Welcome to my February 2014 newsletter. This is usually a quiet time of year, but behind the scenes a lot of preparation work is taking place for the forthcoming Schematic Mapping 2014 workshop at the University of Essex in April. We have plenty of interesting presentations and posters scheduled, covering all aspects of schematic map design. There will also be an exhibition of maps. Registration for attendance is open to everyone.

Web page news
Underground Maps Unleashed – my exhibition of maps at Wivenhoe Station – has come to an end, and photographs of displays have been added to my exhibitions page. It is always good to see maps in their natural habitat, a railway station, and they might make a reappearance at Wivenhoe sometime in the future.

On the web
My New York circles map gets a mention again at the Gothamist website. Another designer, Chris Whong, has attempted a map of the New York Subway in the style of the famously distinctive Washington, DC, Metro map. Attempting pastiches such as this is a good way to investigate whether the effectiveness of design rules might depend on the structure of the network that is being mapped. What works for one system may not work for another.

Dates for your diary
Lecture
• My friend, Peter Lloyd, will be talking about New York City transit maps to GeoMob at the Google London Campus, 4-5 Bonhill Street, London, on 18th March 2014. There will be five speakers at this event, which runs from 18:30 to 20:30. Peter can always be relied on for an engaging, interesting presentation, and the history of the New York Subway map has greater and more lively political and social elements than any other network map in the world. If you haven’t already purchased his book Vignelli: Transit Maps then do track it down. Copies will be on sale at his lecture and can also be purchased from the London Transport Museum.

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
Owing to lack of time, the web-based survey promised in the last newsletter has not been completed, but should be live by the end of February. We will be asking people to rate ease of use and attractiveness of nine different maps according to their appearance. The more who take part, the more interesting the data, so do get ready to tell your friends about it.
Map of the month: The first schematic network map. Not London or Berlin, but Paris?

The schematic network map was very much an idea of its time. Fussy topographical network maps looked out of place amongst bold simple modernist publicity and architecture, and modern electric trains. Hence, Berlin (1931) and London (1933) were early adopters. In Paris too, an intriguing hand sketch, by metro enthusiast Jean Dry (now in the collection of P.G. Offret), shows what might have been possible. It distorts topography and simplifies routes to give the diagram some coherence and is dated 1927.

The map here is my attempt to realise the design, adopting the colours and the lettering used from the mid 1930s. Of course, experts will know that implementing a design using computer vector graphics and fonts creates a whole host of anachronisms, and is a typographical nonsense. Even so, computerising a drawing is an excellent way to learn about its strengths and weaknesses, and permits a fair comparison between official designs and their unpublished competition.

It would have helped to have been able to ask the designer questions about this work. Some lines are obviously intended to be straight, others curve slightly in the drawing. Is this deliberate, or should these lines be straightened too? Dry’s main priorities – an Oval Line 2/5/6, and Lines 1 and 3 straight and parallel – are clear, but what about the rest? What about Line 10, whose cramped station names suggest that it might have been squeezed into an already-existing design. Did Dry have a previous attempt, even earlier than 1927? Overall, the result is clever and elegant, but the Paris Metro was expanding rapidly at the time, so that the need to keep such a stylised work up-to-date would have tried the patience of any designer. Soon after, F. Lagoutte created his geographical map, so outstandingly clear that it withstood all schematic competition for decades.

*For the map of the month in the March issue, we will be looking again at that elusive yet powerful design criterion, coherence. You can subscribe to the newsletter via my web pages at [www.tubemapcentral.com](http://www.tubemapcentral.com).*

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