

SWAAG NEWSLETTER

Serving members of the Association of American Geographers in Arkansas,
Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas

Vol. 7, No. 1

January 1999

Letter from the Chair

Within recent months I have observed, as have many of my colleagues, some disturbing trends regarding the graphic and cartographic contents of the articles published in the *Annals* and the *Professional Geographer*. Because it is apparent that significant changes will soon occur in the two journals, now may be a good time to express my concerns publicly; at least to members of the AAG residing in the Southwest Division.

I believe that an empirical study, if completed, would verify generally casual observations I have made as I browsed through these two journals. First, I have observed that fewer maps are being included in published articles. Second, it seems as if the quality of the maps and associated graphics in articles has diminished. If maps, as we frequently claim, are the most significant tools of the geographer, then something is dreadfully wrong.

My suspicion is that fewer maps are being included in geographic journals because it takes a tremendous amount of work and a lot of time to construct a good map. Perhaps because of publishing pressures associated with tenure and promotion criteria, many geographers are ignoring the laborious map construction and production components of their research and publication. We simply may not want to take time to construct

necessary maps and have them properly prepared for publication. The manual cartographic process is, indeed, time consuming and it can be difficult for many geographers, especially when they have been trained in research, but not cartographic methodology.

In addition, many geographers nowadays may not have the requisite computer skills needed to generate a high quality map. That task may frequently be left for cartographic laboratory technicians who might be overburdened themselves with their own research or grant writing agendas. Or, the facilities may charge prices that authors see as inappropriately high.

The diminished quality of the graphic and cartographic content of published articles is another matter. First, I think that insufficient time in preparation of the graphics has contributed to the diminished quality and the quantity of maps. But, I also think that the computer-mapping technology currently available is greatly to blame. Cartographic software with which I am familiar with generally prohibits the construction of high quality maps.

The software that does tend to be used is frequently easy to learn, but often fails to contain the capacity to perform sophisticated cartographic functions. Very simple, often very plain, and unattractive maps, are the products that appear in our journals. Further,

I have noticed that the poor quality of some maps has not been the fault of the cartographer, but of the publisher.

It was a great pleasure to observe that the first two volumes of our new journal, *Southwestern Geographer*, were filled with many high quality maps, photographs, and other graphics. I hope, as we continue to practice our geographic profession, that we will give more thought to the graphic content of our published research and the cartographic quality of our scholarly journals. High quality maps greatly enhance research. Yes, maps are our greatest tools and they should be constructed and published with great care.

Brooks Green, Chair

The Baton Rouge, LA Meeting

The annual fall meeting of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers (SWAAG) was held in Baton Rouge, LA. The meeting was hosted by our Louisiana State University (LSU) colleagues under the insightful direction of Kent Mathewson. What can you say--except that the hospitality and ambiance of the meetings were superb, including the balmy weather all enjoyed during the meeting. The program featured two intriguing keynote speakers. The first presentation was by Mickey Lauria who discussed "Changing Morphologies of Race and Class in New Orleans." The second keynote speaker was Richard Francaviglia, who artfully illustrated and discussed, "Main Street Morphologies: Evolving National and Regional Icons." Also, field trips and socials, besides being delightful and unique to southern Louisiana, provided great venues for folks to get acquainted and to expand discussions about research interests and other ethereal matters.

As has been the tradition for SWAAG

meetings, the Louisiana contingency organized an interesting and scholarly enriching environment for the fall meeting. There were some 125 papers presented; of which several were professionally constructed and delivered student papers. In addition, the poster session added an interesting dimension to the meeting. One has to agree with Doolittle, who remarked that it was particularly exciting to hear about "in the field" field work geography as well as new genres of geographic analysis and the use of technology to help interpret geographic patterns. Let us doff our hats to the LSU folks and to all presenters.

SWAAG Business Meeting Minutes October 29, 1998 Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Chair Brooks Green called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m.

Green extended thanks from SWAAG to the LSU Geography and Anthropology faculty and students for hosting the fall meeting. In addition, the Chair recognized Kent Mathewson for his efforts in organizing the meeting.

Fiona Davidson, Treasurer reported that a balance of \$3,611.30 was in the treasury at the beginning of the year. Encumbered expenses will leave a balance of approximately \$1,500.00.

Kent Mathewson announced the field trips and socials to be held in conjunction with the meeting. A reception will be held after Business meeting (it was a treat!). Mathewson also emphasized that the department was in the midst of celebrating its 70th anniversary. In addition, Kent reflected on the contributions that individuals such as Fred

Kniffen, Jesse Walker, Robert West and Richard J. Russell had made to the LUS geography tradition and to the field of geography, in general.

Brad Cullen, Regional Councillor, gave an overview of issues discussed at their quarterly meeting. Cullen pointed out that the AAG has decided to discontinue the Resource Publication series. All existing obligations to publish manuscripts in process will be followed through to publication. Cullen also mentioned that the *AAG Newsletter* will no longer print news items related to geographic centers, grants received, geographic alliance news and articles from specialty groups. New features of the newsletter will include advertising, corporate membership profiles, book reviews, an advanced practitioner column and geographers in government articles as well as selected letters. Ron Ablor, Diane Neville Dean and Will Graf are seeking feedback on the newsletter changes. Brad mentioned the potential change in the major publications of the Association.

Cullen noted that the AAG Annual meeting held in Boston, MA had the largest attendance (4,305 participants) of any previous AAG meeting. Slightly lower numbers are expected for the Honolulu meeting in March 1999.

In addition, Brad stressed the need to recruit new AAG members. Membership has declined from 7,144 in 1995 to 6,634 in 1998.

A total of 459 students applied for support from the AAG sponsored Hawaii travel grant program. After some screening a total of 382 abstracts were reviewed for the 235 available awards.

Cullen provided a draft AAG mission statement entitled, "Building and Sustaining

Geography's Communities." Copies the Councillor's report and of the draft can be obtained from Brad at: bcullen@unm.edu.

Reginald Golledge, Vice President of the AAG, spoke to the group about his vision of a national geography learning center. The white papers describing the project include aspects of the Alexandria Project that will have a digital library of imagery. Golledge mentioned that the principal facility would be located in Washington, D.C. The central focus of the facility will be to expose visitors and students to collaborative and cooperative exhibits that will immerse all takers into virtual environments illustrating or explaining geographic phenomena and processes.

Reginald sees this step as imperative as virtual environment labs will be common in 20 years. He would like to see an incremental implementation of the project corresponding with the centennial anniversary of the AAG. Golledge asked for ideas and comments about the project.

John Tiefenbacher, co-editor of the *Southwestern Geographer* stated that two issues of journal have been published. Submission rates "had a good run at end of summer" but John stressed that more manuscripts are needed. At present there is a 35% acceptance rate. He pointed out copies of both issues were available at the meeting. Subscription rates for the journal are \$5.00 for faculty \$3.00 for students.

Lawrence Estaville asked for SWAAG support to help underwrite the cost of publishing the *Southwestern Geographer*. He pointed out that the membership had voted unanimously at the fall meeting in Norman that the journal was a good idea. Estaville reminded the group that he had volunteered

SWTSU resources to launch the journal with the understanding that SWAAG would help fund the journal in the near future. Again this passed as an unanimous vote.

Estaville moved that SWAAG establish annual dues in the amount of \$10.00. The dues would be used to support the journal (\$7.00) and to provide additional funds to increase the number of student awards (\$3.00). In addition, student dues of \$5.00 would be used as a journal subscription. Fiona Davidson seconded the motion.

Olen Matthews pointed out that such a motion would require a change in the by-laws that could not be carried out at a business meeting.

The outcome of the discussion was that the motion was amended and passed to generate a ballot to amend the bylaws so that dues would be established for membership in SWAAG with the funds to be allocated as support for the journal (\$7.00) and for support of student awards (\$3.00).

Fred Shelley discussed the 1999 Fall SWAAG meeting to be held in San Marcos. A central theme of the meeting will be global environmental change. Details and call for papers will follow in the near future.

Clarissa Kimber reported on the progress that A&M Geographers are making in preparation to host the 2000 Fall SWAAG meeting in College Station.

Fiona Davidson, Treasurer, reported that the group will provide five (5) students with \$300.00 stipends for the 1999 AAG annual meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii. Students need to submit two (2) page abstracts and be members of SWAAG for consideration. The review committee will evaluate the student

abstracts. Awardees will be announced shortly after the Thanksgiving break. Contact Fiona Davidson for details.

Next, Davidson proposed several procedural changes to the Student Paper Competition. In essence, the motion pointed out the need to have a more structured approach and set of guidelines for evaluation of student papers.

Fred Shelley moved that the changes in student paper competition procedures be implemented at future SWAAG meetings. The motion was seconded. Discussion followed. A friendly amendment that provided for three awards was added to the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Dr. Jesse Walker announced that the next IGU meeting would be held in Seoul, Korea in 2000. See the upcoming meetings section in this newsletter for details.

Clifton "Skeeter" Dixon, Memphis State University, an LSU alumnus, announced that his campus would host the fall SEDAG meeting. The conference will be held in the Memphis Hotel Peabody. The dates for the meeting will be 21-23 November. Dixon stated that some 130 papers would be presented at the meeting.

Texas Geomorphology Symposium will be held in the near future. Contact Jonathan Philips Chair, TAMU Geography for details about the meeting.

The SWAAG business meeting was adjourned at 6:40ish p.m.

Future SWAAG Meeting Sites

San Marcos – Fall 1999

The Department of Geography and

Planning at Southwest Texas State University welcomes all geographers to the 1999 Fall Meeting of the Southwest Division (SWAAG). The meeting has been designated as a University Centennial Event. In addition to the usual SWAAG papers, social events, and field trips, concurrent events. Among these will be the AAG Fall Council Meeting, a mini-conference on Global Environmental Change sponsored by the James Lovell Center for Hazards and Environmental Geography, workshops for teachers sponsored by the Gilbert M. Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education. Further, there will be a workshop and field trip sponsored by the Center for Nature and Heritage Tourism.

For information, or to be placed on the 1999 SWAAG mailing list, please contact Dr. Fred Shelley, Department of Geography and Planning, SWTSU, San Marcos, Texas telephone (512) 245-8704; or by email: fs03@swt.edu.

College Station – Fall 2000

Contact: Robert Bednarz at (409) 845-7174 or by email: bednarz@vms2.tamu.edu.

Laredo – Fall 2001

Contact: Michael Yoder at 210-326-2634 or by email: myoder@tamiu.edu.

Upcoming Meetings

The International Conference on Research in Geographic Education will meet the 21-23 May 1999 in San Marcos, TX. There will be a pre-conference field trip to Big Bend National Park with a 1 April 1999 signup deadline. In addition, there will be a post-conference trip to Salt Lake City, UT. Contact the Grosvenor Center for Geographic

Education at Southwest Texas State University or call (512) 245-1823 or 1653 for registration materials and information. You can view conference updates at <http://www.geo.swt.edu/grosvenor>.

The Fall 1999 meeting of the South Central Region of the ASPRS will be held at Stephen F. Austin State University. The meeting dates will be 8-9 October 1999. Deadline for abstracts will be 10 September 1999. The theme for the conference is “Toolkits and Applications for Natural Resource Management.” Contact for the meeting is Darrel L. McDonald. Call (409) 468-6605 or email dmcdonald@sfasu.edu for more information.

The 29th International Geographical Congress will meet in Seoul, Korea. The meeting dates are 14-18 August 2000. The theme of the Congress is, “Living With Diversity.” Information about the meeting can be obtained at: igcseoul@plaza.snu.ac.kr. The Secretary General of the Congress is Woo-ik Yu, Seoul National University (www.geog.snu.ac.kr).

SWAAG Bylaws – Section 6 Dues and Fees (current)

6a. Membership in SWAAG is extended to members of the AAG without payment of additional dues or fees, except as hereafter noted.

PLEASE COMPLETE AND MAIL ENCLOSED BALLOT

Stephen F. Austin State University

Darrel L. McDonald, SWAAG Sec.

Poli. Sci./Geography

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Nacogdoches, Texas 75962-3045

SWAAG Members;

There were a couple of problems noted concerning the ballot for officers and the proposed change in by-laws statement. I apologize for the confusion. Included with this mailing is a revised ballot. Please select a candidate or write in a name for chair and secretary of SWAAG. Please vote for one of the two candidates for treasurer as well as respond to the proposed change to the by-laws. After you have made your selections, please return the ballot to Brooks Green. Again, sorry for the confusion concerning the ballot.

Sincerely,

Darrel L. McDonald
SWAAG Secretary