



# ICHC 2013 in Helsinki – An After Action Report

By Bert Johnson, et al.<sup>1</sup>

There were 19 Washington Map Society (WMS) members among the 180 registrants from 34 nations at the 25<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the History of Cartography (ICHC), held at the Marina Conference Centre in the Finnish capital from 30 June through 5 July 2013. Ten WMS members traveled from the US, three from the UK, three from the Netherlands, one from Canada, and one from Belgium. Three chaired sessions and two gave papers. One led a panel on the progress of the History of Cartography project. Nine members shared their experiences, which helped shape this account.

The organizers of ICHC 2013 were the *Cartographic Society of Finland* and *Imago Mundi Ltd.* Partners were the *National Land Survey of Finland*, *National Library of Finland*, *John Nurminen Foundation*, *University of Helsinki*, *Aalto University*, *University of Jyväskylä*, *National Archives of Finland*, *Geographical Society of Finland*, *National Museum of Finland*, and *Chartarum Amici*. Antti Jakobsson was the conference director and Mirja Metsälä was the conference secretary.

The strongest overall impressions ICHC 2013 made were how well the conference was run, how helpful the staff was, and how good the venue was. Indeed, eight of the nine respondents cited these as the most salient feature. **Kris Butler:** *My overall impression of ICHC 2013 is that it was extremely well organized. The staff were super friendly and helpful; the venues were convenient to each other.* **Evelyn Edson:** *Our hosts were most friendly and helpful. I also appreciated the excellent acoustics in the hall.* **Matthew Edney:** *As for our Finnish hosts, I thought they did a wonderful*

*job. Kudos.* The main venue was the Marina Conference Center, one of the best sites chosen for recent ICHCs. **Bert Johnson:** *Excellent conference facility – sound, light, space, the works.* Conferees sat in remarkably comfortable chairs, a real boon for a week of listening to presentations. There was space on the table for each conferee to stack books, take notes, etc. Sight lines and acoustics were outstanding, even from the last row. The dual screen projection was clear and bright, although many speakers did not take advantage of it. Lighting was more than ample for note-taking but suppressed enough that the projected images remained crisp. It was only a short walk to the central harbor, where stalls offered some of the tastiest and most affordable lunches in town, thus becoming the de facto cafeteria of the conference. **John Docktor:** *[At] nearby Market Square...we could relax with other attendees and get typical Finnish foods for lunch.*

An ICHC has some aspects of a family or class reunion. On the first day, people go early to the hall to meet good friends they have not seen since the last ICHC, because they live in different states or countries or continents. This is hard to describe but long remembered. **Kris Butler:** *My favorite aspect of...ICHCs is re-uniting with... friends worldwide from previous conferences—and also making new ones. I especially like...the way everyone mixes...rarely are two people from the same country standing next to each other in any of [my] pictures.* **Anonymous:** *Excellent collegiality, young and old, new and seasoned participants – friendly.*

The opening session was special because this was the 25<sup>th</sup> such gathering, dating back to 1964. It began with a warm welcome from Antti Jakobssen, words of guidance from Imago Mundi chair Tony Campbell, and a report by **Matthew Edney** on the work of the American Friends of Brian Harley, which helps defray costs for presenters who might not otherwise be able to attend. There followed an excellent address by Paul D. A. Harvey marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of ICHC, reflecting on its origins and growth, and what it has come to represent. He was uniquely suited to the task as the sole person to have

<sup>1</sup> Listed attendees were Cyrus Ala'i, Caroline Batchelor, Wulf Bodenstein, Kris Butler\*, Catherine Delano-Smith, Imre Demhardt\*, John Docktor\*, Matthew Edney\*, Evelyn Edson\*, Bill Ginsberg, Fay Huidekoper-Cope\*, Bert Johnson\*, Christophe Klein, Hans Kok, Ken Nebenzahl, Ljiljana Ortolja-Baird, Patricia Seed, and Douglas Sims\*. Asterisk indicates views shared in this article; not all are identified.

attended all 25 ICHCs. Musical entertainment was provided by Kaija, Timo, and Maaria Nuoranne and friends. Kaija and Timo, husband and wife, are on faculty at the Sibelius Academy and well known singers in Finland. Timo is also a choral conductor of international stature. In closing, Kaija sang a portion of the hymn from *Finlandia*.

The conference theme was a change from the past: The Four Elements: Earth, Fire, Wind, and Water. Fifty-seven papers were grouped into 19 sessions, each with a broad theme. Some groups were fairly specific, e.g., coastal maps and charts, whereas others were less so, e.g., grids, coordinates, and projections. Two readers were unable to attend, but one paper was read by a surrogate. There was also a film on copper engraving and a special panel on the progress of the History of Cartography Project. **Doug Sims:** *The agenda [had] subjects of value and interest to many, as opposed to super-esoteric subjects of too limited appeal.*

Six respondents named favorite papers, and five nominated Catherine Dunlop's *The Woman Who Mapped the French Republic: Augustine Fouillee's Cartographic 'Tour de France.'* Written in the wake of France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, this story of two war orphans who flee occupied Lorraine and travel throughout France, was wildly popular and instrumental in rebuilding French morale. It made heavy use of maps and was part of a national post-war effort to improve geographic and cartographic literacy among the French public. Three members chose Paul D. A. Harvey's *Local Maps on Medieval Seals*. Such depictions are rare, and Harvey drew on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century seals from Rome, Marmonde (France), and Innsbruck. Three also selected Stefan Schroder's *Transitional or Transcultural Maps? Latin Mapmakers and Arabic Knowledge in the First Half of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century*. This work re-examined the notion of transitional maps between medieval mappa mundi and later mathematically based works. It also drew on newly found sources to state that al-Idrisi's world map, while important, was not unique, and that other, similar Arab maps may also have been sources. Two members cited other aspects they liked. **Imre Demhardt:** *the multitude of papers/posters on the host region (Finland and surroundings).* **Matthew Edney:** *the number of papers—Nutti, Palsky, Cams, Lin, Hutchinson, Edney, Collier, Lois—that sought a comparative approach/broader context and advanced some explanation.* A list of papers can be found at [ichc2013.fi/programme](http://ichc2013.fi/programme).

Conferees attended three exhibits and four receptions; all were popular with attendees. **Imre Demhardt:** *The combination of exhibits covered virtually the full range from global to local aspects, which in itself is a remarkable accomplishment.* The National Library hosted *The Emerging World – Map Treasures from the A. E. Nordenskiöld Collection*, in collaboration with the National Museum, where the collection is housed. It traced the growth of humanity's geographic knowledge and its transfer to maps, using items from the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was the best curated exhibit, accompanied by exhibit notes and an excellent catalogue in English, Finnish, and Swedish. The exhibit was open to the public for six months. The National Archives hosted *From Observation to Map – The History of Cartography and Surveying in Finland*. Most items were from their collection, but some were from the National Surveying Museum. This exhibit was displayed in the vaulted cellars beneath the building. Interpretive commentary was minimal, but for persons drawn to town maps, regional maps, and other detailed cartographica, it was a feast. The buffet which followed was likewise sumptuous. *Treasures from the John Nurminen Foundation Collection* was the biggest surprise. Nurminen Logistics is a major Finnish shipping firm with over 125 years of experience. Its foundation was begun in 1992 to preserve the maritime history collection it had compiled over the years. The exhibit had world maps from Juha Nurminen's collection, and maps of Scandinavia, the Baltic, and the Arctic from the foundation. These were hung in the reception area and adjoining halls and were simply spectacular. Among the maps were tables laden with the best food and wine of the week. Apart from their exhibit, at registration the Nurminen Foundation gave each conferee two excellent books: *The Juha Nurminen Collection of World Maps* and *The History of the Nordic Map – From Myth to Reality*, by Ulla Enrensvard. There was also a very nice buffet given by the City of Helsinki at the city hall. This was purely social, with a greeting from the city, and was the occasion for presenting the Imago Mundi Prize to Carme Montaner (Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya) and Professor Luis Urteaga (Universitat de Barcelona) for *Italian Mapmakers in the Spanish Civil War (1937–1939)*, *Imago Mundi*, Issue 1, 2012, chosen as the best article in years 2011 and 2012. There was a fourth exhibit, *Helsinki on Maps*, which featured reproductions of maps of the host city, taken from various archives in Helsinki and Stockholm.

Two things were of great use to conferees. One was a tram ticket for unlimited rides for the duration of the ICHC, which put all the venues within easy reach. The other was an excellent conference book, published by the Cartographic Society of Finland with no specific author identified. It contained a program, abstracts of each paper and poster, abstracts for each exhibition, and ads from sponsors and supporters (including WMS).

Several unique events received high praise. On two days, the National Library laid out still more gems from the Nordenskiöld Collection and invited conferees to examine them at length before the library opened – an amazing opportunity. The farewell dinner on the island fortress of Suomenlinna offered outstanding food and wine. A brass band played during dinner, and people danced. When that ended, conferees sang solos, a happy effect of good wine and conviviality. The one and three day after-tours were full, and participants were enthusiastic. **John Docktor:** *I did enjoy the one day post-symposium tour. It gave me a "feel" for the Finnish countryside, and I learned about the Struve Geodetic Arc.* **Evelyn Edson:** *I went on both tours and enjoyed them thoroughly—well organized, and I was delighted to see a bit more of Finland. The opera at Savonlinna castle was a special treat.*

There were few problems noted. There was a plea, heard before but still valid, for speakers to slow down, speak more clearly, and use slides more effectively to assist those dealing with a language or accent barrier. There was one minor note unique to Helsinki. Session chairs and speakers sat in a front corner of the hall, not in the speaker's line of sight. This required the chair to call out the time warnings, more intrusive than holding up cards. One other problem was beyond the scope of organizers. Lower weight limits on airline baggage forced some people to make painful choices on what to leave behind on their return journey, or to pay dearly to mail materials to their home country.

The closing session began with notes of thanks from Antti Jakobsson and Tony Campbell. ICHC 2015 organizer Joost Depuyt gave an enticing invitation to Antwerp, Belgium, 12–17 July 2015. Details will be posted at [www.ichc2015.be](http://www.ichc2015.be), where there is already a booklet with a great deal of information. During the closing minutes, the Finnish group Kardemimmit performed: four young women, all serious music students, now just back from a U.S. tour. As they played, photographs from all 25 ICHCs, dating back to 1964, were projected as a silent hall watched

and reflected on the past and future. **Fay Huidekoper-Cope:** *I liked the photographic history...and hope...someone could...make a similar record of next 25, collecting...for each conference.* **Anonymous:** *I was pleased to see so many sharp young scholars participating; the history of cartography is in good hands.*

WMS members were asked what advice they would give someone thinking about attending the next ICHC. It all came down to one word. **Kris Butler:** *Go! I can say with absolute certainty that you will not regret it, and it may be one of the best times you've ever had.* **Bert Johnson:** *Go – just go! You have no idea what you're missing.*

**What WMS Members Contributed: Papers:** *Imre Demhardt: Absurd Mistakes and Blunders: The Relevance of Boundary Making and Surveying for the Cartography of Colonial Africa; Matthew Edney: The Transatlantic Circulation of Geographical Maps Before 1763; Session Chairs: Ed Dahl: World Maps and Atlases; Evelyn Edson: Map Use and Production II; Matthew Edney: Land Surveying and Land Survey Maps; Panel Discussion: Matthew Edney: History of Cartography Project Briefing; Imago Mundi Prize Sponsor: Kenneth Nebenzahl; Conviviality: Kris Butler: An internationally accredited judge of brewing competitions, Kris led large groups several nights to visit Helsinki brew pubs - great fun! Eagle Eyes: Imre Demhardt: Spotted the two facsimile maps which our Nurminen hosts said were among the real ones; was given his choice of a book from the foundation's publications - insufferably smug!*

**What Interested WMS Members: Most Interesting Paper (3–5 citations):** *Catherine Dunlop: The Woman Who Mapped the French Republic – Augustine Fouillee's Cartographic 'Tour de France; Paul D.A. Harvey: Local Maps on Medieval Seals; Stefan Schroder: Transitional or Transcultural Maps? Latin Mapmakers and Arabic Knowledge in the First Half of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. Interesting Papers (2 citations):* *Mario Cams: The China Maps of Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville; Pilar Chias-Navarro and Tomas Abad: Early 14<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish Cartography; Andreas Christoph: The Topographisch-militarische Charte von Teutschland; Stella Chrysochoou: Rebirth of Antiquity in Byzantium – Construction of Ptolemaic Maps by 13<sup>th</sup> Century Scholars without Use of Ancient Exemplars; Imre Demhardt: Absurd Mistakes and Blunders – The Relevance of Boundary Making and Surveying for the Cartography of Colonial Africa; Matthew Edney: The Transatlantic Circulation of Geographical*

Maps before 1763; Junia Furtado: *The Islands that Arose from the Sea – D’Anville, the Portuguese Azores, and the Vulcans*; Leif Isaksen: *The Practical Prognosticator: Use and Abuse of Ptolemy’s Geography*; Katariina Kosonen: *Mapping the Nation for Finns and Foreign Visitors (tourist and travel)*; Giles Palsky: *The 1899 Atlas of Finland*; Chet van Duzer: *The Cartographer’s Apprentice: Battista Agnese and a Manuscript*

*Nautical Chart in the Nordenskiöld Collection*; **Interesting Poster (2 citations):** Barbara Uppenkamp and Regine Gerhardt: *Daniel Frese – A Renaissance Cartographer to be Discovered*.



Regine Gerhardt (Univ of Hamburg) explains poster to Dr Lucia Nuti (Univ of Pisa)



Hans Kok and John Docktor at Nurminen Foundation



Helsinki Harbor



Buffet at reception at National Archives



Caroline Batchelor and Cyrus Alai



View of Lecture Hall (Dr. Pilar Chias, University of Alacala, Spain)



Christophe Klein



Evelyn Edson (session chair) and Stella Chrysochoou