Greetings, readers…
Twenty years ago we began to develop the program for an ambitious new undertaking at Portland State University, the Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies. One of the first things we learned was that few in the metropolitan region had a sense of the whole place. We were all familiar with the parts of the region we frequented, but beyond that, it was all kind of a blur.

About a year or so later, we were fortunate to be joined by Dr. Craig Wollner. Craig, a historian and student of many things northwest, came on board to help grow the program. One of the first projects we talked about was the creation of a new magazine, a flagship publication that would be aimed at a general audience and would serve as a vehicle for helping us all learn more about our region and its prospects.

The first question soon became what to call this new publication. It couldn’t be named after a place, because our region had too many places. We wanted it to stand out. In the end, we settled on Metroscape, a marriage of metropolitan and landscape, two themes that mattered to all that we were engaged in. In this “word” we saw the built and the natural, urban and rural, city and suburb, and historical and contemporary. We believed that understanding and developing a shared sense of our metroscape would ultimately contribute to the prospects for the region itself.

The subtitle for this publication would be “An Atlas and Mirror of the Portland Metropolitan Region.” What makes this region a place? What separates us? What unites us? Can we better understand the “forest” containing all these “trees?” These would be the big questions that would define Metroscape, and in large part frame the work of the Institute.

In the fall of 1995, Volume 1, Number 1, hit the streets. For those keeping track, this was before the move to the web. Issues came out in hard copy, and it took us 6 months to put one out. Craig was the trail boss for the whole thing, and our first issue, appropriately, featured “A Sense of Place: The Identity of the Metroscape” by Craig himself. Other authors included Carl Abbott and Pam Hanes. Our very first “Periodic Atlas of the Metroscape” was produced by Ric Vrana, and featured maps helping to unpack the communities—geographic, racial, ethnic—of our region.

What you now see on your screen is the most recent in a continuous string of publications reaching back to the very origins of the Institute and its mission. Hopefully, it can continue to provide that occasional “aha moment” when the patterns that surround us suddenly take on new meaning and explanatory power. That was our hope almost 20 years ago, and it remains so today.

I am writing this because Craig Wollner is no longer with us. His death took him from us too soon. Sheila Martin and Meg Merrick, supported by a great group of committed Metroscapeists and the Board of the Institute, have kept the publication living and alive, investing it with the vision and energy needed for the next decades of its existence. Will it always be a “magazine?” Hard to say. The move to the web makes all kinds of things possible. Still, the fundamental role for a publication like this, to not assume that we are all on the same page despite choosing to live in the same place, continues. We hope you’ll be with us as Metroscape, like the region we cherish, takes its next steps.

Ethan Seltzer, Founding Director of IMS