

19. International Atlas Days – April 4-6, 2025, Zentralbibliothek Zürich

The Swiss Atlas Cartography – Precision and Innovation between Snow and Rocks



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Swiss cartography looks back on a long history: the first comprehensive map of Switzerland appeared in 1495/97 from the pen of the Zurich city doctor Konrad Türist, the first printed map on this basis, "Tabula nova Helvetiorum", appeared as plate 17 of the Strasbourg Ptolemy edition of 1513. (Earlier depictions of places and parts of Switzerland date back to the Tabula Peutingeriana and can also be found, for example, on the Ebstorf world map, which was unfortunately destroyed in the Second World War.) The first national atlas (of Switzerland and in general) must be considered to be the maps by Johannes Stumpf, which appeared in 1547/48 in the "Chronik Gemeiner loblicher Eydgnoschafft Stetten, Landen und Völckeren thaaten beschreybung" and went through several editions as an atlas from 1548 onwards.

The development of Swiss cartography was determined on the one hand by the circumstances of the time (such as internal and external conflicts, development of administration, development of tourism), but on the other hand it was also significantly influenced by the special geographical location. When cartographers tried to map the mountains, they were forced to develop or quickly adapt new forms of terrain representation in order to achieve the precision required by the mountainous surface of the country. In particular, the "Dufour Map" as the first official map of Switzerland (1845-1864) and the "Siegfried Atlas" (from 1870) should be mentioned here as milestones in the accuracy of mountain representation and artistic design.

In parallel to official cartography, private publishers (Hallwag, Kümmerly & Frey, Orell Füssli) also made significant achievements in the areas of school, tourism and road maps, which contributed significantly to the international reputation of Swiss cartography.

As part of the Atlas Days, we will reconstruct some of these developments in lectures and by inspecting the maps in detail. Due to the special nature of Swiss cartography, the scope of the event will not only include the private publishers of the 19th and 20th centuries, as has been the case in previous events, but will also examine aspects of early private cartography and official cartography.

A guided tour of the history of maps in the Swiss National Museum rounds off the program. Among other things, the original copper plates of the Dufour map and the St. Gallen globe, which is also well-known beyond the country's borders, can be viewed there.

The International Atlas Days are aimed at interested parties, experts and collectors of atlases with a focus on the 19th and 20th centuries. Cartographic and bibliophile aspects are considered in equal measure.