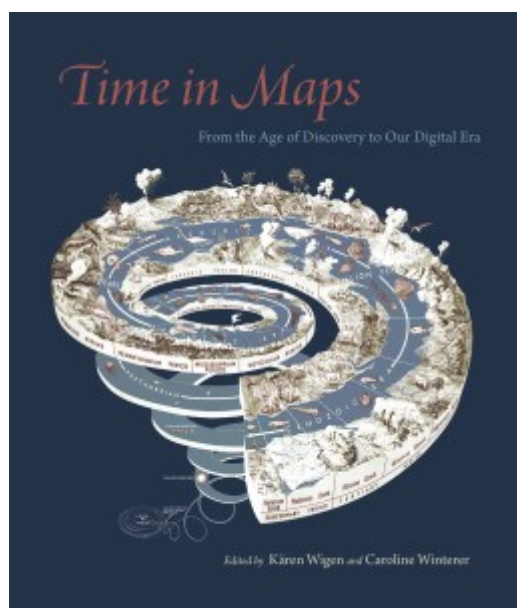




[< issue toc next >>](#)

Review by: William Rafter



Time in Maps book cover

Wigen, Kären and Caroline Winterer, editors. *Time in Maps: From the Age of Discovery to Our Digital Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020. 231 p. \$45.00. ISBN: 9780226718590

This volume was a pleasure to read. It makes the use, study, and exploration of maps and map-making a much richer experience giving the reader language to use when discussing the concept of time and how it applies to maps and mapping. It consists of a collection of essays originally presented at “Time in space: representing time in maps” at the David Rumsey Map Center at Stanford University in November 2017.

Arranged by geographical region ranging from “Pacific Asia” to the “United States,” the essays explore the concept of time and how it has been applied and used by cartographers for centuries, and how, with the advent of digital mapping, new research opportunities have been raised by the changes in technologies. The essays will be of interest to anyone interested in the concept of time as different aspects of time and how it is represented by maps explored. The concept of time has changed over history, particularly with changes to transportation and how those changes impact one’s experience of space and time.



The volume is full of interesting ways to look at maps differently. It focuses on maps from the last 500 years and how maps account for time in their design. For example, looking at ore and coal movement around the world for a year using the width of lines to represent the tonnage being shipped is explored. Other techniques, such as using a series of maps, each showing a different year, can illustrate the passage of time and change over time in such things as population or climate. The essay on early Japanese mapping highlights historical atlases and the evolution of maps showing the regions through time and place, indicating the changing locations of capitals. The essay on Chinese maps showing then and now was particularly interesting for its in-depth discussion of the “The Great Qing Dynasty World Map of tribute-bearing countries with spherical coordinates, then and now” created by Chinese Scholar Zhuang Tingfu in 1794.

The essays on the “Atlantic World” focus to some extent on the history of the Mapa de Siguenza created in the late 1500s. This map shows the history of the land through time by displaying the movement of people in the Aztec world. In Europe, the intriguing concept of using veils in map illustrations is explored as related to “lifting the veil of time” and seems a fitting technique for this time period in Europe.

The final section of the volume concentrates on the United States and reflects its constant expansion over time to the west. Abraham Bradley’s map of the postal network in 1796 shows the time it takes the post to be delivered, and Emma Willard’s later work demonstrates the expansion over time of the country. The final offering of this section looks at time and mapping differently – that of using a map to look back in time at a historical event as opposed to attempting to illustrate the passage of time on the map itself. Typically, the historical events given to this type of mapping have been related to war and, particularly, the American Civil War.

The book is well organized, and the maps and illustrations, many in full color throughout the book, do an excellent job of complementing the text. Each essay also features extensive footnoting and bibliographies so that one may continue their research using this text as a starting point. The book is well worth adding to any collection and will make every reader look at maps and find new insights into the time in which the map was created as well as into the map itself.

William Rafter, M.A., M.L.S.
Head of Library Systems and Technology
University Libraries
West Virginia University



Morgantown, WV

[< issue toc next >>](#)