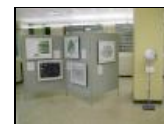


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Places and Spaces: Mapping Science

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The [Places and Spaces: Mapping Science](#) exhibit consists of traveling displays and an online gallery hosted by the University of Indiana. Its focus is "domain maps of abstract semantic spaces" created through the "scientific analysis of large-scale scholarly datasets". Each year, since 2004, a series (iteration) of ten new maps is added, in an attempt "to inspire cross-disciplinary discussion on how to best track and communicate human activity and scientific progress on a global scale." Pretty wordy stuff. Essentially, the exhibit compares existing methods of arranging information with potential methods. If you're an academic, you may find something particular to your specific dataset. If you're a map enthusiast, you may wish to test your ideas of what a map is.



The discussion came up on MapHist last year ([overview](#) by Tony Campbell) and J.B. Post has [written](#) on the complexities of drawing a line between maps and diagrams. After puzzling over this for a week, I realize I've been setting the bar pretty high: "That's not a map. It's a diagram." For now, I'll promise to be more inclusive and hide behind the definition of Harley and Woodward in their Preface to the first volume of the *History of Cartography*:

Maps are graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, or events in the human world. (p. xvi, col. 1)

(Not that this isn't without its own [problems](#).) Thus armed, I think I only have to allow in a *certain kind* of bar graph.

Once I can get beyond the semantics of semantic spaces however, I have to admit that many of these works are doing things that haven't been done before. I found [In Terms of Geography](#) by Andre Skupin hypnotizing. I'm not sure what the scaled text is showing, but the geographical dimensioning is clear enough. W. Bradford Paley's, [TextArc Visualization of "The History of Science"](#) appeals to my love of a good index ("Don't read the book, read the index.") but you need to see it in person to make out the detail.

I'm still trying to wrap my head around a lot of this and I need to go back and give the display the time it deserves. I've found the page about the [U of A exhibit](#) the easiest way into the whole subject, along with the YouTube link. The Cameron display runs until January 31st.

