

The wide selection of maps depicting a variety of events could easily lead the reader to believe that at least one map exists depicting every occasion in the state's history. Indeed, it seemed unusual to have any event, such as the LA riots described on page 233, mentioned in the text without an accompanying map. Understandably, these instances are rare. On the other hand, while the physical terrain model of the Los Angeles Aqueduct's route is interesting in itself and relevant to the chapter on supplying the cities with water, the inability to properly photograph it makes the inclusion of map 376 seem unnecessary.

Most of the maps in the atlas bleed off the pages, making for an interesting appearance and maximizing the page space devoted to the maps. As most maps selected for the atlas exceed the atlas' page size at their original size and scale, a cropped selection of many maps is included when shrinking the map was infeasible or undesirable. In the case of maps 374 and 379, a section as well as the entire map is shown to illustrate different points while telling the story of the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

With such detailed maps containing information equally spread throughout the space, especially with a cropped selection, the tolerance for page trimming becomes more demanding than other visuals. As such, there is a risk of the maps being cropped more than planned, as pages are trimmed just a bit less than originally intended as a result of the printing and binding process. This is especially true for maps bleeding off the left-hand page, where a small variation in trimming the page's edge occasionally resulted in the appearance of being cropped short, as some labels were missing the first letter (e.g. maps 371 and 388 in the reviewer's copy). This is minor effect, and in no way detracts from the overall visual appeal of the atlas.

One effect of the page bleed is that many pages do not display a page number, which can make finding a particular page harder. However, as numbers are only omitted for two consecutive pages at most, it is only noticed when the reader wishes to find a specific page.

The *Historical Atlas of California* is a gorgeous book that would be enjoyed by anyone who loves California, or who appreciates beautiful and historical maps generally. It provides one of the most visually engaging ways to learn about that state's fascinating history, and would be a welcome addition to any collection.

TYPOGRAPHIC MAP OF CHICAGO



By Axis Maps, LLC.

Axis Maps, 2011. 24" x 36", color, also available in grayscale. \$30, offset print on 100 lb semi-gloss paper, store.axismaps.com.

Review by: Jonathan Munetz,
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Axis Maps' typographic map of Chicago is one in a series which includes depictions of Boston, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. On each map, the roads, rivers, neighborhoods, parks, and other features of the city are fashioned purely out of type. This form is not new; the first such map was introduced in 1773 in Germany¹, but it is certainly not common. Axis Maps' typographic maps aim to be both reference and art maps, and the tension between these goals drives the design decisions behind them. That tension has led to particular graphic choices, some in line with familiar, accepted conventions, and others that are innovative, artistic features that grab the viewer's attention (Figure 1).

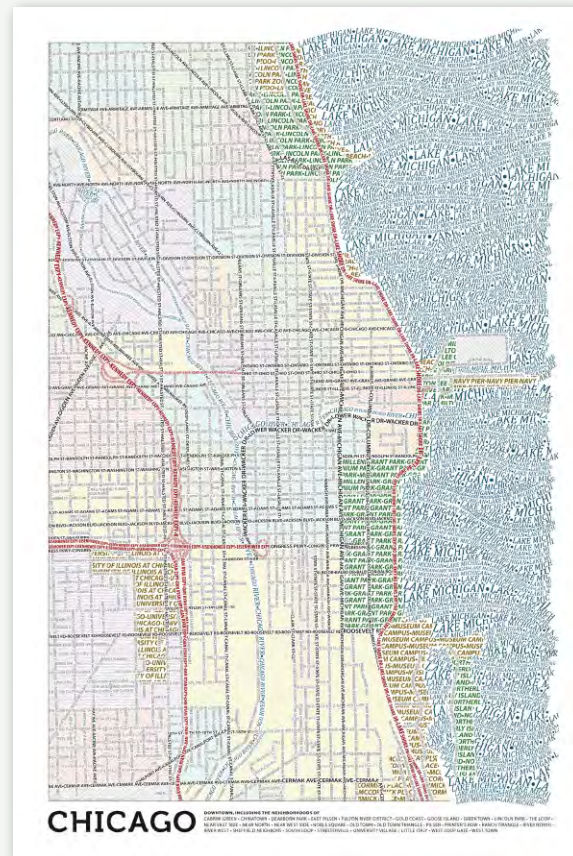


Figure 1. Axis Maps' typographic map of Chicago, 24" x 36", color.

The type, not surprisingly, is this map's most remarkable feature. Overall, the typeface choices work harmoniously

together, and give the map a clean, modern, stylish look. Lake Michigan, to the east, is set in all capitals in a decidedly angular, serif typeface. This angularity contrasts nicely with the roundness of the sans serif, roman letters of the city streets. The clear, legible street labels are divided into two hierarchical levels, with principal thoroughfares set in larger, darker type than smaller roads. Cultural features and parks appear in the italic style of the same font that is used for principal streets. Despite their distinctness, the typefaces comprising the lake, streets, and cultural features complement each other well.

The typefaces chosen for specific features are not as emotive as the map taken as a whole; and the choices sometime seem counterintuitive. For instance, sans serif type is more commonly associated with a modern, industrial aesthetic than serif type. Yet the angularity of the type chosen for the lake gives it a machined, man-made feel that seems in tension with the organic feeling evoked by the curves of the waves of the lake (Figure 2) and the sinuous movement of the Chicago River. A more curvaceous, natural-seeming type choice might have been a better fit with the character of these water bodies.



Figure 2. Detail: the lettering that comprises Lake Michigan appears to undulate, evoking a sense of movement (area shown: approximately 9.5" x 6").

The only other features on the map that appear in serif type are, surprisingly, the neighborhoods. These are the smallest labels on the map, and are tiny enough that the map-reader may fail to notice the type at all. Although one may expect conventional sans serif lettering for these cultural features, the neighborhood labels succeed because they manage to be both subtle and legible, even at their very small size (probably no more than 8 point). Neighborhoods are labeled in six different pastel tones, so that no area has the same color as one adjacent to it, a color scheme no doubt familiar to most map readers. The varied color scheme, plus a varied text angle for each neighborhood, distinguishes neighborhoods and makes their extent clear and unambiguous. The neighborhoods also function as parts of a whole, appearing unified because they belong to the same color family, with similar levels of brightness and saturation. They drift into the background, not competing for visual space with the

streets, yet can still be examined should the viewer want a closer look.

Principal thoroughfares are labeled in red, another familiar road atlas design convention. This comfortable stylistic choice unfortunately creates problems in terms of visual hierarchy, where the deep red of Lake Shore Drive, the Dan Ryan Expressway, the John F. Kennedy Expressway, and the Eisenhower Expressway jump out at the viewer. Highways indeed have profound effects on neighborhood dynamics and life on the ground in cities, yet they are probably not so important as to merit such a prominent, almost overpowering place in the visual hierarchy.

Two other features inhabit the same color family as the expressways: parks, labeled in green, and campuses and popular tourist destinations, labeled in brown. These cultural features seem important to highlight, and the choice of colors for them is logical. One trade-off of such a scheme is that, due to the green and red having similar value and saturation, people with red-green color vision impairment might see Lake Shore Drive being subsumed by Grant Park, at least from a distance. This issue is not too problematic for general viewing, and Axis offers a grayscale version of the map for those who would prefer such a look anyway (Figure 3).

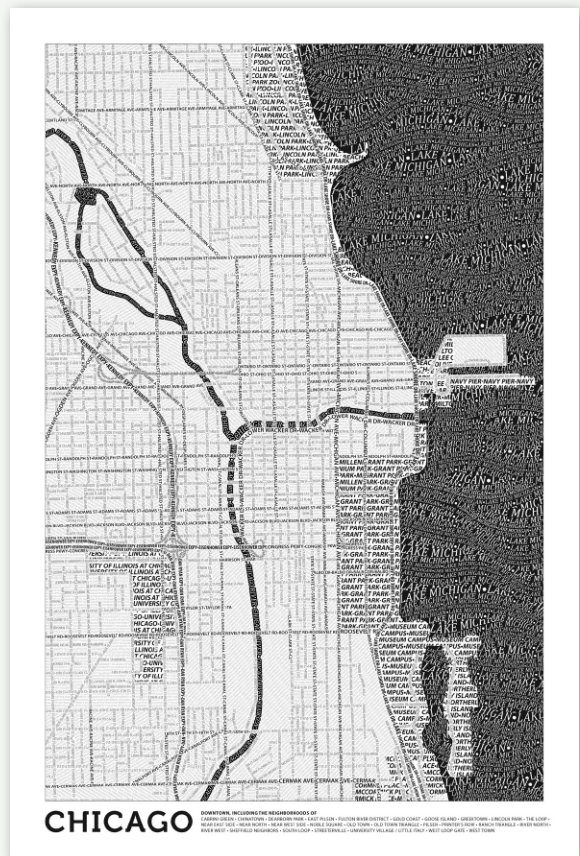


Figure 3. Axis Maps' typographic map of Chicago, 24" x 36", grayscale.

Two other concerns with the color version of this map are obviated by the grayscale version. First, while the subtle color family for the neighborhoods and the bold color families for the expressways, parks, and cultural attractions create internal cohesion, the subtle and the bold features do not necessarily cohere as a whole. Second, the subtle colors, while elegant, create figure-ground issues. It is hard to tell, for instance, where the land ends and Lake Michigan begins. From afar, parts of the city seem to disappear into the water. In other places, Lakeshore Drive looks as if it were the boundary between the water and the land even though, upon closer inspection, one can see it is not. The more subdued color of the actual land-water boundary is overpowered by the nearby deep red hues of the roads (Figure 4). As mentioned, these design choices derive mostly from convention, and are consequently familiar to viewers; thus this design overall is more likely to appeal to a broad audience. Viewers will surely find the map's more innovative and inspired qualities appealing as well.

The striking treatment of Lake Michigan represents the best of this map's novel artistic features. The letters that comprise the lake appear to undulate, evoking a wavelike feeling. Lines of serif type of varying sizes move over and under one another creating a sense of movement. Although the land ends at the map neat line, the lake is allowed to flow freely past it, mirroring the free-flowing nature of the water itself (Figure 2).

The Chicago River, on the other hand, is as unimpressive as the lake is exciting. Given that the Chicago is not much of a river itself, perhaps this choice was intentional. Still, the blue color chosen for the water is so dark that it almost appears to be a road. This confusion is particularly problematic along Wacker Drive (Figure 5), where the river and the road simply do not have enough contrast between them. On their recently released color map of Washington, D.C., as well as on the black-and-white version of this map, Axis Maps has inverted the type and background color, solving this problem. Such decisions suggest that the creators of this map are aware of its shortcomings, minor as they may be.

Overall, any detail weaknesses of Axis Maps' typographic treatment of Chicago are outweighed by the work as a whole. The authors have put together a map that is crisp and engaging, and is clever without appearing trite. In short, the gestalt effect is initially pleasant, and even more appealing upon reflection. One need not be a cartographer or a map aficionado to appreciate this map's informative and aesthetic qualities. It is even potentially useful for anyone looking for a reference map of Chicago, albeit one that comes in 24" x 36".

Notes

1. International Cartographic Association. Helen Wallis, ed. *Map-making to 1900: an historical glossary of cartographic innovations and their diffusion*. London: The Royal Society, 1976, 51.



Figure 4. Detail: the red hues of Lakeshore Drive make the road appear to be the land-water boundary (area shown: approximately 6.5" x 16.5").



Figure 5. Detail: the Chicago River and Wacker Drive are difficult to distinguish (area shown: approximately 6" x 2").

