

## [The Social Lives of Maps: A Special Issue of the Material Culture Review/Revue de la culture matérielle](#)

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Type:

Call for Papers

New Brunswick,

Date:

June 1, 2021

Subject Fields:

Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Cultural History / Studies, Digital Humanities, Geography, Historic Preservation

### ***The Social Lives of Maps: A Special Issue of the *Material Culture Review/Revue de la culture matérielle****

As Bill Brown and Arjun Appadurai have observed, the biographical lives of things inform us about not only a thing's existence, from its creation until its demise, as well as how it has been used, valued, and commoditized. They also inform us about human interaction with things in ways that can allow us to understand the experiences of marginalized and unexpected interlocutors of a thing's existence.

Maps as documents have complex lives. In some ways, maps might be considered eternal in that they are subject to revision and these updates comprise moments or stages of their life spans as living documents. In others, maps live short lives when inserted into books that get destroyed, deemed out of date, grow ragged and decrepit, or end up torn out of the book altogether and introduced into entirely new vertical contexts as wall maps.

Maps are everyday objects, but they are also highly esteemed and valued as antiques, rarified and conserved in the special collections of archives, libraries, and museums who catalogue their lives or provenance. Maps experience in this sense class and privilege much the way that humans do, which gives us pause to consider whether other areas of identity are experienced by maps as well.

Contemporary mapping platforms such as Google Maps offer entanglements with our own lives; they collect data about our movements, desires, and interactions, and attempt to interact with us through these connected nodes. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, and responsive software designed to interact with humans

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increasingly make maps living interactions that adapt to and engage directly with us. Finding ourselves on an analogue, paper map offers a similar function in that humans consistently consult the map to both find and see themselves through it.

This special issue engages with any aspect of the social lives of maps in any way that underlines this material object's lifespan. Scholars from any discipline are invited to contribute to this interdisciplinary issue.

Proposals should include a 250-word abstract (title, brief summary of the theoretical or critical frame for the article, and a summary of its conclusions) and a 100-word biography sent to the guest editor, Dr. Lauren Beck ([lbeck@mta.ca](mailto:lbeck@mta.ca)) by June 1, 2021. Full-length articles prepared in English or in French will comprise 6,000-8,000 words, inclusive of notes and bibliography, and closely follow the journal's [style guide](#).

Once proposals are accepted, full-length articles will be due by January 2022. The peer review process will take about six months and the completed issue will be published in November of 2022.

Contact Email:

[lbeck@mta.ca](mailto:lbeck@mta.ca)

URL:

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