



tographic training and also offer a knowledge base and set of practical skills and advice to those seeking to better their mapping. Design could be the focus for what sets cartographers apart from mapmakers and this is an area we will explore during our initial four-year term.

We have already been active across a wide range of work that showcases the efforts of the Commission or, more accurately, acts as a lens on design in cartography. A number of papers at the North American Cartographic Information Society (NACIS) Annual Meeting in Madison, Wisconsin (October 2011) touched on pressing design issues and served as a reminder of the relevance and timeliness of the Commission. The conference theme was “how does design make a difference?”, so the new Commission is entirely in line with the thoughts of numerous learned societies. Commission members presented at the NACIS meeting and followed that up with seven paper sessions at the Association of American Geographers (AAG) in New York (February 2012), co-organized with the Commission on Cognitive Visualization. A wide array of papers explored overarching issues of the value of design in mapping as well as specific topics, including the way color is applied in particular circumstances and re-workings of the Minard map. The best papers from the sessions were published as part of a special issue of *The Cartographic Journal* in 2012 and evidenced the importance of design in mapping. More generally, there was quite a focus on mapping at the conference and a particularly well-attended session by the team from the *New York Times* graphics department gave an insight into their work. The maps and infographics in the *New York Times* are widely recognized as being some of the clearest, cleanest contemporary examples of good design and the session showcased much of their work and processes. It is work by this sort of individuals and organizations that is both pushing and challenging cartography to evolve.

Commission meetings have also been held at the last two Esri International User Conferences in San Diego. Commission members have also given presentations at the British Cartographic Society Annual Symposia and also at the GeoCart 2012 conference in Auckland, New Zealand. Design was also a focus of a pre-conference workshop in which participants explored the range of possibilities for creating meaningful thematic maps and how design plays an important part in shaping the message of the map. Over the two days, the story of which nations had been most successful in the London 2012 Olympic Games changed dramatically, simply due to the different mapping techniques applied to the same dataset. This provided a unique opportunity for mapmakers to really come to grips with a simple dataset and the myriad ways in which design can be applied and influence the outcome.

Of course, this issue of *Cartographic Perspectives* has emerged from the Aesthetics of Mapping forum held at the NACIS conference in Portland, Oregon in 2012. More details can be found in the editorial letter at the beginning of the issue. More recently, the Commission has continued its presence at the AAG by organizing a day of themed sessions on map design and neocartography, co-hosted with the Commission on Neocartography. The sessions brought together a terrific mix of cutting-edge work on a wide variety of topics that cross-cut themes of map design in the digital age. The Commission was also active at the International

Cartographic Conference in August 2013 in Dresden, where a number of sessions dedicated to map design took place. The Commission additionally held a meeting, and organized a pre-conference workshop, which featured presentations on digital map design and demonstrations of best practice in web map design.

Given the Apple Maps debacle in early 2013 and the recent redesign of Google Maps, aesthetics is clearly something that the big players are grappling with. Apple's well publicized difficulties illustrate clearly what happens when you ignore the issue of how your map looks. Google, on the other hand, seem to be increasingly embracing the look and feel of their map as a showcase for a more personalized map interface. But have they gone too far in using the map as a canvas for advertising and displaying promoted content? This touches on the importance of ethics in cartography as well as aesthetics, as the unwitting consumption of maps born out of selection and omission based on your Internet profiles takes over. This is a really fascinating space and one which the Commission will continue to engage in.

