

Barbara Bartz Petchenik

Barbara Bartz Petchenik (1939–1992) was a pioneer in the world of cartography. From 1965 to 1987, she conducted research and wrote more than a dozen articles and reports about a topic that was of considerable interest to her throughout her life: maps and atlases for children. For her contribution to this field, the International Cartographic Association (ICA) named the Barbara Petchenik Children's World Map Competition in her honor in 1993.

Barbara Bartz was born on August 17, 1939, in rural northern Wisconsin. Her family was well established and highly respected in the community. She grew up in a secure and nurturing environment that gave her the necessary self confidence to achieve. By the time she was in high school, "the Bartz girls" (Barbara and her seven cousins – there were very few boys in the family) were recognized as achievers and leaders, both academically and socially. Though, in Barbara's words, her achievement was "more the former than the latter," as she "was never a prom queen."

In 1961, Barbara obtained a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with a major in chemistry and a minor in English. She spent the following year working at the university as a Geography instructor, and in September 1961 served as the founding "map librarian" of the university's New Map and Air Photo Library. In 1962, she was awarded a National Defense Education Act Fellowship and entered the graduate program at the university. She intended to obtain a PhD in Physical Geography, concentrating on soils, with the ultimate goal of teaching at the university level. However, after earning her master's degree in 1964, she became a cartographic editor with the Field Enterprises Education Corporation in Chicago. During her time there, she designed, conducted, and analyzed the research needed to produce maps and other material for the nine-to-fourteen-year-old audience of the *World Book Encyclopedia*.

In 1970, after earning her PhD, Barbara accepted a five-year position at the Newberry Library as cartographic editor. Here, she planned, designed, and produced the *Atlas of Early American History* with editor-in-chief Lester Cappon and a staff of historians. From 1975 until her death in 1992, she served as the senior sales representative of cartographic services for the R. R. Donnelly and Sons Company. In her writing, she continued to pursue her interest in education.

Barbara wrote several articles and reports about maps for children from 1970 to 1987. Her work explored fundamental aspects of atlases for children by informally considering particular atlases. She thoughtfully observed

Maps are mostly far too complex to “learn” at one or even many glances. The only way to try to make sure that children leave school with some idea of the relative shapes and sizes and arrangements of labeled earth areas and features is to provide opportunities for them to see and use these images (maps) on a highly repetitive and (I happen to prefer) structured basis.

(From: Fundamental considerations about atlases for children. 1987. Cartographica 24:16–23.)

Barbara did much of her research about maps for children during her tenure with Field Enterprises. During the process of designing maps for the *World Book Encyclopedia*, she collected empirical evidence on which types of maps children preferred and could most easily understand, and used this evidence as a basis for her map design. She interviewed a thousand elementary school children and invited them to interpret alternative styles of small-scale maps. From this work, she identified difficulties children had with the interpretation of scale, coordinates, symbology, and typography. Her research showed that children valued clarity in cartography and liked less-cluttered maps with more clear spaces. She noted that although teachers claimed map use was an important skill, children were rarely taught how maps worked. Above all, she recognized that children are a large and important group of map consumers, that they do not approach maps in the same way as adults, and that their distinct perspectives should be taken into account in the process of map design. The articles and research publications in the bibliography that follows provide opportunities to learn more about her philosophy on cartography, especially as it relates to children.

Barbara was active in many professional organizations, including the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping's (ACSM) American Cartographic Association, the Association of American Geographers, the Society of Automotive Engineers, and the International Cartographic Association. She also served as a member of the editorial board of *The American Cartographer*. Through her efforts, the ACSM Map Design Competition began giving awards for student-designed maps. She served as a member of the U.S. National Committee to the International Cartographic Association. She participated in several ICA activities over the years, and in 1991 at the General Assembly in Bournemouth, England, she was the first woman to be elected vice president of the ICA.

Over the nearly twenty years that I knew Barbara, I was always impressed by her intelligence and good humor. We enjoyed a lively camaraderie over the years. Her presence, scholarly contributions, and spirited intellectual discussions have been and will continue to be missed. The Barbara Petchenik Children's World Map Competition is a fitting way of keeping her alive in our memories.

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