Together with the growing social and economic importance of mountain areas, the demand for adequate cartographic base data with respect to its contents, graphic design and the media is also increasing. Especially the visualization of a large spectrum of new themes requires new cartographic methods and approaches which go beyond classical topographic cartography. During the 19th International Cartographic Conference in Ottawa in 1999, a new ICA Commission on Mountain Cartography was established in order to meet these demands. The following Terms of Reference have been accepted by the ICA General Assembly:

- Definition of the scope of subjects of high mountain cartography
- Promotion of mountain cartography
- Providing a platform to promote the exchange of ideas and scientific collaboration
- Compilation of web-based compendium
- Collection of mountain cartography specific and related links
- Collection of bibliographic references
- Status of national mountain cartography activities (federal agencies, private companies, etc.)
- Promotion of joint research projects with other organisations and ICA commissions

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