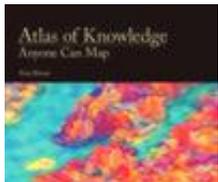




MAA100

CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF
ADVANCING MATHEMATICS

Atlas of Knowledge: Anyone Can Map



Katy Börner

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MAA REVIEW

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[Reviewed by Susan D'Agostino, on 06/18/2015]

One of the first claims that Katy Börner makes in *Atlas of Knowledge: Anyone Can Map* is that, “just as ‘anyone can cook,’ it is also true that ‘anyone can map’ — or at least learn to do either.” This comprehensive book delivers abundant guidance and inspiration for those with an interest in displaying information visually. Part 1 of the book makes the case for adopting a systems science approach in order to convey information about the “relevant social, cultural, economic, and environmental structures and dynamics.” Part 2 of the book offers optimization techniques concerning visualization design decisions. Part 3 of the book is a veritable candy store of large, colorful, detailed maps on topics as diverse as the history of science fiction, NIH grant topics, ecological footprints, Boston ship traffic, locations of US academic jobs, and more. Part 4 offers insight into the future of mapping, including the mind-boggling statement that the \$5 billion global big data market in 2014 is projected to grow to a \$50 billion dollar market in just three years. Apparently, it is not just business people that utilize and display big data but also research scientists, social scientists, government agencies and non-profits.

My favorite sentence in the book occurs on page 168:

“The microscope, invented four centuries ago, allowed people to view and measure matter in detail never seen before. In 2014, data analytics is the modern equivalent of the microscope.”

The reader does, indeed, experience this oversized, densely packed yet ultimately accessible tome as one might have experienced the first microscope. That is, the reader is provided with an opportunity to see beautiful information that was previously invisible. In addition to the practical advice that *Atlas of Knowledge: Anyone Can Map* offers, the overall, lasting effect of the book is one of awe; the book sets the reader’s mind to wander about the myriad ways that displaying and visualizing data may help us live more healthy, effective, and robust lives.

Susan D'Agostino is an Associate Professor of Mathematics at Southern New Hampshire University. She is also an appointee on NH Governor Maggie Hassan's STEM Education Task Force. Her essays have appeared in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and the Mathematical Association of America's *Math Horizons* and *MAA Focus* magazines.

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