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Letter from the Guest Editor

This special issue of *Cartographic Perspectives* chronicles the sessions of the first NACIS Practical Cartography Day, held at NACIS XXI in Portland, Oregon in October of 2001. The long promised write-ups of the how-to tutorials and the informative presentations are contained herein.

We have a total of seven articles and I extend a warm thank you to those Practical Cartography Day participants who took the time to put their presentations into a written format. Some of the immediate impact and nuances of the presentations, made in a hands-on manner on a computer, may be lost but the overall value remains in seeing what cartographers are doing in a practical context.

Three articles come from the session on two- and three-dimensional topographic presentation. David Barnes evaluates the capabilities of ESRI ArcGIS to create relief shading and other basic topographic techniques and also adds

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an advanced technique for preparing Swiss-style hill shading in Arc Spatial Analyst. I present a step-by-step guide to using the most common pixel-pushing graphic arts program, Adobe Photoshop, to create relief shading, hypsometric tinting and colored shadows and highlights. Tom Patterson leads the way in three-dimensional techniques with a tutorial for using Corel Bryce to drape a satellite image onto a digital elevation model.

From our session on special mapmaking techniques with drawing programs, Dick Furno presents his practical tips for dead-line map production at the Washington Post. The unique world of a daily publication provides important real world incentives for the practical cartographer to work quickly and accurately. Dick shows the advantages of combining database and drawing applications (Azimuth and Freehand) to maintain an accurate base map and produce publication quality maps.

Our final three articles are from the session on using geographic data. Brandon Plewe examines the practical cartographer's dilemma of living without the perfect cartographic software. He provides a valuable evaluation of the needs of the professional cartographer and abilities and liabilities of the current software used for mapmaking. Ted Florence provides little known tips and techniques for using Avenza MAPublisher and being the company president, he knows some excellent tricks. A particularly practical tip is how to create an ASCII file with your own lat/long coordinates for mapping. Finally, Mapthematics GeoCart software author Daan Strebe looks at appropriate projections for globe gores. This unique cartographic problem requires careful planning and projection selection to minimize distortions.

I hope these articles give NACIS members who were not at Practical Cartography Day a sampling of the content of the presentations and a view of what the day was like. I would also like to take this opportunity to relate the activities surrounding an event that many of us hope will become a NACIS tradition.

When I first pestered my friends in NACIS about having more sessions and workshops devoted to the activities of the working cartographer, every one of them nodded enthusiastically and said "yes, that would be great, what do you propose?" This got me thinking and talking more and more as Milwaukee led to Williamsburg and Williamsburg led to Knoxville and before I could help myself I was on the NACIS Board and had volunteered to be lead organizer for the first Practical Cartography Day.

There was a devoted crew of fellow practicing cartographers who had also been buzzing for more hands-on cartographic topics at NACIS and they eagerly volunteered to help. We began organizational discussions in early Spring of 2001. Because we planned for a small, intimate gathering of 30 or so, we figured a late starting date for organizing would work fine.

What transpired for Practical Cartography Day in Portland went far beyond our initial expectations. We had over 100 cartographers attend our intimate gathering. We held four sessions: 2d and 3d Topographic Presentations, New Media Maps, Special Techniques for Mapmaking in Drawing Software, and Using Geodata. These consisted of short presentations followed by "open mouse" time with each presenter at a com-puter for questions and answers.

Despite some computer/projector issues and a room that was a little small for a hundred practical cartographers, we had a very successful day. The presentations were highly engaging and many lauded the value of watching practical cartographers at work. The ques-

tion and answer time allowed for interaction between attendees and presenters. Though this "open mouse" set-up was constrained by the small room and a fifteen minute time limit, it proved to be animated and informative and the cartographic techniques were flowing in both directions.

Attendees of Practical Cartography Day I completed questionnaires about the event. The most consistent comment was that we should do it again. As we look to future Practical Cartography Days at NACIS Annual Conferences, the feedback we received in Portland is very valuable. We asked a variety of questions and as often occurs in a survey, many people criticized the very things others extolled: too big, too small, too long, too short, etc. Some desires for a Practical Cartography Day are highly individual!

Here are some of the comments people wrote about what they liked most about Practical Cartography Day:

"Seeing how other cartographers solve the same problems we have."

"I liked the open mouse time – the good sense of humor of the presenters."

"It shows that we are all still learning and adding to our skills."

"Meeting other cartographers—networking—synergy of ideas."

"Variety of topics and rapid pace."

"I liked being shown the tools and steps that are used to create map graphics."

"Seeing how techniques are applied to everyday cartographic work."

"Exposure to new techniques and software."

We also asked people to note areas where things didn't go as well:

"I couldn't ask questions of all the speakers in the time allotted."

"I didn't like the open mouse time."

"Needed more space, hard to

get to presenters when people crowded around during open question and answer time."

"Wanted more explanation of reasons for software choices."

"Open mouse time would have worked better with smaller groups." (This was a common comment and something to address for the future.)

Attendees gave suggestions for the future:

"Would have been good if we had computers to try out the stuff we saw "

"Need to have the how-tos and the presentations posted by conference time so people can go look at them right away."

"Wanted more detail on FLASH cartography, more how-to "

"More on web-based mapping, virtual reality, printing of maps "

A few common themes emerged from the comments. We needed a more time and smaller groups for the "open mouse" concept to be successful. Generally people thought there were too many presentations and they were a little too short (but, of course, several people thought the short presentations were just right—fast-paced and exciting). People universally said they would attend another day and I loved the comment someone wrote that they were " left wishing for more."

All in all, quite a satisfying experience for the participants and organizers and we will be doing it again. The next Practical Cartography Day will take place at the NACIS Annual Conference in Jacksonville, Florida, in October of 2003. We are gathering volunteers now to help with organizing and to be involved in preparing for the day. If you are interested in helping out or just in keeping up with what the organizing committee is up to, please email me at tait@erols.com. We have an email LISTSERVE for the group and you are welcome to join in and contribute your ideas.

Alex Tait

NACIS Practical Cartographer Award

As part of our questionnaire about Practical Cartography Day, we asked attendees to draw the outlines of all the South American countries and label them with their capital cities. We asked that the map be drawn from memory only and I was curious to see how the cartographers assembled would respond to this "practical" challenge. I didn't receive as many entries as I had hoped but those that came in ranged from amusing to astounding. Cartographers are indeed walking gazetteers sometimes.

The inaugural NACIS Practical Cartographer Gerardus Mercator Award (otherwise known as the "Gerry") for best map from memory goes to Sean Hayes of LandGrafix, Inc. for his map of South America. The winning map below is remarkable for it completeness (all the names and capitals!) and its geographic verisimilitude.