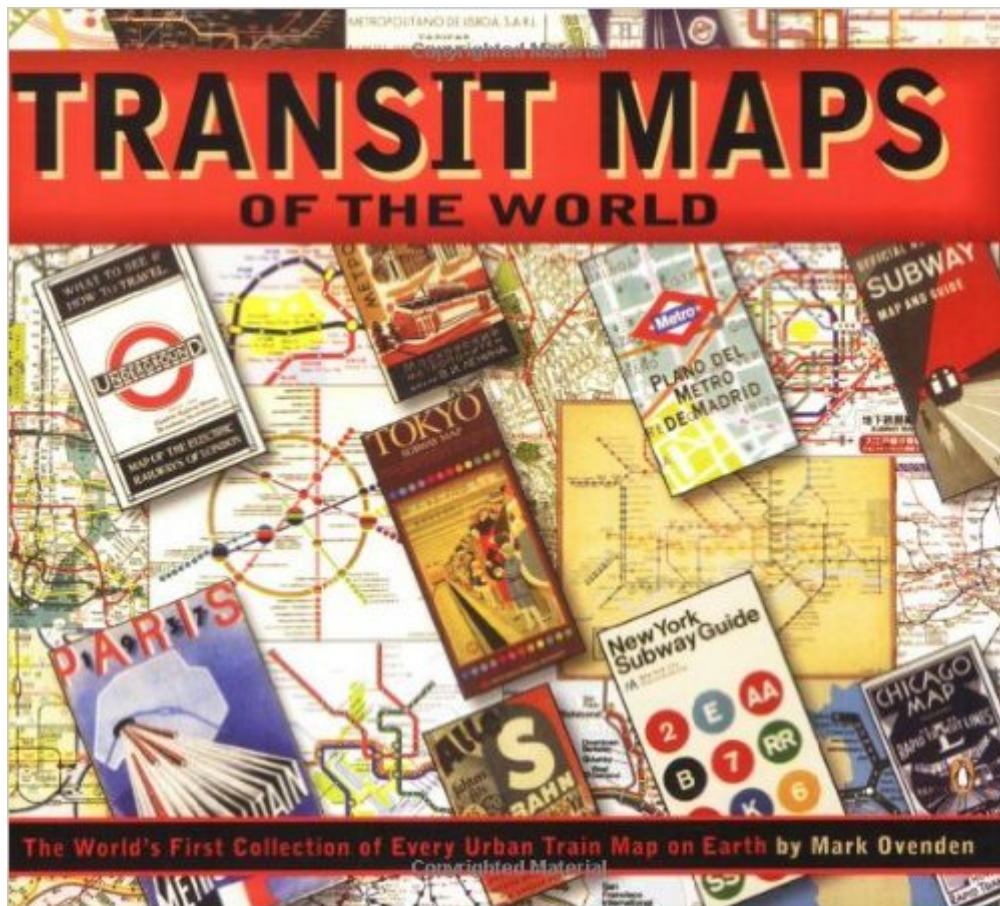


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Transit Maps Of The World: The World's First Collection Of Every Urban Train Map On Earth



Synopsis

Transit Maps of the World is the first and only comprehensive collection of historic and current maps of every rapid-transit system on earth. Using glorious, colorful graphics, Mark Ovenden traces the history of mass transit-including rare and historic maps, diagrams, and photographs, some available for the first time since their original publication. Transit Maps is the graphic designer's new bible, the transport enthusiast's dream collection, and a coffee-table essential for everyone who's ever traveled in a city.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you're like me, and enjoy poring over maps, you'll find this book a treat. If all the book had were reproductions of current urban rail maps, it would be worth at least 4 stars. But there's much more. There is a short history of urban rail from its earliest days, and then you have maps and text for about 200 cities around the world. You get narratives on the history of each system, but the emphasis is on the evolution of the transit maps themselves. For some cities, up to about 20 maps are reproduced, and some of these date back to the 19th century. There's a wonderful sense of the conflict between having maps that are aesthetically pleasing and maps that are pleasing to someone trying to find their way around. The book is divided into 6 zones (rather than chapters), with the distinction based primarily on the evolution of the maps: zone 1: 8 cities, 4 pages per city. Example: Paris, 17 maps dating back to 1900. zone 2: 15 cities, 2 pages per city. Example: Boston, 5 maps dating back to 1926. zone 3: 28 cities, 1 page per city. Amsterdam, 4 maps. zone 4: 16 cities, 2 cities per page, usually 1-2 maps per city. zone 5: 18 cities, 1-3 cities per page, mostly 1 map per

city.zone 6: 140? cities, about 12 cities per page, often without maps, very short narratives. The one problem you'll have is that many of the original maps were very large, and so when the transit map of Greater New York is faithfully reduced to two-thirds of a page in the book, you'll either need remarkable eyesight or a very strong magnifying glass to make out details. But the book is not intended as a catch-all way to actually find your way around, but rather as a paean to maps--you're intended to enjoy looking at the maps, not using them for transit purposes. A real delight!

A timely update to the first edition in 2003 with a new Zone: 6, listing all the latest and proposed subway systems around the globe. This extra Zone now includes hybrids like tram-trains, monorail or light rail and they all need maps. The other five Zones in the original have had their contents revised also. I think the beauty of the book is in looking at the way various transit companies have approached the problem of communicating (sometimes complex) information in a simple way for passengers yet each map has its unique points. The book's authors rightly trace the origins of the modern designed transit map to London Transport's Harry Beck. His genius was to discard the geographic location of stations and have route lines as either vertical, horizontal or at forty-five degrees. It's amazing to see how many maps of the dozens in the book still follow this general principal. However, creating a map that might look graphically stunning is not always enough. New York's MTA got Massimo Vignelli to design their map and it looks a visual treat but passengers weren't impressed and found it confusing so the MTA revised it. Vignelli's 1979 map and the latest 2007 MTA one are shown together on a spread in the book, two maps with the same information yet looking so different. This update has a few more train and station photos to fill the space that was frequently left blank in the first edition and there is a nice touch with a spread near the back that includes some fantasy maps. If I have a fault with the book it is that in the new Zone 6 section many of the maps are so small that I don't think they were worth including. I think it's worth pointing out that Transit Maps is not designed as a reference guide for travelers to cities around the world but as a celebration of the beauty that is inherent in these colorful diagrams.

As you can tell from the title, I was drawn to this book from two of my interests. This book is great! It gives samples of current and historical maps from transit systems all over the world, and it is a treat to look at. I have only two minor faults to find -- not enough to detract from the 5-star rating: 1. some of the maps are reproduced too small (I wish he had made the 1911 Brooklyn elevated map full page size, for example) or too dark (a Chicago transit map from the late 1940s is very hard to read) and 2. (very much my own personal taste) I wish he had included some historical maps from

Philadelphia (he only has a current map of that city, one of my favorites). One thing that does seem a bit strange: Although it is no surprise that the author, a native of London, writes in British English, it is rather odd that he seems to find it necessary to translate the *names* of American transit companies into British English, changing "transportation" to "transport" and "railroad" to "railway." Most people would, I think, leave the official names alone! I hope the author reads this comment so he might be able to take it into account if he comes out with a revised edition -- I know this one has already been revised from the original.

If you are a fan of rail transit systems, cartography, or functional graphic design, then this book is for you. It contains very up to date images of all of the greatest transit maps in the world. It also provides quite a bit of historical insight for the larger systems. The only thing I think that would improve this book is if it were in a larger format. Then you could actually appreciate the maps even more. Considering some of the maps illustrated are displayed 6 feet high on subway station walls, any extra size bigger they could print this book, the better.

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