Welcome to my first newsletter of 2014. It has been an eventful and unpredictable year; 2013 saw the 150th anniversary of the Metropolitan Line and the 80th anniversary of Henry Beck’s first diagrammatic map. I began selling print-on-demand posters, and gave several well-received lectures including to the Design Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, and the Sign Design Society. Unexpectedly, 2013 also turned out to be the year of the circle! Here are some of the highlights:

- My London concentric circles map was intended to be a cartographic joke, but the response to it took me by surprise. First covered by Annie Mole at London Underground Blogspot, it was picked up by Londonist and then went viral. My favourite article was the post at BBC America.
- My work captures a lot of interest in Germany, with press coverage of my Berlin designs in print in many major newspapers, including Bild, Märkische Oderzeitung and Die Welt.
- Many New Yorkers loved the concentric circles Subway map, probably the most powerful of my designs. Gothamist started the ball rolling, with nice articles by Motherboard, Fast Company, Atlantic Cities, the Guardian, and coverage from the American Institute of Graphic Arts.

Many more links on my web pages here.

Web page news
My lectures and talks page has been revamped, bringing it up to date and adding illustrations to brighten up the descriptions. I’m always happy to discuss bookings, take a look at the available topics here.

In the media, on the web
- Time Out magazine compiled 17 of the best tube maps of 2013, two of them are mine.
- Mary C. Nasser wrote about my work at her Mixed Media Map Art pages.
- Pacha Cartographie discusses my Paris Metro concentric circles map in French.
- Nic says that the programme of talks at the V&A made for “a truly fascinating day”.
- Essex Days Out visited my exhibition at Wivenhoe Station, with nice photographs of the walk to there along the River Colne.

Dates for your diary
Exhibition
- Until 25th January 2014, Off the Rails, Wivenhoe. The exhibition at Wivenhoe railway station closes this month. Some of my maps are displayed on the platforms, and an embroidery by Elizabeth Newton and a Christmas tinsel design are on display in the ticket hall.

Workshop
- Schematic Mapping 2014. An international workshop on the design of effective schematic maps, to be held at the University of Essex April 2nd/3rd 2014. Standard registration rate available until March 2014. The deadline for unsolicited papers has passed, but submissions are still possible if the organisers are contacted first. Full details here.
Map research
Data collection for several projects is currently underway, but a web-based survey into opinions about map usability is in preparation, more details next month.

Map of the month: Not another circles map!

This is a map that has been constructed from purely circular arcs, linked together to give points of inflection (where two arcs join, the curvature always reverses). There is a good reason why I designed a map in this way, but that is a story for another newsletter! This is not the first time these design rules have been applied, you can see something similar for Madrid in Underground Maps Unravelled (page 181). The map above is a nice demonstration of why the elements of a design should be relate to each other. In theory, the components of this map are simple shapes but, compared with the regimented construction of concentric circles maps, the end-product is disorganised: not only is there poor simplicity (many lines take complex trajectories) but there is poor coherence. Overall, there is little point in having simple components if there is insufficient attention to the holistic aspects of the design. Even so, this is a pretty map (in a stranded sea-creature-ish sort of way) but is certainly not recommended for usability. It is hard to imagine a system anywhere in the world where these design rules might be the best option.

For the map of the month in the February issue, we will be taking a trip to Paris. You can subscribe to the newsletter via my web pages at www.tubemapcentral.com.

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