An early dispatch for the newsletter this time. I am departing for a mini lecture tour of Germany and Austria at the end of the month. If any newsletter readers are nearby (see below) and would like to meet then do get in touch. Web page development is going well, with almost all technical issues resolved, apart from problems with right-hand margins on mobile devices that is proving obscure and hard to crack. I’ve decided to upload the new pages all in one go rather than in stages, which will look more professional and will also be a lot less work. Expect the pages to go public towards the end of April, with a sneak preview available until then.

Dates for your diary

- On Tuesday April 4th, I will be giving a seminar for the Universität Würzburg Dienstagsgespräch series: Step by Step in London and Berlin: Understanding transit maps by systematically exploring design rules.
- On Friday April 7th, I will be presenting a short paper titled: Digitising Schematic Maps: Recreating or Reinventing History at the Second International Workshop on Exploring Old Maps (EOM 2017) at the Universität Würzburg, Germany.
- On Monday April 10th, I will be giving a seminar for the TU Wien CartoTalk series: Step by Step in London and Berlin: Understanding transit maps by systematically exploring design rules.

On the web

- In French, a short article by Gustave Fulgence exploring the history and future of the Paris Metro Map, ending with several of my own experimental designs.

Map of the Month: Advance planning for Vienna

The Vienna U-Bahn network comprises five lines, and has featured in past newsletters twice already (the very first one, November 2013, and exactly a year ago, April 2016). It is also a favourite testbed for computer scientists attempting to automate metro map design – probably owing, at least in part, to a combination of its relative lack of complexity, and yet also having an interesting shape. The circle formed by Lines U2 and U3 is distinctive, but now scheduled for destruction.

I like to plan ahead for my trips, and with my forthcoming stop to Vienna, with its famous Art Nouveau stations, the local railway maps were an obvious starting point. Unfortunately, the official Wiener Linien map of city railways has difficult-to-follow S-Bahn lines, which are in undifferentiated sky blue, with some very peculiar trajectories that, for example, make S60 and S80 almost impossible to follow. There is also a slight lack of balance; I am always wary of creating a map in which the inter-station distances end up noticeably smaller in the suburbs than in the centre. Reality can be distorted on a schematic map, but should it be reversed? To make sense of the S-Bahn lines properly, I needed to obtain the Vienna city and suburbs map by the national Austrian rail operator, ÖBB. Using this it was possible to identify the routes taken by the S-Bahn trains, but the overall feel of the map was disconcerting, with considerable geographical distortion, and some nasty line trajectories. A classic case, perhaps, of a network whose shape just does not fit the available page shape.
It is not difficult to produce a tidied up version of the Vienna city railways map, simplifying line trajectories and avoiding rotated text. On the other hand, the solution reached by Ursus Wehrli – Swiss comedian and artist dedicated to tidying up the world – in his book *The Art of Clean-Up*, may be taking things too far, even for me.

For my own Vienna design, I decided not to differentiate the S-Bahn lines route-by-route, as per the official city map. I have complained many times about the difficulties caused when multiple individually-coloured routes follow the same trunk-line, resulting in an excessively-striped, thick band of complexity detracting from people’s ability to make sense of already-complex central parts of a map: Frankfurt and Munich are notable offenders. From the point of view of the U-Bahn user trying to get around the city, the S-Bahn lines can be grouped more efficiently than one-colour-per-route, but I have left these as grey on my creation so that there is no conflict with the official colours. The final consideration for this design was geographical accuracy. Although I tried to simplify line trajectories, I was careful not to introduce too much distortion, keeping the design balanced and avoiding misleading implications about distances between stations and their relative positioning.

With a Vienna map that makes sense to me, I am all set for my trip to Europe. Overseas travel is often a source of unexpected mapping inspiration, and so it is impossible to predict Map of the Month for May. To find out how I get on, subscribe to my newsletter at [www.tubemapcentral.com](http://www.tubemapcentral.com).

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