

2009 Annual Report to the Association of American Geographers Council

Biogeography Specialty Group (BSG)

1) Mission Statement

The mission of the Biogeography Specialty Group is to promote interactions between biogeographers, stimulate active research and teaching development in biogeography, and facilitate the exchange of ideas.

2) 2008-9 Dues

Dues for 2008-9 were \$7.50 for regular members and \$5.00 for students.

3) Board of Directors

President: Lori Daniels, University of British Columbia

Secretary-Treasurer: Taly Drezner, York University

Executive Board Member: Colin Long, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

Executive Board Member: David Butler, Texas State University-San Marcos

Executive Board Member: Michelle Goman, Cornell University

Executive Board Member: Henri Grissino-Mayer, The University of Tennessee

Graduate Student Representative: Jacquelyn Gill, University of Wisconsin - Madison

Newsletter Editor: Joy Nystrom Mast, Carthage College

4) Accomplishments

- **BSG Sponsored Sessions**

This year, 45 sessions were sponsored or co-sponsored by the BSG at the national AAG meeting in Las Vegas.

- **Website**

Thank you to John Kupfer for serving as the webmaster for the AAG-BSG webpage.

The new BSG domain is www.biogeographer.org.

- **BSG Geogram Discussion Forum:**

Communications among BSG members is usually by email through the AAG's discussion forum. The AAG will be updating this web-based system this year.

- **New Graduate Representative**

Thank you to Jacquelyn Gill for her service as student representative. Jacquelyn did a great job putting together a successful and informative panel session, '*Biogeography in the Field: A Panel Discussion for Grad Students and Early Career Biogeographers*'. The BSG provides \$500 to the graduate student representative on the board for support for travel to the AAG annual meeting.

- **BSG Newsletter**

Thank you to Joy Mast for the smooth and effective transition as she has completed her first year as editor of the newsletter.

- **2009 Parsons and Cowles Awards**

Thank you to David Butler for organizing, and thanks to all the judges.

Congratulations to Dr. William (Bill) Baker, University of Wyoming, the recipient of the 2009 James J. Parsons Distinguished Career Award. "Bill is a landscape ecologist and biogeographer who has made and is still making an outstanding contribution to our understanding of disturbances and landscapes. His research has tremendous impacts on not only the field, but many practicing academic biogeographers and professional ecologists."

The Henry Cowles Excellence in Publishing in Biogeography for 2009 was awarded to David M. Cairns, Charles W. Lafon, John D. Waldron, Maria Tchakerian, Robert N. Coulson, Kier D. Klepzig, Andrew G. Birt, and Weimin Xi for their publication entitled "*Simulating the reciprocal interaction of forest landscape structure and southern pine beetle herbivory using LANDIS*" published in *Landscape Ecology*.

- **Student Research Grant Awards**

Thank you to Henri Grissino-Mayer and Colin Long for organizing, and all of the reviewers for their good critical comments. The 2009 research grants (announced in May 2009) were awarded to:

Masters:

- ❖ Yanan Li (University of Tennessee) \$500

Ph.D.:

- ❖ William Flatley (Texas A.M University) \$1000

- **Student Presentation Awards**

Thank you to Michelle Goman for organizing, and thank you to all of the judges. The winners of the 2009 competition in Las Vegas (announced in April 2009) were:

PhD Paper presentation award:

- ❖ Evan Larson (University of Minnesota) \$100

Masters Paper presentation award:

- ❖ Joshua Wixom (West Virginia University) \$100

Poster award:

- ❖ Maria Caffrey (University of Tennessee, Knoxville) \$50

- **BSG Elections**

Thank you to Colin Long for organizing the election. The new BSG board members starting July 1, 2009 are:

- ❖ Lesley Rigg, President (Northern Illinois University)
- ❖ Gabrielle Katz, Board member (Appalachian State University)
- ❖ Amy Hessel, Board member (West Virginia University)
- ❖ Stockton Maxwell , Graduate student representative (West Virginia University)

- ❖ In addition, Colin Long and David Butler will be continuing their two-year board positions. Thanks go to out-going board members Michelle Goman, Henri Grissino-Mayer, Jacquelyn Gill, and Lori Daniels for their service.

- **BSG Socials**

The BSG co-sponsored the annual physical geography party held in the conference hotel during the national AAG meeting. The BSG is responsible for organizing the physical geography reception at the 2010 AAG meeting in Washington DC. Lori Daniels, Linah Ababneh, David Cairns and Stockton Maxwell volunteered to organize this event.

- **Future Directions**

BSG members are invited to share their hopes for the future of the specialty group and their concerns. How might the Biogeography Specialty Group move into new growth and better serve our membership?

Discussion of a biogeography plenary session during the 2010 AAG meeting

- there was general support and a recommendation to identify a scientist working in the field of biogeography and is based in the Washington, DC region
- a call for nominations for speakers will be made to all BSG members via the email discussion form

Feedback on the format for the student paper competition

Michelle Goman requested feedback and received the following comments on the current format and special session for the student paper competition:

- coordinate with other specialty groups to avoid overlap in the timing of these sessions
- send advance announcements for the competition
- honor students by putting the abstracts on line at BSG website

Topics for 2010 panel session for graduate student professional development

Jacqueline Gill led a discussion to identify possible topics for next year's panel, including: advocacy ethics, publishing, interacting with media, teaching in the field, and active learning

Journal Submissions

George Malanson encourages people to submit to Geography Compass is a new journal to provide review papers geared toward teaching, Articles are on a commission basis; unsolicited papers are also welcomed.

The Professional Geographer is encouraging biogeography submissions, especially from early career faculty and grad students. The journal has increased the number of color images that may be submitted and increased the size format of the journal.

Binghamton Geomorphology Symposium

- Binghamton Geomorphology Symposium will be held at Virginia Tech this year and members of the BSG are invited to participate

5) Membership and Participation

According to the list provided the AAG as of March 2009 the BSG membership was at 441. There are currently 184 student members and 257 non-student members in the Biogeography Specialty Group.

6) Financial Report

Thank you to Taly Drezner for serving as BSG Treasurer. From March 2008 to February 2009 we paid out \$3386.00 and collected \$2540.00 in dues, paying out \$846.00 more than we took in. As of February 2009, we had a balance of \$2896.51. Note that the AAG has been encouraging specialty groups to spend incoming dues and not carry large balances from year to year, so we have given more awards in the past few years. To avoid overspending, the board has made the following changes to the funding for student awards and other contributions this year:

- Doctoral and Master's paper presentations - \$100.00
- Poster presentation - \$50.00
- Doctoral Research grant - \$1000.00
- Master's Research grant - \$500.00

In addition, the BSG provides \$500.00 to the graduate student representative on the board to support travel to the AAG annual meeting. The BSG contributed \$200.00 toward the 2009 Physical Geography reception; in past years we have contributed \$500.00.

7) Suggestions for Council

The BSG appreciated the Council following the 2007 suggestion to attempt to reduce scheduling conflicts between business meetings of specialty groups with similar interests and overlapping memberships. In addition, we appreciate the efforts of the AAG staff to continue to improve the web-based discussion forums. To improve communications with all BSG members, especially new members, we strongly encourage Council to adopt an "opt-out" instead of an "opt-in" model for participation. This model would ensure all specialty groups members are enrolled and receiving messages through the discussion form and individuals would have the option to withdraw if they do not want to receive the announcements and postings.