



Looking back at reports of new mapping of western North America published in the WAML Information Bulletin

by Ken Rockwell
University of Utah

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It has been over twenty years since I took over the compilation of the regular *Information Bulletin* feature, “New Mapping of Western North America.” As I approach retirement, I hope to pass on this responsibility to another WAML member, perhaps a younger person who can earn credit toward professional development requirements at his or her institution. It seems fitting, then, during this milestone year for our Association, to review the history of this feature and my experience as its editor.

The “New Mapping” list was born in the pre-Internet era, when communication between professional colleagues was largely through written and oral channels or at professional meetings. Collection development for libraries focused on formal catalogs and other reports of new publications. After the organization of the Western Association of Map Libraries in 1967, it was less than two years before the inauguration of a group newsletter. It received the name, “Information Bulletin,” in the third issue, in June of 1970. A list of new maps appeared in that issue, to alert members of publications they might be interested in acquiring for their collections. Given the association’s focus on the western states and provinces of the United States and Canada, the content was restricted to maps from that region. (In issue 18:1 in date, there appeared a column headed “New Mapping of Other Than Western North America,” but no other installments followed.)

Listed maps included city maps early on, such as a Vancouver (B.C.) zoning map from the city’s planning department (2:1). They also sometimes included prices



(including “Free”), depending on the member who reported the map.

The “New Mapping” list became a regular feature of the IB. Since then, only ten issues have lacked a new maps list—most of them during the early years. Early on, individual members would send in lists and the IB Editor would compile them, grouped by state, province, or region, giving the “byline” to all contributors. The first issue (1:3) included maps from the three West-Coast states plus the Pacific Northwest, sent in by three librarians of the three states. The states represented in a given column depended upon the submissions of members. Sometimes, the column would be compiled without a named compiler, but it was likely Stan Stevens, the IB editor at the time through volume 15. But he also had his name on the column in several instances. When Larry Cruse of UC-San Diego took over as editor at the start of volume 17, Stan (who continued as Production and Subscription Manager) continued to supply content the feature along with Larry.

There may have been a call at a business meeting for a volunteer to become the list’s editor (although it isn’t mentioned in published minutes), for in Volume 17, issue 2, the list appeared under the byline, “edited by Dale Steele.” Dale included three long lists covering the three Pacific Northwest states, crediting three reporters. He noted that Michael Noga “has sent us a list of [Stanford’s] state geological survey open-file reports. We give here those for the states of Oregon and Idaho. The rest will be in the next IB.” However, no list at all appeared in 17:3. A short list appeared in 18:1, followed by another gap. Then in 18:3 a lengthy list appeared with no editor’s name listed but credits to the various contributors. This list varied from the usual brief-listing format by including a lengthy review by Stan Stevens; he introduced the review with the note: “New Mapping of Western North America is usually reserved for new sheet maps, but the appearance of a Baedeker for “San Francisco” rates special treatment.”

With volume 19, Joe Crofts, map librarian at Chico State University, became editor of the column and held that position through volume 26. That was the year (1987-1988) when there was a special 20th anniversary issue (19:3) that had special articles and no New Mapping list or other regular features; but there was a fourth issue for that volume published in August. In that issue, Joe included a note: “Your contributions are welcome. Please send any bibliographic data for New Mapping of Western North America to Joe Crofts, [address]. Of particular interest are those maps produced by the more obscure local and regional producers.” After this and later such requests, other members would occasionally send him reports of new maps from their states, but participation in this process was uneven. Joe also made



contact with state mapping agencies, and one in particular—the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries—would send him complimentary copies of new publications.

Joe included occasional maps from outside the principle WAML region. The list in v.19, no. 2, included map supplements from the National Geographic, the “Making of America” series; a map of Oklahoma; and one of the entire Pacific basin. And at the end of this listing were a few other maps sent in by Larry Cruse—all from his home area of San Diego County. On those occasions when Joe included other states, they were usually west of the Mississippi (with the exception of one map of New Hampshire (!) in v.21, no. 2. Texas made its first appearance in 25:3 (July 1994)—over twenty years before that state was voted into WAML’s principle region. Occasionally we would see maps listed from Mexico, especially Baja California.

When Joe Crofts expressed a desire to turn the column over to someone else after seven years, I decided to take up the challenge. Joe arranged for the Oregon agency to send their new files my way, and this lasted into the era when they only sent out CDs of their new maps. (They eventually suspended their depository arrangements altogether.) A few individuals sent me reports of new maps, the most consistent being Linda Newman at the University of Nevada-Reno. But I figured that I would have to do most of the identifying myself. By my second issue, I had come up with the idea of querying OCLC for new maps, on the theory that a catalog record would follow soon after publication. By restricting the search geographically, I could potentially find new maps for each state, province, or region. It soon fell into a routine that I could efficiently perform each month. The list became a regular part of the monthly “News and Notes,” and the IB editor would compile the monthly lists together under their geographic headings for printing in the next issue of the IB.

Another practice I adopted helped to keep things efficient: I kept a running MS-Word document listing the most recent OCLC record (by number) retrieved in each search. By referring to this list in the subsequent month’s search, I would know where to stop as I worked backward in the search results (which were listed by OCLC accession number, most recent numbers first.

My methodology for OCLC querying

Using WorldCat, I would set up an “advanced search” with the following criteria:

- Set the first two search boxes to search by “Subject Phrase” or Keyword, with a



Boolean “or.” I would enter a state or province into both, so as to find maps of that area whether they had the name spelled out in the subject field or not. For larger regions such as the Pacific Northwest, I would enter the official LC heading in “Subject Phrase”, and a different form in the Keyword field, since the official heading is sometimes inverted (for example, “Northwest, Pacific”). I also sometimes use the third search box, set to “Or Subject,” for abbreviations that may appear in a geographic subject heading, such as “Calif.” for California.

- Restrict record format to “Maps.”
- Set the publication date range to the most recent year (or a range of the most recent years).
- “Rank by”: select “Accession number.” This last step, resulting in the most recent records appearing at the top, is important in that it allowed me to keep track of where I left off the previous month. By keeping a separate document listing the first (most recent) record found in the previous month, I would have this on hand to alert me when I searched the same region. [At some point several years ago, WorldCat dropped the “Accession number” option from the pull-down menu at “Rank by.” This was a disturbing development for my methodology, and I contacted OCLC to explain the value of the option. Before long, they had restored it.]

After running a query for a state, I would scan the search results and copy and paste the relevant details into my Word document. Initially, it wants to copy everything “as is,” but a drop-down menu allows me to keep “text only.” Afterward, I would edit the entry according to a format [already set up by previous editors?] I set up as follows: [Creator/cartographer]. [Title.] [map details with scale, such as 2 maps on 1 sheet, scale 1:nnnnn.] [Place of publication: publisher, pub. yyyy]. [ISBN if given]; OCLC: [number] Initially, I would transcribe all maps for the list in one sitting (which could take an hour or two), then come back in a subsequent session to do the editing. Lately, I have been editing as I go, and finding it actually takes less time.

Some considerations and bugs in the method

- WorldCat doesn’t always behave optimally. Since the advent of RDA cataloging rules, I notice that if there is more than one 264 [publication details] field, one of them being the one with copyright date alone, WorldCat will display only the copyright date and not the place of publication or the publisher. In such cases, I go into regular OCLC and copy the “hidden” details.



- Occasionally, I detect an error in the record’s metadata and enter a corrected version, even if it doesn’t appear in the OCLC record that I am citing.
- The list of results will not be perfect, and can result in numerous “false hits” for maps that fall outside our area of concern. This inevitably happens while searching for maps from the states of Washington and New Mexico. I attempt to minimize this by searching the subject phrase “Washington (State),” but the search in the Keyword box still yields maps of the nation’s capital (or those simply published there); while “New Mexico” retrieves numerous maps relating to the country to the south.
- Duplicate maps occasionally turn up, including those input by the Library of Congress, since they rarely adopt contributed-copy OCLC records. The increase in OCLC cataloging from other countries in recent years has also led to duplication of titles. When I suspect a duplicate may have been found, I check OCLC, so that I don’t repeat a listing for a map that I already reported.
- The results for a given month can be quite voluminous, and I made a decision early on to exclude certain kinds of maps. Early lists included some kinds of maps that I don’t now list, such as maps accompanying census data (see 3:3). Many of these maps are ones that either come out very frequently or would be difficult to obtain. Following is a list of excluded map types:
 - Street maps of single cities and their suburbs. (I make an occasional exception for thematic maps, especially of San Francisco—which, after all, is also a county.)
 - S.G.S. topographic maps (a bigger problem in the past, but still turning up for those states where the U.S. Forest Service is actively updating quadrangles).
 - BLM editions of the 1:100,000-scale topo maps showing surface and minerals management status. Updates come up every few years, and they are still available via the depository program. (These were previously included when the first editions came out, such as in the extensive list in vol. 15, no. 1, but their numbers became a bit daunting in more recent years.)
 - Various U.S. Forest Service maps of an administrative nature, such as management plans, firewood, motor vehicle use maps, etc. These, too, are both voluminous and frequently updated.
 - National Park Service brochure maps, the ones handed out at park entrances that traditionally have black title panels and bear a GPO reprint date. Again, they come out almost every year and are available via depository.



- Maps of the entire United States or Canada.
- Official state highway maps, due to their annual publishing schedule.
- Maps that are primarily accompanying materials for other works, such as journals and environmental impact statements. Many of these are often not cataloged separately anyhow, but I do commonly see mining-related maps for publications such as those from Intierra and IntelligenceMine, distributed with *The Northern Miner*. (I do, however, make an exception for *National Geographic* inserts for our region.)
- Ephemeral maps that are going to be difficult for one to obtain except by visiting the featured location. These include tourist brochures, National Park Service trail brochures, etc.

This still leaves a good number of map types that definitely belong on the list because they appear less frequently and can be readily obtained separately:

- Commercially produced maps of regions, including road maps and trail maps.
- Street and highway atlases for states, regions, and counties.
- Forest Service visitor maps and wilderness maps
- Thematic maps from state and federal agencies, especially geologic maps.

In more recent years, I found that some maps took a while before they got cataloged. One regular type of “slow-to-show” map is the born-digital map produced by a state geologic agency. Today there is less need to create MARC records for items available directly through the World Wide Web. Some libraries do create such records (especially when they have a “hard copy” on CD or printed out on paper), but there may be quite a delay between electronic access and cataloging through WorldCat. So several years ago, I made a point of monitoring the websites of the various agencies and transcribing details into my compiled lists. Instead of listing an OCLC number, I provided the direct link to the point where one may access (or even download for free) the digital file. With the move of the *Information Bulletin* to all-online access, these links remain live, which they could not be in the print version. (Of course, some links may change and go “broken,” but at least the early alert to the map’s existence had been done when it most mattered, and later users can seek out the new link.)

The upshot: I have developed a system to report in a relatively efficient manner the publication of new maps covering WAML’s principle region. At some point—soon—I need to turn the list over to someone else to carry on for the time being, as long as the membership continues to feel it is a worthwhile project and useful reference



work. The next editor may find other approaches to compiling the list each month, which is fine. But an advantage to someone volunteering to take up the work sooner rather than later is that I will still be around for a couple of years to advise him or her as needed. Retirement will be upon me before long, so, as the old sales pitch goes, “Offer good for a limited time only, so don’t delay!”

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