

**AAG Newsletter
of the
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New Year's Reflections...and Resolutions

Two thousand four has been a remarkable year for geography and the AAG. We have celebrated our Centennial Anniversary in high style and with scintillating substance all year long, headlined by a most memorable centennial gathering of over 5,000 geographers from around the world in Philadelphia. There was something for everyone at that wonderful meeting—which is just the way it should be in a discipline as rich and diverse as ours.

The centennial meeting encompassed so many extraordinary events that it is hard to cite any one highlight, but my own personal favorite was the experience of introducing back-to-back during the opening session, NSF Director Rita Colwell's excellent keynote presentation, "The New Landscape of Science: A Geographic Portal," followed immediately by the superb world premier performance by the Rittenhouse String Quartet of the classical music piece, "Scenes From A River" composed especially for the AAG's Centennial by David McKee. To me, this union of stellar science and exquisite music encapsulated the dynamic range of our discipline and the creative and synergistic integration that geographers can achieve across that range.

The year 2004 also marked major steps forward at the AAG in establishing a solid financial and organizational foundation needed to meet the challenges¹ our discipline faces in the years ahead as we work to create a more central place for geography in society and the university. Financially, the AAG formally retired all its debt in 2004 and posted the second consecutive year of very strong financial performance, while at the same time initiating many new programs.

Work has also now been completed on the new computerized online membership management system and the online meeting

registration and abstract submission system infrastructures at the AAG, and new applications and benefits of these online system infrastructures are now being realized across the board, from specialty group listserves to our large annual meetings, and from publications to international outreach activities. Substantial cost savings and new efficiencies have also been achieved with these management systems.

2004 also saw significant increase and re-orientation of our educational and international outreach efforts, through expansion of the "My Community, Our Earth—Geographic Learning for Sustainable Development" project, through continued support for and participation in the International Geographical



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Union meetings and other international exchange activities, as well as the AAG's innovative "Online International Education" program, and an array of new NSF and Department of Education funded projects and proposals, increasingly focused on higher education as well as secondary education.

A new AAG Office of Public Policy, established this past year, also means that geography now has eyes, ears and a voice on Capitol Hill and within the federal agencies whose policies can so directly impact our future. The building and training of a new AAG core staff with the professional and technical skills necessary for the 21st century has also progressed well during 2004, and internal work flows continue to be carefully analyzed and defined to increase efficiency and to ensure continuity of operations as normal staff turnover occurs in the future. I am also very pleased to report that our programs to increase AAG membership have produced record membership in our association of

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9,000 individual members in 2004 (see figure below), plus another 1,500 institutional members, primarily libraries.

Resolutions

But a new year is not satisfied with reflection on the past year alone, it requires resolutions about the future as well. So what are my New Year's resolutions? Here are a few of them:

Let's do more of the same to continue to strengthen our Association's membership, financial foundations, annual meetings, and publications, and let's all work together to improve these core programs at every opportunity. Let's find new ways to support geography's academic programs and to expand its outreach to society, to other disciplines, to policy makers, and to engage the larger intellectual enterprise of which we are an

integral and essential part.² Let's continue to represent the needs and interests of geographers from all corners of our diverse discipline. New efforts are already planned for 2005 for programs to support physical geography and for a symposium to explore ways of expanding the growing interaction between geography and the humanities. Bolstering geographic science and interdisciplinary geographic research programs at NSF, USGS, AAAS, and other leading science institutions will be a continuing priority, as will nurturing to success our many new AAG initiatives such as the Diversity Task Force, the Senior Associates program, the Healthy Departments Workshops, our public policy activities, and many others. Remembering to appreciate the hard work of our excellent staff at the AAG,

and thanking our members for the wonderful opportunity to work with you all, however, will be at the top of my list. Oh, there is one other New Year's resolution: after two years without one, I intend to take a real vacation sometime in 2005.

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- 1Richardson, Douglas. 2002. Challenges facing the AAG. AAG Newsletter 37 (8):2-4.
- 2Richardson, Douglas and P. Solís. 2004. Confronted by insurmountable opportunities: Geography in society at the AAG's centennial. The Professional Geographer. 56:4-11.

