Successful commercial map making

Jim Irvine, HarperCollins
Key Points

• What is commercial map making, and what makes it successful?

• Importance of brand and where cartographic design fits into that

• Revision: making sure your maps up to date

• Geopolitics: why how you map the world is important
What is commercial map making - what makes it successful?

There are many different types of ‘cartography’:

- Published maps sold in the trade and paid for by the customer
- Bespoke maps created for a specific client
- Static thematic map created from ‘free’ data using open source software
- Interactive map showing asset locations built using e.g. Google maps api
- Interactive application built using location data platforms, e.g. mapbox

But which are commercial?

- Arguably there are commercial elements to all of them
- **Focus** on those designed to generate £££, particularly the top one
What do I know about all this?

HarperCollins as an organisation:

- Book publishing operation of News UK, global company, around 1000 employees in the UK
- Publishes Times & Collins
- 200 year anniversary this year

Flagship product:

- Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World
- 44 thematic pages, 132 map plates, 222 pages of index
- Weighs 5.5Kg
- First ‘digital’ Edition 1990, 5 new editions since
- Now planning 2018 edition
Most important thing for all commercial map makers?

Like all businesses, it’s our customers:

- Who are they?
- Individuals or institutions?
- Why do they choose to buy your products?
- What do they expect from your products?
- How ‘loyal’ are they to your products?
- What is the risk of disappointing them?
- How much influence do they have?
- Generally not cartographers
- Complex supply chain makes it hard to engage directly with your customers

A powerful brand important for all businesses
Example of a powerful brand: Easy Group?

Not just EasyJet, many variants all sharing the same values:

- Great value
- Taking on the big boys
- For the many not the few
- Relentless innovation
- Keep it simple
- Entrepreneurial
- Making a difference in people’s lives
- Honest, Open, Caring and Fun.
We all have favourite brands, but what do beans have to do with maps?

Which of these is your favourite brand?
There are some big brands in commercial cartography:

What do these brands mean to you?
Unlike beans, in cartography the maps are part of the brand:

Which brand do these maps belong to?
Unlike beans, in cartography the maps are part of the brand:

Which brand do these maps belong to?
House Styles reinforce brand qualities in commercial mapping

A cartographic design that uniquely identifies a map as yours:

- Symbology, colour, typography etc., everything already discussed
What does Commercial Cartography look like:

A commercial cartographer at work?:

[Image of a person relaxing at a desk]
[Image of a person working with printing equipment]
[Image of a forklift]
[Image of a truck]
New Collins Atlas Design

Europe North Central Europe

Want to know more?
- World's joint capitals 8-9
- Effects of climate change 12-13
- World's richest countries 22-23
- Image of Bourtange, Netherlands 32-33
- Europe statistics 36-37
**Two BIG things important to commercial atlas cartographers:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revision</th>
<th>Policy, esp. geopolitical policy</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Being up to date is vital to maintain trust in your brand</td>
<td>- Robust geopolitical policies are vital to maintain brand qualities of world atlas publishers</td>
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<td>- Need to be certain of provenance of sources created by others</td>
<td>- International and internal boundaries</td>
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<td>- Or is it important for map content to be your own intellectual property?</td>
<td>- Areas of dispute</td>
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<td>- Primary v. secondary sources</td>
<td>- Place name forms</td>
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<td>- Importance of copyright</td>
<td>- Transliteration</td>
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Revision: Examples from Times Comprehensive Atlas

- We own and maintain all the content
- Potentially 9k place name changes between 2014 and 2018 editions

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- Rolling news gathering service
- Cartographic challenge to decide what’s relevant
- Detailed research often required
- Copyright is vital
Revision: Some words on Copyright

- Intellectual property can be a business’s greatest asset
- Penalties can be severe
- Safest to assume all sources are someone else’s copyright
- Don’t assume ‘free to use’ means you can use it
- Read the small print
- Maps as ‘artistic works’. Sweat of the Brow principle applies.
Geopolitical Policy: Is this map correct?

At least 1.4 billion people would disagree

Is Taiwan an independent country?

Many countries increasingly sensitive over how their borders are drawn
Geopolitical Policy: In some places this can get quite complicated

Collins example: boundary symbology
Geopolitical Policy: disputed areas can be shown in many ways

National Geographic example: shaded areas
Geopolitical Policy: this isn’t just a few isolated conflicts


Geopolitical Policy: cost of getting it wrong

- Some publicity can be bad publicity
- Individual and pressure groups use of social media

Indian Draft Geospatial Information Regulation Bill May 2016

- To regulate the acquisition, dissemination, publication and distribution of geospatial information of India.
- No person shall depict, disseminate, publish or distribute any wrong or false topographic information of India including international boundaries through internet platforms or online services or in any electronic or physical form.
- Penalties – max fine of $15m plus up to 7 years imprisonment

Met with opposition from many quarters and seems to have quietly disappeared. But publishers & cartographers need to be aware.
Commercial Cartography: Concluding Remarks

• Successful maps are those that sell
• Good ‘design’, embodied in your house style is part of your brand
• Remember about revision, customers don’t like out of data maps
• Be mindful of your own and other’s Intellectual Property
• The world is a complicated place, map it with care and be mindful of what could happen if you don’t

• Despite the challenges commercial cartography is thriving, and
Thank you
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