

Geography of Religions and Belief Systems (GORABS)
2004 - 2005 Annual Report
May, 2005

I. GORABS

The central objectives of GORABS are to encourage and advance the study of the geographical dimensions of religious phenomena and belief systems. This includes, but is not limited to, the study of spatio-religious aspects of human behavior, socioeconomic and political issues, material culture, gender role, and human-environment relations from a religio-geographical perspective.

GORABS intends to achieve its objectives by organizing scholarly paper presentations and discussion of sessions at the professional meetings, developing strategies to facilitate teaching the geography of Religions, publicizing information about GORABS, establishing contact with scholars in other related disciplines, and by seeking funding for research pertaining to the geography of religions.

II. 2004 - 2005 GORABS Specialty Group Dues: \$5.00 (Student \$ 1.00)

III. 2004 - 2005 GORABS Specialty Group Officers:

Chair:

Michael P. Ferber
West Virginia University
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304) 838-0760

Secretary / Treasurer:

David Rutherford
Ph.D. Graduate Researcher
Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education
Southwest Texas State University
601 University Drive
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Phone: 512.245.1823
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Previous Chair:

Darrel L. McDonald
Dept. of Political Science and Geography
Steven F. Austin University

Box 13045 SFA Station
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(936) 468-6605
dmcdonald@sfasu.edu

Board Members:

Ed Davis (2006)
Elizabeth Leppman (2005)
David Hurford (2005)
Robert Stoddard (2006)
Daniel Olsen (2005)

IV. 2003-2004 Accomplishments.

1. New Officers:

At the 2005 Denver Meeting the following officers were elected:

Chair – David Rutherford

Secretary / Treasurer – Ed Davis

Board Member – Cathy Carter
Board Member – Dan Olsen
Board Member – Shankari Patel

Graduate Student Member – Lisa Jordan

Nominating Committee:
Michael Ferber (Chair)
David Hurford
Elizabeth Leppman

2. Creation of Journal

The 2004-2005 board initiated an Electronic Journal with the title: *Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems*. The Mission statement states: *Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems* seeks to forward the geographic study of religion and belief systems through the publication of high-quality peer-reviewed articles and book reviews showcasing research frontiers, methods and methodologies, pedagogy, and relevant advances in complimentary disciplines. The publication schedule will be one issue per year to start. A template is available at <http://gorabs.org/journal/index.htm>. Call for papers will be distributed within a few weeks. Sections include 1) full length articles. 2) scholarly essay, 3) comment, exchange, and debate. 4) reviews. Suggestion was discussed for an “Alternative Voices” section that would contain articles and perspectives from other disciplines besides geography.

3. AAG Sessions

The Specialty Group sponsored three sessions at the Philadelphia meeting.

4. David Sopher Award

Cathy Carter won the 2005 David Sopher award for her paper "Heaven on Earth: The Shakers and Their Sapce."

5. Robert Stoddard Award

The first recipient of the Robert Stoddard Award for distinguished service and contributions in geography of religions and belief systems is Robert Stoddard.

V. Membership Participation.

According to the AAG report membership as of May 5, 2004 included a total of 159 members.

VI. Financial Report.

The GORABS savings account held at the Slippery Rock University Federal Credit Union has a balance as of April, 2004 of approximately \$3297.42.

Addendum: Minutes from the 2005 GORABS Specialty Group Meeting (unapproved):

GEOGRAPHY OF RELIGIONS AND BELIEF SYSTEMS (GORABS)
SPECIALTY GROUP OF THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN GEOGRAPHERS

BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 6, 2005
DENVER ANNUAL MEETING

Call to Order – Mike Ferber

Members in Attendance

Mike Ferber (current chair)\
David Rutherford (current secretary/treasurer)
Darrell MacDonald (past chair)
Carol Prorok
Dan Olsen
Cathy Carter
Ed Davis
Simon Potter
Shankari Patel

Minutes from 2004 Meeting Mike Ferber)

Approved (unanimous)

Financial Report (David Rutherford)

Accounts at Slippery Rock University Credit Union	
Account	Current Balance
Savings	\$2,323.84
Checking	\$505.58
Dues check still to deposit	\$468.00
Total balance	\$3,297.42
Interest earned	\$22.36
Actions since 2004 business meeting	
2004 Sopher award payment (7/12/04)	\$250.00
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Report of GORABS activities for the year

- Sessions at 2005 Annual Meeting
 - Diffusion of religions, belief systems, and ways of life (Organizer and Chair: Simon Potter). Session had much participation
 - Scaling geographies of religion (Organizer and Chair: Mike Ferber). Session had much interest and participation.
 - From Walden Pond to the space shuttle Columbia: Sacred space in the Americas (Organized by Mike Ferber; Chair Darrel MacDonald).
- Creation of Online Journal
 - Major activity of the year for GORABS
 - Journal title: *Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems*
 - Mission statement: *Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems* seeks to forward the geographic study of religion and belief systems through the publication of high-quality peer-reviewed articles and book reviews showcasing research frontiers, methods and methodologies, pedagogy, and relevant advances in complimentary disciplines.
 - Publication schedule: One issue per year to start
 - Template available at <http://gorabs.org/journal/index.htm>
 - Call for papers will be distributed within a few weeks
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Old business

- Sopher Award winner for 2005 – Cathy Carter
- Stoddard Award
 - Creation of this award was approved last year. The award is for recognition of distinguished service and contributions in the geography of religions and belief systems.
 - Motion was proposed that the first recipient of the award be Robert Stoddard. Carol shared that Bob never allowed anyone in this sub-discipline to be “invisible,” but instead encouraged others to share and pursue their work. She relayed the story of how Bob encouraged her when she was a master’s student.
 - Motion was passed unanimously

Motions and discussion from the floor

- Question was raised, Why is there such poor attendance at this GORABS business meeting this year?
 - Attendance is somewhat low this year generally.
 - Everyone should more actively talk to and recruit attendees in sessions.
 - Each person on the board should make it a point to intentionally recruit someone.
 - Business meeting next year could include a short talk by a well know scholar (possible David Ley)
- What do we want people to do as members of GORABS?
 - Share ideas
 - Share their research

- Network – share resources with one another
- Field trip leadership at AAG in Chicago
- Consideration of ways to increase participation during the Annual Meeting in 2006 in Chicago
 - Develop interesting field trip ideas. Communicate over the Listserv about this.

New business

- Elections were held for offices that are open this year – unanimous results follow:
 - David Rutherford – automatically moves from Secretary/Treasurer to Chair.
 - Ed Davis – elected as Secretary/Treasures
 - Board position (1) – Cathy Carter elected to serve second year of an open position
 - Board position (2) – Dan Olsen
 - Board position (3) – Shankari Patel
 - Graduate student member – Lisa Jordan (provisional pending acceptance)
- Nominating committee for next year – same as last year except Darrel (previous past chair) will retire and Mike Ferber (current past chair) will take his place.
- Ideas for 2006 sessions.
 - Place of the geography or religions and belief systems within the overall discipline of geography

Discussion of the papers that emerged from the “Approaching Geography of Religion and Belief Systems” session in 2004 and are scheduled to be published in the Annals.