The International Conference on the History of Cartography (ICHC), held every two years, is the most important gathering of historians of cartography in the world. It is the only academic conference dedicated solely to the history of maps and mapmaking. ICHC provides a forum for both academic and lay scholars interested in research findings and ideas about the history of cartography. It promotes cooperation and collaboration among cartographic historians, curators, collectors, dealers, and institutions through illustrated lectures, presentations, exhibitions, and a social program. Papers must primarily address the interdisciplinary study of maps, their creation, and their use in the past; participation from all relevant disciplines, is encouraged. These include art history, history of science, geography, literature studies, cultural history, and many others. Such subjects as historical geography, history of discoveries, and use of maps for current political argument are not within its purview.

Participation by WMS members has been steady at recent ICHCs; their experiences and opinions can be found in past Portolans (45, 51, 57, 64, 70, 76, 82, & 88). The Portolan encourages WMS members to attend, but we always stress that ICHC is not for everyone. For those whose interests include research and scholarship, or for collectors who wish to deepen their understanding of the history of cartography, ICHC offers a unique opportunity. WMS members who have attended have rated the experience very highly.

Unlike most academic conferences, ICHC is not sponsored by an academic or professional organization. There is no membership. The Board of Directors of the academic journal Imago Mundi coordinates the conferences, but each one is organized by a consortium of persons, groups, and/or institutions in the host country. Their responsibilities include leadership, coordination, finance, paper sessions, poster sessions, exhibitions, social events, excursions, and events for accompanying persons. The organizer of ICHC 2015 is the City of Antwerp, in collaboration with the University of Antwerp and Imago Mundi, Ltd. Their partners in this venture are Museum aan de Stroom (widely known as MAS), Museum Plantin-Moretus/Prentenkabinet, Hendrik Conscience Library, Museum Rockoxhuis, University of Antwerp Library, and the FelixArchief (The City of Archives of Antwerp). Joost Depuydt, Curator of Special Collections in the FelixArchief, is the conference director. Thomas Vervaet, Communications Officer of the FelixArchief is the conference secretary. The sole address to be used in contacting the conference organizers is info@ichc2015.be.

Hosting an ICHC is a formidable task, so organizers and venues are chosen four years in advance. The host sets specific themes, ratified by Imago Mundi, and must conclude with the words "...and any other aspect of the history of cartography." There have been up to 80 papers at some conferences, but the norm is around 55–60. These are usually presented in groups of three or four, led by a session chair, with an opportunity for questions afterward. There is also a half-day poster session, during which scholars and researchers can present their work in direct conversations with interested conferees. The popularity and sophistication of the poster has grown dramatically over the past decade.

The 26th International Conference on the History of Cartography Antwerp, Belgium • 12–17 July 2015

By Bert Johnson
him a toll, he severed one of their hands and threw it into
the river. He was himself slain by a young hero named
Brabo, who cut off one of the giant’s own hands and flung
it into the river. Hence the name Antwerpen, from Dutch
hand werpen, akin to Old English hand and wearpan (to
throw). Other explanations exist, some less colorful and
perhaps a bit more likely, but this is the one portrayed by
a statue in front of the town hall.

Through the politics of the Holy Roman Empire, the
Low Countries were largely under Spanish suzerainty at
the start of the 16th century. Bruges declined when its riv-
er silted in, and by the end of the 15th century, foreign
trading houses had relocated to Antwerp. The city had
a highly efficient bourse that attracted rich bankers and
money lenders from around Europe. Its golden age was
based in part on trading commodities from other nations’
colonies: silver from the Americas, spices from the Indies,
sugar from Spanish and Portuguese colonies, and later,
the manufacture of textiles. By the mid-1500s, Antwerp
was northern Europe’s second-largest city after Paris, with
some 200,000 people. It was the richest city in Europe
and stood at the center of Europe’s economy. According
to one source, Antwerp was earning the Spanish crown
seven times more revenues than the Americas. The city
has been described as a “16th century Manhattan,” and
the Florentine writer Lodovico Guicciardini described
it as “the loveliest city in the world.” The most famous
names from that period are the painters Quinten Metsys
and Pieter Bruegel; printer Christoph Plantijn; human-
ist and philologist Justus Lipsius; physician and botan-
ist Rembert Dodoens; and world renowned mapmak-
ers Gerardus Mercator and Araham Ortelius. The last two
names alone make Antwerp a mandatory destination for
any scholar of the history of cartography.

Its golden age was, alas, short-lived. In mid-century, the
religious fervor of the Reformation swept the area. Phillip
II of Spain, a staunch defender of the Catholic faith, harsh-
ly suppressed the movement. When the Eighty Years’ War
began in 1568, much of the trade with Spain vanished.
Then in 1576, unpaid Spanish troops mutinied, looting
and burning Antwerp, and killing some 7000 persons. By
century’s end the population had fallen to only 46,000
persons, and Antwerp’s fortunes continued to decline.

The 20th century witnessed a rebirth. Antwerp is now
Belgium’s second city, with 512,000 residents and a metro
area of 1.2 million. It is the second busiest port in Europe
and the center of the international diamond trade. Over
85% of the world’s rough diamonds, 50% of cut dia-
monds, and 40% of industrial diamonds are traded there.
Its 16th century legacy and 21st century prosperity have
made it a popular international destination, with many
museums, preserved buildings, gastronomic restaurants,
and good shopping. The city is known for its brewing cul-
ture and is justly proud of its beers. In the past few de-
cades, Antwerp has also become a center for international
fashion design. It was featured in a New York Times article
in August 2014: With its experimental architecture, bijou
furniture markets and numerous concept galleries and fusion
eateries, Antwerp has long been known as Belgium’s capital of
cool. The trendy little city, a buzzing hive of creativity, attracts
an increasing number of artists, designers, and other globetrot-
ters with its thriving avant-garde style scene.

The conference itself will be held in the Aula Rector
Dhanis, the largest auditorium of the University of
Antwerp. The Aula, which opened in 2002, has three
large screens and seats 700 persons. It was one of the first
constructions to take into account the increasing average
height of students, with higher doors and more leg room.
The 26th ICHC is planning no less than six exhibits in conjunction with this conference, the most in at least two decades: (Exhibit titles given here are still preliminary.)

- **Museum Aan De Stroom** (Museum on the River) is better known by its initials, MAS. Located in the old docks area in a striking new building, MAS is a historical and cultural museum about Antwerp and its people from prehistory until today. It will offer *A View of the Knowledge and Imagination of the World*. This will focus on the evolution of the European worldview as shown in maps, manuscripts, prints, art, and objects from the 15th to the 21st century. (Trip Advisor rated this site the 13th most popular attraction in Antwerp among 81 sites rated.)

- **Museum Plantin-Moretus/Prentenkabinet**, located in a UNESCO-listed 16th century printer’s home and workshop, will host *The Image of the City*. It will feature early city maps and views of Antwerp, especially three extraordinary documents: the first city profile (ca. 1515), Antwerp by Vergilius Bononiensis (1565), and the oldest known hand drawn city map (late 16th century). Plantin was one of the printers used by Ortelius. (Trip Advisor rated this attraction the second most popular in Antwerp.)

- **Museum Rockoxhuis** is the former residence of 17th century mayor, Nicolaas Rockox, a colleague of Ortelius, and thus a fine venue for *Abraham Ortelius under the Spell of Classical Antiquity*. With the help of his celebrated museum collection, Ortelius reconstructed ancient times in his Parergon, a collection of historical maps. (Trip Advisor rated this attraction the 14th most popular in Antwerp.)

- The exhibit in the **Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library**, *Mapping the Seven Seas*, will display a collection of maritime atlases of the former Maritime Museum and matching globes by Willem Blaeu, which have recently been restored.

- **Museum Rockoxhuis** is the former residence of 17th century mayor, Nicolaas Rockox, a colleague of Ortelius, and thus a fine venue for *Abraham Ortelius under the Spell of Classical Antiquity*. With the help of his celebrated museum collection, Ortelius reconstructed ancient times in his Parergon, a collection of historical maps. (Trip Advisor rated this attraction the 14th most popular in Antwerp.)

- The first International Geographical Conference took place in Antwerp in 1871. The people behind it were also the founders of the Royal Antwerp Geographical Society (1876). These events are the focus of *Geographical Initiatives in Antwerp*, presented in partnership by the University Library Antwerp (host site) & the FelixArchief.

- Finally, the **FelixArchief** will also present *Land Survey Maps and Atlases*. This will highlight the archives of the city and OCMW, its Social Welfare Agency, which contain several meticulously hand-drawn land-ownership maps.

The farewell dinner will take place on the evening of Friday, 17 July, in the covered street which runs through the St. Felix Warehouse, home of the City Archives. A post-conference tour is being organized for the following day. The group will go first to Sint-Niklaas for a visit to the newly renovated Mercator Museum, where they will find material from the cartographer’s recent 500th anniversary of birth and a unique Lafreri atlas. After lunch the group will visit the University Library at Leuven. The library is also a war memorial built after World War One, with the help of the American people.
A final decision on costs has yet to be made, but Advance Registration is tentatively set at 300 Euros until 15 February 2015, after which the cost of Full Registration would rise to 370 Euros. Accompanying persons will tentatively cost 170 Euros. The cost for full time students will probably be 120 Euros; proof of full-time student status is required. A daily pass would also cost 120 Euros; paper and poster presenters cannot book single day passes. Advance, Full, and Student Registration will cover opening and closing ceremonies, the conference program, conference bag and publications, daily sandwich lunches and coffee breaks, and admission to all receptions and exhibitions. As of this writing we do not know what events will be open to accompanying persons, but more details will be posted on the conference web site.

Two collateral events are not part of the ICHC but deserve a mention. On Saturday, 11 July, the day before the ICHC opens, there will be a meeting of the International Curators of Early Maps (ISCEM) from 9:30am to 3:30pm; this is a discussion group for map librarians but usually contains information of interest to non-librarians as well. There will also be the annual general meeting of the International Society for the History of the Map (ISHMap) from 4:00 to 6:00pm. Both events are open to conferees at no cost.

Detailed information on ICHC 2015 (and a registration form) can be found in the announcement at http://www.ichc2015.be. Information in this article may be updated between now and the conference. The history of ICHC and past conferences can be found at http://www.explekarti.eu/ichc. Suggestions from WMS members who have attended past ICHCs are listed at http://www.maphistory.info/ichcjohnson.html.

—Bert Johnson is a past president of WMS who has attended the last eight ICHCs and looks forward to Antwerp.