



Letters to the Editor

Sat-nav won't replace paper maps

Sir, I read the article regarding the lost art of map reading (Aug 30) with great interest. Lovell Johns has been providing mapping services and interactive mapping to the publishing industry for more than 40 years. Over the past ten years we have seen a huge shift in the services that publishers are looking for, from film or static files for artwork to much more sophisticated digital.

Sat-navs have been the key change in mapping formats. When it's time to get moving, drivers are much more likely to check their route on a computer or let their sat-nav do the work, rather than pull out a paper map. Part of this could be because there is unease with map reading, not being helped by the neglect of teaching geography and mapping skills at school.

As in-car navigation units become more popular and the prevalence of free online mapping services increases, paper maps are becoming less popular. It is no coincidence that road atlas sales have steadily declined over the past two years.

However, I very much doubt that paper maps will disappear from the shelves completely. Sat-navs are currently not infallible; you only have to listen to the news to hear stories about lorries being directed down narrow lanes and cars into rivers. Walkers will still use their dog-eared maps and sailors their navigational charts. Also, you can still buy an old-fashioned British

Isles atlas for as little as £3.99 and I'm sure that paper maps will still be sold for years to come.

Although it's possible that in the future children may no longer ever have to use an atlas or foldout map, I'm sure they still will.

DAVID STEPHENS
Managing Director, Lovell Johns

Sir, A built-in and very expensive sat-nav system purchased with a new car only 12 months ago is designed to accept only the first four characters of a postal code. This will get you to perhaps within eight miles of a rural destination, something of which the manufacturers seem very

proud.

Having recently failed to pinpoint a house in Shropshire clearly marked on the Ordnance Survey map, my wife and I are back to using a car atlas and reliving the good old days of arriving late at a destination not speaking.

Technical progress indeed.

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