

**AAG Newsletter
of the
Association of American
Geographers**

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USPS 987-380 ISSN 0275-3995

The AAG Newsletter ISSN 0275-3995 is published monthly with July/August combined, by the Association of American Geographers, 1710 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009-3198. The cost of an annual subscription is \$25.00. The subscription price is included in the annual dues of the Association. Not available to non-members. Periodicals postage paid in Washington, DC. All news items and letters, including job listings, should be sent to the Editor at the address below or to newsletter@aag.org.

All Newsletter materials must arrive at the Association office by the 1st of the month preceding the month of the publication. This includes job listings. Material will be published on a space available basis and at the discretion of the editorial staff.

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Sleepless in Seattle and Soon on Sabbatical

This will be my last *From the Meridian* column for the next six months, as I leave for my sabbatical in early May, just days after wrapping up what was another wonderful AAG Annual Meeting in Seattle, which I hope you all enjoyed. During my time away I will be conducting some personal research as well as helping to strengthen international collaborations for the AAG. I would like to thank the AAG Council for offering this sabbatical opportunity.¹

I plan to spend two months of the sabbatical in Europe attending a few geography conferences and meeting with several universities and geographical societies, as well as resting up a bit. Following that I will travel extensively for two months in China as a visiting professor at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and also will be spending one month lecturing at Peking University. I also look forward to continuing to develop a number of ongoing AAG initiatives with the Geographical Society of China and with university geography programs across China.

During my absence, Dr. Michael Solem will be in charge of the AAG Meridian Place office and he will be ably assisted by senior AAG staff members Candida Mannozi and Teri Martin. Michael and I have been working closely with the entire AAG staff to plan for good

continuity in the AAG's operations during my absence, and I am confident that the AAG will continue to move forward well during the next six months.

Speaking of the AAG's staff, I want to thank all of them for the extraordinary effort that they put forth in creating another great AAG Annual Meeting this April in Seattle. As in recent years, attendance was very strong, with over 7,300 geographers, geoscientists, GIS specialists, government representatives, businesspeople, professors, students, and others convening at the Washington State Convention Center and nearby Sheraton Hotel. AAG members and AAG Specialty and Affinity Groups organized a total of 1,316 sessions encompassing 5,248 papers,



2011 AAG Honorary Geographer Barry Lopez (L) is welcomed by AAG Executive Director Doug Richardson.

posters, and panels, 15 local and regional field trips, and nearly 20 workshops. The recent trend toward increased international attendance at the AAG Annual Meeting continued, with approximately 27% of attendees coming from countries other than the U.S. As in past years, Canada, the U.K., and Germany were especially well-represented, and this year we welcomed well over 100 geographers from China. In total, geographers from 59 countries participated. As is customary, overseas attendees were formally greeted at an International Reception held in the Exhibit Hall on Thursday evening. During this festive event, geographers from around the world discussed common interests



Matt Paskus of Western Washington University looks over the top entries from the AAG's new photo contest.

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in teaching, research, and service while browsing the booths of over 60 exhibitors. Long-time participants included Esri, USGS, Routledge Publishing, and Klett International. Newer exhibitors included Google and Amazon Web Services.

Highlights of this year's conference included two featured session tracks: "Space-Time Integration in Geography and GIScience" and "Geography and the Humanities." The space-time symposium consisted of nearly 60 sessions exploring recent advances in and research needs of space-time integration, modeling, and analysis. The opening plenary presented current research trends by prominent theorists and pioneers in space-time GIScience and technology research from the U.S., China, and Japan. Presentations within the "Geography and the Humanities" track engaged interdisciplinary topics including literature, history, philosophy, popular culture, performance art, architecture, and photography and their relation to place, space, landscape, cartography, and other aspects of geography. As part of this track, David Lowenthal, Professor Emeritus of Geography at University College London, delivered a plenary, and renowned author Barry Lopez was honored as the AAG's Honorary Geographer for 2011.

The 2011 AAG Presidential Plenary, "Geography in the Changing Worlds of Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges," explored geography's future in the context of the changing role of the university in society. Organized by AAG President Ken Foote, the panel included Duane Nellis, Maresi Nerad, and Orlando Taylor. Past President Carol Harden's address "Framing and Re-Framing Ques-

tions of Human-Environment Interactions" built upon on Mel Marcus' 1979 AAG presidential address. Harden's presentation was followed by a tribal welcome of AAG attendees led by Cecile A. Hansen, Chairwoman of the Duwamish Tribe.

After a tense week of Congressional debates over the budget we were very relieved to see our many colleagues from the federal government join us in Seattle! Timothy Trainor, chief of the U.S. Census Bureau's Geography Division, discussed efforts to collect, review, and update geospatial data for Census 2010 and the many ways in which geographers are engaged throughout the agency's activities; Myron Gutmann, Assistant Director of the National Science Foundation's Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE), introduced NSF SBE 2020, an initiative to set new research directions at NSF for 2020 and beyond; and representatives from many other federal agencies and departments appeared in a variety of other sessions.

As part of the AAG's continuing efforts to develop new and exciting offerings for our members, several activities debuted at the 2011 Annual Meeting. On Wednesday, faculty "career mentors" generously volunteered their time to join AAG staff in the Jobs in Geography Center, providing free advice, guidance, and information to current and prospective job seekers in an event sponsored by the EDGE (Enhancing Departments and Graduate Education) Project. The AAG's ALIGNED Project launched a "Geography in Focus" photo competition to celebrate geography and geographers. Nearly 200 photographs were submitted in three categories with

the winners receiving cash prizes. (View the winning submissions on our website at www.aag.org/cs/photocompetition.) Finally, the AAG organized two panel sessions to address current events in Japan, North Africa, and the Middle East. These late-breaking news panels introduced an initiative aimed at giving members the flexibility to organize sessions on emerging events after the abstract submission deadline. We are pleased to report that all of these new initiatives were successful, and we hope to integrate similar events into future annual meetings.

The paragraphs above provide just a taste of the many exciting events, sessions, and activities from the 2011 AAG Annual Meeting. We've included here just a few photos of conference highlights to illustrate some of the special moments that took place.

We thank all of you for making this year's conference a great success, especially the members of the Local Arrangements Committee and the conference volunteers. We hope you will join us for the next AAG Annual Meeting, to be held in New York City, February 24-28, 2012. We look forward to seeing you there. ■

Doug Richardson, Joy Adams,
and everyone at AAG

¹Foote, Kenneth. (2011). "A Sabbatical for Doug Richardson." *AAG Newsletter*, 46(1), 3, 5.



Virginie Mamadouh of the University of Amsterdam listens to an audience question during the AAG's "Late Breaking News" session on the Arab World.



USGS senior scientist Brian Atwater presented on the recent earthquakes and tsunamis in Japan.



The AAG display booth remained a popular stop for conference-goers throughout the meeting.



Editors and authors (L to R) Phil Govedare, Martin Hogue, Jim Ketchum, Sarah Luria, Karen Kemp, Peta Mitchell, Michael Dear, and Doug Richardson (not shown) were featured in a session announcing the release of a new book exploring geography and the humanities, published by Routledge.



The Presidential Plenary, "Geography in the Changing Worlds of Higher Education," included (L to R) Duane Nellis, organizer Ken Foote, Orlando Taylor, and Maresi Nerad.



David Lowenthal received a standing ovation following his address, which opened the geography & humanities track of sessions.



Paul Bartel of the U.S. State Department presented on the challenges of providing humanitarian aid in different countries.



Mei-Po Kwan (seated, second from left) welcomed guests at the awards luncheon, where she received AAG Distinguished Scholarship Honors.



The China Data Center drew large crowds in the popular Exhibit Hall.



Duane Marble (L) with AAG Marble Awardees Joanna Merson (M) and Rheannon Brooks (R).



Sandra Poppenga discusses her work with a crowd of onlookers in the Poster Exhibit.



Professor Bala Dogo, Kaduna State University, Nigeria attends the 2014 AAG Annual Meeting in Seattle, Monday, April 12.

CREDIT: JOHN WATSON RILEY



Ken Foote joins past president Carol Harden (L) in welcoming AAG Presidential Achievement Award recipient Patricia Gober (R).



Myron Gutmann of the National Science Foundation discussed next generation research opportunities.



The backdrop of Puget Sound provided a pleasant setting for the conference.



Incoming AAG President Audrey Kobayashi with AAG Executive Director Doug Richardson.