In Defense of Terrain in the Newsroom

Carl Churchill | The Wall Street Journal

This presentation is given on Uncompahgre Ute Land
Signs of Trouble

17,700
Traffic fatalities in the first six months of 2016

10.4%
Rise in traffic fatalities in the first six months of 2016

35,000
Traffic deaths in the U.S. in all of 2015

America’s Heartland Becomes More Diverse
Rural counties in the Great Plains and Appalachia have become more racially and ethnically diverse in the past 15 years. Southern and coastal areas have higher levels of overall diversity.

Change in diversity from 2000-15 based on percentage change in an indexed measure of racial and ethnic diversity

- 150% or above
- 100.0-149.9
- 50.0-99.9
- 25.0-49.9
- 0-24.9
- Below zero (falling diversity)

Updated unemployment rates, 12-month average ending in Aug. 2016

- Trempealeau County
- Counties up 150% plus
- 100.0-149.9
- 50.0-99.9
- 25.0-49.9
- 0-24.9
- Below zero (falling diversity)

Annual growth in average wages per worker, 2000-15, adjusted for inflation

- Overall

Adults without any college education, as a share of the over-25 population, 2014

Sources: WSJ calculations based on Census Bureau data (diversity); Labor Dept. (unemployment); Census Bureau’s 2010-14 American Community Survey (education).

Graphics by Andrew Van Dam and Paul Overberg/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
How did we get here?
Digital news graphics are fast and light
Terrain is seen as unnecessary
Vector-based workflows are better suited to normal newsroom graphics.
Journalists rarely learn it
Its not a bad thing
Its only a choice.

Map by Danny Dougherty,
The Wall Street Journal
What terrain brings to a story
Everything happens on terrain
Terrain can explain intuitive factors in a story
Detail is a brand
There is a balance
Designing ‘newsy’ terrain
Keep it light

The tip of the peninsula is about 2 miles from Ochakiv.
Consider land cover
Emphasize prominence
Pick your battles