

Book Reviews

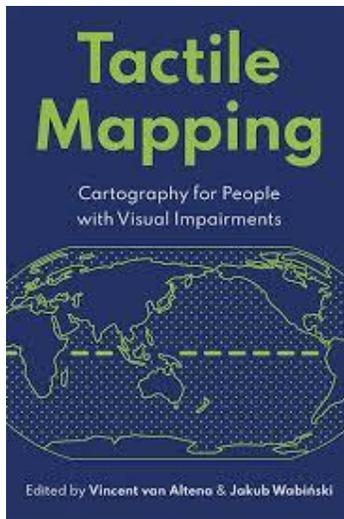
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- *Tactile Mapping: Cartography for People with Visual Impairments*, By Vincent van Altena and Jakub Wabinski (editors), Reviewed by Brendan Whyte, University of Chicago
- *The Library of Lost Maps: An Archive of a World in Progress*, By James Cheshire, Reviewed by René Duplain, Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa

Reviews:

Tactile Mapping: Cartography for People with Visual Impairments



Altena, Vincent van and Wabinski, Jakub (editors). *Tactile Mapping: Cartography for People with Visual Impairments*. Redlands (Calif.): ESRI Press, 2025. 262p. US\$55. ISBN 978-3-58948-8-359.

This book consists of eleven chapters in five parts, each chapter being written by a different author or authors from around the world. Most authors are academics, with one or two engaged in government or commercial cartography or psychology. Several are members of the ICA Working Group on Inclusive Cartography.

The five parts – Introduction, Maps and perception, Designing tactile maps, Users and education, and Reliable output – demonstrate the scope of the book, which is much broader than might be inferred from the title alone.

Part I introduces the anatomy of the eye, types of blindness, and the history of Braille and other educational and communicative aids for the blind. There are different cartographic implications for the totally blind compared to those who “see through a glass, darkly”, as well as for those born blind versus those who lose vision later in life.

Part II summarizes the historical function of maps in understanding our world, from Babylonian clay tablets to 3D laser scanning. Maps serve various purposes – e.g. recording land holdings, wayfinding, geographic education and urban planning – but when converting from a visual to a tactile format, map-makers must take account of the physiological and psychological constraints of touch, such as proprioceptive illusions and tactile after-effects.

Part III describes the requirements of tactile symbol design, highlighting that symbols differentiated by two variables (e.g. orientation and hollowness/fill) are more distinguishable. Cognitive aspects of map reading should also inform design: pictorial symbols are meaningless to the blind, but the limited range of legible abstract symbols makes a standardized symbology difficult to achieve. Additionally, GIS dataset

generalization for tactile maps may require symbol offsetting to ensure haptic legibility.

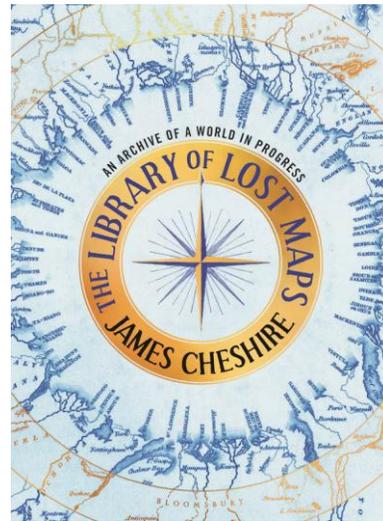
Part IV emphasizes the need for user feedback and product evaluation, including cost, portability, and robustness. It is important to understand how map reading and geographical concepts are taught to the visually impaired, along with the training the blind require in physical mobility and orientation. The best route for a sighted person walking through a city may not be the best for a blind person.

Part V assesses the suitability of different media and production processes for tactile maps. This Part reiterates that usefulness, ease of use, and affordability matter as much as the map's content, reinforcing the need for user input into the initial design process.

All chapters are accessible to the non-specialist reader, and include a bibliography and reading list, although several technical words (haptic, kinesthetic, veridical, proprioception) were not defined up front. Also included are eight specific case studies of tactile mapping in use around the world, from Norway to Kenya, and seven "personal stories" from the vision-impaired about how access to mapping has changed their lives. These extras reinforce the book's focus on modern and future technologies and methods, and highlight the centrality of map users and their needs.

The book is an excellent, multicultural overview of the cartographic needs of the visually-impaired, and the current state of play in the design and production of tactile maps. I found the book literally eye-opening(!) and highly recommend it for cartographers and map libraries.

The Library of Lost Maps: An Archive of a World in Progress



Cheshire, James. *The Library of Lost Maps: An Archive of a World in Progress*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2025. 383p. \$53.00 CAN. ISBN: 978-1-63973-428-3.

In *The Library of Lost Maps: An Archive of a World in Progress*, renowned geographer and professor James Cheshire provides an insightful and sober account of how cartography helped shape world events in the 19th and 20th centuries by exploring an archive of lost maps in the map collection at University College London (UCL). Through his colourful descriptions and striking close-ups, Cheshire breathes new life into these maps, capturing their artistry and the meticulous work that went into them to encapsulate a perspective in time. As he embarks on this exploration of dusty maps, Cheshire is as interested in the minds behind the work as he is about the maps themselves, providing important historical context and a glimpse into the forces that drove their creation.

It is an honest and open account of key figures in cartographic history, with a clear warning for readers that maps can and have