

The AAG: Expanding Who We Are

What a pleasure it has been to attend the AAG regional division meetings this year, each with their own culture and traditions. It has been a delight at the meetings to meet friends and colleagues—familiar and new—and a privilege to report on the state of affairs of the Association. The continued strong growth in AAG membership—up from 6,500 in 2000 to over 9,300 at the end of 2005 is a solid testament to the AAG's success in expanding its services to members, and its broadened efforts to promote our discipline to the rest of the world.

The AAG now provides online services for renewing membership (recently adding an option for automatic renewal). Robert Andelman has been serving effectively as AAG Director of Membership and Business Development, so members have a point of contact for questions and concerns. Robert is also working to develop stronger public sector and corporate support for AAG initiatives, one result of which has been an increase in companies and federal agencies exhibiting at our annual meetings. The Meridian Place staff also focuses on rejoining lapsed members and soliciting new members, particularly students. A new category of membership, retired lifetime membership, has been created...a wonderful way to honor your colleagues upon retirement and facilitate their continued involvement with the AAG and geography. Members now have access to electronic communities for posting news and conducting discussion forums through the specialty/affinity groups links on the AAG website.

Meridian Place also provides greater support services for the specialty/affinity groups and for the regional divisions. A new affinity group has been established for the Stand Alone Geographers (SAGE); those who work alone or in small programs or departments at their respective institutions who could benefit from increased visibility in the discipline and in the AAG. The Public/Private Affinity

Group was established to better serve those who apply geographic principles and practices in business, industry, and government. The AAG has created other affinity groups in years past as a home for members who are graduate students, employed in community college, and are retired. The specialty groups continue to provide a focal point for many members and have provided an important and useful home for many of us. The AAG is expanding "who we are" as geographers by inviting greater participation by geographers in Latin America, and by supporting of the Diversity Task Force and Senior Associates Program. AAG Vice President Kavita Pandit is pursuing an initiative to further internationalize the AAG.

Our publications better serve the membership in several ways. The number of pages has been increased in the *The Professional Geographer*. The editors and Managing Editor Robin Friedman, have worked hard to maintain an on-time production schedule. Special features have been added to the *AAG Newsletter*, including the AAG Member Profiles and John Wertman's AAG Washington Monitor column. The journals and *AAG Newsletter* are all now available online to members. A more attractive version of the *AAG Guide to Geography Programs* has been published, and the next issue will be renamed the *Guide to Geography in the Americas* to reflect greater coverage of programs in Latin America. Specialty publications have elevated geography's role in public debate on contemporary issues: *WorldMinds* highlights geographic perspectives on 100 practical problems related to politics, health and education, life in urban areas, global economies, hazards, and environmental change; *Geography and Technology* describes how innovations have changed the scope of geography and kept our discipline well

positioned to examine societal problems; *Geographical Dimensions of Terrorism* includes twenty-seven chapters on terrorism in all its guises...bioterrorism, urban terrorism, strikes on economic targets, and attacks on food and water supplies. Geography is addressing the big problems.

AAG research and outreach projects have been of special interest to members in general and to me personally. The AAG Hurricane Katrina Clearinghouse and Healthy Departments Workshops have been described in earlier issues. AAG Executive Director Doug Richardson, Patricia Solís (Research and Outreach Director) and the Meridian Place staff have enjoyed success in garnering grants from the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S.



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Department of Agriculture, U.S. Agency for International Development, the Ocean Fund and many others to support various initiatives. Funded projects with the Department of Labor, NSF, and GENIP will help satisfy a long-standing need for hard data and more comprehensive, timely information on trends and opportunities for careers in geography. The AAG is playing a key role in bringing geography back to Harvard and Howard universities, among others. The AAG is partnering with other organizations to co-sponsor specialty conferences: Geography and Drug Addiction, Geography and the Humanities, Geography and the Law, Race/Ethnicity and Place, and GIScience. The AAG staff have organized Congressional Briefings on the *State of Democracy* (May 5, 2005) featuring William Clark, and *Building Geographic Management Systems in Government* (June 14, 2005).

The AAG continues to play a leading role in education affairs in geography with a greatly expanded focus on higher education. Space does not permit a comprehensive review of the myriad of

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geographic education projects for K-12, undergraduate, and graduate education, and international collaborative learning. Michael Solem, AAG Director of Educational Affairs, manages a three-year grant from the National Science Foundation, titled "Enhancing Departments and Graduate Education (EDGE) in Geography," to study the process of professional development in graduate geography. Other new educational projects have been funded by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and NASA. The My Community, Our Earth Project: Geographic Learning for Sustainable Development (MyCOE) encourages youth to use geographic tools and concepts to address local issues of sustainability. By participating in MyCOE, young people from around the world can examine and learn more about environmental issues, determine patterns and trends, and propose solutions to the challenges they study.

The AAG Council, Executive Director Doug Richardson, and the Meridian Place staff have set a proactive agenda and have brought energy to so many facets of the AAG. The AAG is positioned to move forward as a leading organization for our discipline. The value of membership in the AAG has increased and the status of the discipline has been elevated... something that helps all of us in academia as well as members in business and government. Because the AAG membership requested it, and maybe because *The World is Flat* (see Thomas Friedman's book by that title), the AAG is expanding "who we are" as geographers by shaping the AAG to be more inclusive and holistic. The AAG is well connected internationally, with practitioners in other disciplines, and with the public and private sector, serving many constituencies with a long-term vision that is on the one hand, ambitious, but on the other hand, fiscally responsible.

It is a good day to be a geographer; I'm proud—as I hope you are—to be part of the AAG. Most of us want to be part of something bigger than ourselves. Consider volunteering for work on AAG committees or standing for election to an AAG office. Nominate qualified colleagues for the same. Contribute to the AAG Advancing Geography Fund, which includes a suite of named funds or for support of AAG outreach, education, and professional development projects. Nominate deserving colleagues for awards and honors. Make connections with the Meridian Place staff to volunteer to work on one or more of the AAG projects mentioned in this column. As Past President Vicky Lawson titled one of her columns last year: "We are all the AAG." Thanks for all you do for geography. ■

Richard A. Marston
rmarston@ksu.edu

Award Deadlines

2006

JANUARY

6. International Center for Advanced Studies scholarships. www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/icas.
10. Peace Scholar Dissertation Fellowships. www.usip.org/fellows.
10. Newberry Library Fellowships in the Humanities, long term. www.newberry.org/research/felshp/fellowshome.html.
15. NSF Regular Research Proposals. www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5410
16. AAG Travel Grants to IGU Meeting. www.aag.org/Grantsawards/igutavel.html.
16. Center for Comparative Immigration Studies Fellowships. www.ccis-ucsd.org/Programs/fellowships.htm.

FEBRUARY

1. SWG Pruitt National Fellowship for Dissertation Research Program. Contact Ruth I. Shirey at rishirey@iup.edu.
1. Community Forestry Research Fellowships. www.cnr.berkeley.edu/community_forestry/.
15. Holberg International Memorial Prize. www.holbergprize.no.
15. NEH Grants for Collaborative Research in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. www.americancouncils.org.
15. NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Proposals. www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5410

MARCH

1. Newberry Library Fellowships in the Humanities, short term. www.newberry.org/research/felshp/fellowshome.html.

1. Internships in Interdisciplinary Watershed Studies. www.wm.edu/environment/REU/Reu_Home.html.

APRIL

1. IREX International Fellowship Opportunities. www.irex.org/programs/policy-connect/application.asp.

MAY

15. Pruitt National Minority Fellowship Program. Contact Ruth I. Shirey at rishirey@iup.edu.

OCTOBER

30. Young Scholar's Prize in Romani Studies. Contact Katalin Kovalcsik, Gypsy Lore Society Prize Competition, Institute of Musicology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Pf 28, H-1250 Budapest, Hungary. ■