

## Re: Question

**Source:** <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.archaeology/2004-07/1328.html>

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**From:** Eric Stevens ([eric.stevens\\_at\\_sum.co.nz](mailto:eric.stevens_at_sum.co.nz))

**Date:** 07/16/04

Date: Fri, 16 Jul 2004 13:51:10 +1200

On Wed, 14 Jul 2004 21:57:57 GMT, Martyn Harrison  
<[nospam@spammers.of.the.world.unite](mailto:nospam@spammers.of.the.world.unite)> wrote:

>  
><http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/sa/SAIRC/1997/50.html>  
>  
>  
>Apparently on date Wed, 14 Jul 2004 08:34:57 GMT, "David B"  
><[tronospamchos@tesco.net](mailto:tronospamchos@tesco.net)> said:  
>  
>>George wrote in message <[9b937279.0407131655.673d380@posting.google.com](mailto:9b937279.0407131655.673d380@posting.google.com)>...  
>>>  
>>>[A link to Mercator's 1569 World map would be nice here, but I  
>>>couldn't find one on the web.]  
>>  
>>You mean you haven't checked the Primesauce site recently?  
>><http://www.trochos.plus.com/primesauce/later.htm#84>  
>  
>On this subject, I'm under the impression that in 1500, Europeans had access to  
>fairly sophisticated geometric understanding and that a number of ways of  
>representing a curved geography on a flat map would have been possible,  
>available for discussion, and some level of choosing a preferred projection  
>could have been achieved.  
>  
>This assumes they understood the earth to be rotund, maps flat, and so forth,  
>plus some were intelligent enough to realise how the various projections worked  
>in practice.  
>  
>What I'm getting at is the question of whether Mercator projection was actually  
>a new idea as such, or just an existing idea popularised via that name. I  
>reckon the conical projection does have some real advantages in estimating  
>distance within a northern hemisphere ocean voyage such as an Atlantic  
>crossing. In that sense, I'm wondering whether Mercator was something nobody  
>had thought of (I find this rather unlikely, although obviously it may be the  
>way of it), or whether it was adopted for some reason (and what reasons those  
>might be.)  
>  
>The obvious thing is it reflects an entire globe moderately well and is

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>*extremely easy to map lat and long into a rectangular space.*

>

>

The important thing to Mercator was that on his projection a Rhumb line could be projected as straight. The Mercator projection is the only one which allows this.

Eric Stevens