

Illustration style

There were three types of illustration styles that Chambers used in their publications. They can be classified as pictorial, facsimile and schematic.

1. Pictorial

2. Facsimile

3. Schematic

Pictorial-style images

Drawings and engravings in a pictorial style trace their roots to a late 18th-century aesthetic, when concepts of the beautiful, the sublime, and the picturesque were tied to the ideals of 'good taste' found in art, literature and music. Wood engraved illustrations produced in the earlier 19th century had a visual aesthetic which gave an impression the artist might lack access to primary sources or presented a romanticised vignette of a scene, although depicting actual objects or settings. The engravers were aiming for accuracy within the confines of a pictorial style and the knowledge available to them and their viewers. They wanted to convey to a readership with little access to any illustrated material a sense of understanding of technologies, places, people or objects never previously experienced.

Facsimile-style images

In contrast to pictorial-style images, the idea of facsimile-style representation was to depict a subject in as realistic a way as possible or show how it would be encountered in the real world. From the 1860s, photography became increasingly recognised, within scientific communities in particular, as a medium which conveyed 'mechanical objectivity'. Images which related stylistically to photographs were therefore equally deemed to convey authority.

Schematic-style images

A schematic illustration is used to convey abstract information, usually incorporating graphic symbols rather than realistic pictures. The Cambridge Dictionary states that a schematic illustration shows the main form while highlighting specific features, usually in the form of a drawing, in order to simplify a concept or to help people understand it. Maps and diagrams are examples of schematic illustrations.