Looking Northward

In the heat of a Washington, DC summer, it is easy to turn one’s thoughts to the possibilities for greater collaboration between US and Canadian geographers.

How might we build stronger ties with our colleagues in Canada? What are the needs of arctic researchers? Are we doing enough to document glacial melt related to climate change? How can geographers play a leading role in research related to the upcoming International Polar Year? And what has the AAG Cryosphere Specialty Group been up to lately? These and related questions are on my mind as evidence of global warming accumulates palpably here in Washington.

Fortunately, however, the AAG and the Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG) have a long and well established cooperative relationship. We each offer reciprocal memberships to one another’s members at discounted rates on our membership forms. Research collaboration and scholarly exchange flows almost seamlessly across our shared borders. The AAG hosts hundreds of Canadian geographers at our annual meetings, including many invited plenary speakers and AAG award recipients, and the CAG also warmly welcomes US geographers to its meetings. The AAG provides financial and organizational support to our Canadian Studies and other Specialty Groups to bring featured speakers from Canada to the AAG meetings, and the Canadian Embassy sponsors research grants for geographical studies in Canada, available to US as well as Canadian researchers, among many examples of mutual support.

Last fall, I traveled to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, the site of the Canadian Association of Geographers upcoming 2007 Annual Meeting, to explore further concrete ways in which the AAG and the CAG could develop stronger ties and coordination of activities among our members and between our Associations. During discussions with organizers of the CAG 2007 meeting, including University of Saskatchewan geography department chair Bill Archibald and faculty members, the general topic of US/Canadian cross-boundary issues was discussed, and the idea of sponsoring a series of joint sessions around this topic at both the AAG and CAG 2007 Annual Meetings was developed.

Specific US/Canadian cross-boundary topics addressed in the joint sessions might include indigenous peoples, the environment, water, national parks, timber sales, terrorism, trade, immigration/migration, or many other issues. Some of the paper presenters or discussants hopefully would be able to participate in both of our annual meetings for continuity of discussion, while some others would only participate in one or the other of the meetings.

The joint sessions will be advertised as high profile events at both of our annual meetings next year, and a balance of US and Canadian speakers will be encouraged in each session. The CAG president and the AAG president will be invited to help introduce the sessions.

While I may be “looking northward” during July and August in Washington, DC, it is important to remember that the US and Canada share not only a north-south border, but also a lengthy east-west boundary between Alaska and Canada as well. Geographers Mike Sfraga, Roger Pearson, and others at the University of Alaska have created some very interesting multi-institutional geography degree programs and are playing a key role in representing the United States in cross-boundary International Polar Year research activities. They have committed already to sharing their experiences in working on
New Geographer Members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Four geographers were elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) this year. It is the first time since 1976 that more than one geographer was elected in a single year.

The four new members are Michael F. Goodchild of the University of California, Santa Barbara, Robert D. Sack of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Peter Haggett of the University of Bristol (Foreign Honorary Member), and geographer/historian William Cronon of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

All are members of the Anthropology/Archaeology/Sociology/Demography/Geography section except William Cronon, who is a member of the History section.

For more information on AAAS, visit www.amacad.org. ■

AAG to Participate in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Program

The AAG was recently selected to be a participant in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Institutional Leadership Program for 2006-09. Through this program, the AAG will gain access to Carnegie's resources and expertise in the area of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) to assist geography programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, while introducing other disciplines to the AAG's work with the Geography Faculty Development Alliance (GFDA), Enhancing Departments and Graduate Education (EDGE) in Geography, Healthy Departments, and other related initiatives for higher education. Team members will include Michael Solem, Beth Schlemper, Teresa Dawson, Kenneth Foote, and Mick Healey.

SoTL promotes efforts to bridge the gap between teaching and research through reflection and rigorous research methods focused on teaching practices, pedagogy, and student learning in order to professionalize teaching within various disciplines. The first meeting of CASTL program participants will be November 8, 2006.

For more information about the CASTL Leadership Program, please visit the Carnegie Foundation's website at www.carnegiefoundation.org. ■