

Chapter 63

Using the Retrospective Approach to Commemorate AutoCarto Six

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ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines the bases for using a retrospective approach to re-visit papers published 30 years ago (1983) in the proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium on Automated Cartography. “AutoCarto Six”, as it is popularly known, is credited with making numerous, significant contributions to the evolution of automated cartography, geographic information systems (GIS), and a number of related fields. In these remarks I discuss how comments by authors on such topics as Thoughts shaping the design of the papers, Derivative attributions, Original contributions, Impacts, What was new in the papers?, and What was different in the papers? represent an innovative, insightful and instructive way to commemorate conference proceedings and other significant productions.

WHY A RETURN TO THE AUTOCARTO SIX PROCEEDINGS?

There are a number of reasons why the decision was made to organize a publication celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Sixth International Symposium on Automated Cartography that was held in the National Capital Region of Canada in 1983. In this paper I present a selection of those reasons, and many more are contained in the retrospectives provided by the authors of papers written 30 years ago which have significantly affected the evolution of automated cartography (AC), geographic information systems (GIS), and numerous related fields (Wellar, 2013b).

By way of context, as the Director of the Technical Program for AutoCarto Six, and the Proceedings Editor (Wellar, 1983), I have re-visited both individual papers and collections of papers for research and practice purposes on many occasions. Moreover, I have had discussions about the papers with their authors as well as with faculty members, individual students and classes of students, private sector consultants and systems developers, a variety of government officials, and members of advisory boards and expert panels who are often drawn by agencies and commissions from a mix of disciplines and industries.

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The overriding message that I drew from those experiences is that since many of the contributors to AutoCarto Six (AC Six) were pioneers as well as long-term leaders in the evolution of automated cartography, geographic information systems, and related fields, the re-visit should be designed accordingly. In particular, and among other considerations, it should be regarded as an opportunity to:

- Identify and recognize original contributions to the literature on automated cartography (AC);
- Identify and recognize original contributions to the literature on geographic information systems (GIS);
- Identify and recognize original contributions to the literature on relationships between automated cartography (AC) and geographic information systems (GIS);
- Identify and recognize the magnitude of the international perspectives presented at AC Six;
- Recall the Symposium focus on achievements and challenges, which took AC, GIS, and related fields into the “Get real, show us what you’ve got” arena like never before;
- Recall the richness of the AC Six program which sought out contributions in such fields or domains as remote sensing, land information systems (LIS), decision support systems (DDS), land registration information systems (LRIS), interactive graphics systems (IGS), image processing systems (IPS), municipal information systems (MIS), relational database management systems (RDMS), artificial intelligence (AI), and which also placed great emphasis on papers dealing with data quality issues, the movement from data systems to information systems, and achievements and challenges of the data-information-knowledge transform process.

I believe that realizing any one of those opportunities made a strong argument to re-visit the AC Six proceedings, and in combination they made a compelling case.

Finally, the symposium received outstanding support from government agencies, industries, and universities, as well as from hundreds of individuals, and made a significant contribution to the AC and GIS fields, as well as to a number of related fields. The *Retrospective* publication provided one more way to acknowledge that exceptional support.

And, further in that vein, it was one more way to underline the significance of the recent recognition that was accorded to Natural Resources Canada, Statistics Canada, U.S. Bureau of the Census, and U.S. Geological Survey.

In 2012, the four agencies were simultaneously inducted into the GIS Hall of Fame at the URISA GIS-PRO conference. As a contributor to the four nomination statements, I was pleased to write about the many contributions that the professionals from those agencies made over the years to automated cartography, geographic information systems, numerous related fields, and to the AC Six symposium. The *Retrospective* project was another opportunity to recall the valuable contributions, with emphasis on applied geospatial research, made by these agencies over the past three decades.

WHY A RETROSPECTIVE RETURN TO AUTOCARTO SIX?

Anniversary events of professional organizations are conventionally designed around temporal milestones at 10, 15, 25, 50, etc., years of activity. Frequently, anniversaries are celebrated by conference proceedings, journal issues, videos, special publications, and books. And, as rule, a relatively small group of people is responsible for whatever is done to celebrate the anniversary.

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