I finally have my new studio at Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, fully functional. These things always take more time than anticipated, and so there is still a lag in newsletters. I hope to have caught up by the end of the year. If you intend to give posters or books as presents, do order as soon as possible, Christmas is nearer than you might think!

**Dates for your diary**

- The **London Transport Museum** will be hosting a late debate: *Technology and the Future* on November 29th, 18:45 to 22:00 at Covent Garden (Covent Garden Piazza, WC2E 7BB). I will be looking at how unofficial maps of the Underground can transform its appearance, and running a design workshop.
- I will be giving my talk *Transit Maps: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* to the University of the Third Age Broomfield and District branch on Wednesday 9th May 2018, 14:30, at Broomfield Village Hall, Main Road, Broomfield, Chelmsford, CM1 7AH.

**Map research**

Back in January I made available a manuscript that gave my response to a somewhat controversial and negative article that has been published in *The Cartographic Journal*. As a result of referees’ comments, this has now been split into three separate papers, and the review copies are available for download.

- *Objective and subjective methods for evaluating the usability of schematic maps: The case against informal expert assessments*.
- *Towards a science of schematic maps: Systematic design as a component of the process*.
- *Henry Beck’s London Underground diagram and its misuse and use as a cartographic role model*.

More papers are on the way, and hopefully there will be at least two more uploads by the end of the year.

**Map of the Month: Beck to the skies**

In some ways an air route map lends itself to schematisation even more than a railway map. The intention of the airline will be the most efficient route possible, but there are no fixed rails in the skies, and aircraft, in theory, have the freedom to take any permissible trajectory. Cities on an airline map can be linked by straight lines, or else curves might be used to give the impression of take off and landing. A more orderly designer might attempt something more organised, giving a result distinctly reminiscent of the London Underground map. With marketing keen to emphasise the speed and romance of travel, and added artistic flourishes to make the point, there are many outstanding period pieces out there.

Many of you will be familiar with a particularly splendid poster from 1937 advertising air services by *Imperial Airways*. This included a schematic map in an inset, detailing mileages and frequencies of flights to all sorts of exotic destinations. The design of the poster has been attributed to *Laszlo Moholy-Nagy*, and that would have made him a very early designer of schematic maps. Was he inspired by Henry Beck’s work for the London Underground?
In fact, it seems that this actually was one of Henry Beck’s own designs. A two colour map, bearing his name, recently surfaced at a London railway ephemera auction. Not feeling wealthy enough to take part in the bidding (the map was sold for £550) I decided to do the next best thing, create my own digital version using the scan from the auction catalogue.

The schematic element was easy to implement, the typography less so. The map seems to have been hand-lettered using a cross between Johnston’s London Transport lettering and Gill Sans, with Gill’s affectations minimised, such as the curving tail on the R. I chose Gill Sans, but the original italics were very slanted. Fortunately, my computer set-up is sufficiently obsolete to allow me to electronically convert Gill Sans Nova Semi Bold Italic into Gill Sans Nova Semi Bold VERY Italic which is a good match for the lettering, even if it is a typographical travesty. Pragmatism is always necessary for digitisation.

Long distance air travel was strictly for pioneering adventurers in the 1930s, and the map represents a bygone era in so many different ways. The contrast with Beck’s more famous 1933 work could not be greater. Unless there are more discoveries, Map of the Month for November will be firmly back on the ground. To find out where, subscribe to my newsletter at www.tubemapcentral.com.

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