

**AAG Newsletter
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Geography and the Humanities

While the discipline of geography has traditionally embraced and contributed to the humanities, there has been a remarkable recent resurgence of intellectual interplay between geography and the humanities in both academic and public circles. The metaphors and concepts of geography now permeate literature, philosophy, the arts, and other humanities. Terminology and concepts such as *space*, *place*, *landscape*, *mapping*, and *geography* are becoming pervasive as conceptual frameworks and core metaphors in recent publications in the humanities. A brief scan of recent book titles from publications such as the *New York Review of Books* yields a fascinating array of examples of this phenomenon.

The growing diffusion of ideas between geography and the humanities is also significant for the insights and connections it has spawned. For instance, many scholars and writers outside of the field of geography have developed new understandings from interrogating a sense of place, or by examining the changing landscapes of globalization and complex new international realities in traditionally geographic terms. They have applied spatial approaches, using tools and concepts traditional to geography and mapping to conduct research and gain insight in a wide range of disciplines, including history, fiction, and linguistics. Old and new geographic techniques and ideas applied to humanities studies have opened new lines of intellectual inquiry and have changed research methodologies in numerous fields. And, of course, the mutually beneficial interactions between the discipline of geography and such humanities fields as the philosophy of science, cultural and ethnic studies, and various literatures in post-modernist thought have also had

far-reaching implications for geographic research and education.

The Monticello Symposium

During the past two years I have been working on ideas, methods, and partnerships through which the AAG might further explore, showcase, and foster the current fruitful interaction between geography and the humanities.



Richardson

These efforts have resulted in a proposed Symposium on Geography and the Humanities, to be sponsored jointly by the AAG, the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), and the University of Virginia (UVA). The proposed symposium will explore how geography informs the humanities and vice versa. It will not only

take stock of the emerging new connections between geography and the humanities but also identify promising new research pathways along which such interaction can be strengthened and fostered in the future.

The symposium will be held at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, from Friday to Sunday, June 22-24, 2007, with the Rotunda's Dome Room and the University's new special collections library as potential settings. The symposium will also include a special event at nearby Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's historic estate. Co-organizers of the symposium will be myself, Dr. Steven Wheatley of ACLS and Dr. Edward Ayers, Dean of Arts & Sciences at the University of Virginia. John Hammer, the National Humanities Alliance's Executive Director Emeritus, has also agreed to support the effort.

Call for Participation

The symposium will bring together thirty to fifty participants. Approximately

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one-third of these participants will be geographers who routinely engage the humanities in their research, one-third will be humanities scholars who incorporate geography in their own work, and one-third will be more popular writers or artists who use geography to underpin key facets of their work or whose projects engage geographic ideas meaningfully in their conception or implementation.

Topics developed as white papers and presented by individual participants will be the focus of the discussions and breakout sessions during the two-day symposium. An edited volume will be published featuring the papers presented during the symposium, supplemented by other invited submissions to provide a well-rounded overview of the field.

Symposium participants must be prepared to develop a full paper for publication if requested by the editors. The AAG, ACLS, and UVA will distribute the volume within the geography and humanities communities and it is our hope that it will spark additional work on the topics covered and related areas.

Those interested in participating in the symposium as presenters should submit a one-page summary of their proposed topic, describing relevant research conducted and previous directly-related publications, along with a brief resume or CV to: Geography and Humanities Symposium Applications Committee, c/o Douglas Richardson, AAG Executive Director, at drichardson@aag.org. Applications for participation should be

received no later than December 12, 2006. Earlier submission is encouraged. In order to defray the costs of participation, applicants in financial need who are accepted for participation in the symposium may apply for funding to support travel costs.

Additional calls for participation will be posted on several websites in the geography and humanities communities, and symposium updates will appear regularly in the *AAG Newsletter*. I look forward to working together with you to explore these fascinating intersections of geography and the humanities in the months ahead. ■

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