The years 1963 and 1964 have been auspicious ones for University Cartographers. September 1963 saw the formation, at Leicester, of the British Cartographic Society, a body designed to interest all those connected with cartography in any way, whether as mapmaker or map user. Whilst the B.C.S. has much to offer those engaged in cartographic illustration, it was felt that another more specialised organisation was needed to cater for the particular interests of those people engaged in producing maps for the purpose of book illustration. Consequently, at the Summer School held in the University of Glasgow this autumn, a meeting was held at which it was decided to form a new society, to be called the Society of University Cartographers. The question of the title of the society provoked some discussion, it being felt by some of those present that the Society of University Cartographic Illustrators might be more suitable. However, “Cartographer” has been recently defined as “One whose art or business is the making of maps and charts from an accurate compilation based on expert assessment of all relevant material”. This definition suggests that the title chosen for the new society is a valid one.

Cartographic illustration, or the art of compiling and drawing maps for geographical textbooks and journals has developed considerably in the post-war years. Until then no Geography Department had a drawing office with full-time staff fully engaged in illustrative work, though one or two such as Nottingham had personnel doing a little of this kind of work among many other tasks. In the University of Liverpool, Department of Geography, in 1946, Professor H.C. Darby inaugurated a drawing office with a staff of two full-time cartographic illustrators. It is probably true to say, then, that as well as having the first Honours School in Geography in the British Isles, Liverpool was well to the forefront in establishing a cartographic office. At the present every Department has staff engaged on cartographic illustration, the larger offices such as that of University College, London having as many as six draughtsmen.

No longer do University lecturers have to spend time drawing their own maps for publication, they can rely on being able to find professional assistance to do the job for them. The work is of a specialised nature, yet the illustrator must be a man of many parts. Primarily he should be something of an artist with a flair for layout and design but able to adapt himself to the fairly rigid disciplines of cartographic drawing. He should be a neat and accurate draughtsman with the ability to produce first class lettering by any suitable method. A knowledge of the printing trade is a great advantage as much of his work is designed to be printed as book illustrations. He should have a good knowledge of the theory of cartography, know something about geography and geology, have the ability to make field sketches and sketches from photographs, have some knowledge of photography as many of his drawings will be made into slides – and lastly and importantly, he should be able to spell. Where is such a person to be found? So far there has been no training grounds for this kind of work and entrants to the profession have come in via the Ordnance Survey, art school, straight from school or from a variety of occupations completely unconcerned with any form of cartography. A one-year full-time course in cartography has recently been announced at the Oxford Technical College in conjunction with the Clarendon Press. This is encouraging but it is doubtful whether the University authorities would permit junior cartographers to attend such a course for a year, and it is certainly very unlikely that the present level of salaries for junior

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* Alan Hodgkiss was at the time of writing the chief cartographer in the Department of Geography, University of Liverpool. He was editor of the SoC Bulletin from its formation in 1964 until 1973. In volume 1.2 Alan wrote a long article entitled Cartographic illustration – aims and principles. This was an early working of some of his material that became the seminal cartographic text Maps for Books and Theses (David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1970).
technicians would attract new personnel to the profession from such a course.

The present system of training is for juniors to be trained in the different offices by senior members of staff as and when time permits – learning as they work – but the Department of Geography, University of Southampton have inaugurated a systematic training scheme in which the chief cartographer devotes one full day each week solely to training his juniors and works with them to a carefully prepared syllabus with an examination and certificate at the end of one year. This certificate is recognised by the University authorities in Southampton as a suitable qualification for which a bonus is paid on top of the normal annual salary. It would seem that one of the major tasks of the new society should be to try to formulate a national scheme of training with a recognised syllabus and examination approved by the University authorities. Difficulties might be raised in a Department where there was only one illustrator and no one to supervise the training scheme. This could perhaps be overcome by a regional system of training where the junior could attend the nearest Department having senior members of staff, perhaps one day per week or fortnight. It should be possible by cooperation between Departments to establish a workable scheme. To have a set training scheme with a qualification at the end of it would certainly be an incentive to new entrants to the profession and should also do much to improve the general level of work being carried out throughout the country.

A Summer School for University Cartographers, Glasgow, 1964

The Department of geography, University of Glasgow, organised a most successful week’s course for University cartographers from September 21st to 28th, 1964. Twenty people attended the course and fourteen different University departments were represented. All the participants were greatly appreciative of the enormous amount of work put into the course by Mr. J.S. Keates, Mr. G. Petrie and Mr M. Wood. The very interesting programme of lectures and discussions ranged over methods of changing scale, relief depiction, photomechanical methods, photogrammetry, scribing, airbrush work and the care and cataloguing of maps. It was especially valuable to be able to try out new skills such as scribing and airbrush work which are not normally encountered in the daily work of the cartographic illustrator, but which should certainly be part of his stock in trade. A full day was devoted to a visit to the Edinburgh establishment of John Bartholomew & Sons Limited. This was a fascinating and valuable experience and it was particularly refreshing to encounter the craftsmen such as the engravers on the copper sheets, with their very real and obvious pride in their work. The brothers, John and Robert Bartholomew were most generous in giving a great deal of time to explaining what goes on in the different departments and to escorting the party round the works. Everyone was impressed by the skill of engravers, draughtsmen and printers and will no doubt study Bartholomew maps with a new knowledge and interest. The final event of the week was a most enjoyable excursion into the Highlands visiting Stirling, St. Fillans, Killin and Loch Lomond. Professor Miller made this a most rewarding tour by his fascinating commentary on the region. All in all, a splendid week and something of an occasion, as never before have so many University Cartographers had the opportunity to meet each other.

Notes

Full-time cartography courses were started at Luton College in 1967 and at Oxford College of Technology (later Polytechnic) in 1964. The Society has held a Summer School every year since, with the format changing to suit the times. For a list of the venues and for some reports of these events see: https://soc.org.uk/summer-school-conference/ and for a map of them see: http://goo.gl/maps/EWrxb.