

Ask Dr. Map

Q: Dear Dr. Map, would it be possible to be “lost” on Earth—meaning on some unmapped island, let’s say somewhere close to Australia, with Polar bears, handsome men, underground hatches, etc. If so where is this place?

A: Dr. Map has been following the ABC television series “LOST,” and must admit that he too is LOST, not only geographically, but completely, as far as the plot goes! What is known (at least fictionally) is that Flight 815 departed from Sydney en route to Los Angeles in approximately September 2004. A few hours into the flight, the plane lost radio contact and turned around, then hit severe turbulence and broke into three pieces in the air. A group of people survived the plane crash with mere scratches and bruises and have been puzzling TV viewers ever since. The Internet is veritably buzzing as a sounding ground for theories about the series. Some of the web sites even feature elaborate maps of the island, taken from scrutinizing various episodes. Leaving all unexplainable issues behind (e.g. Polar bears in the tropics), Dr. Map turned to the site <http://lost.cubit.net>, which features a world map with all mentioned locations shown. There are apparently only three clues to the fictitious location (the real location is, of course, Mokule’ia beach in Northern Oahu, Hawai’i). First, the French woman Danielle’s team left from a Tahitian port and crashed on the island after three days. This creates a location within about 1,000-mile radius of Tahiti. Second, the pilot of Flight 815 said that he turned back toward Fiji about six hours into the flight and was 1,000 miles off course when they crashed. A more vague clue is the series of numbers which recur in the series as a lottery number and more (4 8 15 16 23 42). These have been taken as 4 degrees 8 minutes 15 seconds North and 16 degrees 23 minutes 42 seconds West, and the fact that this point is in Africa doesn’t seem to matter, the fans place the marker at 4° 48’ 54.00” N 162° 20’ 31.20” E (based on decimal latitude +4.815, longitude +162.342). This point is equidistant from Nauru, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, and much has been made of the fact that it (almost) shows an island on GoogleEarth. A look at lost.cubit.net and in Wikipedia shows the many ways that these numbers have shown up in the show. Personally, Dr. Map is unconvinced. If the show ever ends (remember “The Prisoner”?), it will need a whole additional season just to explain the show to the befuddled viewers, complete with a whole Atlas full of explanatory maps.

Q: There is a book titled *The Map that Changed the World*. Do you agree, or would you pick a different map for this distinction?

A: The book *The Map That Changed the World: William Smith and the Birth of Modern Geology* by Simon Winchester (HarperCollins 2002) tells the extraordinary story of geologist William Smith. In 1798 Smith was inspired to make a map of rock formations based on fossils that he had long observed above and below ground. He made a map of the Bath, England, vicinity, then had the more ambitious idea of creating a geologic map of all of England. Finished and published in 1815 was the enormously successful *A Delineation of the Strata of England and Wales with a part of Scotland*. George Bellas Greenough, first president of the Geological Society of London, resented Smith’s humble origins and planned a rival geologic map that would undercut Smith’s in price. The result sent Smith into bankruptcy; and even after having to sell his precious fossil collection he was arrested and sent to debtors prison in 1819. After a hard life following prison, finally, in 1831, the Geological Society of London awarded Smith its renowned Wollaston Medal. According to historians, however, while the geological map heralded the discovery of coal and iron and, hence, the Industrial Revolution in Britain, it had little influence on the study of geology, since Smith was not involved in education and teaching. Yet, to condemn poor William Smith on this fact is unfair. Dr. Map also believes that Smith’s map “changed the world.” But then so did hundreds, maybe thousands, of others that had a social, scientific, or historical impact. The map that the pilot of flight 815 in “Lost” was following, for instance! In fact, you could argue that every map abstracts and symbolizes the world, and so all maps, good and bad, change the world somehow!

Q: Where can I get a chocolate map?

A: The extraordinary Art CoCo Chocolate Company (<http://www.artcoco.com/store/cart.php>) offers through its website boxes of chocolate balls wrapped as colorful globes. Featured on the box lid (for extra money, even the box is chocolate!) are maps of states, cities, attractions such as national parks, mountains, and their equivalent topographic

INTERCARTO 12

Berlin, Germany, August 28-30, 2006
[<http://www.intercarto12.net>; <<http://www.intercarto12.net/>>]

Historically, Intercarto conferences have been held across Russia in an attempt to encourage common-level communication among Russian cartographers and GIS practitioners. This year, the Intercarto 12 conference will take place at two separate venues: Kalinograd, Russia, and Berlin, Germany. The Berlin portion of Intercarto12 is hosted by DGfK (German Cartographic Society), in cooperation with the German Computer Society's Informatics for Environmental Protection.

InterCarto-InterGIS 12 will meet in Berlin, August 28-30, 2006. The program will include sessions on the following topics:

- Information infrastructure for sustainable development
- Mobile and multimedia cartography for interdisciplinary environmental protection
- Urban and metropolitan regional information systems
- Statistical and analytical models for georeferenced environmental observation
- Agriculture and rural development: from statistics to business processes
- Public Health local and global dynamic facts and action
- Sustainable development and tourism
- Disaster management: awareness, preparedness, situation modeling, action support and knowledge mining
- Metainformation on Facts, Situations, Actions Education and sustainable development

In addition, there will also be roundtable discussion on "Science for an environmentally sustainable future deficits, visions, and solutions;" a poster sessions, and exhibition, technical visits, excursions, and post-conference tour.

Important dates:

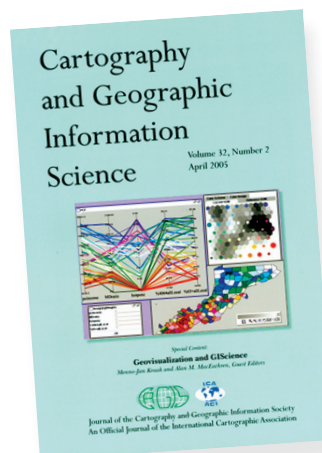
Submit abstracts: March 5, 2006
Notification of Acceptance: April 4
Paper for publication: July 1
Symposium: August 28-30

E-mail abstracts and submit papers to:
office@horst-kremers.de

maps. Thanks for bringing these to Dr. Map's attention conveniently close to Valentine's day. Mrs. Map will be very happy.

Q: The terms Geographic Information Science, Geographic Information Systems, and Geographic Information Society (part of the ACSM member organization, Cartography and Geographic Information Society) all use the same abbreviation: GIS. What are the functions of these terms and, unless they are identical, how can they fall under one abbreviation?

A: Just as there are many definitions of "map" there are also many definitions of "GIS," and even rival names such as Geospatial Intelligence Systems. A popular textbook introduces no less than four different definitions of GIS. GISystems (**geographic(al) information system**) are: (1) A set of computer tools for analyzing spatial data; (2) A special case of an information system designed for spatial data; (3) An approach to the scientific analysis and use of spatial data; (4) A multibillion-dollar industry and business. Alternatively, using the same acronym, GIScience (**geographic information science**) is: Research on the generic issues that surround the use of GIS technology, impede its implementation, or emerge from an understanding of its capabilities. From Dr. Map's point of view, the different definitions are unimportant compared to the fact that the systems are Geographic, and that they deal with information about the Earth or other spatial entity. The GIScience viewpoint now addressed by CaGIS (whose journal is called *Cartography and Geographic Information Science*) recognizes that GIS is more than computer mapping systems, and includes a great deal of the theory and knowledge that makes using the systems more useful and effective. So Dr. Map concludes that GIScience is a superset of GISystems, and that the distinction is of minimal importance. Incidentally, googling "geographic information science" gets 310,000 googlehits, while "geographic information systems" gets 26.6 million, so the web seems to bear this out!



Dr. Map has a Ph.D. and a cartographic license. Send questions to Dr. Map at askdrmap@cox.net, or visit him on the web at <http://www.drmap.info>.