A late newsletter again, and it would be easy to blame the long, grey, damp, dark winter for draining away inspiration! However, the reality is that in the background I’ve also been updating and reworking my Analysis of Variance lectures for the University of Essex. Data collection and statistical analysis are essential components of usability testing and evidence-based design. If you are interested in what I do for my day job, the lectures are online here.

**Dates for your diary**

The third Schematic Mapping Workshop will be held on 15th/16th April, 2021, at Universität Würzburg, Germany. The basic workshop website is complete and includes the full scope and submission timetable. The portal for submissions opens on Thursday 9th April 2020, and we are happy to take questions about these at submissions@schematicmapping.org. Reports on all aspects of schematic map research are most welcome.

- I will be giving a presentation with Mark Ovenden, titled Airline Maps: A Century of Art and Design to the London Map Fair, Saturday 6th June 2020, 14:30, Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore London SW7 2AR.

- I will be giving a presentation, based on my two recent books, titled From tourist guides to airline maps: Beck connections worldwide to the London Underground Railway Society, Tuesday 10th March 2020, 18:40, Upper Room, Allsouls Clubhouse, 141 Cleveland Street, London W1T 6QG.

**In the media, on the web**

This month it is the turn of Airline Maps: A Century of Art and Design. The book featured in Christmas gift guides from the Points Guy, Bizjournals, Open Letters Review, the Daily Beast and the Wall Street Journal – perhaps a little bit late to mention these in this newsletter, but Christmas 2020 will be here soon enough! Full reviews appear in the Financial Times, Cranky Flier, Simanaitis Says and the Critic, Popmatters has published excerpts and there is also a mention in Tools and Toys.

**Map of the Month: Extrapolation or speculation**

Recently, a map surfaced on the internet in which the current Underground lines are depicted in the style of Henry Beck’s original 1933 design. It is not an terrible piece of work – my own early creations from 20 years ago make me wince every time I see them. However, as a pastiche of Henry Beck’s distinctive 1930s style there is plenty to disagree with on so many different levels: Thirty years of Beck’s publications and sketches give us a of lot clues about his general approaches and preferences for schematic map design. It wasn’t the map that bothered me though – despite the inappropriate font – so much as the comments that it was generating. People were praising it for its authenticity and attention to detail, and I had to wonder whether they were actually making the effort to place the internet map side-by-side with the original and compare the two. There certainly seemed to be a collective lack of awareness about Beck’s approaches to design amongst people who should have known better.

Ten years ago, I created my own modern Underground map, inspired by Beck’s elegant, flowing 1930s style, which is included in my book Underground Maps Unravelled, and it seemed like a good time to revisit the idea. The previous map had been very loosely based on Beck’s designs: this time I wanted the result to be more tightly constrained, representing his actual solutions.
The obvious starting point is Beck’s first published work of 1933. However, this was extensively revised that same year (and then received minor alterations only for the remainder of the decade). There is undoubtedly something special about the very first edition, but I decided to base my pastiche on a later work that, presumably, Beck had a preference for.

The challenge is extrapolating the network additions convincingly. Fortunately, Beck tackled the Central Line himself on a very rare monochrome map published in 1939. Laddering of lines that share tracks (e.g. to Uxbridge and Barking, but not the Circle Line) are a recurring solution in his later works, and the topographical soundness of his 1930s configuration enables the Victoria and Jubilee Lines to be added with clean trajectories – definitely a Beck design priority.

But then there are the diamond interchanges. These unique, distinctive devices add character to the early works, but are so hard to apply consistently – defying any attempt to identify logical rules – and so lacking in geometric versatility, that it is not hard to see why they were short lived. They add many uncertainties because small add-hoc decisions can transform layouts and appearances. Conundrums include (1) which colour to adopt, (2) which angle to rotate to, and (3) whether to run a line straight through a diamond or change direction at it to save space (compare the Jubilee and Bakerloo Lines at Baker Street).

The best that can be hoped for with any such pastiche is plausibility. The design here is almost certainly not the work that Beck himself would have produced, but I suspect that he would not have argued too strongly against at least some of my solutions.

I’m delighted to have been invited for the second year running to teach a workshop on map design at the New Design University, St Pölten, Austria. Map of the Month for May will therefore almost certainly have a Vienna theme. March and April are less certain. To find out what I decide, subscribe my newsletter at www.tubemapcentral.com.

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