

Is Cartography Dead?

MACDAD Lecture Series
February 10th, 2006

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Introduction

Primary Impetus

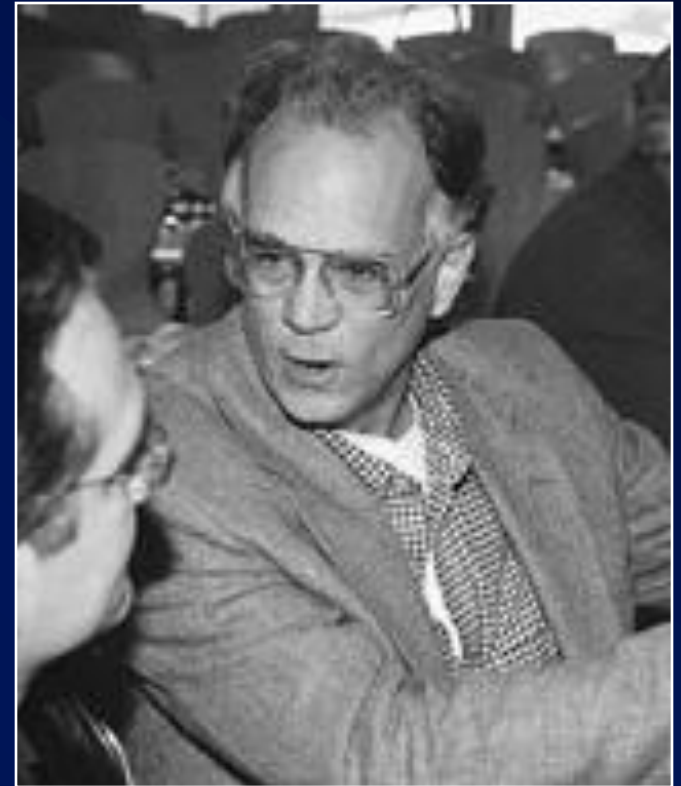
Wood, Denis. 2003. *Cartography is Dead (Thank God!)*. *Cartographic Perspectives* 45: p4-7.

Response Articles

Olson, Judy M. 2004. *Cartography 2003*. *Cartographic Perspectives* 47: p4-12.

Koch, Ted. 2004. *Response to "Cartography is Dead (Thank God!)"*. *Cartographic Perspectives* 48: p4-6.

Carter, James R. 2004. *Cartography is Alive (Thank God!)*. *Cartographic Perspectives* 49: p4-9.

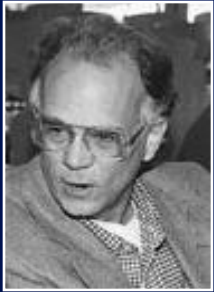


Wood's Arguments:

- I. The (Non-Existent) History of Cartography
- II. The State of Modern Cartography
- III. The (Non-Existent) Future of Cartography

I. The (Non-Existent) History of Cartography

Wood's Arguments:



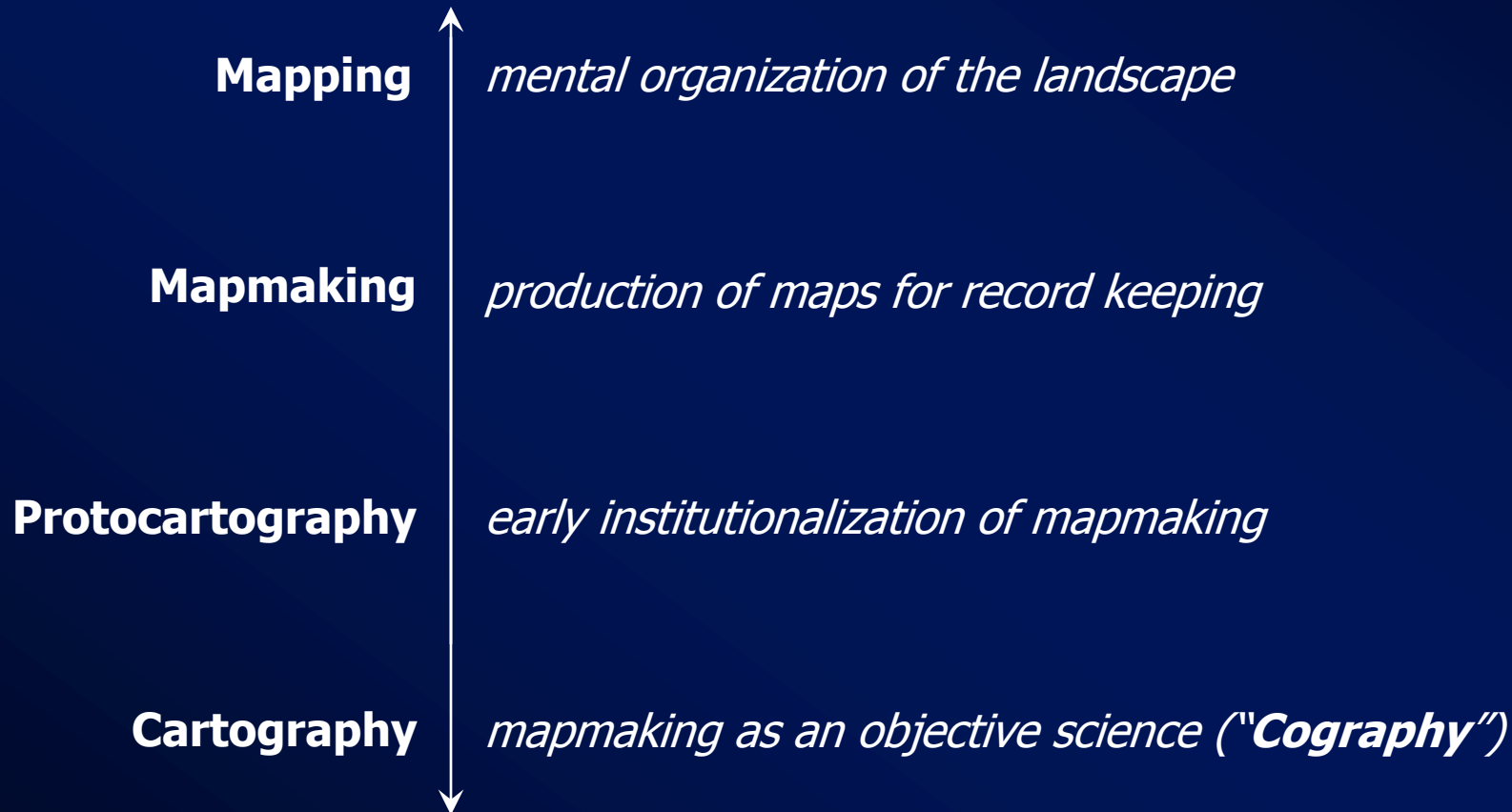
"When I tell people cartography's not much better than a hundred years old, they stare at me like I'm crazy...The facts are simple enough: as far as we know 'cartography' was coined as a Portuguese neologism ('cartographia') by the Viscount de Santarem in 1839. Helen Wallis and Arthur Robinson say that the word 'was quickly picked up and applied to the making of maps'..." (Wood 2003, p4)

In short, Wood views cartography as a "*mid-twentieth century phenomenon.*" (p4)

*But after listening to Matthew Edney speak on his research and the History of Cartography Project, how can this be true?

I. The (Non-Existent) History of Cartography

Wood's Arguments:



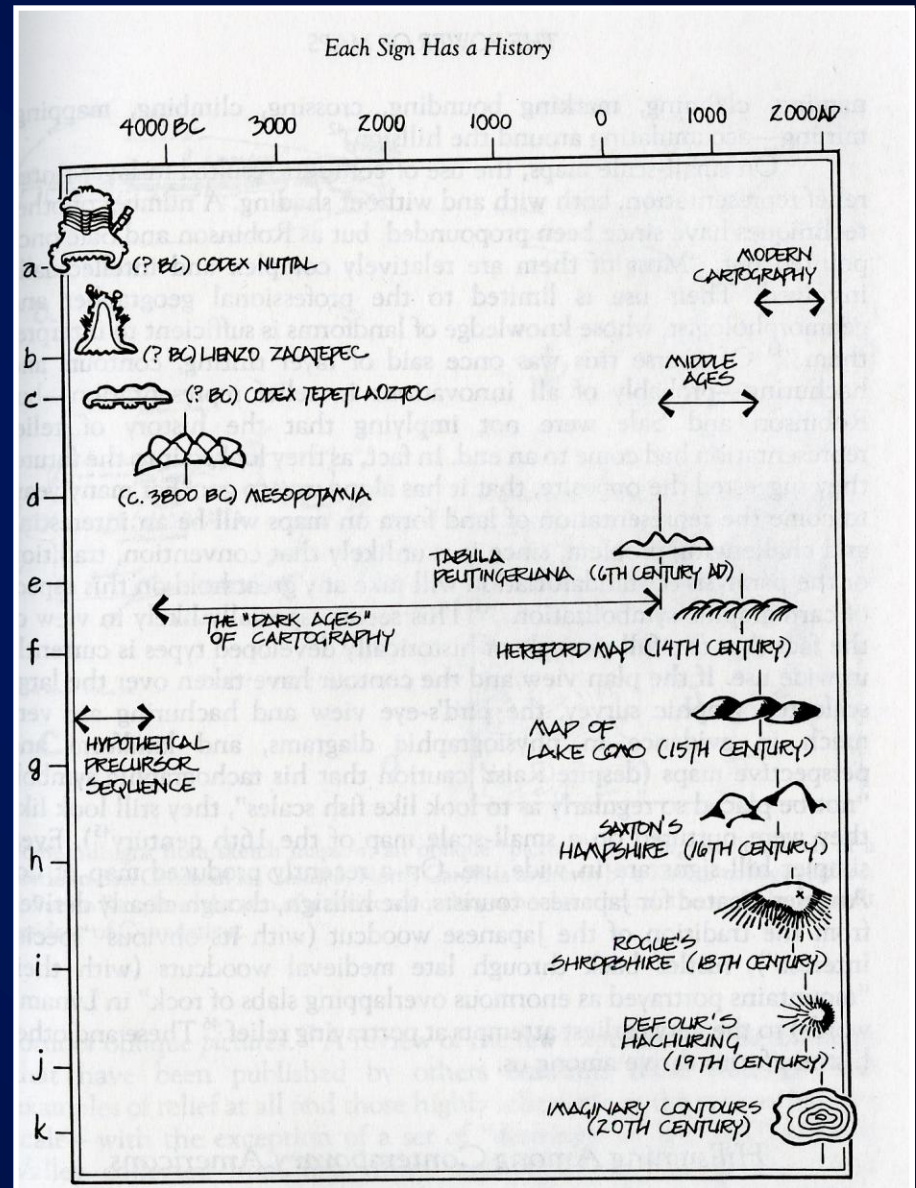
*Wood's historical development of maps (The Power of Maps 1992, Ch. 6,)

I. The (Non-Existent) History of Cartography

Response:

*Wood's cartographic history of the hills sign (Wood 1992, p153)

* "cartography is the body of knowledge about maps." (Olson 2004, p4)



I. The (Non-Existent) History of Cartography

Response:



"The etiology you offer is interesting but irrelevant. It doesn't matter that the word is a nineteenth century artifact 'coined' as a Portuguese neologism ('cartographica') by the Viscount de Santarem in 1839. Nobody cares that 'cartography' entered the Oxford English Dictionary in 1859 or 'cartographic' in 1863. All that is simply a rhetorical device that says the word is too new to be sacred, too Victorian for us to care about." (Koch 2004, p4).

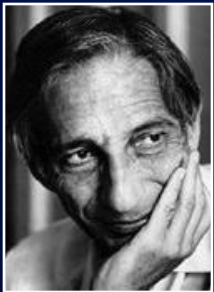
Trivializing the history makes it easy for us to give up on its future.

II. The State of Modern Cartography

Wood's Argument:



"What happened to mapmaking happened to a range of practices as part of a general professionalization, an 'embourgeoisment,' of what we might call the 'white collar' trades. Mapmakers became cartographers. Ivan Illich refers to the middle of the twentieth century as The Age of Disabling Professionalism, 'disabling' because the professionalization of so much life-work tended to disable non-professionals from imagining they could...make a map" (Wood 2003, p5)



"the question must now be asked whether the professions in fact provide their services so altruistically, and whether we are really enriched and not just subordinated by their activities...At the same time we have become a virtually passive clientéle: dependent, cajoled and harassed, economically deprived and physically and mentally damaged by the very agents whose raison d'être it is to help us." (Illich et al. 1977, p9)

Thus, Wood believes that today's cartography is a *"disabling profession."*(p5)

II. The State of Modern Cartography

Wood's Argument:

So how is cartography disabling?

*The Idea: In the cartographer's attempt to make the map appear objective and unbiased, the authorship is masked. When such interest is masked, the general public forgets the many choices that go into the map, therefore forgetting that they can themselves be mapmakers. (Wood 1992, Ch. 4)

*Just giving anyone the tools to make a map "Of course terrifies the professionals (what will they do for a living?)." (Wood 1992, p192)

II. The State of Modern Cartography

Response:



"When we look at these other areas we find many people making maps but they tend to do so outside of the traditional worlds of cartography...By golly, there are many people out there making maps and they do not call themselves cartographers or geographers. But, in my mind this does not demonstrate that 'Cartography is Dead'" (Carter 2004, p5-6)



"The thing is, when it comes to mapmaking there are no outsiders, no more than there are outsiders when it comes to speaking or writing English." (Wood 2003, p6)

*Cartographers are simply "Toastmappers," those that clearly and effectively use their language (maps) to persuade their audience.

II. The State of Modern Cartography

Response:



"All the prescriptive bullshit, every map must have a legend and a scale, all that – ignored in fact on a gazillion effective, useful maps, all that has to stop. And design! Academic cartographers have never understood a thing – not a thing – about design...all that design talk from design illiterates, that's got to stop. And the hectoring of committed, driven people – you can't change scale in a Xerox machine – that's not helpful either." (Wood 2003, p7)

*Wood contends cartographers are like "map police" that point out the mistakes of non-professionals.

"What would be helpful would be to offer professional assistance..."
(Wood 2003, p7)

- *ColorBrewer
- *TypeBrewer
- *MapShaper
- *SymbolBrewer

III. The (Non-Existent) Future of Cartography

Wood's Argument:



"The field's dead. We're just waiting for the death rattle. The word will stick around a while (words do), but its day is passing too." (Wood 2003, p4)



"In its short history, cartography has been about a set of tools no longer in use, or now used so frequently and so casually they require no special home." (Koch 2004, p4)

III. The (Non-Existent) Future of Cartography

The Academic Future:



"As we know, the number [of universities teaching cartography] continued to rise into the early 1990s, when it began to decline. The signs are everywhere that this decline will accelerate. I'm betting that none of the positions currently occupied by cartographers will be filled with them once they fall vacant" (Wood 2003, p4)



"I agree with [Wood's] observation that many courses in map design and production have or will be phased out in the future and that few departments will replace their cartographers with someone in kind...In most university curricular processes courses can only be added by dropping other courses. So, it is not surprising that the more traditional techniques courses will be dropped for the more fashionable GIS courses." (Carter 2004, p4)

III. The (Non-Existent) Future of Cartography

The Professional Future:

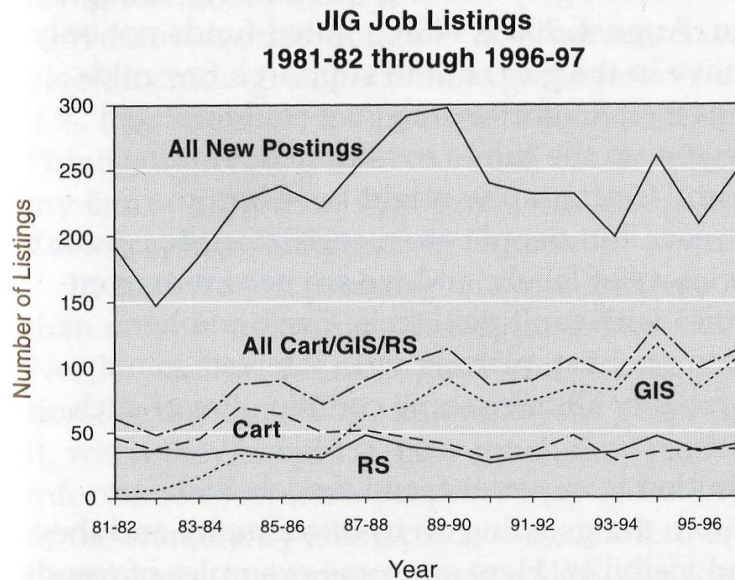


Figure 1. Jobs in Geography (JIG) job listings, 1981-82 through 1996-97. The top line indicates the total number of new postings, the next one the number of ads mentioning cartography, GIS, and/or remote sensing. The remaining three lines indicate the numbers for each of cartography, GIS, and remote sensing; an ad mentioning more than one is counted in more than one line. Source: AAG, various dates. Acknowledgement: Amy Lobben assisted in the compilation.

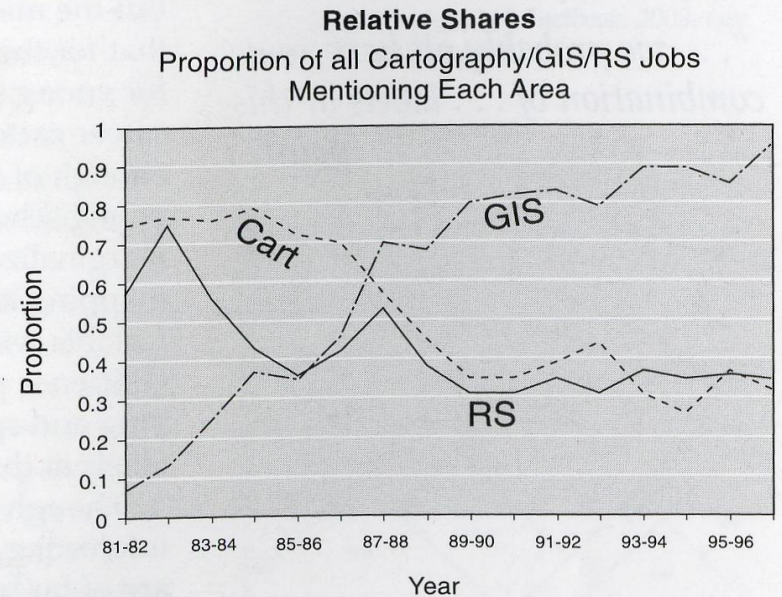


Figure 2. Relative shares. The values in Figure 1 are converted to proportion of all cartography, GIS, and remote sensing listings. Values do not add to 100% because some ads list more than one of these areas.

*(diagram in Olson 2004, p5)

III. The (Non-Existent) Future of Cartography

Is there any hope?



"and we have become comfortable with defining ourselves with multiple labels. Cartographer, GIScience person, visualization scientist, planner with interests in mapping and spatial data..."
(Olson 2004, p6)

*cartographers must be wearers of many hats or the holder of many titles

"We don't have problems cartographers can fix, we have problems...and maps can help solve them."
(Wood 1992, p193)

III. The (Non-Existent) Future of Cartography

What do you think?

~ Thanks for your time,
Rob