Editorial Team

Editor

Meg Miller
University of Manitoba
Meg.Miller@umanitoba.ca

Section Editors

Rédactrice francophone
Anne Hakier
Université de Montréal
anne.hakier@umontreal.ca

Book & Map Reviews:
Rachel Arseneau
Saskatchewan Legislative
Library
rarseneau@legassembly.sk.ca

GIS Trends:
Martin Chandler
Cape Breton University
Martin_Chandler@cbu.ca

Map Spotlight:
Renna Truong
University of Calgary
rdtruong@ucalgary.ca

Student Voices:
Saman Goudarzi
McMaster University
goudars@mcmaster.ca

writes through passage:
Larry Laliberté
University of Alberta
llaliber@ualberta.ca

ACMLA News:
Meg Miller
University of Manitoba
Meg.Miller@umanitoba.ca

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Section Editor: Larry Laliberté, University of Alberta

DESIGN OF DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITIONS

Originally published ACMLA Bulletin Number 36, 1980

Keywords: Map Collections, Visualization, Exhibitions, Displays, Design, Aesthetics, Organization, Communication, Storyline, Assembly, Installation, Conservation

Note from the Editor:

Welcome/Bienvenue to the second installment of writes through passage/écrire à travers passage. In this installment, I could not engage with the author directly, and with no new suggestions coming in, I stepped into the pulpit to speak to some "text accompanying a slide presentation". The piece of writing was a very important part of a presentation I gave at CARTO 2025, which looked at the freedom of displays vs. exhibitions.

At the start of the 1980s, the Bulletin title camouflaged into green. According to the QGIS colour sampler, the green is HTML notation #499154. The colour hex website goes into greater detail, noting that this decimal-based number's RGB value is (73,145,84), and includes a percentage breakdown: Red 24.17, Green 48.01, and Blue 27.81. Meanwhile, Gemini sirens "a desaturated, slightly cool green, often used in design for nature-themed or muted, earthy palettes". This above is a tad exhibitionist, and we need to remain displayed, so let's call it "pool table green ready for racking".
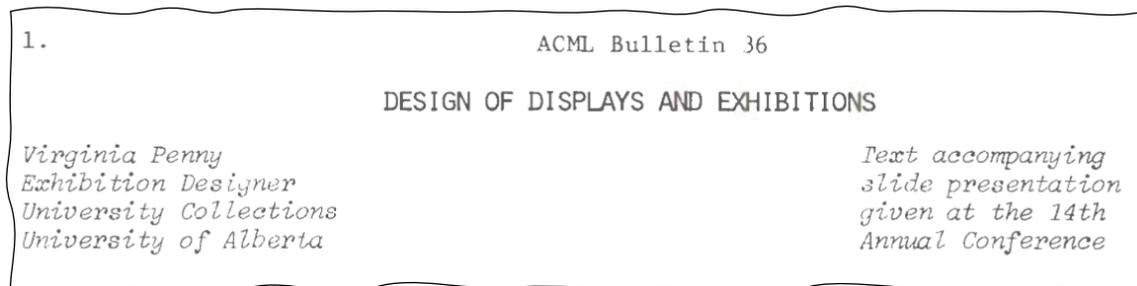

Figure 1: Penny, V. (1980). Design of Displays and Exhibitions - Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives (ACMLA), (36) https://doi.org/10.15353/acmla.n36.6990

Design of Displays and Exhibitions by Virginia Penny is two and a half pages of "text that accompanied a slide presentation" given 46 years ago at the 14th Annual Conference held in Edmonton at the University of Alberta. This was also the *article* that got me thinking about the differences between a display and an exhibition. Though brief, Penny provides definitions, breaks down design into three components: aesthetics, organization, and communication, and outlines a short formula for developing exhibitions.

Display in Latin is *displicare*, meaning to scatter, and disperse. In Middle English, it means to unfurl and unfold.[2] Both these terms align with, wapahtihiwewin ◁·<"∩"∆∇·∆·ᗡ, Cree, for the act of displaying or showing; demonstration; display; rendition.[3]

Through scattering, and unfolding, a printed map display mirrors the debris field of an ongoing colonial wrackline. A lithic scatter of inks embedded in wood pulp. Yet, sans water, fire, and/or vermin (including mice and poor institutional decision making), the printed map is a sturdy artifact. If physically and financially curated over the long-term, it will outlast their digital surrogates, and the more recent, inaccurate re-inscriptions by the environmentally unslakable, morally obtuse and klepto-centric AI. here again, the AI wall appears. Reaction? Immediately bash the head against the wall. Be calm, remain displayed. Run its length, hand gracing textures, until a corner is traced. Then, return to where one began. A head knuckled bash or two (if required). Then, run the other length.

When crafting a display, map staff scatter, and unfold spatial items across map cabinet top broadsides, interspersed with virtual tethers (QR Codes), text, and associated images. On the fly, quick turnaround, and creative dexterity benefit both the curator, and by extension, any prospective audience. All without a formal request to table an exhibition.

Exhibition in Latin is *exhibere* meaning to hold out.[4] Wapahtihiwew, Cree for showing something.[5] This is a useful etymology origin story. Here, an exhibition has an air of the curator holding out, while hanging on to the map "look, but do not touch". With the display, curators let go and

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[2] https://www.etymonline.com/word/display

[3] Online Cree Dictionary. Wapahtihiwewin ◁·<"∩"∆∇·∆·ᗡ (AE Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary, Earle Waugh). Accessed 2026/03/01. Miyo Wahkohtowin Community Education Authority (MWCEA).

[4] https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=exhibition

[5] Online Cree Dictionary. Wapahtihiwew ◁·<"∩"∆∇·∆·ᗡ (AE Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary, Earle Waugh). Accessed 2026/03/01. Miyo Wahkohtowin Community Education Authority (MWCEA).

encourage tactile engagement. Touch, trace and most importantly trance(ify) thyself in this unfolding encounter.

However, this is where Penny's text struck me. *The most important idea is that the display is being mounted not for the benefit of those involved, but for the benefit of the prospective audience.*[6] It made me wonder, "Have all of the displays we have created been self-serving"? Even under the banner of promoting the print collection visually. By not moving into an official exhibition realm, that may employ a designer, or at the very least other perspectives on *creating visual relationships among the items displayed,*[7] *transform*[ing] ... *abstract ideas into ... physical exhibition,*[8] and *increased efforts to involve the spectator more completely in the exhibition, and give the audience the 'feel' for a subject and not overload them with facts.*[9] Yet, even when confronted with this, the effectiveness of putting a display quickly (ideally, within the map space), without extra layers of sign-offs and/or commitment, is the most effective way to highlight the map collection. As Sven Lindqvist states: *dig where you stand.*[10]

If a call came from the library for an "official exhibition" involving maps, I would return to Penny's text, as it is clear and concise, on the role of a designer and the refrain that *the main principle to remember is that an exhibition is initiated for people and purposes other than the preferences of those involved.*[11]

Reflection

As noted, I could not contact Virginia Penny, and beyond the job title of "Exhibition Designer University Collections, University of Alberta", I had no information about what became of the individual who wrote the "text to accompany a slide presentation". So, I turned to the University of Alberta Library's digitized collections on the Internet Archive.

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[6] Penny, Virginia. (1980). DESIGN OF DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITIONS. ACML Bulletin no. 36.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid

[9] Ibid

[10] Lindqvist, S., Flinn, A., von Rosen, A., & Library Stack, distributor. (2023). Dig Where You Stand : How to Research a Job. Watkins Media.

[11] Ibid

Piecing the fractals of information together, one can state that Virginia Penny has maintained a presence in the exhibition and communication aspects that emerged in their 1980 paper. Virginia was the designer for the Ring House Gallery (1981). Stepped in to curate the Treasures of Inner Mongolia Exhibition (1987). The same year Virgina Penny graduated with a B.F.A. (Visual Communications Design in Art and Design) from the University of Alberta publishing the thesis: Final Visual Presentation for the degree of Master of Visual Arts: Visual Communication Design (Textual Component).

One of Virginia Penny's major exhibitions was as the curator of IN THE SPIRIT OF TIBET: which ran from February 4 to April 2 in 2006 and was advertised extensively in the publication Vue Weekly. Virginia Penny was also a perennial volunteer at the Edmonton Folk Fest and the president of The Friends of the Devonian Botanic Garden.

From 2009-2010 Penny created book designs for the University of Alberta Press, including:

- Coleman, D., & Kamboureli, S. (2011). Retooling the Humanities: The Culture of Research in Canadian Universities (1st ed.). University of Alberta Press.
- Kroeger, A. (2009). Retiring the Crow rate: a narrative of political management. University of Alberta Press.
- Major, A. (2010). Memory's Daughter (1st ed.). University of Alberta Press.
- Wishart, D. (2009). The rose that grew from concrete: teaching and learning with disenfranchised youth (1st ed.). University of Alberta Press.
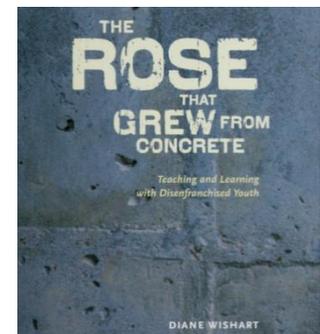
Figure 2: Screenshot of Wishart's book cover

Finally, I would surmise, based on the temporal evidence and the chalk outline derived from the Internet Archive, that Virginia Penny was, at the time of the 1980 conference, an undergraduate, working for University Collections, and had an opportunity to give a presentation because the conference was on their campus. These types of student presentations are still highly encouraged by ACMLA. Furthermore, to have an undergraduate present in a thematic area they are enthralled with, and then to go on and engage in the area outlined in their presentation, is an amazing professional arc.

3D Mapping Infrastructure Changes

Author: Martin Chandler,
Cape Breton University

Keywords: 3D, data, geospatial data, open data

Review

3D mapping is dependent on 3D basemaps, something that requires multiple data inputs to construct. These have been gradually building in complexity over time, with Esri relying on openly available distributions from other companies in the Silicon Valley realm. That availability is subject to many potential pitfalls, though, and it's worthwhile knowing that there are some other possibilities out there in the open source communities.

In March of 2020, Meta (then Facebook) launched a basemap distribution known as Daylight. It was built on OpenStreetMap data, with a number of edits claimed to deal with minor issues or "large-scale defacement" (Daylight, 2020). It was openly accessible and lasted just over 4 years until a May 2024 post, "Sunsetting Daylight," noted its end.

Esri made use of Daylight in its 3D Viewer, so a replacement was needed. Enter Overture, the new 3D basemap tool. This one, however, isn't solely from Meta, but brings in Meta's friends Amazon, Microsoft, and TomTom. Microsoft offered the Building Footprint dataset in 2020 (Freil, 2020), so that part of the partnership is unsurprising. TomTom, as a geospatial/location-focused company, also makes sense. And Amazon, of course, is the great lord of data centres upon which the netizens toil and plough. That Google and Apple are not involved (yet) is perhaps the main surprise, but there is plenty of time for Overture to Coda and Prologue (or perhaps Genesis) to rise in 2027 or 2028.

Until then, the Overture Foundation is running the show, and it remains openly available for use. The goal, according to the announcement from the Linux Foundation, is "reliable, easy-to-use, and interoperable open map data" (Linux Foundation, 2022). The announcement also discusses reliance on open data inputs such as OpenStreetMap, city planning, and various contributed datasets, and on "computer vision and AI/ML techniques to create a living digital record of the physical world".

It should be noted that Linux's involvement is at a staff level, and not at a Steering Committee/Leadership level (Overture Maps Foundation, n.d.). While Linux is predominantly known for promoting ideologies of openness, its lesser status in the Overture governance structure means Overture's openness is rather more subject to the larger players. Perhaps so long as Google's maps are open, Overture will be as well. Unless, of course, it proves profitable to change that.

In the meantime, there are other 3D distributions available. Not necessarily through Esri's products, but for those outside that warm glow, OpenStreetMap does have its own set of solutions, and a number of recommendations both free and proprietary. They can be perused at the OpenStreetMap Wiki:
https://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/3D.

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Paul D'Allmen Ski Maps

Section Editor: Renna Truong, University of Calgary

Keywords: Ski Heritage, Ski Map, Laurentians, Quebec, Map, Cartography

Map:
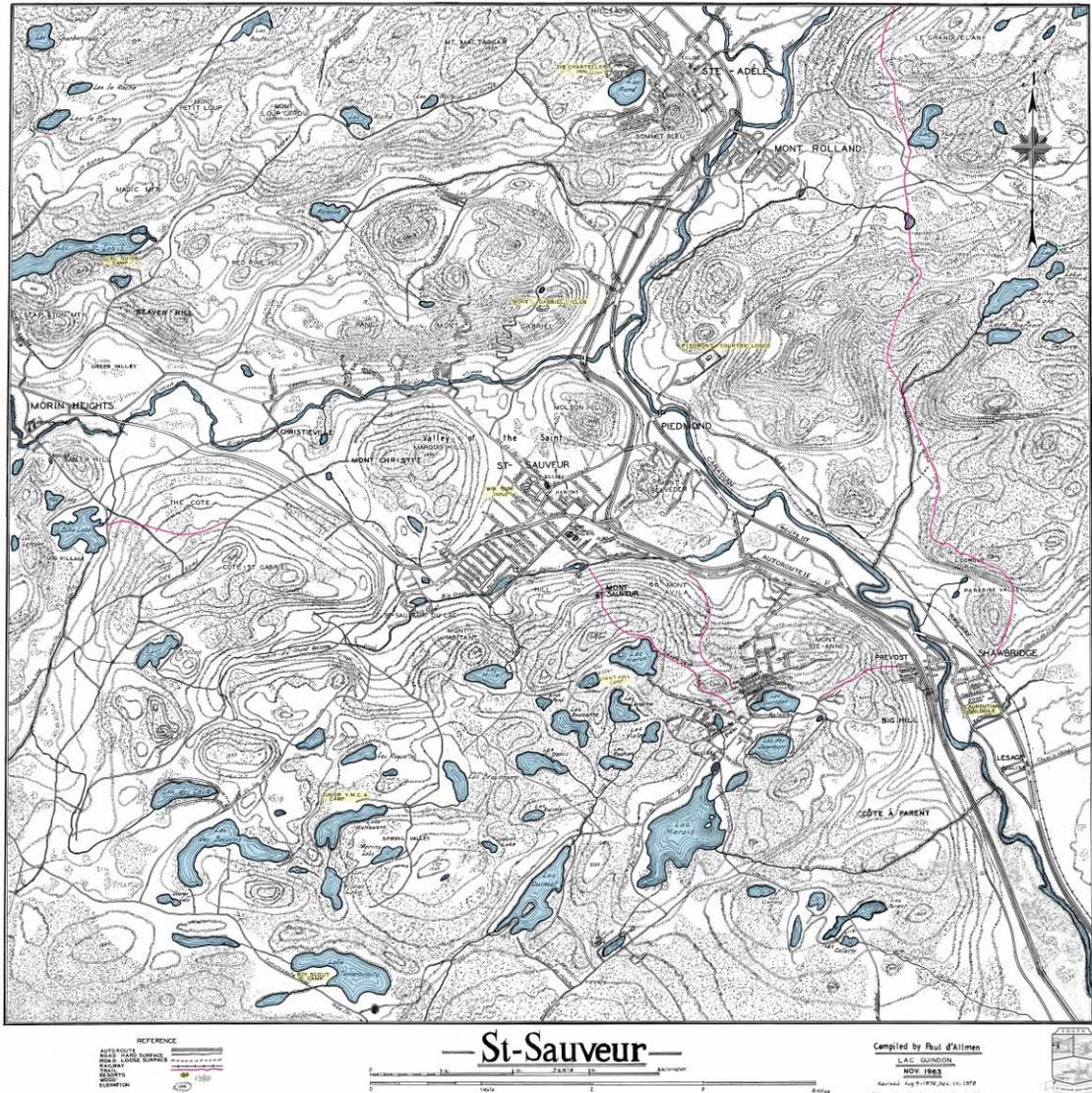
Figure 1: "St-Sauveur", compiled by Paul d'Allmen (November 1963 revised August 1976 and December 1978). Digital edition by Pierre Dumas (November 2013). Map courtesy of the Laurentian Ski Museum.
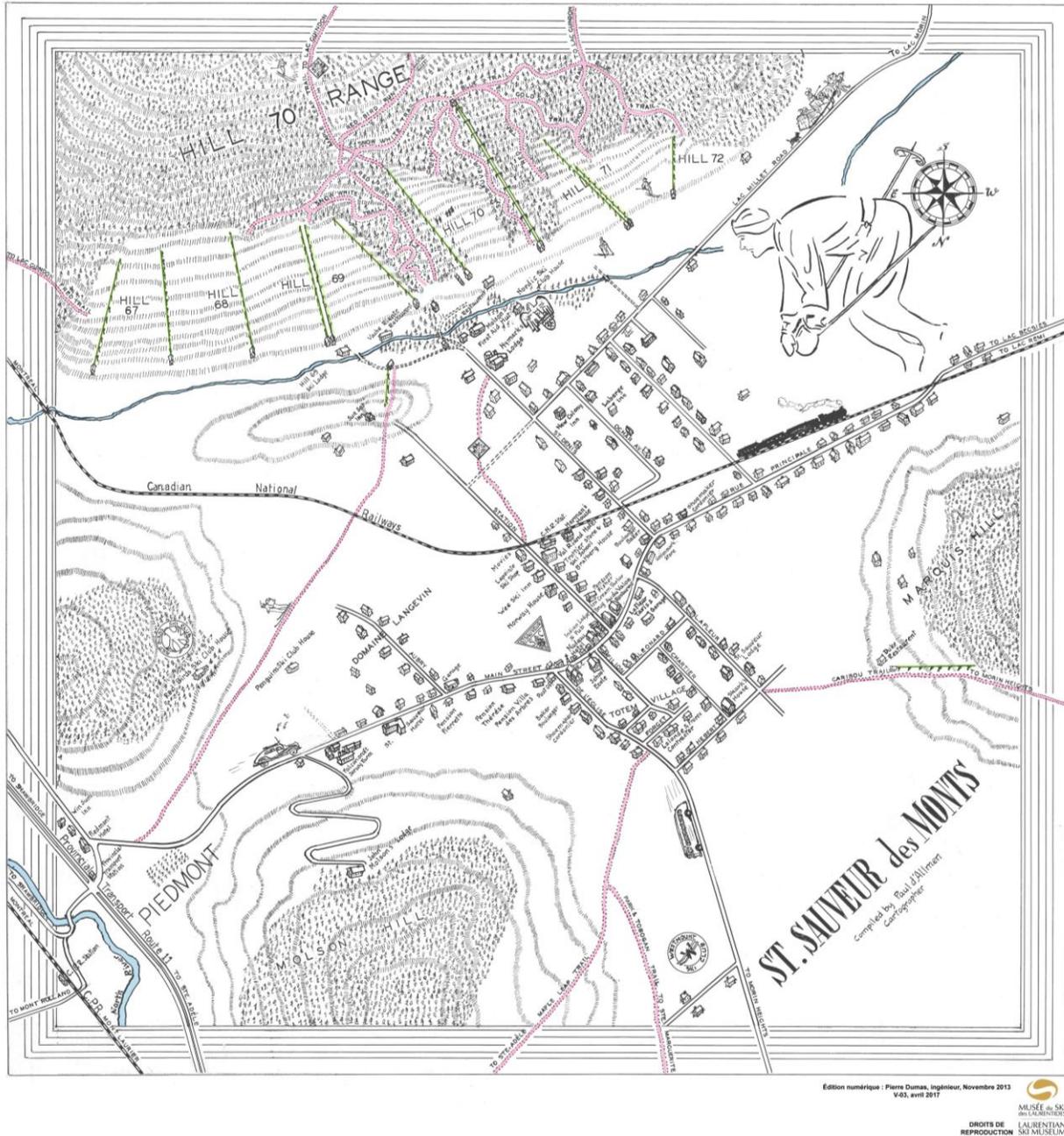
Figure 2: "St. Sauveur des Monts", compiled by Paul d'Allmen . Digital edition by Pierre Dumas (November 2013; V-03, April 2017). Map courtesy of the Laurentian Ski Museum.

Paul d'Allmen Ski Maps

Paul d'Allmen (1890–1981) was a Canadian cartographer and skiing enthusiast who played a key role in mapping Quebec's Laurentians mountain range. He produced highly accurate maps through personal trail surveys and consultation of aerial photographs, combining technical skills with firsthand knowledge of the terrain (Musée du ski des Laurentides, n.d.). The St-Sauveur and St-Sauveur-des-Monts maps shown in

Figures 1 and 2, respectively, demonstrate his meticulous approach, detailing ski hills, lifts, trails, shelters, and resorts throughout the region.

D'Allmen 's maps were valued not only for their accuracy but also for their practical use in navigation, recreation, and regional development. They provide a window into the early organization of skiing infrastructure in the Laurentians, capturing both natural features and human interventions on the landscape.

These maps were rediscovered decades later, by Fred d'Allmen, the son of Paul d'Allmen. Pierre Dumas, a family friend, volunteer, hydraulic engineer, and avid ski historian, helped preserve this important heritage by restoring the maps, ensuring that Paul d'Allmen 's contributions to cartography and skiing history remain accessible to future generations (Graham, 2016).

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Musée du ski des Laurentides. (n.d.). *Paul Dallmen*. https://museeduski.com/membres-honorifiques/paul-dallmen/

Graham, J. (2016). *The lost trails of Paul d'Allmen* . Canadian Ski Hall of Fame and Museum. https://skimuseum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ISHA-CSHFM-CSHWP-2016-2-Paul-DAllmen-Lost-Trails_ma16_kj-SH-JG.pdf

Map of Me

Section Editor: Saman Goudarzi, McMaster University

Author: Tamara Janzen
Student, Brock University

Keywords: Fictional Maps, Imaginary Geography, Personal Cartography, Narrative Mapping

Abstract

Map of Me is a fictional map showing imagined lands, cities, towns, and water bodies with altered names from the author's personal interests, including gaming, theater, video streaming, and art. Using paint wash and ink on Stonehenge paper, the piece treats mapping as a playful way to explore identity.

Figure 1: Map of Me. By Tamara Janzen, 2025 (click image to enlarge)

Book Reviews

Compiled by: Rachel Arseneau
Support Services Librarian, Saskatchewan
Legislative Library

Books reviewed in this issue:

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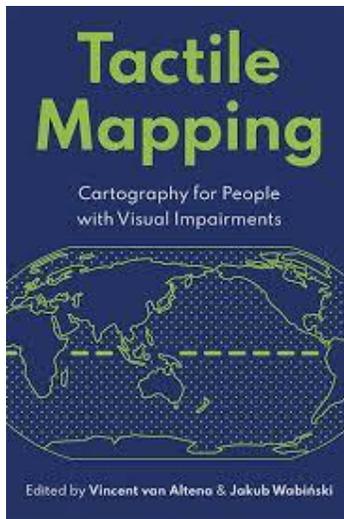
Altena, Vincent van and Wabinski, Jakub (editors). Tactile Mapping: Cartography for People with Visual Impairments. Redlands (Calif.): ESRI Press, 2025. 262p. US$55. ISBN 978-3-58948-8-359.

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

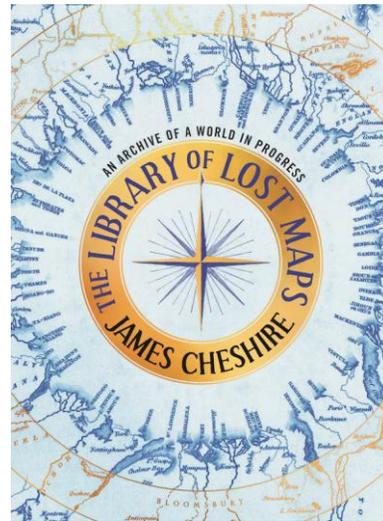generalization for tactile maps may require symbol offsetting to ensure haptic legibility.

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

generalization for tactile maps may require symbol offsetting to ensure haptic legibility.
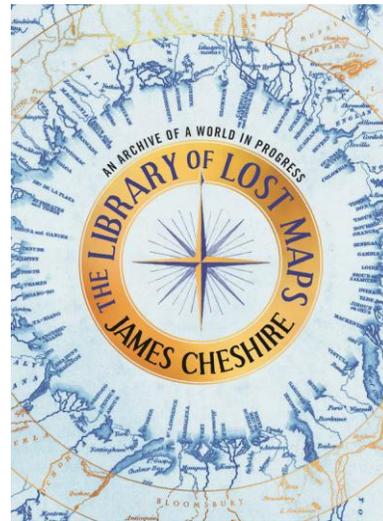
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It is an honest and open account of key figures in cartographic history, with a clear warning for readers that maps can and have

been used as powerful tools to convince, unite, separate, dream, and inform. Among others, we learn about Greenough's early influence on scientific societies, Humboldt and Berghaus's emphasis on the use of maps as scientific tools, Haushofer's darker role in geopolitics and accentuation on suggestive cartography, Schneider's transportive renderings of the snowy peaks of the Himalayas, and Heezen and Tharp's passion to map the depths of the Atlantic.

This book would be useful to academic and general audiences interested in maps and cartography. The writing style is engaging and accessible, with short chapters punctuated by eye-catching close-ups of maps, etchings, and sprawling two-pagers. While the thickness of the book may turn some away, it would make a helpful guide for students looking to learn about the recent history of cartography, map librarians who have only known the modern era of mapmaking using computers and GIS, or historians who seek a cartographic perspective on world events that have shaped the past 200 years.

Cheshire is currently Professor of Geographic Information and Cartography in the UCL Department of Geography and inaugural director of the UCL Social Data Institute in London, UK (Cheshire, 2026). He received his PhD in GIScience from UCL in 2011 on the spatial analysis and visualization of large surname databases (Cheshire, 2026). He has been a prolific researcher, publishing over 100 peer-reviewed articles and conference proceedings, and won the American Association of Geographer's Globe Award for co-authoring the Atlas of the Invisible (Cheshire, 2026). This background makes him very well-suited for this work.

This text should not be thought of as a comprehensive examination of recent world history through maps, but rather as a compelling look at how cartography has evolved throughout the last two centuries and how various cartographers, map makers, and geographers have played a role in altering the course of history. By the end of the book, Cheshire also looks to the future and does not undermine the importance of advancements in technology to the digital map in this evolution. He does so while also emphasizing the value of historic maps as a part of our collective heritage to be cherished and preserved. Cheshire's excitement and reverence for maps and the work that has gone into them is palpable and may drive you to take a detour to your local map library in search of what hidden gems it might contain.

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Cheshire, J. (2026). James Cheshire. https://jcheshire.com

Conference/ Conférence

Section Editor: Meg Miller, University of Manitoba

Theme

In our current age of climate change, habitat destruction, social injustice, and political disinformation, it is vital to recognize that *connection is resilience*. Our ability to adapt, recover, and innovate in the face of challenges depends on how we work together as citizens and scientists of all disciplines. Embracing this perspective, CAG/CARTO 2026 has selected *Resilience* as our theme.

Join the Canadian Association of Geographers-CAG / Association Canadienne des Géographes-ACG and the Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives-ACMLA / Association des Cartothèques et Archives Cartographiques du Canada-ACACC on Lək̓ʷəŋən territory, also known as Victoria BC, on June 1-4, 2026 as we work together to wrestle with these issues, offer solutions, and take action.

Logo Purpose & Inspiration

The logo, by artist **Dahlila Charlie,** represents the spirit and theme of the upcoming conference: *Resilience*. Its design draws inspiration from local land, water, and Coast Salish visual language to honour place-based identity and community strength.

"I focused on themes of trees, land, water, interconnectedness, and salmon in a circular design symbolizing unity and the circle of life. This design reflects growth and generational strength, while the river's movement represents life's renewal amidst climate change, social inequity, and political disinformation. Like trees thriving together, we cultivate integrity and a growth mindset. The salmon symbolizes continuous cycles and the importance of respecting all life and land stewardship, connecting communities and sustaining ecosystems for a better future."

Symbolism & Breakdown

Circle:	Trees:	Salmon:	River:
Unity (NAH'TSA'MAHT), wholeness, and balance	Community, rootedness, growth, and collective strength	Playfulness, strength, protection, respect, nurturing, and guidance	Life, renewal, and the capacity to move through challenges, and continuity