

AAG Annual Meeting Fees: An Analysis

Below is an analysis of the AAG Annual Meeting registration fees in relation to other geographic societies and related associations spanning the humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, environmental sciences, geosciences, and GIScience.

AAG Annual Meeting Cost Considerations

Unlike most of its peer organizations, the AAG has had significant growth in both membership and meeting attendance in recent years. AAG has not increased its meeting fees in the past seven years, despite inflation and a substantial increase in meeting attendance. The modest price increase (9%) prior to the current fee structure represented cost of living increases. To illustrate trends within the academic/professional conference industry, 43% of organizations raised conference rates from 2016 to 2017, ranging from 1% to 40% increases with a mean increase of 0.74%.¹

- 1) The AAG does not charge an abstract submission fee in addition to meeting registration fees. It is common practice for conferences to charge a non-refundable processing fee for handling paper and presentation abstracts.² These fees can add considerable to the cost of attendance, when taken in conjunction with registration fees, travel, and other expenses. Further, the AAG does not charge any additional fees to rent basic AV or other standard equipment, which collectively represent one of our highest fixed meeting expenses.
- 2) AAG Annual Meetings offer far more sessions (80-100 per year) than most other conferences due to our open participation policy and have by far the lowest cost per session of all meetings surveyed (see Doug Richardson's column, "How the AAG Selects Its Annual Meeting Venues," 2017).
- 3) AAG Annual Meetings are held in major cities (e.g. San Francisco, Washington, Seattle, New York) to accommodate the size of attendance of this major disciplinary conference. Other meetings which are much shorter, have fewer concurrent sessions, and have fewer attendees can be held in lower cost cities and venues (e.g. Charlotte, Park City, Providence, Regina, Savannah), which are unable to accommodate our ever-growing meeting.
- 4) The AAG's meeting runs for five full days, with sessions, events, meetings, workshops, and field trips spanning the duration of the conference. The AAG's average registration cost per day compared to the average cost per day of the organizations surveyed amounts to approximately 47% below average.³
- 5) Despite inflation, AAG has not raised membership dues in several years and in fact has lowered membership dues this past year and in recent years for students and underemployed members. AAG's highly progressive membership fee structure is sensitive to membership incomes. Membership is not required to either attend or participate in AAG Annual Meetings as it is for some organizations, though members do benefit from lower registration fees than nonmembers.
- 6) AAG registration fees include complimentary tickets to a number of receptions for all of our 9,000+ attendees, where AAG provides local entertainment and

¹ See Figure 1 for comparable conferences considered in this analysis. Rates were only compared for conferences where information was available.

² For example, at comparable conferences, processing fees are as follows: Geological Society of America (\$50 regular / \$20 students; 2017), American Meteorological Society (\$95; 2017), American Geophysical Union (\$65 regular / \$35 students; 2016).

³ See Figure 1 for more information.

complimentary food and beverages.

- 7) AAG negotiates with conference hotels to achieve the lowest possible group room rates for attendees. These hotel rates are very competitive with other nearby hotels and allow attendees on a budget to participate in the conference.
- 8) AAG has a value-based commitment to try hold its meetings in union hotels whenever possible, which generally results in an increase meeting venue costs, as well as related food and beverage and materials handling costs, compared to non-union hotels. This is a values related decision of the AAG leadership and its membership, of which we are proud. Many other associations do not meet primarily in union hotels, which can reduce their costs for the above items, as well as the cost of meeting cancellation insurance.

AAG Registration Rates Compared to Other Peer Group Meetings

Figure 1 (following page) summarizes the finding from our recent survey of peer group meetings. The fees reported in the middle column are the base cost for member attendees. All reflect advanced (or “early bird”) registration rates, as opposed to on-site registration. All rates listed are for 2017 meetings unless otherwise noted. The notes column highlights select information of significance and does not represent a comprehensive description of the data available. All figures are in US Dollars.

FIGURE 1 Geography Meetings	Member Fee	Location/Duration	Cost/Day	Notes
Association of American Geographers (AAG)	\$295	Boston, MA; 5 days	\$59	
International Geographical Union (IGU)	\$400	2016: Beijing, China; 5 days	\$80	
National Council of Geography Education (NCGE)	\$345	Albuquerque, NM; 4 days	\$86.25	
GIScience Meeting	\$446	2016: Montreal, Canada; 4 days	\$111.50	Biennial Meeting
European Geography Meeting (EuroGeo)	\$172	Amsterdam, Netherlands; 2 days	\$86	
ESRI Users Conference	\$1295	San Diego, CA; 5 days	\$259	
URISA (GIS-Pro)	\$575	Jacksonville, FL; 4 days	\$143.75	
Geospatial Information and Technology Association (GITA)	\$595	Houston, TX; 3 days	\$198.33	
Am. Society of Photogrammetry & Remote Sensing (ASPRS)	\$550	Baltimore, MD; 5 days	\$110	
Royal Geographic Society (RGS) with IBG	\$294	London, England; 4 days	\$73.50	
Institute of Australian Geographers (IAG)	\$502	Brisbane, Australia; 4 days	\$125.50	
Association of Geographical Societies in Europe (EUGEO)	\$316	Brussels, Belgium; 3 days	\$105.33	Biennial Meeting
Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG)	\$204	Toronto, Canada; 5 days	\$40.80	6% processing fee
American Geophysical Union (AGU)	\$480	2016; San Francisco, CA; 5 days	\$96	Abstract Fee: \$65 regular, \$35 students
National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP)	\$595	Durham, NC; 4 days	\$48.75	
International Cartographic Association (ICA)	\$525	Washington, D.C.; 6 days	\$87.50	Biennial Meeting
International Medical Geography Symposium (IMGS)	\$279.33	Angers, France; 6 days	46.56	
Chinese Professionals in Geographic Information Sciences (CPGIS)	\$400	Buffalo, NY; 3 days	\$133.33	
Related Meetings				
Geological Society of America (GSA)	\$410	Seattle, WA; 4 days	\$102.50	Abstract Fee: \$50 Professional, \$25 Student
American Anthropological Association (AAA)	\$238	Washington, D.C.; 5 days	\$47.60	
American Institute of Architects (AIA)	\$550	Orlando, FL; 3 days	\$183.33	
American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)	\$645	Los Angeles, CA; 4 days	\$161.25	
American Political Science Association (APSA)	\$225	San Francisco, CA; 4 days	\$60.00	
International Studies Association (ISA)	\$140	Baltimore, MD; 4 days	\$35	
Agriculture and Applied Economics Association (AAEA)	\$415	Chicago, IL; 3 days	\$138.33	
American Astronomical Society (AAS)	\$487	Austin, TX; 5 days	\$97.40	
American Meteorological Society (AMS)	\$525	Seattle, WA; 5 days	\$105	Abstract Fee: \$95
American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)	\$310	Boston, MA; 5 days	\$62	

AAG Financial Assistance Programs to Help Meeting Attendees

The current AAG conference fee structure represents categories that are in widespread use within the association community and reflects current best practices. In addition, the AAG offers a large number of supplemental financial assistance programs to AAG attendees and provides staff and technical infrastructure to accommodate support for meeting attendance fees. AAG's financial assistance programs listed below and collectively they help to reduce meeting cost for many constituencies of members. The AAG Executive Director is also authorized by the AAG Council to consider applications in cases of financial hardship for partial reimbursement of fees.

Descriptions of all programs listed below are available [online](#).

- AAG Conference Assistants Program for Students and Un-/Underemployed Geographers
- AAG Community College Travel Grants
- AAG International Geographic Information Fund Travel Grants
- AAG Annual Meeting Fund to Support Members with Disabilities
- AAG Childcare Program
- AAG Developing Regions Membership Program
- AAG Enrichment Funds to support participation of non-geographers
- Airline and rail travel discounts to meeting destination cities
- AAG Specialty and Affinity Groups targeted travel support programs
- World Geography Bowl Participant Travel Funds
- AAG externally funded projects or research, and educational and outreach programs that include travel support for grant-related activities that enrich the Annual Meeting.

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