Number 30, April 2016

Time for some rest and recuperation after a grueling term, but I can't put up my feet for long because I have a busy travel schedule for the rest of spring and summer. The first trip is to visit KVV Karlsruhe later in April to discuss the implementation of curvilinear maps, and there are other possible visits elsewhere being negotiated. Be sure to subscribe to my Twitter feed: @TubeMapCentral, which is where newsflashes will be posted if any public lectures are arranged at short-notice.

In the media, on the web
- My designs appear in two articles; the New York Subway Circles map was amongst an interesting compilation by Buzzfeed, and several of my London maps were included in a slide show assembled by GetWestLondon (and which surfaced in a few other places too).

Map research
- My publications page has been updated to list all submitted and published works to date, along with direct download links where possible, and email links for papers that are not currently available for download. I will be commencing work on my next paper soon; a discussion of what can be achieved by design experiments and, in particular, by using a systematic exhaustive exploration methodology.
- Peter Rodgers at the School of Computing at the University of Kent has recently been awarded funding for a PhD studentship on Metro Map Design and Automatic Layout. This would be an excellent opportunity for a recent graduate with an interest in map design and computer science. Applications must be submitted by 31st March, 2016.

Dates for your diary
- I have been invited to give an address at Typo Berlin, Saturday 14th May 2016 at 15:00. The title of my talk is Round in circles and back again: Simplicity, coherence, and the need for evidence-based design. There will also be a small exhibition of my work.
- I will be presenting a paper at DRS2016, the Design Research Society 50th anniversary conference at Brighton, 27th-30th June 2016. The title of my paper is Expectations and prejudices usurp judgements of schematic map effectiveness. The day and time will be posted when I have this information.
- I will be giving my talk Transit Maps: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly to the University of the Third Age Hillingdon branch, Monday 9th January 2017, 11:00 at Winston Churchill Hall, Ruislip, HA4 7QL.

Web page news
- The course web page for Transit Maps: Past, Present & Future now has all ten lectures available for download, along with the slides for the laboratory class on map design.
- For newsflashes and updates don’t forget my Twitter page: @TubeMapCentral.

Map of the Month: It’s the priorities that shape the design
The Vienna U-Bahn is a favourite amongst researchers into automated schematic map creation. The network is simple enough to be practical to attempt to map using computer software, and yet has a sufficiently interesting structure to present a challenge, whether to a graphic designer or to a computer programmer. Long-time readers will recall that a concentric-circles map featured in my very first newsletter, but several other attempts are hidden away on my hard disk.

One particular version was inspired by the wonderful Moscow Metro maps of the 1970s, many of which comprised a circle along with perfect straight lines. This was co-designed with Therese Biedl at a Schloss Dagstuhl meeting, in which a similar minimalist creation was the goal. It was intended to be an unusual design for the automation researchers to think about, and has never been publicly released or discussed.

Fast forward four years, and the first cohort of University of Essex students have signed up for Transit Maps: Past, Present & Future. One of the assignments requires the creation of a schematic map for a medium-sized network, and one student, Luke Holmes, having decided that the 1970s Moscow Metro maps are amongst his favourites, elected to create something similar for Vienna.
In my first book, *Underground Maps After Beck*, I discuss the changes in the appearance of the London Underground map over the years, observing that: “… the configurations of maps have varied considerably, but not because of changes to the fundamental design rules (…). Changes to the appearance of the map are in part because of the need to absorb new lines, but (…) maps also vary in appearance because of differences in the priorities of their designers. I would argue that these have had the biggest influence on the appearance of the Underground map in this period” (page 104).

1964 to 1987 possibly represents the zenith of London Underground map design. Several different people were responsible for its production over the years, and yet the result was a series of elegant, clear, recognisably similar creations, leading to my argument that “… it is the design priorities that shape a map: if two different designers have the same priorities, they will produce similar maps” (page 105).

If evidence is needed to support this idea, the pair of maps shown here certainly suggest that it might be plausible. The two designs, produced independently of each other, differ in many superficial ways, and yet the similar priorities have resulted in similar configurations. These two images really do speak for themselves, there is nothing else I need to say.

For the students taking Transit Maps: Past, Present & Future in 2016, this assignment was their first attempt at creating a schematic map, and the results were very impressive. Design does seem to be a teachable skill.

Yet again, Map of the Month isn’t quite the one that I promised in the previous newsletter. There were just too many other things to do for me to be able to set aside time for completing the intended design. It will definitely be ready for June, and will be worth the wait. You can subscribe to my newsletter at my web pages, [www.tubemapcentral.com](http://www.tubemapcentral.com).

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