Martin Woods, *Where are Our Boys? How newsmaps won the Great War*


*Where are Our Boys: How Newsmaps Won the Great War*, by Martin Woods, has a specific goal: to create a space to read about World War I as if you were in Australia experiencing it at the time. The book does not tackle all sides of the history or provide a complete understanding of the war. Instead, it is a deep dive into a long-gone media landscape where newspapers are at the technological forefront and a major part of the war news industry. Although *Where are Our Boys?* might be mistaken for a coffee table book because of its exceptional print quality and abundance of beautiful old maps, you will undoubtedly get swept up in a milieu of propaganda, nationalism, and war.

Woods sets the stage for the Australian appetite for ‘newsmaps’ with a general history of maps as tools of war. He begins with Ptolemy and fast-forwards to the early 1900s when Australia had a map-oriented, geographically literate society in need of a national identity. Newspapers brought the world to Australia through world events and conflicts like the South African War, and also introduced Australia to the world as part of the imperial family. Concurrently, advances in communications technology facilitated a massive expansion in the reach and availability of print media. Newspaper circulation was growing as was consumption of war maps and stories. It is no surprise that by 1914, when the Great War officially began, both publisher and reader embraced the use of maps in newspapers – newsmaps – for storytelling.

Woods describes the build up to the war in Australia. More propaganda and nationalistic materials began seeping into society. For example, ‘serio-comics’, political commentary in comic-map form, depicted tensions in Europe and Boy Scout materials “reflected the preoccupation with defending the Empire and the hope that the young Scout would ‘some day … shoulder guns in your defense and for his country’s sake’” (p.63). When Britain formally declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, the war news industry ramped up quickly and infused the culture with even more commercial war geography. War maps replaced community announcements on billboards and buildings. Businesses and newspapers released war maps. Some were free or came with small purchases. Maps were used in businesses, schools, pubs, and homes to study the progress of the war. At the same time, censorship rules required publishers to obscure facts and withhold details. Readers were kept at arm’s length yet saturated with maps that, at times, glossed over Allied losses and embellished accomplishments. This portion of the book is particularly thorough and the inventory of media artifacts Woods used to tell the story is extensive and compelling.

Australian troops began mobilizing in December 1914. The ‘theatre of war’ during this time was heavily focused on Europe, yet the newly drafted soldiers were sent to Egypt. For months their whereabouts were undisclosed to loved ones back home. Woods’ narrative and the collection of news stories and newsmaps from this period read with a palpable angst. Very few of the maps littering the Australian landscape depicted the Gallipoli campaign and when they did, they were riddled with errors. The lack of information from newspapers about the location and status of ‘our boys’ contrasted the deep thirst to follow the war battle by battle as had become customary. In this environment, the boys’ time spent in Egypt became a ‘righteous mission’ with a moral underpinning that virtually ensured success. A sense of national identity continued to grow.

The next phases of war required publishers to further ramp up propaganda. Woods describes a “communal act of sharing the narrative” (p.175) that infused the Australian zeitgeist writ large. It kept the war machine and the publishers who depended on it in good business. Producing work about the war became a moral obligation to the country. Publications regarding the war expanded to include things like first-hand accounts, field notes and war diaries. There were novels, sheet music, and
writings for children like ‘Essays for Boys and Girls: A First Guide Toward the Study of the War’. Animated war maps showed up in film reels for the first time.

The drumbeat for war went on long after Australians began to experience the losses and sadness. Publishers printed optimistic headlines alongside lists of fallen soldiers. They emphasized successes while obscuring losses and worked against a dwindling supply of recruits. Going away gifts like fountain pens and razors were advertised to young women who might be sending a soldier off to war.

Woods closes with the aftermath of the Great War. When peace was finally announced, the impulse to map continued. Newly published maps depicted the new Europe and an entire industry sprung out of commemoration and international tourism visiting battlegrounds. This portion of the book was brief, and I wanted to see more media examples from after the war.

Woods beautifully weaves newspapers and newsmaps into this rich history too often lost to textbooks. His thorough use of newspapers and maps on every page make this book a valuable resource. The print quality is exceptional and with good eyes or a magnifying glass, all the reprinted news articles and front-page splashes are legible. You will spend hours poring over old articles and maps. This visually stunning book offers an interesting new view of an old topic and is highly recommended.

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This colourful booklet is a succinct summary of the 14 official state geological maps of Western Australia, in chronological order from the 1894 Harry Page Woodward map to the 2015 Geological Map of Western Australia. The book begins with an initial text section describing the early geological mapping of the state before the Geological Survey of WA was established. Then there are two-page layouts with a page-size reduction of the map on the right side and a textual description on the left. The reproductions are excellent, considering the size of the page, and each includes the actual dimensions of the original map. The descriptions are well-written. They include the geologists and compilers and a short statement on the changes and innovations of each new edition of the state map. Geological cross sections and other colourful bands cover the top and bottom of each text page. Some anecdotes about the authors of the maps enliven the text.

The final section covers the 2015 state geological map. It has a longer description, covering the reinterpretations of the geology, changes in the legend, and the digital data behind the map. A bibliography follows to provide the reader with the sources and additional background on the changing interpretation of West Australia geology as reflected in the maps.

This booklet is not just a history of the Geological Map of Western Australia. It’s a celebration of the accomplishment of numerous geologists, compilers, and the Survey itself over the course of over 100 years.

The histories of national and state geological surveys have often been published as text-centred books, for example History and role of government geological surveys in Australia (R.K. Johns,