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Review of *Editing Early and Historical Atlases* edited by Joan Winearls

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Editing Early and Historical Atlases. Edited by Joan Winearls. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. xvii+196 pp. Maps, tables, photos, and notes. \$39.95 cloth (ISBN 0-8020-0623-X).

Researchers have only slowly recognized the possibilities and pitfalls of using maps as cultural artifacts. Only recently have historians of cartography shown that embedded in every map is valuable information about the cartographer and the society that produced it. Still, there is almost no literature on how editors have influenced the shape of early and historical atlases. *Editing Early and Historical Atlases* is intended to scrutinize this lacuna. In their approach, however, most of its articles use the lenses of traditional historiography.

The four articles in the first section—by James Akerman, Walter Goffart, Mary Pedley, and Anne Godlewska—provide a historiography of early and historical atlases from the emergence of the atlas idea in the late sixteenth century to the mid nineteenth century, by which time conventions in editing historical atlases now taken for granted were established. These articles trace the various remarkable men and milestone collections that transformed “books *of* (or *with*) maps to books *as* maps.” In this regard the essays are highly successful.

Given the emphasis on editors rather than cartographers, it is therefore surprising that these articles do not do more to explore the role of atlas editors as mediators between author and audience. Mapping is more universal than written language, but Western cartographic systems, including atlases, are unique. One yearns to understand how cartographers, editors, and audience experimented with and accepted conventions that allowed for and

directed the emergence and evolution of the atlas idea. The authors describe the considerable economic, political, and legal obstacles that blocked innovation. Were atlas editors mavericks or were they responding to changing market demands? In short, how did atlas editors respond to and influence currents in their broader societies? James Akerman addresses questions like these much more directly than any article in this volume in his 1995 article in *Imago Mundi* on "The Structuring of Political Territory in Early Printed Atlases," a companion piece to his contribution here. In that article Akerman explains how political circumstances have influenced cartographic design and symbols, and especially the content of maps.

The twenty-ninth annual Conference on Editorial Problems, from which these papers originated, was held to honor the completion of the three-volume, eighteen-year, \$8.5 million *Historical Atlas of Canada* (1987-1990). The final three articles are reflections on the *Atlas's* production by participants in the project: William Dean, Cole Harris, and Deryck Holdsworth. Obviously uncomfortable analyzing their own work, the authors concentrate on practical "how-to" advice for the aspiring historical atlas editor, although Cole Harris does discuss how Volume 1 is a product of its time. Harris's essay reveals how much the work of the late Brian Harley and others has contributed to the theoretical study of mapping since the *Historical Atlas* was conceived. Still, readers interested in a critical study of the monumental *Atlas* should turn first to Graeme Wynn's important recent article, "Maps and Dreams of Nationhood: A (Re)View of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*" in the 1995 volume of *Canadian Historical Review*.

This collection forms a well-edited, coherent whole that should interest historians of cartography and editors of historical atlases. One hopes it will also stimulate the further research its editor and authors intend it to. **Theodore Binnema**, *Department of History and Classics, University of Alberta, Edmonton*.