

Rearranging the cities into a much more visually pleasing arrangement

 devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20081113-01

November 13, 2008



Raymond Chen

My friend the seventh grade teacher gave an assignment wherein students were to produce a map of the state of Washington with various required elements, among them, a selection of major cities in the state. Some students failed to understand that the purpose of a map is to represent where the cities are and not to dictate to the cities where they should be, for they moved the cities around in strange ways.

- Some students put Port Angeles 100 miles inland nowhere near any body of water. Psst, it's a port. Ports are not as effective when they are 100 miles inland.
- Other students took the idea of a port too far and put Port Angeles 100 miles out to sea. This sort of misses out the other half of being a port, which is being *connected to land*.
- But the winners of the *Unclear on the concept* award are the students who moved the cities around. "All these dots looked all crooked and stuff, so I moved them around to make a straight line. Was that wrong?"

Moving the dots around to make a more visually pleasing arrangement might work if you were designing, say, a transit map, where the topology of the connections is the important thing rather than their physical arrangement in space. But this wasn't one of those times.

Bonus chatter: Another student decided to embellish the map by coloring everything outside the boundaries of the state in blue. Psst, the color blue has special meaning in maps. Washington is not an island.



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