

FOREWORD

Over the decades (what started as) the Society of University Cartographers has widened its reach and its remit. Today it is a society for all cartographers. Tomorrow it may have an even broader appeal. This beautifully produced and carefully chosen selection of articles, cherry-picked from fifty years of the work of its members and supporters, shows not only the diligence and vivacity of UK cartography, through pieces most written by cartographers based in the United Kingdom, but also how the profession has evolved through time.

Just as a tiny number of US cartographers (those with the first access to computers in the 1960s) were beginning to explore the possibilities of automated cartography, UK cartographers were organizing themselves to better define what good practice in mapping might be and how to better think about cartography in the round. The Society's contribution pushed the practical and professional practice of map-making to the fore. It is interesting to speculate how much knowledge might have been lost, or have never been brought together and disseminated, and with what effect, had the Society not been formed in 1964.

Thanks largely to the Society of Cartographers, those who made most of the maps which appeared in UK University and other textbooks over the course of the last half century also contributed to the debate of how those maps should look. From Jane Thake's and H.A. Sandford's work on mapping for children, through to debates about the most complex of cartographic techniques – many included in this volume – the contribution of those making maps and being trained to make maps became part of the theory and education in cartography that typified the UK experience.

Writing on the first 25 years of the history of the Society (1964–1989) and also included in this volume, Carson Clark and colleagues described how, before the advent of the Society, it was common for University Cartographers to be said to have to '...possess a high degree of "manual dexterity" – a derogatory term used frequently by academics to emphasize their view of the inferiority of all non-academic staff' (see chapter 'The SUC: 1964–1989'). The Society, and its *Bulletin*, was one of the ways in which such views were greatly – if not yet entirely – changed for the better.

At times, and especially at the height of the popularity of Geographic Information Systems, articles appeared in the *Bulletin* lamenting whether cartography was becoming a dying art. The recent political history of cartography and cartographers in the UK appears to contain episodes of rebellion, despair, and anger over the incursion of machines, as well as celebration. Gary Brannon's chapter in this volume, written in 1998 suggested that: 'it is quite possible that in a few decades from now, we will look back

at cartography, not in terms of a viable salary-paying profession, but as a service provided by a machine, looking perhaps much like the ubiquitous bank machines found in every high street, where a multicoloured map sheet will be custom produced at a kiosk while you wait.'

We are now, almost, a few decades from Gary's 'now'. I would suggest that if the images in this volume produced after 1998 are compared to those before that date then perhaps there is less need to despair – unless the works published by the Society in its *Bulletin* have become less and less representative of the wider world. Flick through this book, from start to end and you see a kind of animation of the evolution of contemporary UK cartography. Fifty years in fifty seconds if you can flick the pages slowly enough. The final maps, of London's subterranea by Stephen Walter, could not contrast more with Elwyn Edwards' initial images of 'ideal', 'satisfactory' and 'poor' lettering.

How might the next fifty years of cartographic evolution play out? What objects that are currently not considered maps might become part of the remit of cartography and what things that cartographers once did will be taken for granted more and more – will be automated? I suspect we'll be going off the page, into the third and fourth dimensions more routinely, and perhaps not knowing we are doing so if that becomes more ubiquitous.

I suspect the old will continue to lament the lack of knowledge of the young. In my younger days you had to learn to programme a computer to use one! I suspect there will continue to be a need for solidarity in the face of derogatory views, perhaps new forms of not very nice older views. And I suspect another fifty years will show just as much, if not an even faster, rate of change. Hopefully this change will be based on a knowledge of the past and then the change that will be all the better for that.

Steve Chilton and Alex Kent deserve to be warmly congratulated for bringing together a volume which is much more than the sum of its parts, and which, I think, can be looked at as a whole to learn something many of us had not seen before about the evolution of map-making, especially in what now looks, in hindsight, to have been a particularly vibrant period in UK cartographic history.

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