Summary of activities 2020

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1. Editor’s comment

If there is a zeitgeist that is defining academic publishing at the moment, then it would be open access (OA). I wouldn’t go as far as to say that it is sweeping all before it, but it has far outgrown the idealism evident at its inception. That idealism has long been ingrained in scholarly communication: the notion that knowledge should be widely shared for the benefit of all.

Of course, this flies in the face of capitalism where you make a ‘widget’, patent it, sell it at a profit until someone else produces an improved ‘widget’, then repeat the process. The ‘widget development process’ is what we would call ‘research and development’ and so part of knowledge production; in contrast to scholarly publication, it is not shared widely. Patents and products are often the only way of finding out what businesses are actually doing. And this makes a lot of sense: if you are investing time (and other resources) into developing new ideas that add significant value, then it would seem appropriate to charge for the downstream products that are produced from them. Except we know that there are many knowledge-based products that don’t do this, with open source software an excellent example. In no particular order, the likes of Firefox (https://www.mozilla.org), MySQL (https://www.mysql.com/), Drupal (https://www.drupal.org/), Hadoop (https://hadoop.apache.org/), LibreOffice (https://www.libreoffice.org/), and Apache HTTPD (https://httpd.apache.org/) are all open-source products that underpin much of the service and client software that many businesses and individuals use. They enable the delivery of other products and services. There are two core benefits of open source: (1) there is an ingrained capability to rapidly innovate the software; and (2) an ability to request and add features. This latter benefit enables you to ensure software longevity, rather than having to rely on a third party.

All of which makes me optimistic about OA, not least because the Journal of Maps has been at the forefront of OA publishing since its first issue back in 2005. At that time, OA had been adopted by a fringe – in terms of volume – number of journals; however, over the intervening 15 years, that number has swelled and gained significant momentum. Whilst some early adopters ‘flipped’ to the OA model, there has also been a significant rise in many new-start OA journals. Meanwhile, traditional subscription journals are no longer thinking about whether they should ‘flip’ to OA, but rather when they should. This is because their long-term viability is being challenged by their OA counterparts.

Of course, all of this wouldn’t be possible without the necessary pre-conditions; namely, a viable business model. Publishing is predominantly a service industry and if the reader isn’t willing to pay, then it must be funded by the author (or their benefactor). Governments, funders, and research institutions realise this, which is why there is now significant weight behind ‘Gold’ OA. As this is predominantly a shift in the sources of funding, rather than the requirement for additional monies, it has highlighted notable deficiencies: subject areas such as the sciences or public-policy-focused areas of the social sciences often have sources of grant funding, whilst less-well resourced areas of the social sciences and much of the humanities are more financially challenged. It’s these latter areas – and the journals that service them – that are struggling to make this transition.

And so – towards the end of 2020 – this is where the publishing industry finds itself. Every point in time is unique, but 2020 appears to be a nexus – or perhaps a pivot point – between the old and the new. A key period of transition for an industry that is transforming itself. Within this context, the Journal of Maps is an interesting microcosm, given that it spans the sciences and social sciences, as well as incorporating work from the humanities. We are passionate about spatial outputs – maps – and about making them widely available, shareable, and discoverable. Open access is a central tenet of this philosophy; however, whilst our science-based authors have embraced this approach, the challenge remains in supporting the full remit of social science material.

There is no magic bullet for the road ahead, other than that these academic disciplines will eventually
need to transition to an OA publishing model. This transition will require academics to accept the author-pays model, journals to ‘flip’ to OA, and funders to support this road ahead. I don’t think there is any doubt for grant bodies that this is an appropriate use of funding; however, it is universities that will have to assess their approach. They have traditionally paid subscription fees for journals, and the expectation – at least in part – is that they flip this funding to supporting the payment of article processing charges (APCs) by their researchers. Read-and-publish (Hinchcliffe, 2019) agreements are a starting point and will in-part help in the short term; however, longer-term solutions will require targeted interventions by key stakeholders.

This brings us back full-circle to the nature of zeitgeist and, if we were to reframe the question from the perspective of the author, then it would be about sharing. Academics have long-heralded their freedom of speech, the ability to express their ideas. In parlance of the everyday, this is no better exemplified than through the likes of blogging and tweeting. They connect individuals and allow them to share ideas. Open access extends this idea to the realm of formal publication, open data (Smith, 2020) to downstream application, and Creative Commons (https://creativecommons.org/) to the ability to take, reuse, and repurpose. Sharing is proving truly revolutionary.

2. Best map award

For 2020, the ‘Best Map’ was judged by the formal Awards Panel, which was comprised of Dr Mike Smith, Dr Dick Berg, Dr Bernhard Jenny, Mr Mike Shand, and Professor Nigel Walford (and this section reflects our combined comments). Contributions are assessed for both their academic content and cartographic quality. It is neither the best academic paper nor the best-designed map, but a combination of qualities from both areas that is judged the winner. The following 10 maps were reviewed for the award:

Benito-Calvo, H. Haddoumi, H. Aouraghe, A. Oujaa, M.G. Chacón & R. Sala-Ramos: Geomorphological analysis using small unmanned aerial vehicles and submeter GNSS (Gara Soultana butte, High Plateaus Basin, Eastern Morocco)

Jessica Gosling-Goldsmith, Britta Ricker & Menno Jan Kraak: Topographic and thematic (in)visibility of Small Island Developing States in a world map

Maria Jazmín Chávez-Álvarez, Mariano Cerca, Margarita López Martínez, Gabriel Origel-Gutiérrez & Luca Ferrari: The Eocene-Oligocene Nanchitala dike swarm, eastern Michoacán, México

Dominik Kaim, Jakub Taczanowski, Marcin Szwagryzk & Krzysztof Ostafin: Railway network of Galicia and Austrian Silesia (1847–1914)

Piotr Klapyta: Geomorphology of the high-elevated flysch range – Mt. Babia Góra Massif (Western Carpathians)

Jackie M. Langille, Liana Stachowicz & Felix Stith: Southwest extension of dextral transpression along the Burnsville fault into the Clyde 7.5-minute quadrangle, western North Carolina, USA

Wanyun Lu, Yongxue Liu, Jizhou Wang, Wenzuan Xu, Wei Wu, Yongchao Liu, Bingxue Zhao, Huiting Li & Pei Li: Global proliferation of offshore gas flaring areas

Franz-Benjamin Mocnik, Paulo Raposo, Wim Feringa, Menno-Jan Kraak and Barend Köbben: Epidemics and pandemics in maps – the case of COVID-19

Jiří Nemeškal, Martin Oufedníček & Lucie Pospíšilová: Temporality of urban space: daily rhythms of a typical week day in the Prague metropolitan area

Christian Öhrling, Gustaf Peterson & Mark D. Johnson: Glacial geomorphology between Lake Vänern and Lake Vättern, southern Sweden

Emilio Ortega, Belén Martín, Ágata De Isidro & Rodrigo Cuevas-Wizner: Street walking quality of the ‘Centro’ district, Madrid

V. Tsibulskaya, A.J. Hepburn, B. Hubbard & T. Holt: Surficial geology and geomorphology of Greg crater, Promethei Terra, Mars

Min Weng, Xiaoyan Song, Lingqi Wang, Huan Xie, Ping Zhang, Shiliang Su & Mengjun Kang: A tourist map of Xi’an: combining historical city characteristics with art

It is with great pleasure that I am able to announce the award of the 2020 ‘Best Map’ to Min Weng, Xiaoyan Song, Lingqi Wang, Huan Xie, Ping Zhang, Shiliang Su & Mengjun Kang (Wuhan University) for their paper detailing methods that seek to improve both the functionality and artistry of tourist maps, using Xi’an as a case study (Weng et al., 2020). The map presented in this paper specifically targeted the use of variable scales, topological optimisation, hand-painted symbols and colour based upon the architecture of the city to develop a new product. One of the committee panel commented upon the ‘simple but elegant map design with outstanding graphics and illustrations.’ It is a worthy winner.

3. A year in numbers: 2020

As I write this summary of 2020 in late November, all articles for the current year are published and I can now look back upon another formational year. Our switch back to open access in 2016 still looms large in the ‘rear view mirror’ of hindsight. Any editor will tell you of the nervousness of ‘flipping’ to OA, because submissions inevitably go down in the immediate post-switch period before growth returns. That growth at the JoM has been rapid, rising from
81 articles and 790 pages in 2018 to 105 articles across 1,033 pages in 2019. In 2020, we published 109 articles across 1,163 pages; however this hides what has been a very busy year, with the cultivation of two special issues, which will be published in full in 2021.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the importance placed upon the JoM by authors and readers alike is the increase in the journal’s Impact Factor to our highest ever rating at 2.365, a significant increase from 1.600 in 2017. Total incoming citations dropped from 582 to 454; however this reflected the dropping-out of the large volume in 2016 from the calculation, in which we published out our backlog of articles as part of our the conversion to open access. As a result, the number of citations relative to the number of articles increased, and this is reflected in the Impact Factor. Across all the articles we have published, there was a rise in total citations from 1,267 in 2019 to 1,545 this year, again highlighting the breadth and appeal of the work our published authors submit.

Whilst formal metrics show the growing importance of the JoM, perhaps the statistic I am most impressed with is the number of downloads, as it reflects how widely read our published maps. In short, it is far more indicative of the sharing that the JoM engenders in terms of both the maps and that it is open access. These currently stand at 303,442 through to October, higher than the 203,554 recorded for the same period last year. I will reiterate my comment from last year (Smith, 2020):

compare this to the 30,972 downloads for our last year as a full subscription journal (2015) and the benefits of open access are obvious – you get tremendous reach which increases the potential for download, citation and further downstream utilisation.

In terms of metrics for individual articles, the top five cited (2017–2019) and downloaded (2020) are:

**Most Cited (2017–2019)**

| Title | Citations |
|-------|-----------|
| R. Civico, S. Pucci, F. Villani, L. Pizzimenti, P. M. De Martini, R. Nappi & the Open EMERGEO Working Group: Surface ruptures following the 30 October 2016 Mw 6.5 Norcia earthquake, central Italy | 25 |
| Sarriolea, P.; Herrera-Ossandon, M.; Meseguer-Ruiz, O.: Climatic regionalisation of continental Chile | 16 |
| Stefano Vitale & Sabatino Ciarcia: Tectono-stratigraphic setting of the Campania region (southern Italy) | 14 |
| Clerici, N., Calderón, C.A.V. and Posada, J.M.: Fusion of Sentinel-1A and Sentinel-2A data for land cover mapping: a case study in the lower Magdalena region, Colombia | 13 |

**Most Downloads (2020)**

| Title | Downloads |
|-------|-----------|
| Chi, G.: Land Developability: Developing an Index of Land Use and Development for Population Research | 9363 |
| F. Bohoyo, R. D. Larter, J. Galindo-Zaldivar, P. T. Leat, A. Maldonado, A. J. Tate, M. M. Flexas, E. J. M. Gowland, J. E. Arndt, B. Dorschel, Y. D. Kim, J. K. Hong, J. López-Martínez, A. Maestro, O. Bermúdez, F. O. Nitsche, R. A. Livermore & T. R. Riley: Morphological and geological features of Drake Passage, Antarctica, from a new digital bathymetric model | 5917 |
| Beconytė, G., Eismontaitė, A., Žemaitienė, J.: Mythical creatures of Europe | 3627 |

**Table 1. Referees at the Journal of Maps.**

| Name | Institution |
|------|-------------|
| Isabel Lopez | Aibeda |
| Peter | Almond |
| Richard | Armitage |
| Pietro P.C. | Aucelli |
| Felix | Baschofer |
| Davide | Baioni |
| Gianni | Balestro |
| Raimundo | Bambó |
| Luca | Barale |
| Tamires | Barbosa |
| Iestyn | Barr |
| George | Bathrellos |
| Martin | Bednarik |
| Jacob M. | Bendle |
| Sara | Benetti |
| John B | Birks |
| Clare | Boston |
| Mike | Bravo |
| Anders | Bryn |
| David | Burgess |
| Frances | Butcher |
| Daniele | Cannatella |
| Dario | Canu |
| Sebastien | Cauquad |
| Gerardo | Carrasco-Nunez |
| Doriano | Castaldini |
| Çetinkaya | Çem Polat |
| Juwen | Chang |
| Gargi | Chaudhuri |
| Alessandro | Chelli |
| Chuqun | Chen |
| Zuoji | Chen |
| Marie-Luce | Chevalier |
| Andrea | Ciampolini |
| Vincenzo | Ciancia |
| Sirio | Cicciaci |
| Susan | Conway |
| Paola | Coratza |
| Anna | d’Atri |
| Mattia | De Amicis |
| Harry J. | de Koning |
| Sandro | De Muro |
| Eliane | Del Lama |
| Matteo | Del Soldato |
not only will they see what reviewers write about their work, but they will also appreciate the amount of time and effort it takes to produce such a review. Observing this process is an Associate Editor who facilitates the day-to-day handling of a manuscript and makes a recommendation to the Primary Editor, who has oversight of all the manuscripts in their section. Once accepted, it passes through to the Production team, who typeset the work to the high publication standard expected of a citation-listed journal, before it is finally pushed live to journal’s website.

With this process in mind, the gratitude of the Editorial Board extends to the authors and reviewers who make the Journal of Maps possible. We want to share the best academic maps as widely as possible, but for this to happen authors must submit their work and their peers must assess the efficacy of it. You only have to look through the manuscripts we published last year to see the list of authors; however, reviewers are often opaque and give up their time and expertise to facilitate the sharing of the very best work. I would therefore like to formally acknowledge the effort expended by our referees and list them individually (Table 1), where they have given us the permission to do. I am also grateful to the team at the JoM which includes the Associate Editors (Table 2), as well as those at Taylor and Francis (and in particular Andrew Kelly).

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