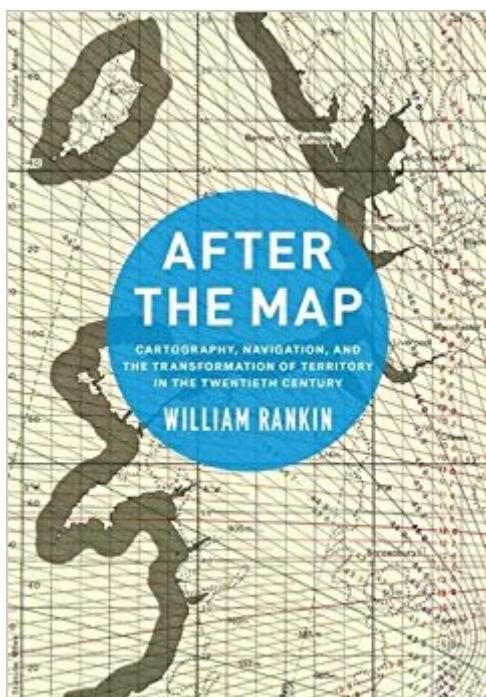


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# After The Map: Cartography, Navigation, And The Transformation Of Territory In The Twentieth Century



## Synopsis

For most of the twentieth century, maps were indispensable. They were how governments understood, managed, and defended their territory, and during the two world wars they were produced by the hundreds of millions. Cartographers and journalists predicted the dawning of a "map-minded age," where increasingly state-of-the-art maps would become everyday tools. By the century's end, however, there had been a decisive shift in mapping practices, as the dominant methods of land surveying and print publication were increasingly displaced by electronic navigation systems. In *After the Map*, William Rankin argues that although this shift did not render traditional maps obsolete, it did radically change our experience of geographic knowledge, from the God's-eye view of the map to the embedded subjectivity of GPS. Likewise, older concerns with geographic truth and objectivity have been upstaged by a new emphasis on simplicity, reliability, and convenience. *After the Map* shows how this change in geographic perspective is ultimately a transformation of the nature of territory, both social and political.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This ambitious and detailed book, elegantly written and illustrated, offers a history of the mapping sciences—or, more precisely, "geographic tools" and "geo-epistemology" in the 20th century. Moving across cartography, geodesy, and navigation, cartographer Rankin traces a gradual but significant shift in the "nature of territory" from a world of cartographic representation

firmly tied to the space of the nation-state to very different understandings premised on the coordinates of the global positioning system (GPS). Alongside detailed historical excavation, the text's strength is its serious, even unprecedented, attempt to draw together scholarship in cartography and historical geography with the history of science—and with a dose of diplomatic or international history, too. Rankin clearly possesses a formidable understanding of his subject, and approaches maps and related technologies with a delightful precision."

(Choice)"Policymakers and the public clamored for maps throughout the first half of the twentieth century.... Yet by the 1960s and 1970s, interest in maps waned while electronic coordinate systems emerged. But this was not solely a shift in technology, as William Rankin writes in *After the Map*. The shift from maps to coordinate systems, and then eventually to GPS produced novel geographical subjectivities, navigational experiences and geopolitical arrangements. It was a shift in the meaning of territory itself." (New Books Network) "In this tour de force study, Rankin maps mapping, demonstrating just how radically the global map evolved over the long twentieth century. He brings us from the 1890s, when treaties produced the first true global map system, through the military grids that marked every spot for building, digging, and targeting. Finally, Rankin displays, in a fresh new way, how we have come to move in a pointillist, instrument-ready GPS world—the third great moment of modern world mapping. Map may not be territory, but with *After the Map*, Rankin shows us how mapping has remade contemporary territory and reconfigured the political geography of space itself." (Peter Galison, Harvard University) "How do we place ourselves in space? Do we imagine large, contiguous territories or isolated points on a grid? Rankin traces three waves of geographic knowledge-making over the twentieth century. Forged or foiled by wars and treaties, technological capabilities, navigational imperatives, and cartographic imaginations, each mapping scheme reflected shifting notions of how best to find our place in the world. *After the Map* is profoundly researched and utterly fascinating." (David Kaiser, Massachusetts Institute of Technology) "After the Map is as prodigiously capacious and ground-breaking as the successive representations of the world that it recounts. It not only traces the progression since the late nineteenth century from terrain-based maps, through location by latitude-and-longitude-free grids, to orientation by points in GPS space, but it also convincingly analyzes what drove these cartographic shifts, spotlighting the dynamic interplay among technical knowledge and practices, military and navigational needs, and changing ideas of territory and sovereignty. Deeply researched and lucidly written, *After the Map* is an important, eye-opening, and compelling work." (Daniel Kevles, Yale University)

William Rankin is assistant professor of the history of science at Yale University. He lives in New Haven, Connecticut.

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