

SMALL BUSINESS

Globe-trotting map man found road to success

Stuart Sellars' Travel Graphics International celebrates 50 years

By Mars King
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Bitten by the travel bug at an early age, Stuart Sellars has spent most of his life helping others with the same affliction get to where they want to go.

Born in England and trained as an engineer, Sellars is the founder and art director of St. Paul-area map-making company Travel Graphics International, which marked 50 years in business this week.

An impressive milestone in any industry, TGI weathered the Internet boom and the rise of GPS mapping with a custom illustrated, 3D map style that emphasizes major thoroughfares and prominent geographic and architectural landmarks.

Popular in the travel and hospitality industries, clients of TGI have ranged from visitors bureaus and chambers of commerce to the Four Seasons Hawaii and United Airlines. With more than 10 million maps distributed, if you've ever grabbed a map from a brochure rack, there's a chance it's one of theirs.

Founded in 1975 in Minneapolis with about \$10,000, TGI wouldn't reach its height until the mid-1990s when it did nearly \$1.5 million in sales and relocated to Roseville as a home-based business. Nearly 30 years later, the business today is still finding ways to re-



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Stuart Sellars, founder of Travel Graphics International, a map-making company, talks about his career last week in his Roseville office.

main relevant and keep its maps in travelers' hands.

Mapping a map: 1970s

When the company launched in 1975, it was the first of its kind in many ways, Sellars said.

Without Google Earth or satellite imaging, researching a city in order to document it was a monstrous task.

"I would charter a helicopter and fly over the downtown areas, strapped in and leaning out to

take 200 to 300 photographs," Sellars said. "Then I'd have to drive every street to match the aerial photographs with the buildings."

Thousands of pieces of reference materials were needed to draw the maps in 1970s and 1980s, including aerial images from the newspaper, blueprints from the planning office, travel books and postcards, Sellars said.

At the time, an average hand-drawn map would cost \$70,000 to \$80,000 to create, Sellars said,

with the lion's share going to production and roughly \$15,000 earmarked for research, including flights, room and board and on-site photographs.

"I tried every other way of doing it less expensively, but I found that you could not get the view that you needed," he said.

Compiling the research usually took a few weeks, Sellars said, and the artist would then take two to three months to draw the map.

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Business People

Financial Services

Wells Fargo announced the opening of a branch at 835 W. Broadway Ave., North Minneapolis. Wells Fargo, based in San Francisco, is Minnesota's second-largest bank by deposit market share. ... The American Fraternal Alliance, a national trade group representing fraternal benefit societies, announced the election of Sharon Brosnan as board chair. Brosnan is vice president of government affairs at Thrivent, a Minneapolis-based Fortune 500 financial services company. ... GFC Planning announced its launch as an independent registered investment advisory firm in Woodbury. It was founded by Lance Huebner, a U.S. Army combat veteran who previously spent over a decade as a financial adviser at Morgan Stanley.

Government

The Metropolitan Council, a quasi-governmental agency overseeing jointly shared public and transportation services for Minneapolis, St. Paul and surrounding suburbs, announced that Gov. Tim Walz has appointed Deb Barber as interim chair, following the retirement of Charlie Zelle in September. Barber was appointed to the Met Council in 2015 by Gov. Mark Dayton and previously served as the District 4 Council Member. She is co-founder and senior partner of Canopy Medical.



Deb Barber

Health Care

The Integrated Body Center, a health and wellness clinic, announced its opening in Hastings' historic Olde Armory Building, 121 3rd St E. Angie Thompson is founder and CEO.

Law

Moss & Barnett, Minneapolis, announced that attorney Bethany L. Maski has joined the firm's family law team. Maski previously clerked for the Honorable Richard Stebbins, referee of Hennepin County Family Court.

... Fredrikson announced the election of the following new shareholders in its Minneapolis office: Megan A. Bowman, Rachel L. Dougherty, Devin T. Driscoll, Christian V. Hokans and Aaron C. Nyquist.

Fredrikson is based in Minneapolis. ... Maslon, Minneapolis, announced the return of attorney Joe Ceronsky to the firm's Litigation Group as counsel. Ceronsky joined the firm in 2010. In

2024, he left the partnership for a year-long RV trip with his family. ... Gov Tim Walz announced the appointment of Michael Grover as a District Court Judge in Minnesota's Ninth Judicial District. Grover

will replace the Honorable Donna K. Dixon and will be chambered in Roseau in Roseau County. ... Spencer Fane announced the addition of Aaron D. Quinby to the firm's St. Cloud office as an of counsel attorney in the real estate practice group.

Manufacturing

Mate Precision Technologies, an Anoka-based provider of metal-fabricated products and services for industry, announced the promotion of Joe Schneider to president. He succeeds Kevin Nicholson, who is retiring after 19 years in the position. Schneider has 31 years with the company and was appointed vice president of marketing in 2006.

Nonprofits

The Eagan Community Foundation announced the awards of \$62,000 in community grants to 30 nonprofits, including the launch of funding from the Art Works Legacy Fund, a \$1 million endowment, and the Youth in Philanthropy program, empowering seven teens to make grant decisions.

Real Estate

Cushman & Wakefield, a national commercial real estate



Michael Grover



Joe Schneider

firm, announced Anders Pesavento as managing principal for the Minneapolis/St. Paul market. Pesavento joins the firm from developer Ryan Cos., where he was senior vice president, capital markets. Cushman & Wakefield has offices in Bloomington and Minneapolis.

Retail

Best Buy, a Richfield-based national electronics retailer, announced the appointment of Meghan Frank

to its board of directors. Frank is chief financial officer of Lululemon, a global athletic apparel, footwear, and accessories company.

... Mall of America, Bloomington, announced the planned opening of Primark, an Ireland-based fast-fashion chain, in the mall. It will be the chain's first Minnesota location.

Sponsorships

The Minnesota Wild NHL franchise and Blaze Credit Union, Falcon Heights, announced a multi-year partnership as the team's home helmet partner. The Blaze logo will appear on the Wild's home helmets starting this season. As part of their partnership, Blaze will continue the Blaze Credit Union's Hockey Kids4Kids Program.

Technology

Inkit, a Minneapolis-based digital file management platform for business, announced the opening of a St. Paul office.

Email items to businessnews@pioneerpress.com

WORKING STRATEGIES

Making the most of college internship experiences

In last week's column I promoted the idea of stretching out a Bachelor's degree beyond four years, to provide more time for internships or other "add-on" college experiences. My thinking, born of my own college tenure, is that the extra year or two won't harm one's career path nearly as much as the extra experiences will help.

So now let's turn to internships. These can be excellent remedies for closing an experience gap for college students. Since college coursework is often theoretical in nature, internships can add the missing practical component that relates more



Amy Lindgren

closely to the workplace.

While extra years in college might not appeal to everyone, the benefit of extra internships is hard to overstate. However a student manages to fit them in, with internships it's a case of the-more-the-merrier.

That could mean different internships each summer, or internships each school year, or even multiple internships at one time. If that sounds a little overboard, consider the benefits a directed work/learning experience can provide: Hands-on practice in a chosen field; the opportunity to explore different career paths; mentorship from an in-

dustry professional; potential income; work products to demonstrate in later interviews; networking contacts who could turn into colleagues; work references; school credit ... it's almost too many to list.

With so much to gain from a single internship, who wouldn't want two or three or more? Here are some basics to understand if you're going to pursue internships during college.

■ 1. How to find an internship. For enrolled college students, it's logical to start with your institution's career department. This is often the first stop for outside organizations wishing to promote the internships they offer. If you've aligned yourself with a

specific course of study, your department chair is also a likely resource.

For sources outside the college, check online internship boards and professional associations in your discipline, or consider contacting companies directly to ask if they take interns.

(To aid the search, remember that internships can go by different names, including externship, practicum and applied learning experience.)

■ 2. How to structure an internship. Depending on the situation, the internship may already be structured, in which case you'll need to confirm that the logistics will work for you. In

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Edward Lotterman's Real World Economics column is taking the week off. The column is scheduled to return next week.

ECONOMY

Shutdown results in data lapse

Markets, economists turn to alternative sources for now

By Christopher Rugaber
Associated Press

From Wall Street trading floors to the Federal Reserve to economists sipping coffee in their home offices, the first Friday morning of the month typically brings a quiet hush around 8:30 a.m. eastern as everyone awaits the Labor Department's crucial monthly jobs report.

But with the government shut down, no information was released Friday about hiring in September.

The interruption in the data has occurred at a particularly uncertain time, when policymakers at the Federal Reserve and Wall Street investors would need more data on the economy, rather than less. Hiring has ground nearly to a halt, threatening to drag down the broader economy. Yet at the same time, consumers — particularly higher-income earners — are still spending and some businesses are ramping up investments in data centers developing artificial intelligence models. Whether that is enough to revive hiring remains to be seen.

It's the first time since a government shutdown in 2013 that the jobs report has been delayed. During the 2018-2019 partial government closure, the Labor Department was one of several agencies that remained open because Congress had agreed to fund them. September's jobs figures will be released eventually, once the shutdown ends.

If the shutdown continues for another week or more, it could also postpone the release of other high-profile data, including the next inflation report, set for Oct. 15.

The Trump administration has blamed Senate Democrats for the shutdown, while Democrats levy similar charges against the White House.

"Businesses, families, policymakers, markets, and even the Federal Reserve are flying blind at a key juncture in America's economic resurgence because the Democrats' government shutdown has halted the release of key economic data," said White House spokesman Kush Desai.

Yet President Donald Trump himself has often trashed government jobs data when it has painted an unflattering picture of the economy. In August, he fired the then-head of the Bureau of Labor Statistics after the agency reported that job gains in May and June had been sharply lower than previously reported.

ADP: 32,000 private jobs lost in September

For now, economists are turning to alternative measures of the job market provided by nonprofits and private-sector companies. Those measures mostly show a job market with little hiring, but not many layoffs, either. Those who have jobs appear to be mostly secure, while those looking for work are having a tougher time.

Payroll processor ADP, for example, said Wednesday that its estimate showed the economy had lost a surprising 32,000 private-sector jobs last month. Companies in the construction, manufacturing, and financial services industries all cut jobs, ADP found. Restaurants and hotels, and professional services such as accounting and engineering, also shed workers.

Businesses in health care, private education, and information technology were the only sectors to add workers, ADP said.

"We've seen a significant decline in hiring momentum throughout the year," said Nela Richardson, ADP's chief economist. "This is consistent with a low-hire — even a no-hire — and low-fire economy."

Austan Goolsbee, before becoming president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago in January 2023, was one of those busy economists on the first Friday morning of the

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Map man

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"That research was the key part," Sellars said. "I think one of the reasons we really didn't have competition for 20 years was because it was so expensive to produce."

The little competition TGI did have, "We'd usually end up suing because they would trace our maps," Sellars said.

Mapping a map: 2020s

Instead of hanging out of the side of a helicopter to snap a reference photo, TGI's Illustrator Arkady Roytman consults Google Maps, Google Earth, social media and company websites.

Using Adobe InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop, Roytman painstakingly crafts entire cities, one digital building at a time.

"I make an isometric grid, then I try to capture the essence of the building I am trying to illustrate," Roytman said. "Using the photos and the reference material, I try to find a good face of the building, something distinct that somebody looking at the map could recognize."

While the maps are accurate, they are not drawn to scale and certain liberties must be taken, Roytman explained. For example, a building might be rotated so its most recognizable features are apparent to a visitor.

Roytman, the company's sole artist, earned a degree in sequential art, worked at several art galleries and illustrated coloring books before joining the mapping business in 2018.

"Their main concern was the unique style of the map," Roytman said of his hiring. "They wanted someone who could mimic that style and that is one of my skills."

Roytman likens the colorful, whimsical nature of the maps to Martin Handford's "Where's Waldo" and Spanish-Mexican-American cartoonist Sergio Aragones, known for creating the comic book "Groo the Wanderer."

As opposed to the months it would take to draw a map in the 70s, Roytman said he can create a map from scratch in just weeks with certain projects taking only hours.

Most maps of the continental U.S. are printed at the John Roberts Co. in Coon Rapids and the company's Hawaii maps are printed at Edward Enterprises in Honolulu, Sellars said.

Staying relevant

Throughout its 50 years in business, TGI needed to evolve in order to stay afloat.

What began as promotional poster maps of Hawaii, Mexico and the Caribbean would soon expand to maps of major U.S. cities and eventually grow to offer the now-ubiquitous map-brochure.

In 1979, TGI entered its



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A map of larger Minnesota cities that Stuart Sellars, founder of Travel Graphics International, has in his Roseville office.



COURTESY OF TRAVEL GRAPHICS INTERNATIONAL

A custom map of downtown St. Paul, circa 2025.

first deal with United Airlines to supply maps of its major destinations. During the 1980s, the company researched and published maps of Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul, New Orleans, Phoenix, Orlando, Philadelphia, San Diego, San Antonio and Washington, D.C.

"What's really cool about the business model is that he created these maps ages ago and he is still able to use them and customize them to each client," Roytman said.

In the 1990s, the company created online versions of its illustrated maps and developed proprietary software that allowed businesses to customize its products for their customers. In the late 90s, TGI entered a deal with Hawaiian Airlines and its second deal with United Airlines to supply in-flight maps.

In more recent years, TGI created a map for Visit Inver Grove Heights, the city's convention and visitors bureau. "I was looking for a custom map to help promote hotels, sports facilities, restaurants and shopping to visitors,"

said Eric Satre, former executive director for Visit Inver Grove Heights, in an email.

TGI was able to create a map that fit the bill and they were placed at hotels in the city as a way to connect visitors to local businesses, said Satre, who now works as the destination marketing manager for Destination: Woodbury.

Today, TGI's maps include QR-linked digital versions that update in real time and a virtual concierge service, ConciergeMaps.com, that recommends activities and helps with reservations.

Jennifer Wedel, Sellars' daughter, is currently working part-time for the company, helping to rebuild its Hawaii business. The company hopes to reopen its Honolulu office next year, which closed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks put a damper on travel.

"The maps and the way they're enjoyed so much still by tourists, that's always been an especially successful model and product in big tourist destinations like Hawaii," said Wedel, who has

worked full- and part-time for the company over the last decade. "It's a natural place for us to work on rebuilding."

TGI also has plans to offer territory-based equity distributorships so local entrepreneurs can own territory rights, sell ad space and share in map revenue.

False starts, mob run-in

While it is the most successful of Sellars' map companies, TGI was not the first nor the second.

Prior to TGI, Sellars worked for Vancouver-based Trans Continental Cartographers where he sold ad space for the vibrant, cartoon-style map maker.

When Trans Continental Cartographers went out of business, Sellars and three friends picked up where it left off with their new business, Inter Continental Cartographers. What seemed like a good idea at the time, it would unfold in ways Sellars never saw coming.

Sellars recounted a particular business trip in 1971 where, upon returning home to Vancouver, he discovered that members of the Canadian mafia had commandeered Inter Continental Cartographers due to unpaid debts by one of the co-owners.

As Sellars describes it: The organized crime cell planned to transport drugs into the U.S. by storing them in the rolled up maps inside of polyethylene tubes. The thinking at the time was that K9 units wouldn't be able to detect the substances due to the tubing and the ink on the map, he said.

During this time, Sellars said he and his family were threatened and followed by a black limousine. Out of fear, he decided to send his family back to England, he said.

After alerting the Canadian authorities to their sit-

uation, Sellars and his business partners safely relocated to Toronto.

With Vancouver, and the mafia, behind him, Sellars would go on to have an ownership stake in map-making businesses Archar Inc., Archar Western Inc. and finally as the sole owner of Archar International Inc., which now does business as Travel Graphics International.

Looking for buyer

At 85 years old, Sellars is hoping to retire soon and pass the business on to a fellow traveler.

Sellars, who is the sole investor with 90% ownership of the company, said he has invested around \$4 million into

TGI since its founding. The other 10% of the company belongs to Paula Hylle, a long-time employee of TGI.

"I've never become wealthy in the business, but I've felt wealthy and I got to do things," said Sellars, who has visited nearly 100 countries.

His home office in Roseville is proof of a life lived on the road: brochure maps strewn about, a floor globe in the corner, cartography-themed wallpaper and a bookshelf where each title lists a different country.

Of all the places he's traveled, he said a safari in East Africa remains his favorite. Sites still on his list include Iceland, Greenland and parts of Central America.

When asked if he'd take the reins, Roytman said with a chuckle, "I'm happy to continue my role as the artist, but I don't have the business acumen."

Wedel isn't interested in taking on the business either, she said. "I am in a part of my life where taking major business risks doesn't align with my other responsibilities," said the mother of a 13-year-old.

"It's been a significant joy in my life that I've been able to work so closely with my dad. Most people don't get that opportunity," Wedel said.

While she wouldn't take the company's top spot, Wedel said she would "jump at the chance" to work as a salaried marketing director under new ownership.

As for Sellars, just because he wants out of the office doesn't necessarily mean he's out of the game.

"I'd love to stay involved and help someone else take over and be successful," he said. "If the opportunity arose and there were more places to research — I'd go!"

Major League Winner.

Scorecard Page
Sports

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THE WEEKLY NEWS QUIZ: Tribune News Service

1. President Donald Trump recently announced on social media that he was directing the Department of Defense to "provide all necessary Troops to protect" which "War ravaged" city on the West Coast?

A. San Diego
B. Seattle
C. Portland, Oregon
D. Sacramento, California

2. Electronic Arts, the maker of video games like "Madden NFL" and "The Sims," is being acquired in what could become the largest buyout ever funded by private equity firms. The deal is valued at about ...?

A. \$40 billion
B. \$45 billion
C. \$50 billion
D. \$55 billion

3. Who will headline the 2026 Super Bowl halftime show?

A. Taylor Swift
B. Adele
C. Kendrick Lamar
D. Bad Bunny

4. Which of these teams did NOT make it to the Major League Baseball postseason?

A. San Francisco Giants
B. San Diego Padres
C. Los Angeles Dodgers
D. Seattle Mariners

5. A falcon was crowned Bird of the Year this week in which nation's annual contest?

A. Canada
B. New Zealand
C. Ireland
D. Argentina

=====

ANSWERS

1. C
2. D
3. D
4. A
5. B

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Lindgren

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more flexible situations, you might be choosing which days or how many hours to intern, or whether to pursue the internship on-site or remotely.

To help with these decisions, remember that networking is one of the benefits of the process — which is easier to do on-site. Hands-on learning with someone nearby for assistance is another reason to lean away from remote options when possible. In these cases, you may find that one or two full days each week works better than several half-days, in terms of commuting less.

3. How to afford an internship. There's no doubt that being paid is preferable to volunteering — not to mention your budget may not accommodate training without a wage.

That said, if you can manage with a stipend, low wages, or no wages, you may find a broader range of opportunities. This will be especially true of internships you initiate by directly contacting companies of interest to you.

The truth is, internships can be costly for employers in terms of mentorship and other resources. While some states require payment, not every employer will be able to add a wage to the mix as well.

If you do go the no-pay

Jobs

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route, a shorter, more intense burst of learning may be easier on your budget. Conversely, you might opt for just a few hours a week for a longer period, balanced by another internship or job with a paycheck attached.

4. How to ensure learning. Learning contracts are helpful here. Typically, they'll state what the organization is committing to teach you while also outlining your responsibilities as the learner (for example, be punctual, dress appropriately, keep a learning log).

5. How to benefit from the internship. Of course, doing your best is the primary way to benefit from any learning experience. But internships are also great for providing work samples, portfolio pieces, résumé and LinkedIn entries, letters of recommendation and, sometimes, the gold standard: a job offer post-graduation.

The key to reaping these rewards is to keep them front of mind during and after each learning experience. If you keep great notes, introduce yourself to colleagues, and stay in touch after you leave, it won't be long before you have both experience and a networking base envied by your "elders" in the field — exactly what you need to launch your career.

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Still, while there are alternative measures of hiring and unemployment, there are fewer sources of information on inflation, which the Fed is charged with keeping stable and low. Prices have picked up in recent months for many imported goods, mostly because of tariffs, but Goolsbee said that he is closely watching inflation in services, which have perked up in the past two months. Higher services prices are a potential sign that inflation is spreading beyond imported products.

Goolsbee is eager to see the next inflation report to see if the trend continues. "That makes the government shut down, lack of BLS data that much more concerning," Goolsbee said.

On Friday, the Institute for Supply Management, a trade group of purchasing managers, released its monthly report on economic activity in the services sector, which includes everything from banking to restaurants to retail stores to warehousing and covers about 90% of the economy. Its index dropped to 50, from 52, with 50 the dividing line between shrinking and expanding. That means services sector activity was unchanged last month.

But services companies did cut back on hiring for the fourth straight month, the ISM's survey found, suggesting that job gains remained weak last month.

Chicago Fed: Unemployment rate 4.3% in September

Just last month, however, the Chicago Fed began issuing its own estimates of the unemployment rate and other job-market indicators, using a combination of public and private-sector data, which it updates every two weeks. On Thursday, its latest figures put the unemployment rate in September at 4.3%, the same as in August and still low historically.

Goolsbee said the Chicago Fed prefers to focus more on rates, such as the unemployment figure, and layoff and hiring rates, as an indicator of recession risk, because they are less affected by changes in immigration patterns and the aging of the U.S. workforce than the changes in total jobs.