Welcoming International Geographical Societies to New York

One of the greatest pleasures of a sometimes grueling travel schedule is the opportunity to meet with my counterparts and colleagues at other geographical societies. I always try to find time to meet with them, to share information and news regarding geography, to discuss possible collaborations, and when possible to participate in their annual meetings.

This year in New York City all geographers in attendance will have the opportunity to welcome dozens of leaders of geographical societies from around the globe. A special session will feature a series of brief summaries of the status of geography in other countries from top officials of their national geographical associations. This kaleidoscope of international geography will provide a venue for leaders of international associations to interact with one another, and with AAG meeting attendees as well. This special session, entitled “Snapshots: Geography in the World Today,” will be held from 2:30 – 6:20 p.m. on Sunday, February 26, 2012 in the Nassau B room of the New York Hilton Hotel, and will be moderated by Ken Foote, AAG Past President. Please join Ken, me, and our international guests for what promises to be a fascinating exchange on the status of geography worldwide.

During my sabbatical this past year, I was able to meet with many and varied geographical societies throughout Europe and Asia. Many of these societies now will be working together with the AAG on ongoing projects, such as the International Encyclopedia of Geography, and on preparations for a geography presence at the decadal UN Sustainable Development Conference (also known as Rio+20), to be held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro. We welcome the participation of all other societies that may be interested in these activities.

New Collaborations with China

As part of a two-month visiting professorship at the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), I was fortunate to be able to attend the annual meeting of the Geographical Society of China (GSC), held in Urumqi (Wulamuqi) in Xinjiang Province, as well as to work with many others to establish and solidify multiple collaborative initiatives between the AAG and leading Chinese geographical institutions, including the GSC, the CAS, and many university geography departments throughout China.

These collaborative projects and programs encompass geographic research, international education, publications, specialty scientific meetings, larger international conferences, and academic exchanges. An ad hoc GSC-AAG Liaison and Coordination Committee has been established to help coordinate, sustain, and further develop and expand these collaborations. Its initial members include eight leading geographers from China and the US, Zhou Chenghu (CAS), Yu Lizhong (President of East Normal China University), Liu Weidong (CAS), Zhang Guoyou (CSG), Michael Solem and Douglas Richardson (AAG), Mei-Po Kwan (OSU), and Alexander Murphy (U-Oregon). Initial co-chairs of the committee are Yu Lizhong and myself. These joint projects are cross-cutting and designed to produce progress for geography in both countries, and to foster broader personal and professional interaction among individual geographers from the US and China.

The AAG and the Geographical Society of China will formalize these current collaborative activities through the signing of

Continued on page 4
Don Mitchell, Distinguished Professor of Geography at Syracuse University and author of a number of influential publications on space and social justice, including The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space, and Frances Fox Piven, professor of political science and sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center who has throughout her career combined academic work with political action, and who has received both career and lifetime achievement awards from the American Sociological Association. AAG Executive Director Douglas Richardson will provide welcoming remarks.

AAG Chairs’ Symposium

For the 2012 Annual Meeting in New York, AAG Past President Ken Foote has organized a half-day symposium on “Developing Effective Strategic Plans and Program Reviews,” scheduled from 8:00 a.m. to 11:40 a.m. on Saturday, February 25. This symposium focuses on strategies for developing strategic plans as well as responding to department and program reviews. Although listed in the conference program as two separate panels, the two have been organized together as a single event to allow ample time for presentations, panel discussions, and small group breakouts. Organizers are Ken Foote, Stuart Atten, Ines Miyares, Benjamin Otori-Amoah, and Dan Shrubsole. This symposium will be held in the Mercury Ballroom on the third floor of the Hilton Hotel. The annual Department Chairs’ Luncheon immediately follows.

International Reception

A special reception to welcome all attendees of the 2012 Annual Meeting will be held in the conference Exhibit Hall on Saturday, February 25, from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. An opportunity to see old friends and meet colleagues at the outset of the AAG Annual Meeting, attendees will also have the opportunity to survey the many exhibit booths and speak with exhibitors. Free drink tickets are provided in registered attendees’ conference welcome packets, available at conference registration.

Exhibit Hall

The always popular Exhibit Hall is a vital part of the AAG Annual Meeting displaying the latest publications in geography, tools in teaching, field research, graphic applications, computer modeling, and data collection and analysis, and the most recent technical advances in cartography, GIS, and GPS. The Exhibit Hall will be located in the Rhinelander Gallery on the second floor and Americas Hall I on the third floor of the Hilton Hotel. It will open on Saturday, February 25, at 9:30 a.m. and stay open through 9:30 p.m., and will be open on Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Monday from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

AAG Atlas Award

Dr. Mary Robinson, a world-renowned advocate for human rights, former President of Ireland (1990-1997), and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, will receive the AAG Atlas Award and deliver an address on climate justice and international efforts to combat climate change, most recently at the COP17 in Durban. Her address, “Mapping the Future of Climate Change” will follow presentation of the Atlas Award by Douglas Richardson, AAG Executive Director, and AAG President Audrey Kobayashi. This event will be held on Saturday, February 25, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in Sutton Parlor Center, second floor of the Hilton Hotel.

Human Rights Panel

Featuring Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Nicholas Kristof of The New York Times, Salil Shetty, Secretary General, Amnesty International, and Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, this panel will discuss themes surrounding human rights, social justice, and the role that media plays in reporting on and bringing light to these issues. Douglas Richardson will provide opening remarks on the AAG’s Geography and Human Rights Program and will moderate this session with introductions by AAG President Audrey Kobayashi and Jessica Wyndham, Associate Director of the Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights, and Law Program, AAAS. The session will be held on Tuesday, February 28, from 10:00 a.m.

From the Meridian continued from page 2...