

REFLECTIONS III: IMPACTS

THE ART OF EARTH-BUILDING: PLACING RELIEF MODELS IN THE CULTURE OF MODERN GEOGRAPHY

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Our talk takes the physical relief model as its principal object of concern, variously considered as a catalyst for geographical knowledge production, scientific education and public communication. Most versions of geography's intellectual history give primacy to ideas and theories conveyed by the written word. Recent scholarship has supplemented these approaches with a focus on the embodied practices of geography, notably how disciplinary knowledge is forged, performed and contested through fieldwork, and how the field-class operates as a landmark event in undergraduate degree studies. A further approach has considered the discipline's material culture. While recent work has studied geographical instruments and the objects of exploration, the physical relief model remains largely under-examined. Once a staple of geographical teaching and learning, of explanation and experimentation, the relief model demands further historiographical consideration. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it developed alongside a repertoire of techniques for diagrammatic, photographic and cartographic reproduction. As an educational and instructional aid models have been differently deployed: to illustrate the emergence (and denudation) of surface landforms; to explain the nature of geophysical, hydrological, fluvial and coastal processes; to reveal subsurface geological structures; and, to show differing kinds of

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human response to environmental setting. Drawing on research inquiries from an AHRC-funded PhD studentship undertaken in collaboration with RGS-IBG, our talk will be supported by a digital display of relief models held in the Society's collections. The display models were the original work of sculptor-artist Mr. T. Bayley, commissioned specifically for the purposes of photo-illustrating *The Earth's Crust: A New Approach to Physical Geography and Geology* (1951), a general interest book by Sir L. Dudley Stamp (RGS President, 1964-6). We will use the story of the book's provenance and production to, briefly, explore the art of earth-building, and the place of the relief model in changing disciplinary cultures.

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