

**AAG Council Meeting Minutes  
November 7–8, 2015, San Antonio, Texas**

**Present:** Sarah Bednarz, *President*; Glen MacDonald, *Vice President*; Mona Domosh, *Past President*; Melissa Gilbert, *Treasurer*; Thomas Mote, *Secretary*; Douglas Richardson, *Executive Director*; Stuart Aitken, Julie Cidell, Sara Diamond, Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux, J.M. Shawn Hutchinson (via telecon), Richard Kujawa, Patrick Lawrence, Robert Mason, Scott Mensing, Gregory Pope, Susan Roberts, Jeremy Tasch, Susy Ziegler

**AAG Staff:** Candida Mannozi

**Opening of the Fall 2015 AAG Council Meeting**

Bednarz called the meeting to order at 9:01 am on November 7, 2015.

*Adopt the agenda as presented. Moved by MacDonald, seconded by Mensing, approved unanimously.*

Bednarz welcomed returning and new Council members.

The Spring 2015 Council Meeting Minutes were approved by electronic ballot on October 28, 2015. One correction was made to the minutes. Doug Richardson stated that he had abstained on the vote of the approval of minutes. The change was accepted without objection.

**President's Comments**

President Sarah Bednarz shared a number of substantive issues to discuss at this meeting, most of which appear on the approved agenda, and others will be inserted as needed.

**Vice President's Comments**

Vice President Glen MacDonald said he would like to explore a number of issues, including a focus on diversity as broadly as possible to increase inclusiveness in the Association and discipline. He noted that the Association has become the international center for Geography in many regards, but with that comes additional responsibility. He asked how can the Association take advantage of the forthcoming name change and operationalize that in a positive fashion. He will seek ways to increase inclusiveness of professional geographers outside of academic institutions. He also asked how can we be more inclusive to the planners who are part of many Geography departments. He suggested that the Association needs more ways to honor those who have done exceptional work in education and service, as well as research, which could be part of an AAG Fellows program.

**Past President's Comments**

Past President Mona Domosh said that she wants to continue to follow up on issues that she has championed during the past two years. She mentioned inclusiveness as advanced through the curriculum as a central issue. Judith Butler will be recognized as the Honorary Geographer on the first day of the 2016 annual meeting in San Francisco.

**Regional Division updates**

Chair of the Regional Councilors Richard Kujawa said New England - Saint Lawrence Valley Geographical Society (NESTVAL) members asked about fossil fuel investments and other moral issues regarding investment at their annual meeting. Kujawa reported that NESTVAL members asked him to raise the

issue with the Council. He also reported that it appears progress has stalled on the best practices document for regional divisions. Kujawa will write to regional councilors for input. Bednarz announced a new undergraduate degree in Geography at Texas Christian University. Regional councilors will make a full report at the Spring 2016 Council meeting.

### **Student Representative's Comments**

Student Representative Sara Diamond presented a proposal from the Graduate Student Affinity Group (GSAG) to make the student representative a full voting member of Council. The student representative would be elected by the general membership. MacDonald asked how other societies provide student representation. Gregory Pope suggested also including undergraduate students. Diamond responded that the position would be open to any student. Scott Mensing asked about adding regional councilors outside the U.S. if a change were made to the constitution. Diamond said GSAG does not wish to propose the mechanism for election. Pope asked how the nomination process would proceed.

Bednarz will create a task force that will make a recommendation at the Spring 2016 Council meeting. The task force will consist of Diamond, Pope, Julie Cidell, and Patrick Lawrence. Richardson suggested using the Nominations Committee to select an election slate in order to ensure a diversity of candidates.

GSAG also recommended that the AAG Council adopt a set of best practices to guide departments' relationships with graduate students. Richardson said the Association has an ethics statement that addresses some of the concerns, but not all. Mensing, Bednarz and Mote asked about matters on the GSAG list that are beyond the control of departments. MacDonald suggested including an FAQ for grad students that might include some items that are on the list of topics provided by GSAG. Gilbert and Aitken said the document should offer moral authority to the best practices, even if some items are beyond the control of departments. Pope suggested this document also may be directed at graduate schools. Mason suggested the document remain general and aspirational. Bednarz, Gilbert and Pope suggested separating the economic from academic matters within the document.

Bednarz asked that GSAG reconsider the proposal and that she will help to revise and create a set of best practices aligned with existing AAG policy and procedure statements including the statement on ethics. Susan Roberts will assist.

### **Discussion of Data Collection Question**

Bednarz suggested the creation of a consistent data collection template for matters that are important to the discipline, such as issues of contingent faculty, inclusion, etc. The results of the data collection could be provided as a "dashboard" on the AAG website. MacDonald said such data can be used to inform a board, such as the AAG Council, in planning but must be strategic in implementation. Mensing asked how data are collected and vetted now, and he stated that department chairs might contribute more effectively if the findings can be used for program review and other internal assessments. Richardson mentioned the ongoing climate survey. Richardson said AAG websites already summarize data from AAG Guide to Programs and information from new members. Kujawa conducted a similar survey within NESTVAL and will share those questions.

### **Executive Director's Comments**

Executive Director Doug Richardson reported that overall , the AAG is doing very well, and that during the past decade the AAG has built strong research, publishing, diversity, and financial foundations for the AAG and its future.

He also noted that many more membership support programs are now being offered by the AAG than ever before, and that as these programs multiply and expand, they require a great deal more staff time and funding to sustain and operate them. The AAG now provides extensive technical support and accounting services for Specialty Groups and Regional Divisions. The AAG also takes pride in developing many programs that help enhance diversity in the discipline, and indicated that he was particularly pleased that the new on-site child care service was well received at the recent AAG Annual Meeting in Chicago.

### **Consent Agenda**

Bednarz reminded Council members that the Council had agreed by consensus to implement a consent agenda during the Spring 2015 meeting, but had not yet formally approved the use of the consent agenda via a Council resolution.

*Resolved to adopt the practice of having a consent agenda as part of the standard operating procedure of Council meetings. Moved by Domosh, seconded by Gilbert, approved unanimously.*

*Approve the current consent agenda proposed for this Council meeting. Moved by Gilbert, seconded by Dupigny-Giroux, approved unanimously.*

### **STATUS OF THE ASSOCIATION**

#### **Finances**

Treasurer Melissa Gilbert said that there will be a full report from the Finance Committee in the Spring 2016 Council meeting. Former Council members Elizabeth Wentz, Grant Saff, and Tom Maraffa provided a report last spring. The Working Group on Endowment, Investment and Membership Strategies was created as an outcome of their report. The task force included Gilbert, Mensing, Hutchinson, Saff, Maraffa, and Bednarz.

Gilbert presented several slides of financial data, starting with change in net assets of the Association during 1999–2014. She stated that the Association is in good shape financially. The statement of activities and changes in net assets for years ending August 31 for 2013 and 2014 were presented by Gilbert. These statements illustrate the primary sources of revenue to the Association, including publications, annual meetings, membership fees, etc. These statements also illustrate expenses, such as funded projects, recognition, annual meeting, etc., with detail in each category.

Mensing asked about funded projects category. Richardson responded that this category includes mostly research and outreach activities that the Association would want to conduct regardless, and that some of these costs are offset by grant support. MacDonald asked if the cost of some salaries are included in funded projects rather than central administration. Richardson responded that some salaries are assigned to funded projects as appropriate, and that the AAG auditors have regularly complimented the AAG on the fact that the AAG overhead and administrative costs are low compared to most other peer organizations. Aitken asked if the research success of the Association may be at the expense of Association members when competing for grants. Richardson responded that the Association generally applies for grants that are broad-based and cross-cutting, or are strategic in nature. Mason asked about the personnel costs compared to total expenditures. Richardson responded that as is the case in almost all service or professional organizations, personnel costs will be the largest expense category.

Gilbert said that the financial ratios during 2010–2014 illustrate how the reliance on particular sources of income can shift. Royalties have increased and meeting income has dropped in importance. Investment income and grants have fluctuated.

Richardson said investment income has fluctuated more in recent years because new accounting rules affect how investment income is reported. For example, bonds and CDs are now reported at current market value, rather than the full amount of the investment, which is what the AAG actually will receive as we hold bonds and CDs to maturation. This sometimes makes it more difficult to analyze financial positions, if this fact is not understood.

Gilbert reviewed cash and investments by category, earnings by category, as well as individual investments.

#### *Endowment*

Gilbert reviewed AAG's long-standing investment policy, last reaffirmed in 2013. Previous AAG Councils have reaffirmed a conservative investment strategy as well as preservation of principal and purchasing power as primary goals. Gilbert reviewed the resolution from 2008 establishing the Douglas Richardson Endowment for Geography's Future. She indicated a target goal of \$15 million in the endowment, endorsed by Richardson.

Gilbert presented the discussion and recommendations from the AAG Working Group on Endowment, Investment and Membership Strategies from October 5, 2015. Gilbert reported that the Executive Committee discussed socially responsible investing, and the Executive Committee directed staff to determine how other societies deal with socially responsible investment.

Richardson said that the Association is audited every year. He said that the AAG auditors have repeatedly determined that the AAG's internal controls and financial management practices are characteristic of much larger organizations. The AAG auditors have stated that the AAG is in the top 2% of organizations which they audit.

Gilbert presented three recommendations from the working group for consideration by the Council.

*Resolved that the Association's investment adviser be invited to attend the Finance Committee meeting on an annual basis, and that the Treasurer will report back to Council. Moved by Gilbert, seconded by Kujawa, approved unanimously.*

*Resolved that the Executive Committee should begin to discuss the process by which priorities will be identified and decisions made regarding the use of endowment earnings once the fund achieves the target of \$15 million. Moved by Gilbert, seconded by Kujawa, approved unanimously.*

*Resolved that the Association begin to collect data, including information from similar organizations, in order to foster a discussion on socially responsible investments. Moved by Kujawa, seconded by Domosh, approved unanimously.*

#### *New Addendum to Publishing Agreement*

Richardson provided an overview of the terms of the existing Publishing Agreement, which he negotiated in 2006-2007 with Taylor & Francis. Richardson said he exercised care in the original agreement to make sure that the Association has the copyright to the journals and complete editorial

control. AAG journals continue to operate without page charges or illustration fees to authors, and T&F bears the costs of printing and distribution. The existing 10-year AAG Publishing Agreement also provides the AAG with substantial guaranteed annual revenue, but it expires at the end of 2017. The potential loss of this publishing agreement revenue and related benefits was identified by the AAG Council last year as the single biggest challenge to the AAG's future. Richardson described his success over the past year in negotiating and signing a new Publishing Agreement, structured as an Addendum to the current Agreement, which extends many benefits, including financial benefits, during 2018–2028. T&F will also increase the royalty rate in the new Publishing Agreement. Instead of fixed annual increases as in the past, the annual royalty increases will be tied to the Consumer Price Index going forward. Richardson said that this new Agreement will provide a legacy that will ensure the financial future of the AAG and the AAG journals well into the future, through 2028.

Richardson said one of the biggest expenses to operating the journals is mailing. Furthermore, he said that many members have asked why the Association is distributing print journals. The Association will develop a model that would encourage members to receive their AAG journals electronically. Journals will continue to be available in hardcopy to any member who wishes to receive hard copies, as in the past.

Bednarz will ask the Publications Committee to develop a recommendation to encourage members to receive digital journals.

### **Membership**

Hutchinson presented remotely via Skype. He said the total number of Association members was 10,804 at the end of 2014, an increase of over 700 from the previous year. Membership this year appears to be above 2014 numbers. Post-2000 growth has been remarkable, adding about 300 members per year. Growth in membership has continued but has slowed since 2008. Hutchinson identified a loose association between the location of the annual meeting and membership. Hutchinson asked if there is a way to frame membership in a manner to buffer the impact of the annual meeting location. He also asked if the Association can track undergraduate versus graduate student membership. He noted that while the highly progressive nature of the Association dues structure certainly helps lower income members, there still remains a relatively higher burden on lower income classes. Student members have declined by about 60 members per year since 2009, while developing regions members have increased by 36 members per year. Hutchinson showed a decline of 219 members in some income categories of regular members since 2009, and increases in other income categories. He also provided forecasts of total membership using the trends developed from each of the membership categories.

Domosh said the student decline is most concerning. Hutchinson said there are 23,000 reported undergraduate and graduate Geography students in the U.S. and about 18% are members of AAG. Lawrence said a significant amount of drop-off in student memberships appeared to occur in 2013, prior to the Tampa meeting. Richardson suggested that the AAG might enhance opportunities for recruiting undergraduate membership with the formation of an undergraduate student affinity group.

*The Association create an undergraduate student affinity group. Moved by Hutchinson, seconded by Domosh, approved unanimously.*

### *GFDA and Healthy Departments Workshops*

Bednarz said the Geography Faculty Development Alliance (GFDA) will be at the University of Tennessee this summer.

### *AAG Climate Survey*

Richardson said the ongoing climate survey had a good rate of response, but the deadline will be extended to try to encourage additional participation.

### **Publications**

Publications Committee Chair Stuart Aitken said the Publications Committee met regarding two issues that should be considered by Council. The first topic was the review of the journals. He said the evaluation proposed for *GeoHumanities* may be appropriate to apply to all journals. The Publications Committee will receive data from Routledge in the fall, and he proposes to provide reports and feedback to the Council during the spring meeting. Domosh said that it will be difficult to use impact factors to assess new journals as we will not have that information. She asked if the Publications Committee could use rejection or submission rates as measures. Bednarz suggested that the Publications Committee ask Routledge for the data sooner so the committee has time to review and report data from the most recent year at the Spring 2016 Council meeting. Pope suggested to use metrics from Google Scholar to assess new journals. Aitken stated that one important goal is to avoid additional workload on Publication Committee and editors. Aitken asked for Council approval of an annual review of all journals.

*Approve an assessment of the Association journals on an annual basis by the Publications Committee. Moved on behalf of the Publications Committee by Aitken, approved unanimously.*

Aitken said a commentary has recently been submitted to the *Annals of the AAG*, but the practice has been to not publish commentaries in the journal. The issue was referred to the Publications Committee. The Publications Committee agreed that the current policy is appropriate. The Committee discussed publishing commentaries online. The Council considered the publication policy and the potential for publishing commentaries online.

*Resolved that the Annals of the AAG continue the practice of not publishing commentaries in the Annals, but create a visible online web presence for commentaries. Moved by Aitken, seconded by Domosh, approved unanimously.*

Aitken said there is a question among the Publications Committee about whether current sections are anachronistic, and he suggested the sections be reconsidered. He said there are high impact articles about the discipline that are not being published in the *Annals*. Pope said the original concerns that lead to the Environmental Science section remains. MacDonald emphasized the importance of trying to raise the profile of physical geography, but this must be considered in the context of all journals. The discussion will come back to Council in the spring.

### **Communications**

Bednarz mentioned that the Executive Committee discussed the need for high quality, short videos to advertise Geography that could be used by individual departments. Richardson will seek partners to assist with this project.

### **Meridian Place Operations**

#### *AAG online election*

Bednarz and Richardson indicated that members had raised concerns about the practice of candidates engaging with specialty groups during elections. Bednarz asked whether the Nominating Committee should provide guidelines to candidates for election. After Council discussion, Bednarz agreed to

monitor the upcoming elections for discussion in a future Council meeting.

#### *AAG Archives*

Richardson said a gift agreement is in place with the Library of Congress for the AAG Archives and that many AAG archival materials have now been shipped to the Library of Congress. The AAG Executive Committee appointed an Implementation Group to oversee the implementation of the two AAG Council resolutions to consolidate the AAG Archives at the Library of Congress. This group consists of Sarah Bednarz, Ed Ferguson, Mona Domosh, and Doug Richardson. The Implementation Group is looking into options with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to digitize AAG archival holdings there and eventually to move the hard copies to the Library of Congress.

#### *Geographers on Film*

Richardson said there is interest in adding to the collection of Geographers on Film. He said the key is identifying a systematic way for selecting individuals for interviews to facilitate the creation of new films. Bednarz questioned what role the Films would serve and suggesting asking the Archive Committee to explore options so that people can generate interviews that can be uploaded to a website. Roberts suggested the importance in maintaining continuity of the Geographers on Film. Richardson suggested having both a curated and open element.

Council asked the Archive Committee to develop a proposal to continue the Geographers on Film series for discussion at the Spring 2016 Council meeting.

*Resolved that the Council support the recommendation of the Archives Committee to develop a proposal to maintain the Geographers on Film series. The Archives Committee and Association staff should work together to develop this proposal. Moved on behalf of the Archives Committee by Bednarz, approved unanimously.*

#### **Policy and Outreach**

##### *Public Policy Update*

Richardson noted that the AAG is engaged in many Public Policy issues, ranging from geography education funding to scientific and academic freedom issues, described in the AAG Council background information packet for this meeting.

Richardson proposed to send a letter to U.S. Representative Lamar Smith, chair of the Committee on Space, Science, and Technology, in response to the subpoena of NOAA employees. The Council also discussed a possible response to a Texas state law allowing open carry of guns on campus, and by unanimous consensus agreed to sign on to a statement by numerous other academic associations, expressing concern about carrying guns on campuses.

##### *Changes at the National Research Council*

MacDonald raised questions about the sustainability of the Geographical Sciences Committee of the National Research Council. The last staff member supporting this committee has left NRC, and the Committee has been dormant, raising the possibility of the disbanding of the Committee. MacDonald asked how the Association can help maintain the Geographical Sciences Committee. Richardson will meet with Carol Harden, who serves on the Committee. Thomas Baerwald and Richardson will propose names of people who might serve on the Committee. Richardson said that Baerwald has in the past been supportive of NSF funding for Geographical Sciences studies where appropriate. In response to questions about NRC from Pope, MacDonald explained the role of these NRC committees, the

importance of maintaining the Geographical Sciences Committee, and how Committee members are appointed.

#### *National Geographic Society Assets Sale*

Richardson and Bednarz discussed the assets sale and related layoffs at National Geographic Society, but stressed the difference between the National Geographic media sale and the NGS foundation.

#### **AAG Projects and Programs**

Richardson noted that the AAG operates many funded research and outreach projects and programs and referred the Council members to the background information packet for this meeting.

#### *Task Force on Diversifying Curriculum in Geography*

Domosh said the Association has been involved in many activities to diversify the discipline. Minelle Mahtani and Domosh agreed to request a task force with the goal to diversify Geography's curriculum. The task force would be formed from the Enhancing Diversity Committee as well as others named by Mahtani and Domosh.

*Resolved that the Association develop a task force for diversifying Geography's curriculum to be disbanded when its goals are achieved. Moved by Richardson, seconded by MacDonald, approved unanimously.*

#### **CONTINUING AND NEW BUSINESS**

##### **Honors and Awards**

Bednarz recommended the Excellence in Mentoring Award be renamed the Susan Hardwick Excellence in Mentoring Award. Hardwick was the first recipient.

*Rename the Excellence in Mentoring Award to the Susan Hardwick Excellence in Mentoring Award. Moved by Cidell, seconded by Pope, approved unanimously.*

Bednarz and Domosh announced the 2016 Honorary Geographer is Judith Butler. Domosh announced the 2016 Presidential Achievement Awardee is Audrey Kobayashi. Bednarz announced that Michael Goodchild is the 2016 recipient of the AAG Stanley Brunn Award for Creativity in Geography. Bednarz and Richardson announced that the AAG Atlas Award has been postponed for one year. Mote announced that the New Harm de Blij Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Geography Education is still pending.

Bednarz said there will be concrete suggestions for discussion of an AAG fellows program in the Spring 2016 Council meeting.

##### **Annual Meetings**

###### *San Francisco 2016*

Richardson reported that an exciting meeting is expected in San Francisco in Spring 2016. He reminded Council of the three themes for this year's meeting: succeeding in a disruptive environment; Geography of the Anthropocene; and Geography, GIScience, and Urban Health. Roberts raised a concern about the session submission process involving multiple co-organizers.



### *Upcoming Meetings*

Richardson said he will begin the next round of AAG Annual Meeting site evaluations and negotiations for the years of 2020, 2021 and 2022, during the coming year.

### *Related Annual Meeting Topics*

Domosh said onsite childcare was a success and is continuing. In addition to onsite childcare, the annual meeting has a caregivers room. Diamond said the caregivers room was difficult to locate last year.

### **Long Range Plan Update**

Ken Foote presented the long range plan remotely via Skype. He recommended the plan should be reviewed annually once implemented. The plan was circulated widely in the fall and has received some comments, but Foote has not made any additional changes pending action from the Council.

*Resolved to approve the long range plan as presented. Further resolved to thank Ken Foote and the Long Range Planning Committee for their thought, attention and effort on behalf of the Association. Moved by Richardson, seconded by Domosh, approved unanimously.*

### **Committees, Specialty and Affinity Groups**

#### *Committee on Committees Update*

Mote refreshed the Council members on the discussion from the Spring 2015 Council meeting regarding the status of dormant committees. A task force consisting of Mote, Bednarz, Richardson and past Secretary Laura Smith visited this issue in August. The task force determined that the College Geography and Careers Committee, the Government Data and Employment Committee, and the Scientific Freedom and Responsibilities Committee as constituted duplicate activities that are handled by the Association staff. Furthermore, the task force found that the Constitution and Bylaws is needed only on an occasional basis, and should be appointed as an ad hoc committee rather than a standing committee. The four committees have been inactive. The task force recommended that Council sunset these committees. The task force also recommended that International Research and Exchange Committee be changed to a specialty group. Jeremy Tasch said he spoke to the International Research and Exchange Committee chair, and they believe that the Committee should be maintained as a standing committee.

*Council sunset the following four committees: Constitution and Bylaws, Government Data and Employment, Scientific Freedom and Responsibilities, and College Geography and Careers. Moved by Mote, seconded by Richardson, approved unanimously.*

Mote presented the slate of committees from Nominating Committee chair Maria Lane.

*Council accept the election slate from the Nominating Committee. Moved on behalf of the Committee on Committees by Mote, approved unanimously.*

Mote presented the Committee on Committee recommendations for appointment to the Membership Committee.

*Council ratify the changes to the Membership Committee as circulated. Moved on behalf of the Committee on Committees by Mote, approved unanimously.*

### *Specialty and Affinity Groups Update*

National Councilor Chair Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux said that specialty groups were polled for issues or concerns. Dupigny-Giroux said the Disability specialty group and the Public and Private Sector and Retired Geographers affinity groups expressed concern about membership in their written reports.

Dupigny-Giroux said the specialty group chairs raised questions regarding the phone app for meetings during the spring luncheon. A number of issues around the specialty group handbook were raised. They also raised questions about the website and making knowledge community websites more public. They also asked about liability issues when organizing field trips for specialty groups and the organization of posters within poster sessions.

Bednarz shared a request from a group to form a Caregiver Affinity Group (CAG). According to recent correspondence from the CAG group, CAG dues would be used to subsidize caregiving costs for AAG members, and the affinity group would not itself undertake caregiving responsibilities. Tasch said that the correspondence from the CAG, however, indicated that other sorts of care beyond childcare would be covered. Richardson said the proposed constitution for the proposed affinity group would require modifications to align with the correspondence from the organizers, and to address liability issues.

*Approve the Caregiver Affinity Group contingent on their acceptance to changes to their constitution in consultation with Association staff. Moved by Domosh, seconded by Gilbert, approved unanimously.*

### **Council**

The spring Council meeting will be in San Francisco, March 28–29, 2016. There will be no official meeting of the Council on Sunday, March 27, but the Council will meet all day on Monday, March 28, and part of Tuesday, March 29.

### **Closed Session**

Council met in closed session to review the Executive Director's performance and compensation.

### **Necrologies**

The Council discussed the publication of necrologies in the *Annals of the AAG* and asked the Publications Committee to set a policy for necrologies.

*Approve a memorial for Edward Soja that will appear in the Annals of the AAG. Moved by MacDonald, seconded by Aitken, approved 16 yes, 1 no, 0 abstentions.*

### **Editor Interviews and Selection**

The Council conducted interviews, led by Aitken, with candidates for the Nature and Society section and the People, Place, and Region section of the *Annals of the AAG*.

*Select James McCarthy as the Nature and Society editor for the Annals of the AAG. Moved by MacDonald, seconded by Domosh, 3 abstentions, 2 opposed. The motion was approved.*

*Select Nik Heynen as the People, Place, and Region editor for the Annals of the AAG. Moved by Aitken, seconded by Roberts, 4 abstentions, 1 opposed. The motion was approved. [Recorded by Mannozi]*

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Bednarz adjourned the Council meeting at noon on November 8, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,  
Thomas Mote  
AAG Secretary