

AAG Newsletter of the Association of American Geographers

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From Idea to Reality: The AAG's Developing Regions Membership Program

In 2006, I posed the question, "Is it Time for an AAG Developing Regions Membership Program?" in this column (*AAG Newsletter*, December 2006). Since that time, with the concurrence and support of AAG officers and the Council, the AAG has worked hard to develop a conceptual approach and a workable process for how such a program might be structured, financed, and implemented. Today, I am pleased to be able to update that earlier column by transforming it from a speculative proposal to a concrete announcement of a new, subsidized AAG membership program for geographers from developing regions of the world who wish to join the AAG.

While the AAG has long advocated providing greater support to and increasing scholarly exchange with geographers from the poorest regions of the world, the lack of financial resources has limited our ability, as an association, to implement such initiatives broadly. However, the AAG's financial foundation is now strong and growing, and as a result I believe we can afford to share some of our membership benefits with those around the world who do not currently have the resources to access our publications, meetings, research programs, and other membership benefits. A summary of the new program, which is in effect now, follows below.

Summary of the Program

Geographers from and living in developing regions, and with an income of less than \$25,000 per year, are now eligible for AAG membership at the deeply discounted rate of \$20 per year. The AAG developing regions membership category includes all regular AAG member benefits, except that publications are provided only in digital format. The membership benefits include, among others, the following:

- Online access to AAG publications, the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *The Professional Geographer* and *AAG Newsletter*

• Eligibility to participate in AAG research grants and awards programs

- Reduced registration fees (member rates) at the AAG Annual Meeting and other AAG-sponsored meetings
- Reduced rate on other third party geography journals offered by the AAG
- Reduced prices on AAG publications (according to normal individual membership benefits)
- Optional hard copy journals or newsletters, for small incremental fee to cover cost of shipping only
- Participation in AAG Specialty Groups and Listservs



Richardson

Determining eligibility for participation in this new membership program, of course, requires a definition of which countries comprise "developing regions" and would therefore be eligible to participate. Several organizations, including the United Nations and the World Bank, generate economic data and national poverty rankings based on fairly widely accepted criteria, generally per capita income. These rankings form useful starting points, however imperfect, for beginning the program. The AAG has used World Bank gross national income (GNI) per capita data to arrive at a broad classification of developing regions. A listing of eligible countries based on these criteria is available on page 8 of this Newsletter, and also on the AAG Website. While it is important that we consider this question of classification carefully, we should not let the impossibility of arriving at the perfect definition of developing regions prevent us from moving forward at all.

Everyone Benefits

The AAG's Developing Region Membership Program will benefit not only those geographers from developing regions who wish to participate, but will also benefit our

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Visiting Scholar at the AAG

The AAG welcomes Anna Carrabetta, a visiting scholar from Italy, to the AAG for the Spring of 2008. Anna holds a PhD in human geography from the University of Pavia and Viterbo, with a focus on historical-cultural landscape studies.

During the last few years Anna has undertaken extensive research concerning park stewardship in Italy, and has identified several areas of need and opportunity for enhancing management of parklands. She currently is conducting research in both Europe and the United States, attempting to connect theoretical approaches to concrete actions for addressing pressing management needs for national parks. Thanks to the Del Monte Bank Foundation and its Ivano Becchi Professional Grant, she has



Dr. Anna Carrabetta, a visiting scholar from Italy, discusses her research on national parks recently outside the AAG's Meridian Place Offices in Washington, DC.

received funding to collaborate with the AAG in Washington, DC this year.

Anna stated that the main goal of her current research project is "to reach a

rather comprehensive idea of what is the state of the art in the application of GIS in U.S. National Parks. In this sense the AAG represents an outstanding example of commitment. The senior AAG staff and many of its members have been involved in this particular field of study for a long time, and I look forward to the opportunity to work together with Dr. Richardson and others at the AAG on this research."

The AAG is pleased to host Dr. Carrabetta, who also holds a Masters Degree in Cultural Geography Research from the Royal Holloway University of London, as a visiting scholar. Anna plans to attend the AAG Annual Meeting in Boston, and looks forward to discussing her ideas with geography colleagues from around the world.

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current membership. Greater international networking, information sharing, and interaction is becoming increasingly common—and necessary—in the work and lives of most geographers, both in so-called "developing regions" and in wealthier countries. As the AAG membership and the attendance at our annual meetings have grown in recent years, international geographers' participation in the activities of the AAG has grown at an even faster rate than that of domestic U.S.-based geographers. With over 6,000 attendees already registered for the AAG Annual Meeting to be held in Boston this April (2008), nearly 27% are from countries other than the U.S., up from approximately 20% a few years ago. Yet most of our current international membership and participation is still from the wealthier countries in Europe, Asia and North America.

The AAG developing world membership category recognizes the obvious: that vastly different financial resources are available in different parts of the world. This new category of membership, while recognizing the more extreme financial needs of geographers in the very lowest income countries, is not wholly inconsistent with the AAG's current general membership fee approach for the U.S. and other wealthier countries, which also recognizes income level differences among individual members in establishing membership fees.

And, of course, enabling greater participation of geographers from the "developing regions" of the world in activities and networks of the AAG also enriches the experience, research, and scholarship of the AAG and its current members in myriad ways, providing both personal and professional benefits to us far exceeding the financial subsidies we might extend to our colleagues in some of the poorest regions of the world.

How You Can Help

The implementation of a new program of this scale is a large and complicated undertaking, involving the development of new AAG infrastructure for international outreach, materials creation and distribution, language translation, website development, and communications. The AAG has established a tax-deductible Developing Regions Membership Fund, to help fund the infrastructure and staff needed to support the new program and also to provide financial grants for memberships for those developing regions geographers for whom even \$20 may not be affordable. A contribution for infrastructure or memberships to this Fund can have a far-reaching impact. A donation of only \$100, for example, would support five student members from Latin America for one year. A \$1,000 contribution could support AAG membership for ten geography faculty members from Africa for five years.

AAG members can also help by informing geographers in developing regions of the new program, and perhaps also by offering to sponsor memberships directly for colleagues, former students, research collaborators, and others who may be interested. AAG Specialty Groups, especially those with a regional focus on a developing region, can play an important role in helping to get the word out about the new program, and also perhaps by sponsoring colleagues from your region of interest.

The AAG already has developed brochures in four languages (Spanish, French, Portuguese, and English) describing the Developing Regions Membership Program, and plans more of these in many other languages, including Chinese and Arabic, as funds become available. A Specialty Group may wish to support additional flyers in these or other languages, and also might help with the translations. Copies of these flyers are available from the AAG in hard copy or as a digital .pdf file for members who wish to distribute them to colleagues and friends in developing regions.

For more information on this new program, or to join the AAG as a Developing Regions member, visit the AAG website at www.aag.org. I look forward to working with you to help build the AAG's new Developing Regions Membership Program in the years ahead.

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AAG Developing Regions Membership Program

Eligible Countries*



Afghanistan	Ecuador	Madagascar	Serbia
Albania	Egypt, Arab Rep.	Malawi	Seychelles
Algeria	El Salvador	Malaysia	Sierra Leone
American Samoa	Equatorial Guinea	Maldives	Slovak Republic
Angola	Eritrea	Mali	Solomon Islands
Argentina	Ethiopia	Marshall Islands	Somalia
Armenia	Fiji	Mauritania	South Africa
Azerbaijan	Gabon	Mauritius	Sri Lanka
Bangladesh	Gambia, The	Mayotte	St. Kitts and Nevis
Belarus	Georgia	Mexico	St. Lucia
Belize	Ghana	Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Benin	Grenada	Moldova	Sudan
Bhutan	Guatemala	Mongolia	Suriname
Bolivia	Guinea	Montenegro	Swaziland
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Guinea-Bissau	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic
Botswana	Guyana	Mozambique	Tajikistan
Brazil	Haiti	Myanmar	Tanzania
Bulgaria	Honduras	Namibia	Thailand
Burkina Faso	Hungary	Nepal	Timor-Leste
Burundi	India	Nicaragua	Togo
Cambodia	Indonesia	Niger	Tonga
Cameroon	Iran, Islamic Rep.	Nigeria	Tunisia
Cape Verde	Iraq	Northern Mariana Islands	Turkey
Central African Republic	Jamaica	Oman	Turkmenistan
Chad	Jordan	Pakistan	Uganda
Chile	Kazakhstan	Palau	Ukraine
China	Kenya	Panama	Uruguay
Colombia	Kiribati	Papua New Guinea	Uzbekistan
Comoros	Korea, Dem Rep.	Paraguay	Vanuatu
Congo, Dem. Rep.	Kyrgyz Republic	Peru	Venezuela, RB
Congo, Rep.	Lao PDR	Philippines	Vietnam
Costa Rica	Latvia	Poland	West Bank and Gaza
Côte d'Ivoire	Lebanon	Romania	Yemen, Rep.
Croatia	Lesotho	Russian Federation	Zambia
Cuba	Liberia	Rwanda	Zimbabwe
Djibouti	Libya	Samoa	
Dominica	Lithuania	São Tomé and Príncipe	
Dominican Republic	Macedonia, FYR	Senegal	

*The AAG Developing Regions Membership Program is available to members living in these countries, and who have an annual income of less than \$25,000 (U.S. equivalent).

Interested geographers may obtain information and join the AAG online at www.aag.org. We look forward to working with you to support geography in the years ahead.



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Programa de Membresías de la AAG para Regiones en Desarrollo

Programme d'adhésion à l'AAG pour les régions en voie de développement

Programa de Associação de Regiões em Desenvolvimento da AAG

A AAG estabeleceu uma nova categoria de associados para geógrafos que residam em regiões em desenvolvimento. Geógrafos originados ou que morem em regiões em desenvolvimento, com uma renda anual inferior a US\$25.000, agora qualificam-se para associar-se à AAG pagando a anuidade bastante reduzida de US\$20. A associação na categoria de Regiões em Desenvolvimento proporciona todos as vantagens que os associados normais da AAG recebem, com a exceção de que os periódicos e boletins informativos são fornecidos em formato digital on-line. Periódicos e boletins impressos podem ser obtidos mediante o pagamento do custo de envio. Visite www.aag.org/membership para associar-se.



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