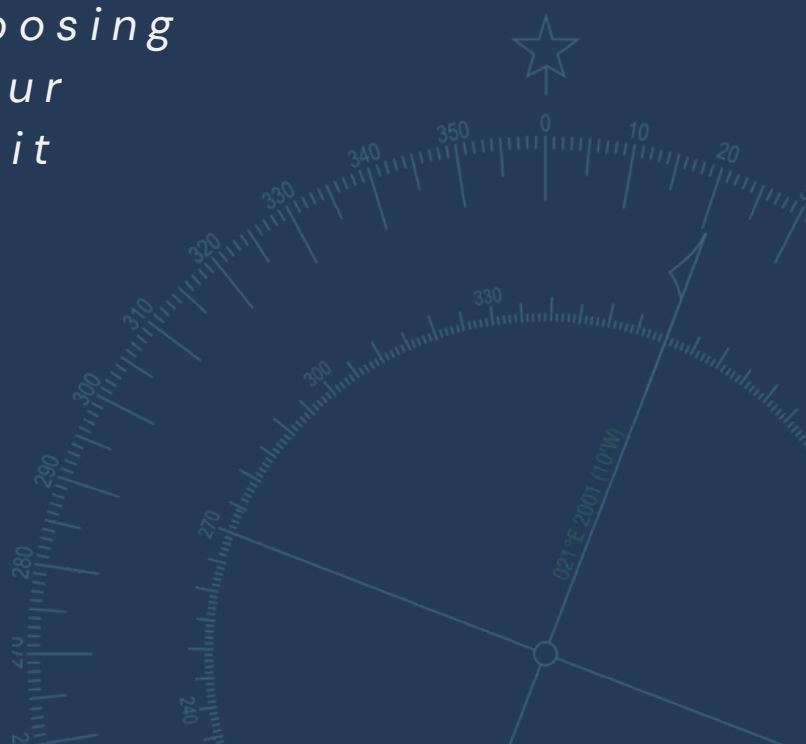
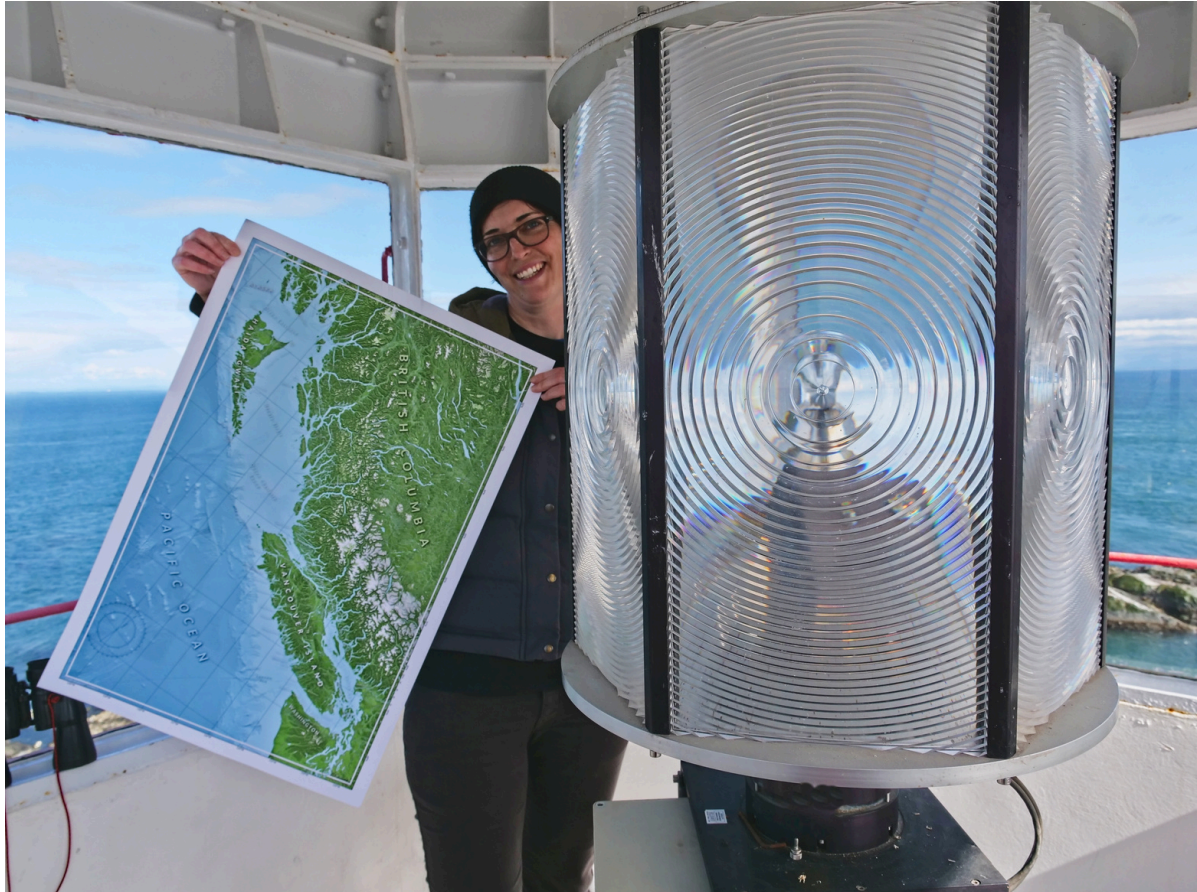


# YOU DON'T NEED TO BE TECHNICAL:

How to Leverage the Power  
of Maps in Your Work

*A short guide to choosing  
the right map for your  
work and asking for it  
confidently.*





Welcome to the world of mapping and spatial analysis. I believe it's my job to show you how to leverage the power of maps to help move you work forward. I want you to make decisions with with better information and crazy speed.

Let's do this!

*Courtney Edwards*



[Geospatial Consulting.](#)



[Online Map Shop](#)

*{PS: In case that photo makes no sense to you, I'm standing at the top of a lighthouse, that's a Fresnel lens.*

**CDEdwards Mapping**

# IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE MISSING SOMETHING, YOU PROBABLY ARE.

{DON'T PANIC}



Maybe this sounds familiar:

- Too many inputs, no clear picture.
- Meetings that drift into the weeds.
- Decisions made in the dark.
- Stakeholders who nod... but don't really "get it."

You suspect maps could help.

But you don't have the technical training.

And you're not sure where to start.

This guide is for you.

It won't teach you GIS.

It will teach you how to think about maps so you can use them in your work.

# MOST MAPS ARE DECORATION OR DISTRACTION.

## YOU NEED MAPS THAT WORK.

Most organizations use maps as decoration or documentation. They might look ok in reports, but they don't help clarify decisions.

A map that works is different.  
It's a map with a job to do.

It's designed backwards from:

- the decision you're making
- the people in the room
- and where the map will be used.

Before you think about software or data,  
ask:

“

**What job do we need this map to do?**



# THE ONE QUESTION EVERY USEFUL MAP MUST ANSWER

Every useful map can finish this one sentence:

This map's job is to...

In practice, almost every map that works does one of three jobs:

- **Shared surface**
  - Help everyone see the same starting picture.
- **Persuasion**
  - Make a case. Push an agenda. Win support.
- **Logistics**
  - Show what's where for working out in the real world.

Once you know the job,  
you can stop asking for "a map"  
and start asking for the right kind of map.

## MAP TYPE 1:

# SHARED SURFACE

GET EVERYONE ON THE SAME PAGE.

Use a shared surface map when:

- Everyone has their own mental picture.
- There are lots of inputs and reports.
- Meetings feel political and fuzzy.

A shared surface map's job is simple:

**Help everyone see the same starting state.**

It:

- Pulls scattered info into one clear picture.
- Shows overlaps, gaps, and patterns.
- Makes it easier to say, "Yes, this is what we're dealing with."

Success looks like:

- Faster agreement on what's true
- ...so you can argue about what to do next.

## MAP TYPE 2:

# PERSUASION

**MAKE YOUR CASE IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE.**

Use a persuasion map when:

- You need funding, approval, or support.
- You're making a case to leadership or the public.
- You want a risk or opportunity to finally land.

A persuasion map's job is to:

**Make one story or conclusion feel obvious.**

It:

- Selects and emphasizes on purpose.
- Uses color, scale, and framing to focus attention.
- Makes people say, "Oh. I see it now."

Success looks like:

- People moving from "I don't get it" to "Okay, now I understand why this matters."

## MAP TYPE 3:

# LOGISTICS

**GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO THE RIGHT PLACE.**

Use a logistics map when:

- You're planning or running field work.
- You're coordinating routes, sites, or assets.
- You need fewer missed stops and fewer "where is that again?" moments.

A logistics map's job is:

**Show what's where so work happens smoothly.**

It:

- Shows routes, waypoints, and coverage.
- Helps crews see where to go next.
- Works on a screen, printout, or GPS device.

Success looks like:

- Fewer missed sites.
- Less back-tracking.
- Fewer frantic calls asking for clarification.
- Clear options for when plans change.

# HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT MAP

IN 3 QUESTIONS.

Before you ask anyone for a map, ask yourself:

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## 01 What decision or conversation is this map for?

Write one sentence starting with:

“This map is for helping us decide / discuss...”

---

## 02 Which job fits best?

- Shared surface
- Persuasion
- Logistics

---

## 03 The people who will use this map are:

- New to the topic
  - Aware of the topic
- 

You don't need to know the software.  
You just need to answer these questions  
then ask for a map that works for that job.

**BONUS**

**WHEN YOU ASK FOR A MAP**  
include this information too:

**Delivery format and dimensions:**

Printed/Digital

Report, Slide deck, Poster, Webmap, Other

**Timeline:** for the Draft and Final Version

**Who to include on the emails** for review

**Any particular datasets**

**Map Title + any special language in legend**

**Disclaimer + Citations**

**Logos + branding**

---

Hand pg 7+8 to any mapping person or contractor  
and you're more than halfway to a map that works.

*{And you'll seriously cut down on the number of emails  
you have to send too!}*

# YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE "THE MAP PERSON."



You don't need to:

- Learn GIS software.
- Memorize projections.
- Know every data source.

You just need to:

- Know the decision.
- Choose the map's job  
(shared surface, persuasion, or logistics).
- Describe who will use it and where.

That's it.

Your job is to know how to leverage the power of maps.  
The technical work can be done for you.

# READY TO DESIGN A MAP THAT DOES SOME HEAVY LIFTING?

If you can see how maps could help but don't feel confident defining or commissioning the right one, you don't have to figure it out alone.

Book a call and bring one real project.

You'll walk away with:

- One clearly defined map scope for that project (job, users, and context nailed down)
- A short written brief you can hand to any GIS person

No mapping or GIS skills required.

Just your project, your goals, and a willingness to try something better than whatever you're doing right now.

[work.cdwards.com](https://work.cdwards.com)

{Calendar Link is  
on my website}

Questions?

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