

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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Reluctantly Transitioning to the Inevitable: Online Publications

All AAG publications are now available both online and in hard copy print. For several years, the AAG Council has been examining whether to continue to produce both the hard copy and online versions of some publications such as the *AAG Newsletter*, the *AAG Guide to Programs in Geography*, and journal book reviews.

It also has been evaluating options for holding AAG elections online rather than by paper ballot only, and for transitioning AAG's annual meeting programs from paper books to interactive online meeting programs for use on computers and mobile hand-held devices. Recently, the AAG Council has passed resolutions addressing several of these publications and programs, and these decisions are summarized below.

AAG Annual Meetings

The AAG will begin offering online electronic versions of its bulky Annual Meeting Program book, for use on mobile hand-held devices and laptops, beginning in 2013 at the AAG Los Angeles meeting. The program will also still be available in printed program books as before, for those attendees who wish to have the hard copy version in Los Angeles. In future years, based on the experience in Los Angeles, a decision will be made whether to continue with both the paper print version and the online version of the program, or to move to online only.

The AAG Guide

The *Guide to Geography Programs in the Americas* and *AAG Handbook and Directory of Geographers* has long-been a useful tool for students, faculty, and geographers throughout the world. This year we are pleased to announce that in an effort to make the *Guide* more widely available to our membership, the 2011-2012 edition of

the *Guide* will now be published also as an online publication, access to which will be free for all AAG members.

Published annually for the past 43 years, the *Guide* has evolved from its early editions, as the *Guide to Graduate Programs in the U.S. and Canada*, to include bachelor and associate degree programs. In 2005, it was expanded once again, this time to incorporate Latin American institutions, and became the *Guide to Geography Programs in the Americas*.



Richardson

The new 2011-2012 *Guide* describes a total of 108 academic institutions throughout the Americas known to offer a doctorate in geography. The volume also contains information on 79 institutions in which the master's is the highest degree offered, and 266 that offer bachelor's degrees in geography. Departmental listings offer such useful information as degree requirements, curricula, faculty qualifications, program specialties, financial assistance, and degrees completed. The *Guide* also lists information on government agencies, private firms, research institutions, and related organizations that employ geographers. The *AAG Handbook* and the *Directory of Geographers*, which have been included in the published *Guide* since the early 1990s, are invaluable sources in themselves, and are also a part of the new online edition of the *Guide*.

AAG members can now access the *AAG Guide* online by visiting www.aag.org/publications, and login with your member username and password. Participating departments with listings in the *Guide* will also be provided free online access for all faculty and all geography students to use, via a departmental username and password.

Limited hard copies of the *Guide* will still be printed and be available for purchase

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this year at http://www.aag.org/aag_book_store. Arrangements for print-on-demand copies of the *Guide* will also continue to be available in future years. Online copies of the *Guide* will also be updated more frequently, and will be archived annually. For questions regarding accessing the *Guide* online, please contact Megan Overbey at moverbey@aag.org.

AAG Newsletter

The Council recently passed resolutions directing the AAG to begin transitioning the AAG *Newsletter* content to a set of interactive and interrelated online communication vehicles. This transition will occur within the next year, and will make AAG news and op-eds, as well as Jobs in Geography listings, available on a far more timely basis, and enable wider and more in-depth coverage of news about our discipline. A great deal of the *Newsletter* information is already conveyed online via the AAG Smartbrief, AAG Geograms, the AAG website news section, AAG's online Jobs in Geography listings, and other channels. Multiple online means of communication will be developed to convey the news and other information currently contained in the hard copy *AAG Newsletter*.

AAG Journals

There are no plans to discontinue the hard copy versions of the AAG's flagship journals, the *Annals of the AAG* and *The Professional Geographer*. Currently, all AAG members automatically receive both hard copy and online access to our leading AAG journals. While some members feel that these journals eventually will go online only, that time is not here yet, and I don't see it happening in the near future.

However, those members who wish to receive their AAG journal subscriptions "online only" may already elect to do so on an individual basis. Many AAG members have now chosen this option, for personal convenience or due to concerns about

impact on the environment of printing and mailing the hard copy issues. If you wish to receive your AAG journals online only, rather than both online and hard copy, you may do so by logging on to your AAG website profile, and checking the box at the bottom of the page to opt out of receiving paper copies of the AAG journals. Or you may simply contact AAG membership director Adam Thocher at athocher@aag.org, or by phone at 202-234-1450, and he can make the arrangement for you.

The AAG Review of Books

The AAG Council has also passed a resolution to include AAG journal book reviews in a new online AAG publication, *The AAG Review of Books*, which will contain scholarly book reviews as formerly published in the *Annals of the AAG* and *The Professional Geographer*, along with reviews of significant current books related more broadly to geography and public policy and/or international affairs.

As mentioned above, the AAG's flagship journals will continue to be published both in hard copy and online. Book reviews will be referenced in the hard copy versions of the *Annals* and *The PG*, but the reviews themselves will move to and will be available only in the new online companion publication, *The AAG Review of Books*, beginning in 2013. A great deal of discussion by our journal editors and the AAG Council went into this decision, which was not made lightly. Overriding considerations included the opportunity to include many more worthy geography books for review, and the ability to publish these reviews in a timelier manner. In addition, it is also hoped that the new *AAG Review of Books* will reach a much broader interdisciplinary readership, as well as make important geographical contributions to policy and international affairs.

AAG Elections

The 2013 AAG Election also will be conducted online, rather than with paper ballots only as in the past. The AAG has been thoroughly researching online election software systems for some time now, and we have narrowed the options to two companies that provide these systems. We are currently testing each of these two finalist online voting systems, and evaluating factors such as security, cost, ease of use for voters, and flexibility for use in multiple types of AAG elections, including potentially for AAG regional divisions or by other AAG entities as well. Before implementing this new voting process, the AAG will provide training and orientation materials for members, which will be distributed well in advance of the election. An option will still be provided for any member to receive a paper ballot should that be needed. Based on the experience of many of our peer organizations, we hope this move also will increase participation by AAG members in the annual AAG elections for officers and councillors.

The AAG Council recognizes that questions of online vs. paper hard copy publications are often controversial and that strong opinions and good valid arguments are represented on both sides of the debate. I would like to emphasize that the AAG Publications Committee and the AAG Council has approached these decisions with a great deal of thought, research, and input from the membership.

Please bear with us as we continue to transition AAG publications and administrative functions online over the next few years, as this process is complex. We are confident that over time you will experience many benefits from this accommodation to the new digital publishing world, as well as a wistful sense of loss that I do share with many of you. ■

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From the Meridian columns are archived at www.aag.org/publications.