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Maps of Cyberspace

By Sam Vaknin, Ph.D.

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"Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts...A graphical representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the non-space of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding..." (William Gibson, "Neuromancer", 1984, page 51)

<http://www.ebookmap.net/maps.htm>

<http://www.cybergeography.org/atlas/atlas.html>

At first sight, it appears to be a static, cluttered diagram with multicoloured, overlapping squares. Really, it is an extremely powerful way of presenting the dynamics of the emerging e-publishing industry. R2 Consulting has constructed these eBook Industry Maps to "reflect the evolving business models among publishers, conversion houses, digital distribution companies, eBook vendors, online retailers, libraries, library vendors, authors, and many others. These maps are 3-dimensional offering viewers both a high-level orientation to the eBook landscape and an in-depth look at multiple eBook models and the partnerships that have formed within each one." Pass your mouse over any of the squares and a virtual floodgate opens - a universe of interconnected and hyperlinked names, a detailed atlas of who does what to whom.

eBookMap.net is one example of a relatively novel approach to databases and web indexing. The metaphor of cyber-space comes alive in spatial, two and three dimensional map-like representations of the world of knowledge in Cybergeography's online "Atlas". Instead of endless, static and bi-chromatic lists of links - Cybergeography catalogues visual, recombinant vistas with a stunning palette, internal dynamics and an intuitively conveyed sense of inter-relatedness. Hyperlinks are incorporated in the topography and topology of these almost-neural maps.

"These maps of Cyberspaces - cybermaps - help us visualise and comprehend the new digital landscapes beyond our computer screen, in the wires of the global communications networks and vast online information resources. The cybermaps, like maps of the real-world, help us navigate the new information landscapes, as well being objects of aesthetic interest. They have been created by 'cyber-explorers' of many different disciplines, and from all corners of the world. Some of the maps ... in the Atlas

of Cyberspaces ... appear familiar, using the cartographic conventions of real-world maps, however, many of the maps are much more abstract representations of electronic spaces, using new metrics and grids."

Navigating these maps is like navigating an inner, familiar, territory.

They come in all shapes and modes: flow charts, quasi-geographical maps, 3-d simulator-like terrains and many others. The "web Stalker" is an experimental web browser which is equipped with mapping functions. The range of applicability is mind boggling.

A (very) partial list:

The Internet Genome Project - "open-source map of the major conceptual components of the Internet and how they relate to each other"

Anatomy of a Linux System - Aimed to "...give viewers a concise and comprehensive look at the Linux universe' and at the heart of the poster is a gravity well graphic showing the core software components, surrounded by explanatory text"

NewMedia 500 - The financial, strategic, and other inter-relationships and interactions between the leading 500 new (web) media firms

Internet Industry Map - Ownership and alliances determine status, control, and access in the Internet industry. A revealing organizational chart.

The Internet Weather Report measures Internet performance, latency periods and downtime based on a sample of 4000 domains.

Real Time Geographic Visualization of WWW Traffic - a stunning, 3-d representation of web usage and traffic statistics the world over.

WebBrain and Map.net provide a graphic rendition of the Open Directory Project. The thematic structure of the ODP is instantly discernible.

The WebMap is a visual, multi-category directory which contains 2,000,000 web sites. The user can zoom in and out of sub-categories and "unlock" their contents.

Maps help write fiction, trace a user's clickpath (replete with clickable web sites), capture Usenet and chat interactions (threads), plot search results (though Alta Vista discontinued its mapping service and Yahoo!3D is no more), bookmark web destinations, and navigate through complex sites.

Different metaphors are used as interface. Web sites are represented as plots of land, stars (whose brightness corresponds to the web site's popularity ranking), amino-acids in DNA-like constellations, topographical maps of the ocean depths, buildings in an urban landscape, or other objects in a pastoral setting. Virtual Reality (VR) maps allow information to be simultaneously browsed by teams of collaborators, sometimes represented as avatars in a fully immersive environment. In many applications, the user

is expected to fly amongst the data items in virtual landscapes. With the advent of sophisticated GUI's (Graphic User Interfaces) and VRML (Virtual Reality Markup Language) - these maps may well show us the way to a more colourful and user-friendly future.

Sam Vaknin is the author of "Malignant Self Love - Narcissism Revisited" and "After the Rain - How the West Lost the East". He is a columnist in "Central Europe Review", United Press International (UPI) and ebookweb.org and the editor of mental health and Central East Europe categories in The Open Directory, Suite101 and searcheurope.com. Until recently, he served as the Economic Advisor to the Government of Macedonia.

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Star Maps

By Stephen Schochet

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Since movie stars have moved into the big mansions of Beverly Hills and Bel-Air, vendors have sold maps of their homes with varying accuracy. Although most stars resent unwanted intrusions of fans, many take it with good humor. Sitting in his swimming pool, Oliver Hardy would welcome fans who climbed over his fence. "Hey, How about a dip?" In the earliest days, Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks would drive up next to people with star maps and ask them for directions. And more recently, television producer Aaron Spelling would come out and pitch show ideas to tourists. Buying a star's home could bring unexpected baggage. Doris Day's love of homeless animals was well-known to her fans. For several years after buying her house, the new owners posted a sign that said, "Please do not leave your small dogs and cats, Miss Day has moved!"

Many celebrities simply tire of the fan attention. Paul Newman and Joann Woodward put their Beverly Hills house on sale after they found out it was on the star maps. Pop star Prince threw rocks at passing tour buses. Yet the star maps had their uses. Once actor Lee Marvin was so drunk he couldn't find his house, so he pulled over and bought a star map to locate it. Unfortunately, it was a new house so it was not on the map yet!

Stephen Schochet is the author and narrator of the audiobooks "Fascinating Walt Disney" and "Tales Of Hollywood". The Saint Louis Post Dispatch says, "these two elaborate productions are exceptionally entertaining." Hear realaudio samples of these great, unique gifts at www.hollywoodstories.com.

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