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## Whitaker (1999): *Mapping and Naming the Moon*

(glossary entry)

### Description

[Ewen Whitaker's](#) 1999 [book](#) (reprinted as a paperback in 2003) is a comprehensive account of man's efforts to name and catalog the Moon's features from antiquity to the present day. It is richly illustrated with sample pages from most of the major maps and catalogs. Written by someone who has been continuously active in the field since 1955, it lies somewhere between a strictly historical account and a critique. In places, particularly in the discussion of what happened in the last half of the twentieth century, the author's strong personal views about what was correct practice (his own) versus wrong-headed approaches (most everyone else's) gets in the way of a clear and easily followed account of what actually happened. Nonetheless, it is certainly the most complete account of this subject currently available. The appendices provide useful lists of new names introduced in various catalogs. - [Jim Mosher](#)

- Chuck Wood note: Ewen's strong views were not just personal! In the early 1970s the IAU nomenclature committee was headed by a [solar astronomer](#) (the only place in the solar system without names!) who had a cavalier disregard for lunar nomenclature use and its history. There were so many poor decisions that NASA started a nomenclature advisory board made up of practicing lunar scientists (Ewen and I were members) to rectify the mistakes. I remember that [Dick Pike](#) of the USGS also wrote a stinging attack of the IAU decisions in Icarus. - [tychocrater](#) Jul 23, 2007

### Additional Information

- This is the best reference on lunar nomenclature. - [tychocrater](#)

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- Whitaker has written several other, briefer, accounts of the history of lunar names. For those interested in the history of the [IAU nomenclature](#), his historical introduction to [NASA RP-1097](#) is in many ways a clearer account and fills in some of the gaps that are hard to follow in *Mapping and Naming the Moon*. Whitaker also wrote a chapter on the early history of selenography in Michael Hoskin's *General History of Astronomy*.
- As an example of the occasional lapses in *Mapping and Naming the Moon*, NASA's carefully prepared Apollo-era catalog of named nearside features, [SP-241](#), of which Whitaker himself was a co-author, is nowhere mentioned; making it impossible for the reader to know the author's view of how that publication fits into the general scheme of things. What other major lunar mapping and cataloging efforts may be missing is unknown. [Rükl's](#) widely-consulted *Atlas* comes to mind – although listed among the general references, Rükl's maps do not appear to be described or mentioned in the text. Oddly, Whitaker's book lacks a simple chronological list of the maps it *does* include. Appendix II of [Wilkins and Moore](#) *does* contain such a list (through about 1960), and many of the maps mentioned there do not seem to be discussed in Whitaker's book.
- Likewise, there is no comprehensive index with which the reader can discover where a particular feature name is listed in the text. To determine if a particular feature is mentioned or not (and where) it is necessary to resort to a search with [Google books](#) , but it is unknown if that is reliable. Links to scanned copies of the Appendices listing the works in which primary nearside names were introduced (not all of which display in Google Books) can be found on this *Wiki's* [Researching Nomenclature Histories](#) page.
- Another serious omission is the absence of a simple tabulation of the name changes approved at each annual meeting of the IAU (something we have tried to supply [here](#)). Despite Whitaker's good intentions it is virtually impossible to track changes in the IAU nomenclature with any certainty using this book alone. The various appendices are very concerned with this, but they seem to list the names that appeared on a map only if it was the first appearance of the name and only if that name was not approved by the IAU at the time the map or catalog was published. But it is not a comprehensive list of such new name introductions, and the changes made in certain years are completely omitted.

One reading the book would be totally unaware of when the official spelling of **Walter** was changed to [Walther](#), or that such a change had even occurred. Likewise, one would not know that the modern name [Abbot](#) is a replacement for **Apollonius K** (something one can learn from *Section 1(g): Replacement Names (post-1972)* of [NASA RP-1097](#)), or where that name came from (it was approved in 1973, prior to the publication of [LTO-62D1](#), for which it served as the name). In this case, the approval date can be found on-line in the [IAU Planetary Gazetteer](#), but the name that was being replaced, and who proposed the replacement, is

not indicated there.

As it is, the origins of many names in the current IAU list, and when they were introduced, simply cannot be deduced from this book. While the mention of the source of a name in Whitaker adds to our understanding of the history of lunar nomenclature, the omission of a name simply means the reader will have to work it out on their own.

Note: *Appendix U* (p. 236) is headed "Additions to *NASA Catalogue of Lunar Nomenclature*, RP 1097". Unlike the other lists which give new names and changes introduced in a particular atlas or catalog, this a list of new names approved by the IAU at the 1985-1994 meetings, **after** the publication of *RP-1097*; and there is at least one typo: the crater which [Hédervári](#) replaced was **Amundsen A**, not [Amundsen](#). *RP-1097* actually includes as *Section 1(g)* a similar list of lettered craters that were promoted to full named status in 1972-1982. A similar list of promotions and changes appears in the back of [NASA SP-241](#), covering some of the years prior to 1972, but exactly which ones is not clear. Neither of these lists is reproduced in the present book, nor is there any systematic mention of most of the thousand or so name changes introduced by the IAU in the years between 1964 and 1985. Also, even for the few years it covers, *Appendix U* does not mention changes that did not involve introducing completely new names, nor does Whitaker always accept the IAU spellings. For example, the list does not mention the thirty or so rima, named for nearby craters, that were added in 1985; nor the nine that were dropped; and **Florensky** becomes **Florenskii**.

- Perhaps more seriously, Whitaker's book may give an incorrect impression of the certainty with which features can be identified on old maps. The depiction of crater shapes and positions on many old maps is highly ambiguous, yet only rarely does Whitaker place a "?" after his identifications. One example, of many, would be his certainty (in Appendix G, p. 214) that [Riccioli's Plutarchus](#) and **Seneca** were intended to be the same as the modern [Plutarch](#) and [Seneca](#). It is possible they are, and it is possible they are not. [Riccioli's Plutarchus](#) and **Seneca** are one of two pairs of craters that he places to the east of [Cleomedes](#). The northern pair, with the lower crater being labeled **Berosus**, are likely the modern [Berosus](#) and [Hahn](#) (with [Hahn](#) being called **Berosus** by Riccioli). The problem is that these are shown much closer to the limb, and much farther into the libration zone, than the southern pair, which Whitaker believes to be the modern [Seneca](#) and [Plutarch](#). This is, unfortunately, the reverse of the true situation: the modern [Seneca](#) and [Plutarch](#) are actually closer to the limb, and harder to see at unfavorable librations, than [Berosus](#) and [Hahn](#). If the [Berosus/Hahn](#) identification is correct, then perhaps Riccioli meant the southern pair to represent something closer to [Mare Crisium](#) (such as [Eimmart](#) and perhaps some ill-defined feature to its southeast)? Similar ambiguities and

contradictions exist with nearly all the hand-drawn pre-photographic charts, including the efforts of such later selenographers as [Neison, 1876](#), whose maps can be interpreted in many ways.

-  **Jim Mosher**

### Comment by Chuck Wood

Ewen Whitaker did not write the book Jim Mosher wants. As an author I am sympathetic to Ewen, for every book is a compromise between a universe of possibilities and a limited amount of pages, time and interest. I have not talked with Ewen about these wiki page comments (and he does not have Internet access) so I can not speak for him. However, I can speculate on a few of the issues Jim raises.

1. Not all atlases are described: Possibly because they did not contribute to nomenclature - both [SP-241](#) and [Rükl](#) are excellent depictions of official existing nomenclature but they do not expand it.
2. No comprehensive index: Yep - I've wished for one too. But I don't think Whitaker's goal was to explain the nomenclature history of each crater, but rather to describe nomenclature introduced on various maps.
3. Tabulation of name changes: This apparently wasn't one of Whitaker's goals, but it would be historically interesting.
4. Changes of individual names: Ewen's book isn't a history of every name change, but of the larger scale processes and forces that led to the existing nomenclature. Our wiki provides an opportunity (and plenty of space) to describe every contortion of nomenclature history. And some of that already appears in the individuals pages for each named feature.
5. Details of changes: see #4. The thousand or so name changes are mostly adding new names to the farside and deleting lettered features. Ewen may not have described all of them because he retired in the 80s (I think) and reduced direct involvement with IAU changes.

All told, Whitaker's book provides a unique addition to the literature of lunar history. It is a marvelous look at nomenclature by the best expert in the world and a key player (not a bystander like me) from the 1950s through the 1980s. There is more to be done, and Jim is contributing by adding details of nomenclature history to this wiki.

That's great!


-  **tychocrater** Aug 1, 2007

### Comment by Danny Caes

Fasten your seatbelts... (it's not an ordinary comment).

Every person on this planet should read E.A.Whitaker's *Mapping and Naming the Moon* (!). Because... for ninety-nine-






point-nine percent of the world's population of adult people the moon is just a kindergarten memory, a leftover from the days when almost every kid was forced to swallow utter nonsense, sheer rubbish, and other fairytale'ish stories about, for example, a so-called *Mister Sandman* to get early to bed, while mom and dad were about to watch X-rated movies on telly (twistin' boobies and buttocks, etcetera...), and the moon was shining through the window as a croissant-shaped thing with a silly smiling face on it (that's how little children were forced to think about the moon). Their parents should have known better (especially those who had little children during the late sixties and early seventies, read: during the heydays of NASA's Project Apollo and its manned lunar landings!). Nobody wanted to believe the existence of the lunar excursions performed by the NASA astronauts. NOBODY!!! The few of those on earth who knew that all of this (Project Apollo) was reality, were seen as nutty fools or *freaks*. It is a fact: crazy people know all too well the TRUTH, but they are forced to keep their mouths closed, and when they don't want to do that, they are lock'd up.

-  **DannyCaes** Sep 25, 2015 (I was a kid whose parents were influenced by the Space Age, mom and dad told me about NASA's manned explorations of the moon, not about a silly *sandman* and a smiling face on a yellow crescent up above!).


## LPOD Articles

[A perfect collection of lunar books](#) 

## Bibliography

- Whitaker, E. *Mapping and Naming the Moon*. Cambridge University Press (hardback, 1999: [ISBN 0521622484](#) ; paperback 2003: [ISBN 0521544149](#) ). – Sample pages can be viewed on the [publisher's website](#)  and more (by searching for key words) on [Google books](#) 
- Whitaker, E. "Selenography in the Seventeenth Century," in Michael Hoskin, ed., *The General History of Astronomy* Vol. 2, Pt. A, (Cambridge University Press, 1984).
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This page has been edited 21 times. The last modification was made by -  **DannyCaes** on Oct 18, 2016 6:25 am - *mgx1*

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