

The second chapter begins: “The actual surface of the Earth is not very cooperative.” (p. 39), and the next sixty-one pages (the chapters “Building a Coordinate System” and “Heights”) show that this is a bit of an understatement. Legacy Geodetic Surveying, Ellipsoids, Geodetic Datums, and Coordinate Transformation are all covered. What is more, they are made readable; maybe not as readable as Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, but certainly with a clearer narrative line.

The later chapters: “Two Coordinate Systems” and “Rectangular System,” apply the conceptual chapters to three (actually, four) particular coordinate systems. US examples predominate, with discussions of State Plane (with its two main projection types) and the US Public Land Survey System taking up the lion’s share of the page count, and UTM getting a look in as the second of the “Two Coordinate Systems.”

Because the State Plane discussion includes examination of both the Lambert Conic and Transverse Mercator based zones types, it is generally applicable to systems other than State Plane. As well, it offers an opportunity to compare the Transverse Mercator as used in State Plane with the version used in UTM.

Without a doubt, there are a lot of people who operate daily in a State Plane Coordinate System (SPCS) coordinate environment, and *Basic GIS Coordinates* provides a good comprehensive look at it. One may argue that systems such as State Plane are not true coordinate systems, but, nonetheless, they are used to describe locations on the planet and are based on the application of specific projected frameworks. One may also note that this specific system (SPCS) is only used for a very small portion of the globe, but, again, the basic problems to be encountered when using such a system will be similar wherever one is applied. My first GIS job was processing survey fabric data under the Canadian Dominion Land Survey (DLS), which is similar, albeit (I always thought) admirably more regular in plan and execution. On reflection, though, that impression of regularity may be mistaken, arising because I have never seen it described to this level of detail (and I note that Van Sickle never uses the term “road allowance,” which is one of the particularly charming features of the DLS).

The five chapter-ending “Exercises” and “Explanations and Answers” sections should be mentioned. I usually ignore these parts of a book; put it down to pure unadulterated laziness on my part. In *Basic GIS Coordinates*, however, these exercises are well worth working through. The explanations are short, sharp summations of the main text relevant to the exercise question, and placed, as they are, immediately after the question pages, there is no disincentive to ‘bother’ with the exercises.

## Criticism

One could argue that the domestic US focus of *Basic GIS Coordinates* is more limiting than it may appear to someone who has worked only in the US. Similarly, the author’s focus on surveying concerns and conformality is obvious. Azimuthal projections get only the briefest of mentions, and non-conformal projections even less space. Still, the aim is clearly not to be encyclopedic, but to focus on the components of coordinate systems, and this aim is achieved.

## Summary

This is really an excellent little book. It brings together a whole skein of threads that might be hard to round up otherwise. I perhaps flatter myself in thinking that I already have a pretty good grasp of at least the basics of most of the issues raised in *Basic GIS Coordinates*. I know I have, over the years, been able to solve a good many seemingly sticky coordinate problems, and have given some sound and well-reasoned advice on projection choices and other issues. In part, this has been because I both understand the general frame of the issue and know where I can find the relevant specific information when it is needed. *Basic GIS Coordinates* is very much the kind of basic reference that is useful in this: its explanations are short and succinct, its illustrations are clear, and it is unencumbered with extraneous anecdotal and mathematical detail. In general, in these days of computer computation, one seldom (or never) has to work these calculations out, but it pays to know what is going on. This book contains the sort of stuff I need to know to allow me to understand specific situations as they arise. I am glad I have it on my shelf.

On the other hand, *Basic GIS Coordinates* is published by CRC Press, and CRC Press does not publish inexpensive books. At a slim 200 pages, and with a list price only a nickel shy of ninety dollars, one must think long and hard before shelling out scarce pennies for such a publication. I know I would have to think very long indeed. I would have no qualms, however, pressing my librarian to lay in a copy for circulation.

## THEY WOULD NOT TAKE ME THERE: PEOPLE, PLACES AND STORIES FROM CHAMPLAIN’S TRAVELS IN CANADA, 1603–1616



By Michael James Hermann & Margaret Wickens Pearce.

Translation by Raymond Pelletier.  
The University of Maine Canadian–American Center, Orono, Maine, USA.  
ISBN 978-0615-23159-4. \$14.99.

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In *They Would Not Take Me There*, Margaret Pearce and Mike Hermann set out to tell the story of Samuel de Champlain's journeys in New France in the early seventeenth century. At first glance, their work appears deceptively simple. Champlain's route is drawn on a very plain base map of the St. Lawrence River and the eastern edge of the Great Lakes. Spilling into the otherwise empty expanse of land south of the river are five panels, each consisting of a series of relatively simple inset maps which carry us through episodes from Champlain's journals (Figure 1). There are no clever multivariate symbols. There are no trendy design embellishments. There is little more than land, water, and text. It would be a mistake, however, to assume it is cartographically unremarkable simply because of its plain appearance.

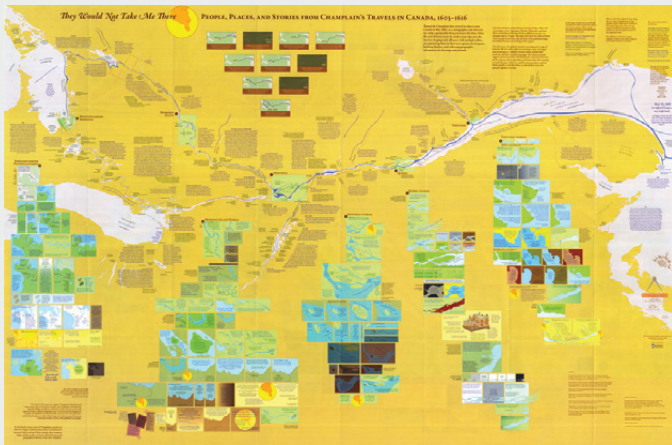


Figure 1. Map Overview.

Within that simple framework the authors have created a work that is as deep and engaging as it is unassuming in appearance. This is not merely a catalogue of the path of Champlain's travels overlaid onto some local hydrography and annotated with a few quotations from his writings. Here, Champlain's words are the star. The text is supported and enhanced by the spatial representation, not the other way around. In reading *They Would Not Take Me There*, we are reading Champlain's journals, arranged not linearly, but instead embedded in their spatial context. When Champlain says that he "never saw any torrent of water pour over with such force as this", we see his words define the location of the very



Figure 2. Torrents inset.

torrent he's describing (Figure 2). The authors seek to give Champlain a voice, and this they do quite well. We can hear him narrate his experiences as we look on, and his words point to the geographies that he lived just as clearly as would his finger if he were present.

Champlain's is not the only voice on the map; the imagined voices of the native peoples of his New France are heard as well, set in a separate color of type. They compete for the chance to interpret events, while observing and commenting on his actions. Their toponyms sit beside his. The map's authors, too, get in on the act, using their own notes to fill in details and describe events from an outsider's perspective. This is not a sterile map of the physical landscape; it is populated and alive. It is a work of very human cartography.

In the inset map sequences we find specific episodes from Champlain's travels. As the authors move through each small map in the series, they carefully shift location, scale, and color palette to influence the reader's understanding of the story being told. The darkness of death, the red of blood, the loneliness of a small island amidst the water—all of these play quietly upon our feelings, reinforcing the tone of Champlain's words. The map engages us at an emotional level; something critical for effective storytelling (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Drowning insets.

Engaging though its narrative is, the map does a poor job visually advertising its wealth. The creative use of voices will interest readers, but only if the lack of an immediate aesthetic appeal does not keep them from coming close enough to look. The cold white hydrography on the base map is empty and uninviting, and there are vast stretches of flat, uniform tan land. It seems like the only purpose of either is to show that it is not the other: the tan polygons are simply there to mark not-water, and the white layer looks like it only indicates places where there is no land. Neither has its own positive identity, and this can serve as a barrier to engaging with the narrative so carefully crafted in the typography. The actors' words mean more when we can look at the map and see them talking about a landscape, not canoeing atop a polygon. The uniform emptiness could be a useful device to illustrate the great stretches of New France which were unknown to Europeans at the time, but there is no visual contrast drawn between the places Champlain knew of or experienced, and the places he did not. His



words fit on the St. Lawrence about as well as they fit in Michigan. As a final note on the overall aesthetics, the thin, semi-matte coated stock on which the map is printed feels at odds with the subject matter. Its lack of weight and its plastic feel does not mesh with the historical drama which unfolds on its surface.

While the panels of inset maps are more attractively done, they are poorly integrated with the base map. Their richer color palette makes the main map look dull in comparison, and contributes to a sense that they belong on another page altogether. They are meant to show events taking place at a small location marked on the base map, but they necessarily move far away from that location as the story unfolds, making it difficult to maintain a sense of context and thus weakening their connection to those spaces.

These weaknesses are not fatal; while they can introduce static into the transmission of Champlain's voice, enough comes through to make for a rewarding experience. *They Would Not Take Me There* is a valuable contribution and a worthy addition to anyone's library. It is a map for human beings, about human beings, in a way that too few are, and gives voice to those living in the geography represented. The reader is drawn emotionally into the story through its creative typography and the thoughtful use of color and scale in the inset maps. *They Would Not Take Me There* is worthy of imitation and will hopefully serve as a source of inspiration to others.

### THE GODDESS AND THE NATION: MAPPING MOTHER INDIA



By Sumathi Ramaswamy.

Duke University Press,  
2010. 379pp.  
152 figures and illustrations, 100 in  
color. \$27.95. Paperback.  
ISBN 978-0-8223-4610-4.

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Sumathi Ramaswamy's book  
traces the initial appearance  
and subsequent evolution of

"Bharat Mata" (India Mother), a new deity that emerged in conjunction with India's struggle for nationhood. Significantly, the figure of Bharat Mata was regularly depicted along with a map of the Indian subcontinent, thus (in philosopher Edward Casey's terms) both *standing for* and *standing in for* the nation waiting to be created. The author accounts for the importance of these representations of Mother India by reviewing theories of representation in conjunction with historical

events and key personages in Indian history, in order to provide frames for the images and contexts for their interpretation. The book's chapters each begin with an explanation of how its particular topic contributes to an overall understanding of the image's importance and impact, followed by detailed descriptions of several prominent examples, generally presented in chronological sequence. The chapters also follow a historical sequence, moving from the image's earliest appearance through periods of growing use and into the present period, when Bharat Mata's recognizability has made her a popular feature on contemporary political posters.

Rawaswamy traces Bharat Mata's origins to Bengal in 1904, where a female figure identified as "Mother Bengal" first appeared on posters. Although clearly a deity (she had four arms and an aura), she bore a strong resemblance to an average Bengali woman and was intended as a symbol of that area. Over the next few decades, as Bharat Mata gained in popularity, artists added new features to her depiction: the tri-colored flag of the independence movement, lions, and most importantly, a visual image of the territory she represented. Mother India's success as an icon of national independence was not assured from the outset, however, and many decisions had to be made about her appearance. Although the territory depicted in images of Bharat Mata varied, with some posters suggesting greater territorial claims than others, obtaining consensus on the map of India and its boundaries appears to have been less problematic than settling on the female deity's character and characteristics. For example, although bearing a very strong resemblance to Hindu deities, Bharat Mata had to be a unifying figure, so many posters depicting her took pains to include messages and slogans in the languages of India's religious minorities (p. 21). India was also deeply divided by its caste system, complicating what would be appropriate for Bharat Mata's attire and jewelry. Would portrayals of her as rich make her less attractive to the enormous number of India's poor? Would portraying her as poor adequately convey the exploitative character of British occupation? Should she be young or old? If she was young, just how attractive and desirable could she appear and still maintain her dignity? Also, if she was "Mother" India, should she be depicted as having children? If so, how many, and who might be their father? If not portrayed as a mother, could she still appear to be a maternal figure? If she did represent the struggle for independence, should she perhaps be more aggressive than maternal and be depicted with instruments of battle? As artists grappled with these issues, their chosen solutions often dictated how they incorporated the mapped image of the Indian subcontinent into their designs. Virtually all portrayals of Bharat Mata, for example, include the island of Sri Lanka in some fashion: in many, it takes the form of a flower, in others a vase, and in still others it is simply a