Week 5: Lecture Activity

Breaking Down and Building Up Terrain

Introduction

Visual complexity describes the number and character of elements in the visual scene. Furthermore, we often discuss visual complexity in terms of information density, or the number of information elements per unit area of the page. In cartography, we handle visual complexity differently when considering thematic mapping versus reference mapping. For thematic mapping, visual complexity is something that we try to "overcome" through generalization and simplification. The goal of reference mapping is to jam-pack the map with information, while establishing a clear visual hierarchy within this information density for as legible of map reading as possible. Terrain adds to this complexity, while simultaneously enhancing realism. As such, developing a clear intellectual and visual hierarchy is crucial.

Directions

Cartographers utilize symbol and type specifications or specs to develop, record, and share *intellectual hierarchies*. Spec sheets translate intellectual hierarchies into graphic elements that support a *visual hierarchy* on the map page. Cartographers return to spec sheets and make edits throughout the design process.

Task 1

Download the *Spec Sheet* file from Canvas. Pick one terrain map submitted to the course's Object discussion board. Take a screenshot of the map. Using the *Spec Sheet* table, deconstruct or break down the terrain map into it's core components and feature layers. In other words, what would the map's layer structure look like in Adobe Illustrator? Rank each layer in the visual hierarchy (i.e. which features rise to figure or ground) and record the visual variables (i.e. hue, value, size, shape, texture, etc.) used to reinforce the intellectual hierarchy.

Don't forget about labels and label hierarchies!

Task 2

Complete a second spec sheet for your Lab 2 Terrain map that incorporates the following features: *route, terrain, land cover, cities on route, other cities, political*

boundaries (admin 0 and 1), rivers, lakes, bathymetry, physical features, etc. Propose a preliminary intellectual hierarchy and design plan. Which features do you want to rise to figure or ground? How might you develop that hierarchy graphically?

Outcome

To receive full credit for this lecture activity, submit the following:

1. a screenshot of the terrain map you used in Task 1
2. the Spec Sheet for Task 1
3. the Spec Sheet for Task 2