NEMO Newsletter

Quarterly Journal of the North East Map Organization

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From the Bridge

Finding NEMO

To sustain and build upon collaborations, members are contemplating strategic priorities. During the process, map making is accelerating, which may leave many wondering how NEMO is responding.

Long-term priorities identified by the DigiMap Workshop and others may suit us. They include:

- Providing a source and reference service for historical materials to promote our cultural and scientific heritage.
- Making recommendations for georeferenced digital collections

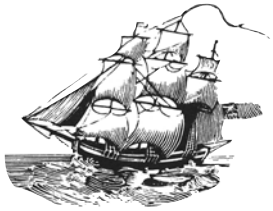
Please share your ideas both privately and publicly on items you would like to see in our strategic plan.

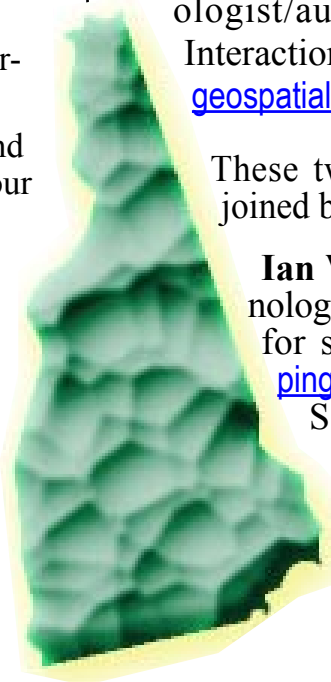
Now… on to marketing. We would like your participation for a 2008 session on using blogs, podcasts and web conferencing to promote maps, GIS, cataloging etc. Let us know what you are doing.

Sarah Stanwicks recently reported that the Map and Geographic Information Center (MAGIC), at the University of Connecticut, released the beta version of a new website to help users find historical aerial photographs of Connecticut. By using GIS and the center points of the photographs, users are able to access the digital images, as well as brief and full-FGDC metadata for the images. See:

http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/adimg_project/CHAP/index.htm

Cynthia Dietz
Captain NEMO





Look Who's On Board for
NEMO's 22nd Annual Meeting!
June 5-6, 2008
Newsbank Conference Facilities
Chester Vermont

Two confirmed speakers so far:

David Cobb, Curator of Maps & Head of Harvard Map Collection/author: "Vermont Maps Prior to 1900" hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/maps/collections/printed.html *and*

Joel W. Grossman, Geospatial Archeologist/author: "Human- Landscape Interactions in the 21st Century" www.geospatialarchaeology.com/.

These two gentlemen will likely be joined by:

Ian White, Urban Mapper/Technologist who uses lenticular images for street guides www.urbanmapping.com/ *and by* the peripatetic Sara or her "brother" Sam: sara.spatialrobotics.com/index.html, courtesy of the information visualization specialists at Penobscot Bay Media www.penbaymedia.com/.

Thanks in Advance to:

Jim Walsh of Newsbank for arranging the venue and providing insight, maps and general material describing all things Chester;

Angelique Jenks-Brown, Science Librarian/ Binghamton University, for offering to serve as registrar or do anything else that's needed.

Join Us Pre-Event Launch! Submit Abstracts/Proposals/Offers of Help to:

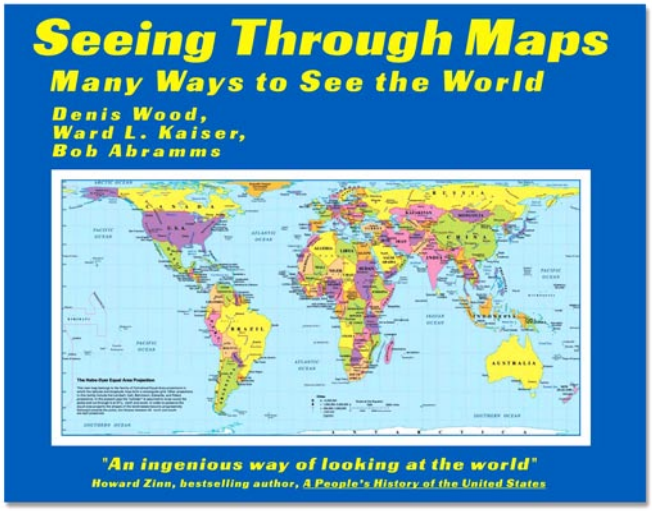
Dore Nash dnash@oem.nyc.gov

Reviews

Wood, Denis, Ward L. Kaiser, and Bob Abramms, ***Seeing Through Maps: Many Ways to See the World.*** Amherst, MA: ODT Inc., 2006 (ISBN 1931057206). viii, 152 p.: ill., maps; 22 x 28cm.

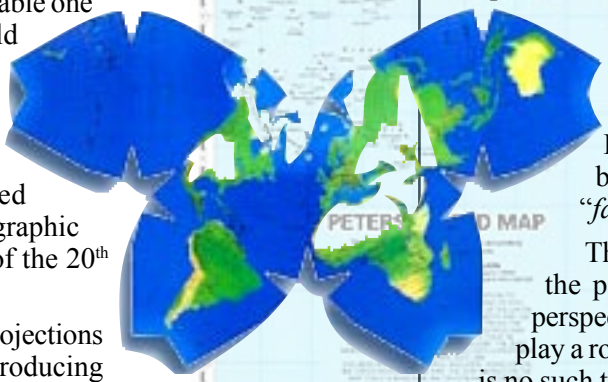
Abramms, Bob, ***Many Ways to See the World: A Thirty Minute Tour of Intriguing World Map images.*** Amherst, MA: ODT Inc., 2006. DVD video.

Reviewed by Reed Lowrie, Cabot Library, Harvard University



The double-edged title of this book, first published in 2003, refers both to how we use maps to see the world, and how we can learn to look critically at what's on the paper (or screen) to see the thinking that lies behind the map. Given that the book is published by ODT–publishers of the controversial Peters map–and that it has a quote on the front from noted leftist historian Howard Zinn, the reader would be excused for expecting a polemical treatment of the subject. In fact the book is a very balanced study of map projection and of the uses and misuses of maps in the contemporary world.

The bulk of the book is devoted to the history and practice of map projection. The first several chapters offer a primer on the subject and a brief gloss on the development of the Mercator projection and its later use as a general purpose world map. Other projections, including the Peters, are introduced and used as a means of talking about the impossibility of having both accurate size and accurate shape. Throughout this discussion the authors hammer home the point that viewers must always be aware of the map's purpose, and that the projection must coincide with this purpose. Mercator is an excellent projection for what it was designed for–navigation–but a much more questionable one when it is used in world geopolitical mapping. Compromise projections are reviewed in relationship to the three projections used by the National Geographic Society for the bulk of the 20th century.

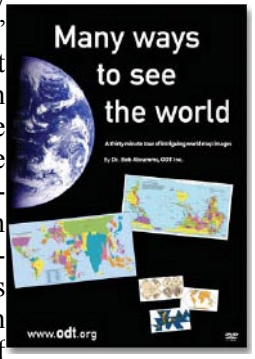


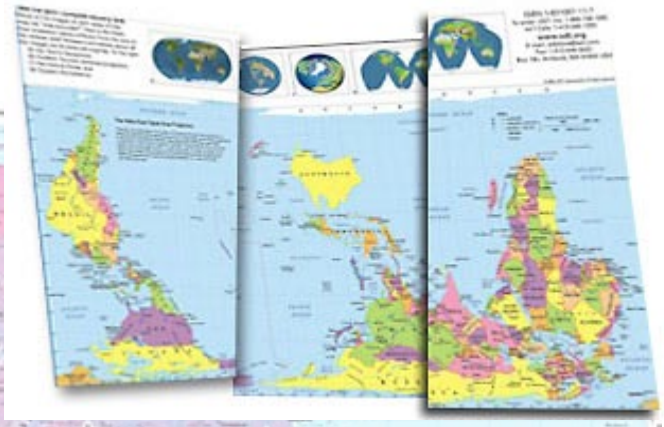
The discussion of projections is used as a way of introducing more unusual maps, including world maps displaying the southern hemisphere at the top of the map. This is a useful way of stimulating thinking about mapping conventions, and their consequences, where north becomes equated with "top," and by extension, with "good" and "heaven," while the south becomes allied with "bottom," "bad" and "hell." Earlier in the book they call this phenomenon the "Mercator-in-the-mind," where by constantly seeing one view of the world we start to believe that this is in fact what the world looks like. An obvious point that is ignored in the discussion, however, is that world maps are designed to be facsimiles of globes, and the earth is indeed oriented in only one way. The northern hemisphere is always "above" the southern hemisphere, the artic is on the "top" of the planet and Antarctica the "bottom." It is not only northern cultural and political dominance that dictates that the north is shown at the top of a world map.

Following the discussion of projection is a more general one on mapping and the process of selecting what is and isn't shown on any given map. Van Sant's GeoSphere Map is used as an example of a map that purports to be highly accurate, yet is a collage of thousands of satellite images, stretched into a Robinson projection, erasing all evidence of clouds, and making the entire earth bathed in daylight. While there is nothing wrong with that per se, the photographic look of the map connotes that it is something that in fact it is not: an accurate picture of the world. This dovetails into a distinction that is at the heart of the book: the need to tell the difference between what a map *denotes* and what it *connotes*. In fact (denotation), the Mercator is a "conformal projection on which lines of constant compass are straight lines," but what it connotes is the "world… *as it really is!*" Likewise, the Peters is an equal-area projection in fact, but the message, or connotation, is that it's "*fair to all peoples*."

The final chapters extend the discussion to the power of maps to influence thought and perspective. The authors argue not only that maps play a role in constructing our reality, but that there is no such thing as an objective reality. Since this is a topic that has engaged thinkers for centuries, some may pause in wonder at a one paragraph dismissal of objective reality. Nevertheless, the authors are persuasive in their discussion of the ability of maps to create a view of reality and to do this in some measure by never indicating that

this is what they are doing. In what could be a summary of the book, they write that "seeing through maps [is] to admit that truth is found in many places and seen from many angles." On the final pages, the authors point out that part of the work of maps in creating reality is to perpetuate the existing power structures. Maps are generally created by people in powerful positions who want to maintain those positions. By constantly asking what the purpose of the maps is, and who created it, rather than by accepting it as a "real" view of the world, the enlightened map reader can really begin to see through maps.





None of this will likely be new to map librarians or to other professionals who do a lot of work with maps. The book seems best suited for upper level high school students, lower level undergraduates, or the interested lay reader. It is clearly written, in a conversational tone, and explains any concepts that might be new to the reader. The production values are a little below par: there is no color inside–which is unfortunate given the number of map reproductions–and the line drawings sometimes look a little like clip art. Libraries also should plan on rebinding if the book gets even moderate use. The review copy came with a DVD that is essentially a half-hour lecture by Bob Abramms of ODT, covering the same territory as the book. It could be viewed independently, or in concert with the book. The book has two appendices. The first covers the use of the Peters projection in human resource training and adult education and will be of limited use. Appendix B, however, is a detailed table of map projections with an example and brief description of each as well as a note on their individual strengths and weaknesses. This appendix alone may be worth the cost of the book, which all map libraries should consider purchasing anyway, as it in an excellent introduction to a complex topic.

(Color versions of some of the maps discussed in the book can be seen, and purchased, at the ODT web site, where this book is also available: http://odtmaps.com.)

[Editor's note: Chapter one of *Seeing Through Maps* may be downloaded from the website.]

ODT Inc. ***The Peters World Map***. Amherst, MA: ODT, Inc., 2005?

Reviewed by: Lucinda M. Hall, Dartmouth College

World maps are interesting in that they all show the "world," but distort that same world in different ways.

The Peters World Map features a map projection which has caused controversy since Arno Peters introduced it in 1973. The Peters projection keeps equal area while distorting shape. Continents appear longer and thinner than they actual are. This projection wants to make up for the misrepresentation and bias of Mercator's projection.

This new Peters map, published by ODT has several ancillary maps that allow users to compare and contrast other projections with the Peters. There are also references to more information on the projection and Arno Peters himself. However, for all of the accompanying information, there is nothing that looks at the map and its projection critically. All of the citations support the use of the Peters projection. None seem to look at the projection and discuss the reasons why researchers looked at it so critically. Since the accompanying material seems to defend the projection, it would have been nice to see the references include some of the criticisms of the projection.

The map is well made and everything is where it should be! If you are looking for a balanced discussion of the Peters projection, this map and its accompanying material is not that. If you want another example of how we flatten the Earth to make a map, how projections differ and how they can distort our view of the Earth, get this map. This is a good example of another view and viewpoint.

Are You There?

The NEMO website includes pages by members or their collections and we want to list yours. The best way to get listed is to send your link and a paragraph annotation. Visit the website for examples: http://www.northeast-map.org/. Click on "Member Pages" and take a look.

Are You Here?

While you are at it, do want to publicize a website or page that you did, or one that you want to tell your carto-friends about?

Submit the info and link to the *NEMO Newsletter* and we'll make sure to let the membership know in the next issue. Write an article or description and send it to the editor.

Ahoy, NEMO Members

Save these Dates!

Thursday & Friday, June 5-6, 2008

22nd Annual Meeting at

NewsBank — Chester, Vermont

Papers &/or ideas
for presentations welcome.

Contact: Dorothy Nash
Captain-Elect

The NEMO Newsletter
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Number 62 January 2008

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We welcome contributions and suggestions. Please submit materials to the editor by e-mail, 3.5" disk (PC/Mac (Word, RTF, or ASCII, tif, jpg)) CD-ROM, or by sending a typewritten document. Submissions and newsletter questions should be directed to:

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NEMO (North East Map Organization) is dedicated to serving as a unifying body for all who use, produce, collect, and market maps and cartographic information in the Northeast; increasing communication between all interested in maps; and working with state, regional, and national organizations and government agencies in dissemination of maps and cartographic information. NEMO's principal region is CT, DE, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, and Ontario/Québec.

NEMO Membership is $15 per year. Membership year runs June-May and *NEMO Newsletter* subscriptions are included with membership. Back issues for the current year are included with new memberships. To join, send a check for $15 payable to **North East Map Organization** to:

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