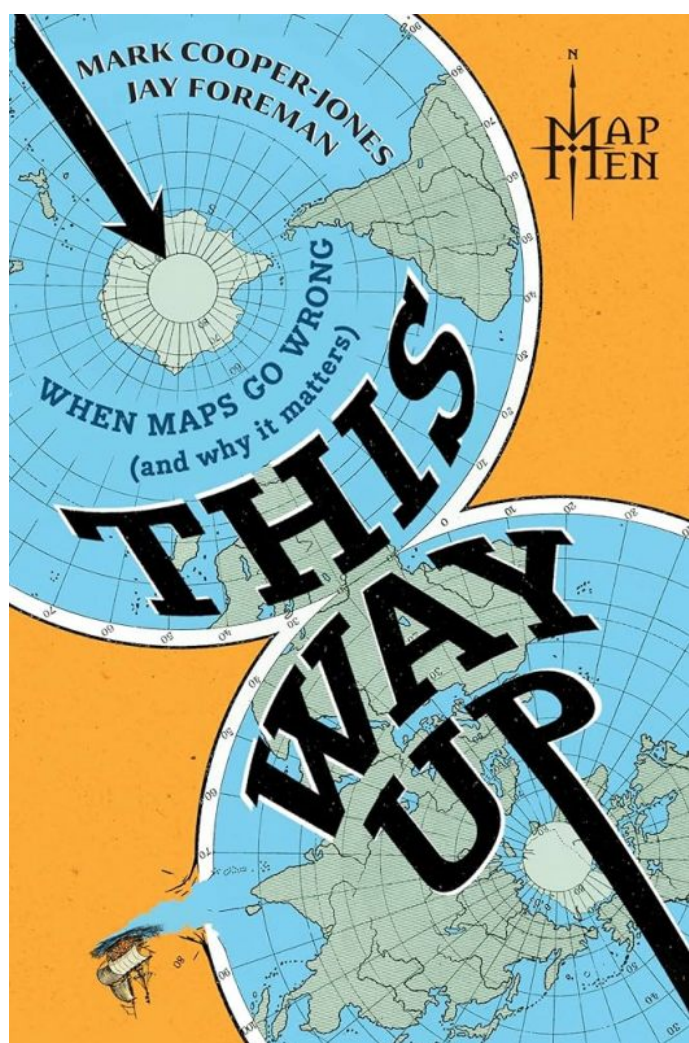




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Book review: This Way Up: When Maps Go Wrong (and Why It Matters)

reviewed by Susan M. Moore



Cooper-Jones, Mark and Foreman, Jay. *This Way Up: When Maps Go Wrong (and Why It Matters)*. Toronto: Hanover Square Press, 2025. xiv, 369 p. \$29.99. ISBN: 978-1-335-00131-3.



If you have ever wished that *Monty Python's Flying Circus* had ever explored the history of maps, in particular not very good maps, then this book is right up your alley. Mark Cooper-Jones and Jay Foreman have a series of videos on YouTube where they talk about maps and related geographic topics in a style very much like Monty Python and this book brings their perspectives on maps to a new format. Mr. Cooper-Jones is a former geography teacher and Mr. Foreman is a map lover. Their focus is on maps that are, in their words, “big, stinking, awful map blunders” and what impact these maps have had on history.

Several of the chapters discuss maps drawn with little to no information about the area they are supposed to represent. These discussions include the map used to create the border between the United States and Canada, several maps of Africa (all stemming from a map that added mountains where there are none), and the map used by the ill-fated Donner party. Other chapters cover the plight of areas included in insets due to space constraints or left off all together (sorry New Zealand), map producers dealing with the demands of governments and censorship, and map producers that add in minor erroneous details to ensure their map can be copyrighted (with one finding out that his fictional addition became real, for a while). There is also a chapter on the nearly extinct skill of using stick charts from the Marshall Islands and the role the United States played in the loss of these skills. The use of Google Maps in current navigation is also a topic that is covered, with the authors somewhat ambivalent about what impact the use is on the human brain.

This book falls into the area of edutainment, with some good information about the maps that they discuss. The book is very text-heavy, with some black and white maps and eight pages of color plates. The authors use a variety of writing styles for the chapters, including poetry, a transcript of a fake podcast, as well as historical fiction in conveying the information about the topics covered. However, if you are looking for a straightforward discussion of how maps can be misconstrued and misused, this isn't the book for you. Humor can be very subjective. For those not fond of Monty Python or Black Adder, this definitely isn't written in a style meant for you. This reviewer found the text informative and amusing in spots, though the transcript of the fake podcast didn't appeal to me. This book would be good in a popular reading collection and could steer people toward learning more about maps and cartography

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