

AAG Newsletter
of the
**Association of American
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New York City: An International Gathering

The Association of American Geographers 2012 Annual Meeting in New York City broke all previous attendance records with more than 8,670 geographers, GIS specialists, environmental scientists, and other registrants from around the world sharing the very latest in research, policy, and applications in geography, sustainability, and GIScience. Of those attending, thousands, representing approximately 34% came from countries other than the USA, which continues a

steady trend toward increased international participation at AAG Meetings. For comparison, the 2006 meeting in Chicago registered approximately 20% international attendees, while the 1982 meeting in San Antonio had only 59 international attendees, or 2.8% of the registered total.

This year, attendees came from 80 different countries, including 41 nations of developing or emerging economies. The largest participation of scholars from outside of the U.S. came from Canada, the UK, Germany, and China, with strong representation among geographers in developing regions. Many others attending from countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ghana, France, Iran, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Mexico, New Zealand, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Romania, Spain, Tanzania, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, and many more enriched the intellectual and social events throughout the week-long conference.

The AAG celebrated the global character of the association and the meeting with a series of special sessions, entitled "Snapshots: Geography in the World Today," involving presentations by top officials from geographical

societies around the world, the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the AAG and the Geographical Society of China; and an International Networking Reception in the Exhibit Hall. The reception provided an opportunity for attendees to mingle with each other and

to view the 100 booths of exhibitors, while enjoying refreshments. The AAG showcased its many international activities, including the AAG Developing Regions Membership Program which engages eligible geographers and other colleagues from lower income countries of the world with full membership benefits at deeply discounted rates.

The AAG Annual Meeting also featured several diversely themed research tracks and special events, many with strong international dimensions. One major themed track focused on Human Rights and Social Justice, with more than 40 sessions during the course of the conference, beginning with the outstanding Opening Presidential Plenary, "The City Beyond Symbol-



Yanhua Liu (R), President of the Geographical Society of China, co-signs the AAG-GSC Memorandum of Understanding with AAG Executive Director Doug Richardson (L).



Human Rights panelists included (L to R) Jessica Wyndham (AAAS), Ivan Šimonović (UN), Doug Richardson (AAG), Salil Shetty (Amnesty International), Audrey Kobayashi (AAG), and Nicholas Kristof (New York Times).

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ism," organized by AAG President **Audrey Kobayashi**, and concluding with a session on Human Rights on the last day of the meeting, featuring presentations by *New York Times* columnist **Nicholas Kristof**; Secretary-General of Amnesty International **Salil Shetty**; Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights at the UN **Ivan Šimonović**, and a presentation on "Why Geography and Human Rights?" by myself.

In addition, the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and first woman president of Ireland, **Dr. Mary Robinson**, received the 2012 AAG Atlas Award, celebrating outstanding accomplishments that advance world understanding in exceptional ways. Her eloquent and impassioned address, entitled "Mapping the Future of Climate Change" focused on climate justice issues and prospects for international efforts to confront climate change.

Past President **Ken Foote** provided a beacon for geography's future with his engaging address, "Building Community, Changing Culture," and presented this year's AAG Presidential Achievement Award to **Laura Pulido** and **Dawn Wright**. Additional distinguished awards, including AAG Honors, were conveyed during the AAG

Awards Luncheon on the final day of the conference.

Other themes developed for the New York City meeting included International Finance and Economics; Qualitative GIS; Physical Geography and Sustainability;

Geographer **Saskia Sassen**; U.S. Census Director **Robert Groves**; economist **Jeffrey Sachs**, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University; National Science Foundation Assistant Director **Myron Gutmann**; U.S. DOI Assistant Secretary of Water and Sciences **Anne Castle**; and **Michael Arad**, the architect of the National 9/11 Memorial.

The above summary represents only a few of the many exciting sessions and international activities that took place at the 2012 AAG Annual Meeting. Numerous other paper, poster, and panel sessions and presentations highlighted geographic work organized by AAG members and AAG Specialty and Affinity Groups. Field trips, workshops, and a special emphasis on Careers in Geography also greatly enriched

the experience of AAG conference participants. A selection of photographs from the conference follows below.

We thank all of you for making this year's conference a great success and invite you to

attend the next AAG Annual Meeting, to be held in Los Angeles from April 12-16, 2012. I look forward to seeing you there.

Doug Richardson, and everyone at the AAG



Dr. Mary Robinson (L) received the Atlas Award from the AAG's Doug Richardson and Audrey Kobayashi.



Dawn Wright received a Presidential Achievement Award from Ken Foote.

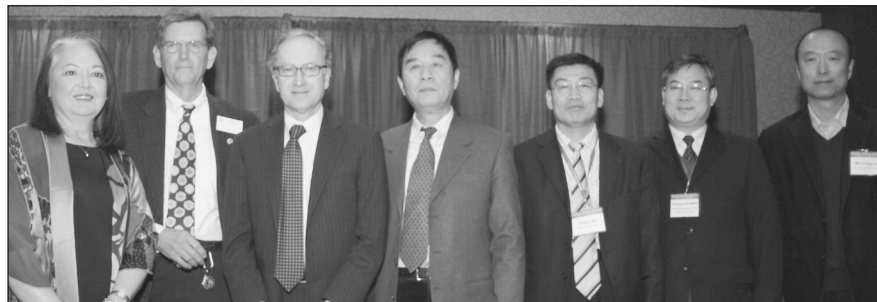


Dr. Robert Groves, Director of the U.S. Census Bureau.



DOI Asst. Secretary Anne Castle (R) with AAG Council Member Marilyn Raphael.

the United Nations; Cyber-infrastructure and Social Networking; Geography and the Humanities; Historical Maps at the New York Public Library; and much more. Wide-ranging plenary addresses were delivered by the AAG's 2012 Honorary



The AAG's Kobayashi, Foote, and Richardson welcomed distinguished guests from the Geographical Society of China (left to right) Yanhua Liu (president), Shi Peijun (vice president), Guoyou Zhang (secretary-general), and from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Weidong Liu (far right).



Robinson greets audience members following her presentation on climate justice and human rights.

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John Agnew (L) welcomes 2012 Honorary Geographer Saskia Sassen (R), who spoke before an overflow crowd.



Jill Ottman (U. Wyoming) accepts congratulations and an NGS atlas from Audrey Kobayashi as a winning Geography Bowl team member.



The AAG's Niem Huynh welcomes a visitor to the AAG booth.



Jiangfan Fu (L), the AAG's new visiting researcher, is welcomed by Mei-Po Kwan (R).



The opening plenary included (front row, L to R) Audrey Kobayashi, Frances Fox Piven, Scott Kurasbige, (back row, L to R) Don Mitchell, Ruth Gilmore, Doug Richardson, and (not pictured) Grace Lee Boggs.



Pulitzer Prize-winning NYT columnist Nicholas Kristof participated in the panel on human rights.



A large crowd attended the 2012 AAG Awards Luncheon in the Hilton's beautiful main ballroom.



Mike Ratcliffe of the Census Bureau engaged passersby with quiz questions selected by a spin of the wheel.



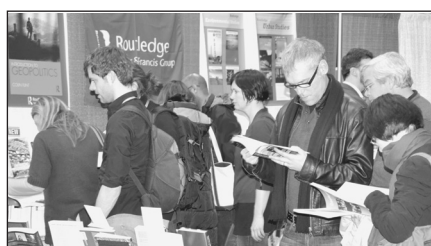
Salil Shetty, secretary-general of Amnesty International, responds to an audience question during the human rights panel.



Architect Michael Arad spoke about his design for the National 9/11 Memorial.



The AAG's Michael Solem was one of many volunteers who provided career mentoring at the JIG Center.



The Exhibit Hall was a popular stop for conference attendees.



Richard A. Walker addresses the audience after accepting AAG Distinguished Scholarship Honors.