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The Evolution of Cave Mapping and Cartography

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Abstract

“Does it go?” Is the initial question that has inspired many a cave explorer to push the extent of a cave system. But the answer only brings more questions...how far, how long, how deep does it go? During the exploration process, as a cave system reveals its complexity, the questions also change – what is the cave’s relationship to the surface, and to surrounding caves? What are the features and obstacles that the cave contains? Those involved in cave exploration know that the only way to answer these questions is with systematic documentation in the form of cave and surface surveys, detailed notes and observations and ultimately cave maps. A cave map not only portrays the geography of a cave, but also shows the location of features within the cave, and illustrates the relationship of a cave other caves and to the surface topography. The basic data that needs to be collected in order to produce a cave map has not changed much since the advent of cave survey and cartography. However, the evolution of survey and computer technologies has changed how caves are mapped and how cave maps are produced. This presentation will provide an overview on the evolution and development of cave mapping and cartography.