From Idea to Reality: The AAG’s Developing Regions Membership Program

In 2006, I posed the question, “Is it Time for an AAG Developing Regions Membership Program?” in this column (AAG Newsletter, December 2006). Since that time, with the concurrence and support of AAG officers and the Council, the AAG has worked hard to develop a conceptual approach and a workable process for how such a program might be structured, financed, and implemented. Today, I am pleased to be able to update that earlier column by transforming it from a speculative proposal to a concrete announcement of a new, subsidized AAG membership program for geographers from developing regions of the world who wish to join the AAG.

While the AAG has long advocated providing greater support to and increasing scholarly exchange with geographers from the poorest regions of the world, the lack of financial resources has limited our ability, as an association, to implement such initiatives broadly. However, the AAG’s financial foundation is now strong and growing, and as a result I believe we can afford to share some of our membership benefits with those around the world who do not currently have the resources to access our publications, meetings, research programs, and other membership benefits. A summary of the new program, which is in effect now, follows below.

Summary of the Program

Geographers from and living in developing regions, and with an income of less than $25,000 per year, are now eligible for AAG membership at the deeply discounted rate of $20 per year. The AAG developing regions membership category includes all regular AAG member benefits, except that publications are provided only in digital format. The membership benefits include, among others, the following:

• Online access to AAG publications, the Annals of the Association of American Geographers, The Professional Geographer and AAG Newsletter
• Eligibility to participate in AAG research grants and awards programs
• Reduced registration fees (member rates) at the AAG Annual Meeting and other AAG-sponsored meetings
• Reduced rate on other third party geography journals offered by the AAG
• Reduced prices on AAG publications (according to normal individual membership benefits)
• Optional hard copy journals or newsletters, for small incremental fee to cover cost of shipping only
• Participation in AAG Specialty Groups and Listservs

Determining eligibility for participation in this new membership program, of course, requires a definition of which countries comprise “developing regions” and would therefore be eligible to participate. Several organizations, including the United Nations and the World Bank, generate economic data and national poverty rankings based on fairly widely accepted criteria, generally per capita income. These rankings form useful starting points, however imperfect, for beginning the program. The AAG has used World Bank gross national income (GNI) per capita data to arrive at a broad classification of developing regions. A listing of eligible countries based on these criteria is available on page 8 of this Newsletter, and also on the AAG Website. While it is important that we consider this question of classification carefully, we should not let the impossibility of arriving at the perfect definition of developing regions prevent us from moving forward at all.

Everyone Benefits

The AAG’s Developing Region Membership Program will benefit not only those geographers from developing regions who wish to participate, but will also benefit our

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Visiting Scholar at the AAG

The AAG welcomes Anna Carrabetta, a visiting scholar from Italy, to the AAG for the Spring of 2008. Anna holds a PhD in human geography from the University of Pavia and Viterbo, with a focus on historical-cultural landscape studies.

During the last few years Anna has undertaken extensive research concerning park stewardship in Italy, and has identified several areas of need and opportunity for enhancing management of parklands. She currently is conducting research in both Europe and the United States, attempting to connect theoretical approaches to concrete actions for addressing pressing management needs for national parks. Thanks to the Del Monte Bank Foundation and its Ivano Becchi Professional Grant, she has received funding to collaborate with the AAG in Washington, DC this year.

Anna stated that the main goal of her current research project is “to reach a rather comprehensive idea of what is the state of the art in the application of GIS in U.S. National Parks. In this sense the AAG represents an outstanding example of commitment. The senior AAG staff and many of its members have been involved in this particular field of study for a long time, and I look forward to the opportunity to work together with Dr. Richardson and others at the AAG on this research.”

The AAG is pleased to host Dr. Carrabetta, who also holds a Masters Degree in Cultural Geography Research from the Royal Holloway University of London, as a visiting scholar. Anna plans to attend the AAG Annual Meeting in Boston, and looks forward to discussing her ideas with geography colleagues from around the world.

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How You Can Help

The implementation of a new program of this scale is a large and complicated undertaking, involving the development of new AAG infrastructure for international outreach, materials creation and distribution, language translation, website development, and communications. The AAG has established a tax-deductible Developing Regions Membership Fund, to help fund the infrastructure and staff needed to support the new program and also to provide financial grants for memberships for those developing regions geographers for whom even $20 may not be affordable. A contribution for infrastructure or memberships to this Fund can have a far-reaching impact. A donation of only $100, for example, would support five student members from Latin America for one year. A $1,000 contribution could support AAG membership for ten geography faculty members from Africa for five years.

AAG members can also help by informing geographers in developing regions of the new program, and perhaps also by offering to sponsor memberships directly for colleagues, former students, research collaborators, and others who may be interested. AAG Specialty Groups, especially those with a regional focus on a developing region, can play an important role in helping to get the word out about the new program, and also perhaps by sponsoring colleagues from your region of interest.

The AAG already has developed brochures in four languages (Spanish, French, Portuguese, and English) describing the Developing Regions Members Program, and plans more of these in many other languages, including Chinese and Arabic, as funds become available. A Specialty Group may wish to support additional flyers in these or other languages, and also might help with the translations. Copies of these flyers are available from the AAG in hard copy or as a digital .pdf file for members who wish to distribute them to colleagues and friends in developing regions.

For more information on this new program, or to join the AAG as a Developing Regions member, visit the AAG website at www.aag.org. I look forward to working with you to help build the AAG’s new Developing Regions Membership Program in the years ahead.

Doug Richardson
drichardson@aag.org
AAG Developing Regions Membership Program

Eligible Countries*

Afghanistan  Ecuador  Madagascar  Serbia
Albania  Egypt, Arab Rep.  Malawi  Seychelles
Algeria  El Salvador  Malaysia  Sierra Leone
American Samoa  Equatorial Guinea  Maldives  Slovak Republic
Angola  Eritrea  Mali  Solomon Islands
Argentina  Ethiopia  Marshall Islands  Somalia
Armenia  Fiji  Mauritania  South Africa
Azerbaijan  Gabon  Mauritius  Sri Lanka
Bangladesh  Gambia, The  Mayotte  St. Kitts and Nevis
Belarus  Georgia  Mexico  St. Lucia
Bhutan  Guatemala  Moldova  Sudan
Bolivia  Haiti  Mongolia  Suriname
Bosnia and Herzegovina  Honduras  Myanmar  Swaziland
Botswana  Hungary  Namibia  Syrian Arab Republic
Brazil  India  Nepal  Tajikistan
Bulgaria  Indonesia  Nicaragua  Tanzania
Burkina Faso  Iran, Islamic Rep.  Niger  Thailand
Burundi  Iraq  Nigeria  Timor-Leste
Cambodia  Jamaica  Northern Mariana Islands  Togo
Cameroon  Jordan  Oman  Tonga
Cape Verde  Kenya  Pakistan  Turkey
Central African Republic  Kiribati  Palau  Turkmenistan
Chad  Korea, Dem Rep.  Panama  Uganda
Chile  Kyrgyz Republic  Papua New Guinea  Ukraine
China  Lao PDR  Paraguay  Uruguay
Colombia  Latvia  Peru  Uzbekistan
Comoros  Lebanon  Philippines  Vanuatu
Congo, Dem. Rep  Lesotho  Poland  Venezuela, RB
Congo, Rep.  Liberia  Portugal  Vietnam
Costa Rica  Libya  Romania  West Bank and Gaza
Côte d'Ivoire  Lithuania  Russian Federation  Yemen, Rep.
Croatia  Macedonia, FYR  Sao Tome and Principe  Zambia
Cuba  Senegal
Djibouti
Dominica
Dominican Republic

*The AAG Developing Regions Membership Program is available to members living in these countries, and who have an annual income of less than $25,000 (U.S. equivalent).

Interested geographers may obtain information and join the AAG online at www.aag.org. We look forward to working with you to support geography in the years ahead.
AAG Developing Regions
Membership Program

(See column on page 2 for more information)

Programa de Membresías de la AAG para Regiones en Desarrollo

La AAG (Asociación Americana de Geógrafos) ha establecido una nueva categoría de membresía para geógrafos que residen en regiones en desarrollo. Los geógrafos de y que viven en regiones en desarrollo, con ingresos anuales menores de $25,000, son ahora elegibles para inscribirse en la AAG por una cuota de membresía bastante reducida de $20 al año. La membresía en la categoría de Regiones en Desarrollo incluye todos los beneficios regulares de membresía de la AAG, excepto que las revistas y los boletines informativos se proporcionan en formato digital en línea. También existe la disponibilidad de copias impresas de las revistas pagando únicamente el costo de envío. Visite www.aag.org/membership para inscribirse.

Programme d’adhésion à l’AAG pour les régions en voie de développement

L’AAG (Association of American Geographers) a créé une nouvelle catégorie d’adhésion pour les géographes résidant dans les régions en voie de développement. En effet, les géographes de ces régions ou vivant dans ces régions et dont le salaire annuel est égal ou inférieur à 25 000 $ peuvent dorénavant s’inscrire à l’AAG selon un tarif réduit de 20 $ par an. La catégorie Régions en voie de développement comprend tous les avantages de l’adhésion normale à l’AAG, exception faite que les journaux et les bulletins sont fournis en ligne en format numérique. Les exemplaires en format imprimé sont également offerts en option pour un prix modique qui permet de couvrir les frais d’expédition. Pour devenir membre, consultez www.aag.org/membership.

Programa de Associação de Regiões em Desenvolvimento da AAG

A AAG estabeleceu uma nova categoria de associados para geógrafos que residam em regiões em desenvolvimento. Geógrafos originados ou que moram em regiões em desenvolvimento, com uma renda anual inferior a US$25.000, agora qualificam-se para associar-se à AAG pagando a anuidade bastante reduzida de US$20. A associação na categoria de Regiões em Desenvolvimento proporciona todos os vantagens que os associados normais da AAG recebem, com a exceção de que os periódicos e boletins informativos são fornecidos em formato digital on-line. Periódicos e boletins impressos podem ser obtidos mediante o pagamento do custo de envio. Visite www.aag.org/membership para associar-se.