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Review of "Atlas of the unexpected: Haphazard discoveries, chance places and unimaginable destinations" by Rhys Stevens

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BULLETIN

Book Reviews

Compiled by Sarah Simpkin

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Atlas of the Unexpected: Haphazard Discoveries, Chance Places and Unimaginable Destinations

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Elborough, Travis. *Atlas of the Unexpected: Haphazard Discoveries, Chance Places and Unimaginable Destinations*. London, U.K.: White Lion Publishing, 2018. 208p. \$38.99 CAN. ISBN 9781781317167

Armchair travelers and geographical trivia buffs alike will almost certainly discover new details about fascinating locales throughout the world within the pages of *Atlas of the Unexpected: Haphazard Discoveries, Chance Places and Unimaginable Destinations*. The entries contained in the atlas were assembled by freelance writer, author and cultural commentator Travis Elborough as a kind of sequel to his *Atlas of Improbable Places: A Journey to the World's Most Unusual Corners* (2016). In the two-page introduction to *Atlas of the Unexpected*, he explains that, "...[the book] is a compendium of places – odd and enchanting, ancient and modern – touched by the certainty of chance and the often haphazard nature of what passed for discovery in the golden age of exploration."

Of the 45 places included in the atlas there will be several that are already familiar to readers such as the ancient Roman city of Pompeii near Naples, Italy which was entombed in volcanic ash after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79. A majority of entries, however, describe places slightly

off the beaten path like the pre-Columbian Native American site of Cahokia Mounds, Illinois as well as numerous others that might be considered downright obscure. For instance, how familiar are you with Grand Tsingy, Madagascar, home to the world's largest stone forest? Ever heard of the thirty-three unique species found in Movile Cave, Romania that exist nowhere else on earth? A handful of sites described might be considered tourist destinations (e.g., the hidden Greek fortress town of Monemvasia) though a number of others are best observed from afar – in particular the “garbage city” of Manshiyat Naser, Egypt, known for receiving and recycling Cairo's rubbish. The only Canadian destination included is Chemainus, British Columbia on Vancouver Island which pioneered townscape revitalization through the use of outdoor murals.

The atlas is loosely organized into five thematic chapters which group these unexpected locations into categories like “Accidental Discoveries”, “Cavernous Locations” and “Serendipitous Spaces.” Within each chapter, individual locational entries are allocated four pages of descriptive text, maps, and black and white photographic images. The textual descriptions make for enjoyable reading thanks to Elborough's skill in weaving together interesting stories about each place using a variety of snippets from popular and scholarly sources. One downside is that entries contain neither footnotes nor in-text citations which limits the utility of the atlas for academic purposes despite the inclusion of a four-page selected bibliography.

In summary, the brief historical, geographical, and socio-cultural background details described in the *Atlas of the Unexpected* make for absorbing reading about some of the world's lesser-known places. This engaging work is suitable for public library collections but perhaps less relevant for academic libraries.

Getting to Know Web GIS, Third Edition

Martin Chandler

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Fu, Pinde. *Getting to Know Web GIS, Third Edition*. Redlands, CA: Esri Press, 2018. 486p. \$94.99 US. ISBN 978-1-58948-521-1

Getting to Know Web GIS, Third Edition, is an excellent resource for those new to web GIS learning and use. The text is easy to read, providing both background information on how the software works, as well as straightforward tutorials that guide the reader through many of the features of Esri's ArcGIS Online and its associated web-based tools.

With the first edition of the text published in 2015, and the second edition in 2016, one may ask why a third edition needed publishing in 2018. The tech world, of course, is partly to blame, with the “break things and move fast” ethos. Similarly, textbook publishing can be a lucrative industry, and new content is always needed. Given statements such as “With the rapid advances in mobile GIS, the vision of using GIS for anything, anytime, anywhere, and by anyone is being realized faster than we can imagine” (p. 7), one would expect regular changes to necessary web GIS knowledge.

the text don't always match the software. This is easily overcome with some critical thinking, but happened enough to be a noticeable issue.

This is not the only problem encountered in the tutorials. There are issues when needing to type out links (eg: "Is that an upper case 'I' or a lower case 'L'?"), which, again, can be overcome with some critical thinking, and trial and error. One dataset did not exist, though a related one did – again, critical thinking is necessary – and there were a number of broken links within. Another link of "premium content" would not load, at least when this reviewer was working through the tutorial. The text, meanwhile, blithely glossed over the ethics of credit consumption for viewing said premium content (p. 86).

As a whole, *Getting to Know Web GIS, Third Edition* offers a rich introduction to ArcGIS Online, and has plenty to offer for those who do not have a previous edition. For individuals or institutions with the second edition, though, there isn't much new here, and you would be better off waiting for the fourth edition.

The Writer's Map: An Atlas of Imaginary Lands

Julie Jones

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Lewis-Jones, Huw. *The Writer's Map: An Atlas of Imaginary Lands*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018. 256p. \$45.00 US. ISBN: 978-0-226-59663-1

The Writer's Map is a beauty of a book. It explores the relationship of maps to writing and how writers use maps in their craft – whether as points of entry into worlds that they want to explore or as writing tools that assist with communicating, clarifying, and enhancing the worlds that they themselves are building. The book does this via the presentation of gorgeous literary maps as well as essays about literary maps by various authors and mapmakers.

The 167 illustrations in this book are mostly maps and are all intoxicating and inspiring. They fall into three main categories. First there are beautifully reproduced literary maps that take us deep into the imaginary worlds of many novels, with children's and young adult fiction figuring prominently. These are maps that tell stories and convey complex journeys, that give shape to fantastical, imaginary lands. Then, wonderfully, there are reproductions of maps that writers have created in their private notebooks to assist in literary creation. Sometimes, like Helen Moss's sketch of Castle Key that she drew while writing her Adventure Island books (included on p. 140), these evolve into finished maps that appear in their books (this was indeed the case with Moss's sketch and the map of Castle Key that came to be included in her books is also included on p. 140). Other times these maps function as tools that assist authors as they "work out how their story fits together, what their characters do, even the way the surroundings might 'look, smell, and feel'" (p. 201). Abi Elphinstone shares: "I begin every story I write by drawing a map because it is only when my characters start moving from place to place that a plot unfold. ... I always draw my way into stories. Sometimes I sketch my fictional world directly on an Ordnance Survey map to make sure the geography works and other times I draw on a blank sheet of paper, using memories of interesting places I've discovered" (p. 147). And lucky for us, we get to see both of these types of

maps that she creates as a part of her writing process on p. 146 and 147, respectively. And then there are many early, mainly European, maps of the real world included as well. These maps enhance these pages because they too deal with imaginary lands, in a way— they were created when so much of the world was still unknown and unexplored so had to be partly if not completely imagined.

After the Prologue by Philip Pullman and the two stage-setting opening essays by Lewis-Jones (he's joined by Brian Sibley in the second) in Part One, the essays are divided into three parts: Writing Maps (writers write about the maps that have inspired and been created as a part of their writing process and projects), Creating Maps (mapmakers and illustrators write about the literature that has inspired their maps), and Reading Maps (writers exploring more themes such as women in cartography and maps of the body).

This is a special and unique book that would be a wonderful addition to map libraries serving humanists, writers, and possibly human geographers. It could easily function as an outreach tool for bringing new populations into the map room and could even potentially inspire a syllabus concerned with literary maps, early maps of the world, and/or the philosophy of writing. All of this is to say that this is a potentially very useful book for librarians and other map professionals collaborating with faculty and other types of instructors. It would also make a wonderful gift – for you or someone else. Like all good atlases, it is wonderfully engrossing and a complete joy to get lost in.