Beyond the Ivory Tower A: Preparing Geographers for Business and Private Sector Careers

A panel discussion sponsored by the EDGE Project, the Applied Geography Specialty Group, and the Private/Public Affinity Group

2012 Annual Meeting of the AAG

About the EDGE Project

Enhancing Departments and Graduate Education in Geography (EDGE) is an NSF-funded research and action project led by the Association of American Geographers to enhance the career preparation of professional geographers. EDGE-Phase 2 (2009-2012) focuses on employment opportunities for geographers in business, government, and nonprofit (BGN) organizations. Researchers are collecting a variety of data from professional geographers, employer organizations, and graduate programs to examine workforce development, industry trends, and the career paths of master’s and doctoral students. Project deliverables include paper and panel sessions at regional and national professional meetings, updates and additions to the Jobs and Careers area of the AAG’s website (www.aag.org/careers), expanded activities within the Jobs in Geography Center at the AAG’s Annual Meeting, journal articles, and books, including Practicing Geography: Careers for Enhancing Society and the Environment (Pearson Education 2012).

Michael Solem [moderator] is Educational Affairs Director for the Association of American Geographers. Dr. Solem currently directs the Enhancing Departments and Graduate Education in Geography (EDGE) project and the Center for Global Geography Education (CGGE) initiative, both funded by NSF. He currently serves as the North American coordinator of the International Network for Learning and Teaching Geography in Higher Education (INLT), is associate director of the Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education at Texas State University–San Marcos, and is Treasurer for the International Geographical Union's Commission on Geographical Education. Dr. Solem twice received the Journal of Geography in Higher Education’s award for promoting excellence in teaching and learning for his research on faculty development and graduate education in geography.

Amy Blatt is a Senior Health Informatics Analyst, in the Informatics and Analytics group, at Quest Diagnostics. Her main responsibilities include producing the clinically relevant Quest Diagnostics HealthTrends™ research reports (which have been published in Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism), as well as supporting new marketing and sales initiatives through customer-driven insights and analytics. Dr. Blatt has held several other geography-related positions, such as Geodemographer at Marketing Systems Group and Statistical Data Analyst at the Hartford Customer Services Group. She also had a faculty appointment at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Blatt is the editor of book volume entitled Perspectives in Medical Geography (2012, Taylor and Francis) and a past president of the Esri Mid-Atlantic Users Group.

Kate Edwards is the founder and principal consultant of Englobe Inc., a Seattle-based niche consultancy for content culturalization. Ms. Edwards is a hybrid of an academic geographer, writer, and corporate strategist, all coexisting with a passion for cultures, media, and emerging technologies. Formerly as Microsoft’s Geopolitical Strategist in the Geopolitical Strategy team (a position and team she created and managed),

About the panelists

Beth Schlemper [moderator] is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Toledo. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2003. Her research interests are in cultural and historical geography, specifically the construction of regional identity, the role of scale, and shifting boundaries. In exploring these interrelated topics, Dr. Schlemper has conducted research in both the United States and Europe. More recently, her research and publications have related to career and professional development in higher education. She has served as a principal researcher and a co-PI for the AAG's EDGE project. Her publications appear in a variety of geography and higher education journals including Journal of Historical Geography, Journal of Cultural Geography, The Professional Geographer, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Journal of Geography in Higher Education, and Research in Higher Education.
she was responsible for protecting the company against geopolitical and cultural content errors across all Microsoft products and locales, from cartographic sensitivities to PR issues to market strategy. Her work extended to the Microsoft Game Studios, where she was personally responsible for reviewing potential cultural sensitivities in nearly all of the company’s games between 1995 and 2005. Since leaving Microsoft, Ms. Edwards continues to apply her experience across diverse products with clients such as Microsoft, Google, National Geographic, and Electronic Arts. A lifelong gamer, she has worked on many game titles, including *Halo 1 & 2*, *Fable*, the *Age of Empires* series, *Rise of Nations*, *Dragon Age 1 & 2*, *Dance Central 1 & 2*, and most recently *Star Wars: The Old Republic*.

Ms. Edwards is also the founder/chair of the Game Localization Special Interest Group in the International Game Developers Association (which presented her its MVP award in 2011) and she is a regular columnist for *MultiLingual Computing* magazine.

**Rob George** is the Director of Market Research for Rite Aid Corporation, headquartered in Camp Hill, PA. Mr. George has been employed with Rite Aid for 4 years and manages a team of four. His current duties include consumer research, retail site selection, targeted geographical marketing, and using geography to make better day-to-day decisions at Rite Aid. Prior to joining Rite Aid in 2007, he worked for Wendy’s, Sonic, and Blockbuster, focusing mainly on retail site selection. He received a master’s degree in geography from the University of Alabama and a BS in elementary education/geography from the William Patterson University. Mr. George has served as a member of the North American Research Task Force for the International Council of Shopping Centers for five years.

**Dave Miller** has 18 years of experience with Walgreens. Since he joined the company, it has grown from 1700 stores to over 7500 stores. During that time, he has held several positions in the Market Planning and Research group, currently serving as Director. This department is primarily responsible for analyzing and guiding the growth activities of the company across all business units (including Organic Retail, M&A, Specialty, Rx Services, and Healthcare BU’s). In addition to supporting those activities, Market Planning & Research is involved with several other areas of the company, collaborating with Store Operations, Real Estate, Marketing, Advertising, Health Services, Pharmacy Services, and Mergers & Acquisitions, among others. Mr. Miller is also an adjunct professor at Carthage College in business geography, and he attends several conferences and training sessions in the areas of retail, management, market planning, healthcare, and GIS. He graduated from Carthage College with a degree in geography/economics.

**Linda A. Peters** is Director of International Commercial Business Development for Esri in Redlands, CA. A graduate of The University of Maryland (UMBC) Linda is a trained cartographer and GIS analyst. Linda has over 20 years of business experience and is skilled in systems design, market research, GIS analysis, demographic analysis, and business development. Ms. Peters works with retailers, manufacturers, real estate organizations, consumer product good companies, and other large global companies to help them realize the benefits of applying GIS to real-time decision making. Essential to each of these organizations is an understanding of the changes in demographic and economic trends as well as consumer behavior and geographic patterns. Ms. Peters endeavors to help companies better understand how to use GIS capabilities and data in overcoming contemporary business challenges. A founding member of the AAG’s Business Geography Specialty Group (BGSG), Ms. Peters has organized many workshops to help further education and adoption of GIS and geospatial techniques in business.

**Mike Ziolkowski** is an Assistant Professor of International Business at The College at Brockport -- SUNY. He earned his doctorate in economic geography from the State University of New York at Buffalo (UB), where he researched university and academic linkages. He also earned his master’s and bachelor’s degrees from UB, where he studied international business and world trade. In 1994-1995, Mr. Ziolkowski attended TSM Business School at the Universiteit Twente, Enschede, Netherlands, as a fellow studying innovation and business development. From 1995-2009, Mr. Ziolkowski worked in many capacities for the Global Corporate Operations Department of technology distributor Ingram Micro, Inc. Mr. Ziolkowski’s research and teaching interests are in the area of Canada-U.S. trade, international business, social and economic development, college extension programs, supply chain management, and international education. His wife and two children live on Grand Island, NY.

To learn more about business and private-sector careers, stop by our career mentoring session on Saturday, Feb. 25, from 1:00-4:00 pm in the Jobs in Geography (JIG) Center within the Exhibit Hall.

For more information about geography careers, visit us online at [www.aag.org/careers](http://www.aag.org/careers).