, in your research tool kit.

Monmonier, Mark, and Branden B. Johnson. 1991. Using qualitative data-gathering techniques to improve the design of environmental maps. *Proceedings of 15th International Cartographic Association Conference*, at Bournemouth. Vol. 1, 364-373.

Suchan, Trudy A. and Cynthia A. Brewer. 1999. Qualitative Methods for Research on Map Making and Map Use. Forthcoming in *The Professional Geographer*.

For basic advice on in-person interviews, see:

Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin. 1995. *Qualitative Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Patton, Michael Quinn. 1990. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. 2nd ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Merton, Robert K., Marjorie Fiske, and Patricia L. Kendall. 1956 and 1990. *The Focused Interview*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.