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We finally edge back to a monthly cycle. Of course, with a spate of frequent newsletters, there is less news to fill them with, but Map of the Month will hopefully make up for that.

Book news

We have just returned the first set of corrected proofs for *Airline Maps: A Century of Art and Design* (co-authored with Mark Ovenden) and, so far, everything is still going to schedule for an October release. I’m also exploring possibilities for my next book, and Map of the Month this month might be giving a clue as to its subject matter.

Date for your diary

The third Schematic Mapping Workshop will be held on 15th/16th April, 2021, at Universität Würzburg, Germany. We are currently working on the new workshop website. Once this is completed, the generic web address, [www.schematicmapping.org](http://www.schematicmapping.org) will be redirected to the new pages, which will, in turn, link back to previous workshops. More details as they are finalised.

Map of the Month: Not what it seems at first glance

Many readers will know of my hobby of collecting unofficial London Underground maps in tourist guides. There is so much material, none of it well-archived or documented, mapping the Underground in every conceivable way, sometimes with blatant IP theft, sometimes unusable, sometimes full of errors and, very occasionally, something new and interesting. They inspired me to investigate multilinear and curvilinear maps, always with an awareness that a good idea can often be let down by poor implementation.
Unofficial maps are very common today, but much rarer before the 1980s for many reasons. The demand for international travel was considerably less than it is today, the powerful computers and software necessary to make such designs easy to create did not exist, and London Transport permitted free commercial reproduction of the London Underground map until 1981. Despite all this discouragement, some tourist guide publishers still went to the effort of creating their own Underground map. Indeed, the earliest example known is from a 1938 German guide to London.

This takes me to one of my favourite early derivative maps, from the Stern Reiseführer of 1968. A superficial glance suggests nothing amiss, but look more closely. The stations are showed with dots (anticipating the Vignelli New York City Subway map by five years), the white interchange connectors are missing and, most sacrilegious of all, it is set in Univers.

Why go to all this trouble? The clue comes from looking through a magnifying glass. It is an early four-colour process map (plus navy blue). The artwork that they would have been offered for the official Underground pocket map in 1968 (assuming that they asked for it) would have needed seven colours, requiring its own special print run. Rather than modify the separations, they chose to recreate the map and, as a side-effect, changes and spelling mistakes crept in.

The original version of the Stern map was small and poorly registered, justifying my recreation here, and it permits a direct comparison with my digital recreation of the official London underground map from a similar time. Perhaps most interesting of all, almost all of the map is faithful to the original, apart from errors at Kings Cross/St Pancras/Euston. Also the “escalator connection” between Monument and Bank has vanished. These sorts of mistakes might be made if the original was confusing, and the designer could not work out what was intended. An early example of evidence for a usability issue with the map.

Getting back to schedule, the next newsletter will definitely get mailed during the correct month, and Map of the Month will feature a departure from urban rail maps. To find out what is in store, subscribe at www.tubemapcentral.com.

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