

AAG Newsletter

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AAG Launches New Website

The Association of American Geographers is pleased to introduce its new feature-rich website, developed during the past year to better meet the current needs of the Association and its members. As AAG membership and annual meeting attendance have grown, our website has become a central point of contact. The site averaged more than 126,000 visits per month during the last year. The increasing reliance of geographers on the AAG's website as a source of information about the association's projects, programs, events, and services means that we have to update our site regularly to ensure that its functionality, content, and technology are current.

A major step toward meeting that goal during our current upgrade was to implement a web-based content management system (CMS) that uses templates and databases to control the site navigation, functions, and content. A content management system is a decentralized tool that gives authorized AAG employees and members direct access to

content on the site, enabling them to update information faster and more easily than before. In turn, members and other visitors receive the most current information.

The new website will make it easier for us to coordinate the AAG's growing constellation of diverse activities, and will allow our members to better manage their membership information, register for the annual meeting and other events, and interact with the AAG's many new programs and projects. Other new tools and resources will enable members from around the world to more easily connect with our dynamic community of scholars, educators, and practitioners. For example, improved discussion forums allow members to meet, network, and collaborate with other geographers and related professionals. These interactive specialty group forums will further facilitate the exchange of ideas across a broad spectrum of interests, disciplines, and regions.

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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.

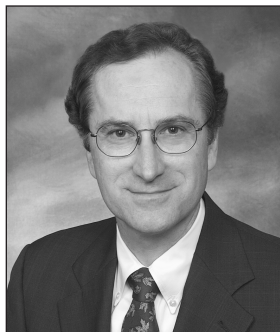
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Postmaster: Send address changes to AAG Newsletter, 1710 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009-3198, or address@aag.org.

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Several of the other enhancements made to the site improve how web pages and materials are found and accessed. A new design aesthetic organizes information visually to make it easier for users to scan for the information they need. Additionally, the navigation throughout the site has been streamlined and standardized to improve speed and accessibility.

An integrated, advanced search engine indexes all content on the site, making PDF, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint files searchable. Advanced options allow users



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to search using wildcards, Boolean searches (i.e., AND, OR, NOT), synonyms, and relevant phrases. The new site structure has also been optimized for search engines, making it more widely available to a broader audience through searches conducted on sites like Google and Bing. The enhanced search results will help increase access to information about the programs and services available from AAG and its members.

Members will have access to password-protected content, like all Jobs in Geography listings, current and back issues of the AAG journals, the AAG Newsletter, membership directory, and specialty group forums. Members can visit the Members Only page to quickly find links to those frequently visited areas.

Members now can also upload and share files with colleagues through a document management module. This tool serves as a central repository, making the exchange of project ideas easier than before.

Having the new CMS in place now means that AAG staff and other contributors will be working over the next six months to develop and expand the content of each major section of the site. For instance, the AAG "Jobs & Careers" section of the website will be thoroughly updated and expanded in the coming

months with job listings, and extensive information about professional development and career planning.

Members can now find detailed information about AAG research, grants, and core programs under the "Projects & Programs" and "Education" sections of the website. Other sections are devoted to key AAG initiatives

supporting the work of geographers in the United States and internationally, as well as services for geographers and academic departments seeking to enhance diversity, obtain disciplinary data in geography, and conduct public outreach activities with the media and with policy-makers.



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The AAG "Publications" section of the website not only provides direct online access to all current and past issues of the AAG journals, but also early access to individual AAG journal articles prior to publication. The "Publications" section will also highlight books published by geographers. Members who have recently published a book are invited to submit information about their new book to be featured on the site.

The changes to the site also brought enhancements to the "Annual Meeting" section. It is now easier to sign up online for field trips, workshops, and other annual meeting activities, even after registering to attend. The processes for submitting abstracts and organizing sessions for the annual meeting are constantly reviewed and improved as members and attendees provide feedback and new ideas.

In addition, several important topical clearinghouse sites, such as the AAG Geography and Human Rights Clearinghouse, the Geography and Climate Change Clearinghouse, the AAG Diversity Clearinghouse, and the Historical GIS Clearinghouse and Forum, provide a central resource and exchange

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forum for both geographers and others around these interdisciplinary topics. Similarly, the new AAG website offers a new enhanced micro-site for the AAG's decade-old My Community, Our Earth (MyCOE) partnership, which is focused on geographic learning for sustainable development. Members are encouraged to contribute to the resources of these special AAG clearinghouse sites.

Our new website is also compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which means that users with physical or visual impairments can use assistive technologies to access AAG web pages. For example, visually impaired users will be able to use screen

readers to retrieve information from the site.

A new AAG Calendar of Events enables our members to search for events of interest to geographers by keywords and dates. The calendar also allows users to save those events directly to their Outlook and Google calendars.

Whenever the AAG publishes a news item to the website, the item is also published automatically as an RSS feed. An RSS feed is a dynamic news feed that can be read off-site using feed readers on mobile devices and other web-based applications like Google Reader. If you wish to subscribe to the AAG

news feed, you can find the "RSS" link on the AAG website home page.

As the site continues to evolve and integrate new functions, the AAG welcomes your input to develop new ideas to improve the site. Members are strongly encouraged to actively engage and submit their feedback through the tools available online. To explore the new features and benefits of the AAG site, visit www.aag.org. ■

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