

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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Reaching Out to Latin American Geographers

The AAG has long welcomed geographers from around the world to its ranks, to its meetings, and to its journals. International exchange among geographers worldwide continues to grow, and approximately 20% of the attendees at the AAG Annual Meetings are now from countries other than the U.S.

This broad international interaction is not only welcome, it is indispensable to the success and intellectual depth of all our activities.

In this spirit, I'm pleased to announce that the 2005-2006 edition of the AAG's *Guide to Geography Programs*, which currently encompasses geography programs in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, will expand its scope to include listings for Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Over the years, this publication has evolved from providing information about geography programs in the U.S., to including information about Canadian programs, to encompassing the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. We will now make information about geography programs throughout all of the Americas readily available, and doing so will also enable a title change to the AAG *Guide to Geography Programs in the Americas*. This seems to me a most appropriate title for a publication of the Association of American Geographers.

This expansion of information will enable AAG members to locate colleagues throughout the region for developing research projects, for applying to the Fulbright scholars programs, and for other forms of cooperation. It will also enable U.S. and Latin American students to discover and compare graduate programs from all of the Americas.

What else might the AAG do to reach out to and welcome Latin American geographers in warm and meaningful ways? There are many possibilities:

- It would be an easy matter to include Spanish-language translations of the abstracts of our articles in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* and *The Professional Geographer*. I propose that we consider publishing translations of these journal abstracts beginning in 2006.

- The AAG could also provide translations into Spanish of some of the resources available on the AAG website and in the AAG *Newsletter*. These Spanish language resources would not only be an important step forward in strengthening ties with our Latin American colleagues, but also for reaching out to Spanish speaking geographers within Hispanic communities in the U.S. As



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such, they represent a resource for enhancing diversity within our discipline in the U.S. and Canada.

- The AAG might consider organizing, together with Latin American geographers and related groups, joint sponsorship of meetings in Central America and South America during the next year or two in order to encourage scholarly exchange and explore ways of cooperating further.
- The AAG could, perhaps in conjunction with the Latin American Specialty Group (LASG), encourage the establishment of a Spanish-language e-community listserve on the AAG website for discussion of issues related to geography in and of Latin America, or of geography in general.
- Perhaps a limited number of sessions at the AAG Annual Meeting could be conducted in Spanish.
- The AAG might consider the special promotion of AAG Gift Memberships to Latin American colleagues and the prospect of lower-cost membership not only for Latin America, but also for lower per capita GNP countries around the world.

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of these and other organizations that are employing geographic technologies in unique ways.

A Booming Downtown Residential Real Estate Market

The 2000 census was the first since the 1950 census to show an increase in Chicago's population. This population growth was just one sign of the prosperity that the city has experienced from 1995 through 2005. Recent population growth has been paralleled by a residential housing boom that has included the conversion of former downtown office spaces to residential units and new high-rise apartment buildings and condominiums that have sprouted up in and around downtown. The boom has been especially dramatic in the South Loop a neighborhood in the Near Southside Community Area. One example of this type of construction is the Central Station redevelopment project that occurred on former Illinois Central rail yards. This expansive real estate boom has coincided with gentrification and it is difficult to find neighborhoods in the city where prosperous newcomers have not invaded. Meanwhile, the city's poverty areas have

contracted spatially as a result of this new real estate investment, but also because of the demolition of Chicago's notorious high-rise public housing buildings that began in 1996.

The AAG is planning field trips that will explore the full variety and context of this real estate boom. A gentrification field trip will highlight the spatial magnitude of the process as well as the displacement issues that have occurred as a result. Evidence of the remarkable real estate boom can be seen on a short walk from the conference hotel as well.

Immigration and Ethnicity

To suggest that immigration and ethnic diversity is new to Chicago since 1995 would be to ignore all of the city's history. However, a subsequent newsletter piece will articulate some of the changing dynamics and patterns of Chicago's ethnic makeup since the AAG's last meeting there in 1995. Topics to be covered will include the degree to which multiethnic neighborhoods have expanded or contracted and the question of whether classic patterns of segregation have reemerged. The piece will examine the tension that gentrification has brought

some of the city's more stable ethnic enclaves. The geographic dimensions of the growth in new immigrants (Latino and Asian) will also be described as well as the continued growth in the more firmly established immigrant groups.

The AAG already has plans to visit Pilson, a Latino neighborhood that has seen new pressure from gentrification, and many other field trips are sure to emerge that will show that Chicago is still a city of neighborhoods.

So as you plan your trip to Chicago, save time to explore these and many other facets of a fascinating city. Bring your walking shoes, and depending on the weather, you may even consider renting a bicycle to tour the greenways of Chicago that begin two blocks from the conference hotel. You can also venture into some of Chicago's ethnic neighborhoods for unique dining experiences, or even plan a journey from downtown to the edgeless exurbs (but if it is during rush hour, definitely consider taking one of the Metra rail lines).

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The AAG would clearly want to work closely with and welcome ideas and input from individual geographers throughout Latin America, as well as related groups such as the Congress of Latin Americanist Geographers (CLAG), the AAG Latin American Specialty Group, the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH) of the Organization of American States (OAS), and the International Geographical Union (IGU), among others, in our outreach efforts.

Of course, extending a warm welcome



and encouraging scholarly exchange with our geography colleagues in Latin America does not mean a lesser interest in international collaboration with other regions. The AAG will continue to invite new partnerships and encourage strong existing interaction with geographers throughout the world, including those from

Europe, South Asia, East Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. We also have plans to expand the International Reception for all international attendees at our AAG Annual Meetings. International exchange brings rich new perspectives, ideas, and experiences into

our geographic conversation, and benefits our research and teaching broadly. Your comments and feedback on these ideas would be appreciated. *Saludos!*

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Geography programs in Latin America and the Caribbean are invited to list in the *AAG Guide to Geography Programs in the Americas*. To receive further information or for questions contact guide@aag.org. Note that this year, there is no cost for Latin American program listings in the *Guide*.