

The Portolan Issue #100 and the Washington Map Society

By Leigh W. Lockwood



One refers to an organization's mission statement about once a decade, so in preparation for the 100th issue of *The Portolan*, we looked at it: "The Washington Map Society supports and promotes map collecting, cartography, and study of cartographic history."

The Board ensures the mission is attained, and at our last Board meeting and by unanimous "aye" votes (hardly motivated at all by self-interest), the Board congratulated itself on its success and adjourned to the nearby Hunan Dynasty Restaurant for a celebratory dinner. (At each person's individual expense, of course!)

Don't be fooled by previous lighthearted paragraph: Successful management of the Washington Map Society is far more complicated and thoughtful than one might first imagine. Almost 40 years ago a group of map enthusiasts decided to form a group of like-minded people and define itself clearly in the mission statement. The new group, The Washington Map Society, then defined and followed a series of written and unwritten rules, policies and standards starting with the Constitution and bylaws. Devoted, behind-the-scenes volunteers undertook activities that became the report card for success or failure in fulfilling the mission statement. Volunteers have kept up the momentum for nearly 40 years.

(All this may seem like a bit of a bore, but one must risk the self-analysis and live with the inevitable conclusions).

There are two real purposes to this essay for the 100th issue of *The Portolan*: How does *The Portolan* support the overall goals of the Washington Map Society? How has *The Portolan* developed into the present respected journal?

Upon publication of the 100th issue, it is appropriate and timely to recognize and celebrate the contributions of *Portolan* editors over the last several decades:

Dr. Jonathan T. Lanman, Founding Editor (1984–1987)
Nancy Goddin Miller, Editor (1988)

Nancy Goddin Miller and Charles A. Burroughs, Co-Editors (1989)

Charles A. Burroughs, Editor (1989–1996)

Marianne McKee, Associate Editor (1990–1991)

Jeanne Young, Associate Editor (1992–1996)

Jeanne Young, Editor (1996–1997)

Thomas F. Sander, Editor (1997–present)

For a complete story of the development of *The Portolan* over its first 50 issues, members are referred to "The Portolan at 50" in Issue 50 (spring 2001), pages 19–23. (Current members can access the issue (and all issues) online via the Members Only pages of the WMS website. The article is also available under the "Portolan" tab of our website.)

While the editor is assisted by a loyal and interested membership, he or she must be a self-starting, independent worker with deep insight into WMS interests. For many members who have never attended a meeting at the Library of Congress Geography & Map Division, *the Portolan* is the "face" of the Washington Map Society. [While this writer is an early adopting, gadget happy techie who attends meetings, I smile broadly when I open my post box and see my latest ink on paper *Portolan* has arrived.]

What is the purpose of *The Portolan*? *The Portolan* keeps us informed, gives us information about topics of interest, and opens new areas of interest through its letters from the President and Editor, content, book reviews, meeting reports, interviews, Cartographic Notes, announcements, and Recent Publications.

Is *The Portolan* important? While *The Portolan* is simply physical paper and ink (also available in digital format since 2017), its content gives life and adds so much more Washington Map Society. In fact, it is the ONLY common denominator binding all members together, hence its critical importance to the success and momentum of the Society.

Our Editor's concentration on quality has resulted in *The Portolan* being the only substantial publication on this topic in the United States. Indeed, dozens very prominent US and international institutions subscribe. Besides US subscribers such as Yale, Harvard, Huntington Library, New York Public Library, the Newberry, etc., libraries and institutions in 15 other countries subscribe, including The British Library, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Zentralbibliothek of Zurich, National Tsing Library in Taiwan, etc. You can see the complete list by navigating to www.washmapsociety.org, The Portolan Journal/Where to Read the Portolan.

Fortunately, *The Portolan* has full support of the Board and since issue number 1 has been "staffed" by brilliant editors, all volunteers.

Three times a year the editor starts with a blank piece of paper. Months later, he or she receives several boxes of *Portolans* that must be mailed and the excess stored for back issue sales. An incredible amount of work goes into each issue resulting in about 80 pages of diverse material:

- Choose relevant, engaging topics, choose authors, and follow up. I am certain this is much more challenging than it sounds.
- Edit each article to include fact checking, permissions to reproduce images, writing style (English is a second language for some authors), copyright, etc.
- Submit select articles to the Editorial Advisory Board; quarterback all suggestions.
- Work with Treasurer to ensure paid advertising appears as contracted. Follow up with advertisers to supply art (which must meet *Portolan* standards).
- Choose books to be reviewed, identify and solicit reviewers, then make sure reviews are submitted by deadline.
- Compile and edit the Cartographic Notes page. (This is like authoring an article for every issue).
- Compile the "Spotlight on Membership" page, after choosing three members for each issue; 146 members have contributed thus far.
- Select cover image and text.
- Filter to two pages the very extensive calendar of exhibitions and meetings from John Docktor's *worldwide events website*; edit "Map Site Seeing" column.
- Submit the raw input to the Layout Team, proof and manage resulting PDF through multiple proofing cycles, close the issue and go to press (place yourself in the mental mode of the editor—making the decision there will be NO MORE changes to a journal to be read by tyros,

finicky and demanding readers, academics, professionals, institutions, etc.) Work with printer to ensure timely delivery and excellent quality.

- Ensure that mail packaging conforms with postal regulations (after having learned and kept up with the regulations) to obtain the balance between cost savings and timely delivery.
- Ship over 400 copies every four months.
- Store and ship special order back issues.
- Write the editor's letter and answer letters to the editor.
- Write thank you letters to authors, contributors, book reviewers, and publishers of reviewed books.
- Prepare for the next issue by setting and enforcing deadlines—a diplomatic challenge as no contributor is remunerated.
- Provide information for website: Cover art, cumulative table of contents, index (now over 150 pages), and additional relevant information.
- Update webmaster and Treasurer for advertising rates and deadlines.

Tom Sander has been Editor since 1997, for more than half of the 100 issues—please get the oldest issue in your collection and compare it to this issue 100—marvel at how the presentation and content improved over the years. *The Portolan* evolved from what was basically a Xeroxed and stapled issue number 1 to a full color, perfect bound, highly respected journal very comparable to any other journal or commercial publication in our field.

Countless members have been mailed books by the Editor with the note, "I request your finished review by such-and-such a date!" Well, your author is speculating on that last part, but I venture that from time to time some gentle cajoling is required.

Let us also acknowledge the Editorial Advisory Board, six members who diligently work in total obscurity but contribute immeasurably to the quality of *The Portolan*. They evaluate many submitted articles to ensure article quality is up to *Portolan* standards by bringing to bear the experience and broad knowledge of six experts in diverse fields who can fact check, suggest changes or additional research, tighten up writing, add references, and much more. Your author can only imagine the time and work involved in reviewing material, and I am grateful.

Speaking of member/contributors (No matter how many I mention, dozens of equally important contributors will not be mentioned), Bert Johnson has steadfastly and generously contributed well over 50 articles. Bill Stanley has written milestone essays about the society. Joel Kovarsky and predecessors have reliably compiled the "Recent Publications" column which, in Joel's ten-year tenure, now runs to well

over 200 pages. I only mention a few and have full respect for every contributor, but will add a few of my favorite articles: John Rennie Short's "The Modern National Atlas" brought inquiries from at least two other countries; James Goode's fascinating series on the Albert H. Small collection; Chas Langelan's "The 1890's Surveyor, Soldier, and Mapmaker Who Transformed Washington DC"; JC McElveen's "The Use of Maps in Legal Proceedings" (one of my favorites as he cites a 1540 map of Oztoticpac, not far from where I grew up); Hal Meinheit's wonderfully researched and written articles on the Far East, particularly "The Consul's Maps, Diplomacy, Cartography, and Japan's 1874 Formosa Expedition." Lest we think only "old" maps are considered, Issue 93 carried the 2014 Ristow Prize Award winning, "Mapping Armageddon: The Cartography of Ruin in Occupied Japan".

Indeed, EVERY contributor, whether authoring a letter to the editor or a multi-issue series, needs to feel pride in supporting our esteemed editors and adding immeasurably to the quality and interest of *The Portolan*.

In closing, let me quote from the page 1, Volume 1, number 1 article dated October 10, 1984 written by then President (and prescient) Janet Green: "A major new undertaking is the launching of a Society publication that will keep the membership informed on up-coming Society and other meetings, exhibitions, forums, articles written by our members; reviews of speakers, lectures and other information of specific

interest to our membership..... We begin publication on a modest scale, with plans to expand and enrich the contents as interest and funding allow. We must rely upon input of material for the publication not only from our volunteer editorial staff, but from the entire membership. We need YOUR help—we solicit your support and suggestions to assure success of this new "voice" in the cartographic field."

What a remarkable achievement that a journal led and staffed solely by devoted volunteers has become such an important, respected and vital, "voice" in our field.

I will now answer my two questions. How does *The Portolan* support the overall goals of the Washington Map Society? It is the "glue", the information channel, and the common denominator for all members.

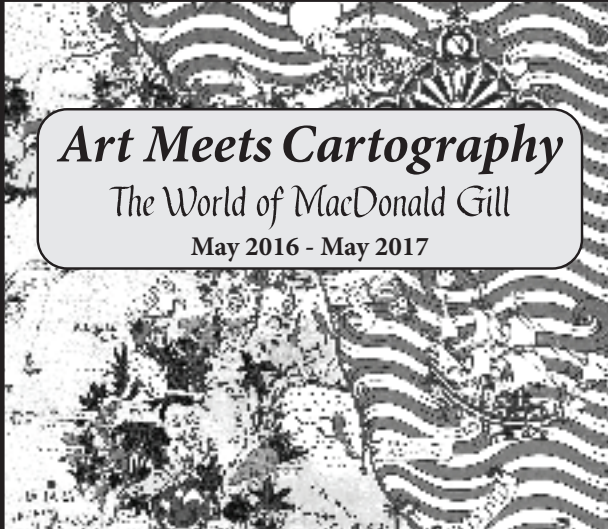
How has *The Portolan* developed into the respected journal that it is? Hard work. Loyalty. Vision. Fortitude. Pride. Dedication. Knowledge. High standards. Focus on continuing evolution.

Upon publication of this 100th issue, I believe I join every member in thanking all our past and current editors for their steadfast and very successful work. We hope they sit back for a few moments to enjoy having made a great and positive contribution to our world.

—Leigh Lockwood is Webmaster of the Washington Map Society.



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