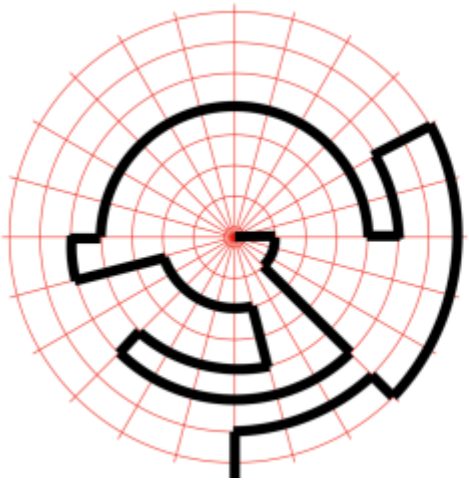
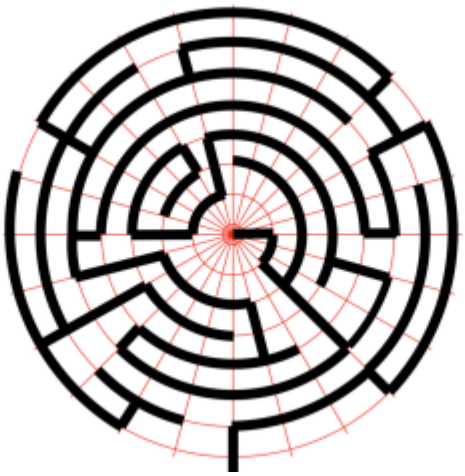
Forked paths

Description

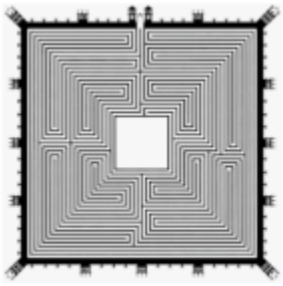
The usual method for creating a puzzle maze is to start with a rectilinear, triangular or radial grid and mark it up with a convoluted route from start to end. Then draw in branches, loops and deviations that make the route less obvious.

The challenge for a maze architect is to provide the appearance of simplicity and symmetry. The route from start to finish should be difficult to predict unless you trace the route with your finger and backtrack when you reach a dead-end. Hereâ??s my attempt at a construction towards such a maze. The first is the tortuous path between the centre and the periphery; the second is the maze with false routes added; the third shows the lines as corridors.





Thereâ??s also an automated maze generator at http://www.mazegenerator.net/. Here are some of the many mazes revealed by a Google image search. Also see an online article by Jeff Saward.


Mazes or Labyrinths...
labyrinthos.net


Circular Classical 7 Circuit...
pinterest.com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But my favourite 7-circuit J...
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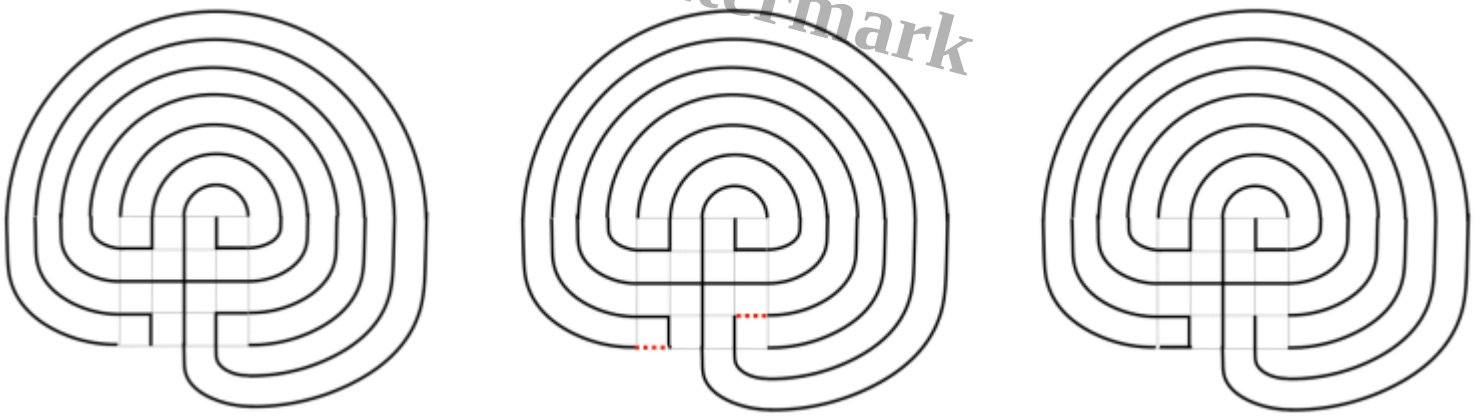
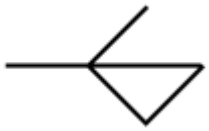
Classical re-entry

The classical unicursal labyrinth can be adapted to provide a branching maze with shortcuts, short circuits, and dead ends.

Hereâ??s the classical maze, re-entrant version. It starts with a unicursal maze providing a route to the centre and a different route to an exit. Moving a couple of grid segments introduces a junction with three choices: one leading to a dead end, the others forming a looped circuit that includes the centre.



The third maze is simply a circuit with one dead end branch. Itâ??s a trident, a forked path with two ends joined by an additional path.



Espionage and the labyrinth

In â??The garden of forking paths,â?• Jorge Lui Borgesâ??s characters discuss an old text that says: â??*I am withdrawing to write a book.* And another time: *I am withdrawing to construct a labyrinth.* Every one imagined two works; to no one did it occur that the book and the maze were one and the same thingâ?• (36). Borges frequently conflates maze architecture with writing and reading.

Borgesâ??s narrator says of the textâ??s author, â??*He creates,* in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and forkâ?• (37).

â??The garden of forking pathsâ?• is an espionage short story set in WW1. The two characters (Stephen Albert and Yu Tsun) discuss the nature of timelines that proliferate and reconnect. â??Time forks perpetually toward innumerable futures. In one of them I am your enemy,â?• says Albert (39).

A few moments later, Yu Tsun shoots Albert. A third person, whose arrival we anticipated from the start of the story enters the room and arrests Yu Tsun for murder.

Hereâ??s the twist: we discover the murder provided the only means available to Yu Tsun to convey to his boss in Britain the location of the French city (in the Somme) they must attack, which goes by the name of Albert. The brutal murder would appear in the British newspapers: â??The Chief had deciphered this mystery. He knew my problem was to indicate (through the uproar of the war) the city called Albert, and that I had found no other means to do so than to kill a man of that nameâ?• (39).

Here, perhaps espionage recruits time as a maze of potential forking paths to deliver coded messages â?¦

Reference

- Borges, Jorge Luis. 1962. The garden of the forking paths. In Donald A. Yates, and James E. Irby (eds.), *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*: 31-39. New York, NY: New Directions.
- Saward, Jeff. 2017. Mazes or Labyrinths: Whatâ??s the difference & what types are there? Available online: http://www.labyrinthos.net/Labyrinth%20Typology.pdf (accessed 16 July 2019).

Category

1. Architecture

Tags

1. Borges
2. labyrinth
3. maze

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