

AAG Newsletter
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Creating an International Encyclopedia of Geography

I am pleased to announce that after careful discussion by the AAG Council, Executive Committee and Publication Committee, the AAG will undertake one of the most ambitious and potentially far-reaching publication projects in the recent history of the discipline of geography. This will be a fifteen-volume work, to be published in both hard copy and online, tentatively entitled *The International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment, and Technology*.

This four to five year project will engage geographers and geographic societies around the globe, and its editors and contributors will reflect the international and interdisciplinary nature of our discipline. The sheer scale of this undertaking, both in terms of its length, depth, and international scope has not, to my knowledge, been attempted before.

In-depth entries of up to 10,000 words will allow key topics and concepts in geography to be analyzed and presented in ways which recognize their inherent complexity. Interactive online extensions to supplemental material and resources will enhance the value of the *Encyclopedia* to the researcher. The scope and range of the publication will enable a much fuller discussion of the multiple subdisciplines and perspectives of modern geography than is typically the case in such endeavors, and will also permit the engagement of inter-related ideas and topics from other closely aligned fields.

Scope and Vision of the Project

The goal of the project is to create the most comprehensive and authoritative in-print and online resource covering a field broadly defined to include:

- human geography
- physical geography
- geographic information science and systems
- study of the earth
- study of the environment

Our vision is that this resource will become the first and foremost location for all those

needing scholarly, authoritative information about the field for decades to come. Initial publication will be both in print and online.

The International Encyclopedia of Geography will be available to a potentially worldwide audience who will have a comprehensive, accurate and regularly updated account of the field at their fingertips. The level of information will appeal to the advanced undergraduate on through to top scholars in the field. It will provide accessible introductions to basic concepts as well as sophisticated debates in contentious areas.

Where appropriate, it will bring perspectives from across the spectrum ranging from science, social science and the humanities to bear on the topics it explains and explores. We also plan to encourage co-authorship by collaborative teams of human and physical geographers to provide comprehensive coverage of cross-cutting topics.

In sum, we intend to provide a serious, comprehensive, scholarly, in-depth, peer-reviewed overview and analysis of the field for an inter-disciplinary audience of scholars, graduate students, advanced undergraduates, and other interested researchers. Our goal is to establish, regularly update, and maintain *The International Encyclopedia of Geography* as the world's leading reference resource for the field, one that genuinely engages the international academic community.

Structure and Process

The International Encyclopedia of Geography will contain approximately 5,000,000 words, or 9,000–10,000 printed and bound pages in 15 volumes, including an index. Over 1,000 illustrations and color photographs will also be included. The AAG, through an Editor-in-Chief and an international editorial team, will be responsible for ensuring that the entries are relevant, accurate and consistent and, in so doing, ensure that the *Encyclopedia* as a whole, and each of the entries, is of a high quality. At least two peer-reviewers will assess each entry to ensure that it conforms to well-established

Continued on page 4



Richardson

From the Meridian from page 2

standards of scholarly publication, and fairly and adequately presents the state of the field for the subject matter.

In consultation with others, the AAG will select an experienced and distinguished editorial team, which will direct the overall project and lead the way in developing a taxonomy that knits together the research in the field and provides balanced and comprehensive coverage. The core editorial team will consist of an Editor-in-Chief and 4-6 other Core Editors, each of whom will work with 6-8 Subject-Matter Section Editors who represent relevant subfields and will guide 40-50 entries each.

After considerable care has been taken to finalize the taxonomy of the entries and the choice of contributors, the first drafts would be commissioned. When reviewed and finalized, they should provide a state-of-the-art analysis and discussion written in an accessible style, in keeping with the aims of a definitive reference work. In addition to the entries themselves, we anticipate including an editorial introduction, timescale of key developments in the field, lexicon by subject, and index.

I have already appointed an interim project manager to provide a single point of contact for the Editor-in-Chief, the Core Editors, the

Section Editors and the Contributors, and to oversee an online interactive manuscript submission and peer review process. The project manager will reside within the AAG headquarters office, and also will assist with project administrative matters.

The International Encyclopedia of Geography will be published in conjunction with Wiley-Blackwell, with whom the AAG has recently concluded extensive negotiations and a publishing agreement regarding the project. Distribution of the *Encyclopedia* will explicitly reflect the international scope of the project.

Call for Participation

Significantly, as AAG President Ken Foote recently pointed out, *The International Encyclopedia of Geography* "will be an influential work for years to come as well as an important community-building project within the discipline, both nationally and internationally." As such, please give careful thought to those leading geographers around the world we might encourage to apply for core editorships to help lead this project. We will need a highly knowledgeable and experienced core editorial team with broad perspectives, international vision and good connections across the discipline. We will also seek to

engage younger editors and contributors who are working at the cutting edges of new directions in geography, including those who can address the changing nature and diversity of our discipline.

There will be ample opportunity for very broad participation by the geography community in this landmark project. As we move forward over the next few months with the initial organizational steps, I encourage you to offer your suggestions for candidates for leading editorial roles in the project, or also to indicate your own interest in being considered as a contributing author or an editor. Please submit your ideas or comments to Miranda Lecea (mlecea@aag.org), AAG's interim project manager for the *Encyclopedia*, and she will document and pass these on as appropriate. A special informational and discussion session also is scheduled for the AAG Annual Meeting in Seattle for those who wish to learn more about the *The International Encyclopedia of Geography*, or to offer ideas or other input. I look forward to working together with you on this most engaging project in the years ahead. ■

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