

SWAAG NEWSLETTER

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

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Letter from the Chair

Comedian Paul Rodriguez once said "Sometimes I think war is God's way of teaching us geography" and in the wake of 9/11 I don't think any of us would disagree with him. The consequences of the terrorist attack, now a little more than six months in the past, have been felt in a myriad of different ways in all our lives. For those of us in an organization like SWAAG, geographers and, in most cases teachers at all levels, the impacts have been particularly striking. From the day that it happened, when classes were disrupted as students wanted to know "why, who and how", and the media used the human resources of geography departments and area studies programs to answer their particular questions, there has been a new interest in information about the "others". Information about people we've never met, cultures we are unfamiliar with and places we've never seen. I'm not sure what's going on at other universities in the region but at the U of A, enrollments in area studies classes and area studies programs have gone up (particularly noticeable in our Middle East Studies program) and after an initial reluctance to travel abroad, our study abroad programs have boomed for both Summer and Fall.

The critical issue, as I see it, is for geography and geoscience programs to take

this new interest and to help foster not only a greater knowledge of people and places beyond the borders of the US, but also, through knowledge, a greater understanding. The debate about geographic literacy is not a new one for any of us. We have spent more than a decade listening to the deplorable statistics about US students' inability to locate Asia on a world map or name our nearest neighbor to the south.

However, geographic literacy is not the issue here – the ability to recognize Afghanistan on a map, or name it's capital might indicate an encouraging interest in the world outside the US, but it hardly contributes to a greater understanding of the place and people. Anyone can teach geographic literacy, however it takes a geographer to turn those lines and names on a map into landscapes, resources, languages, cultures, rituals, communication patterns and conflicts. It was instructive to watch the news analysis programs in the weeks after September 11 and to see the political scientists, historians, religious studies experts, economists and military analysts all discussing pieces of the complex problem that is the relationship between the Islamic East and the West. There were few geographers, once again we were the invisible discipline. This seems singularly inappropriate given that geographers are in a

unique position to integrate all the different facets of these kinds of conflicts. This seems especially true at the level of lower division college classes where it is possible to discuss issues of resource use, population growth, cultural imperialism, economic globalization, 19th and 20th century colonialism, religious fundamentalism and totalitarian vs. democratic governments. If it is true that we are in a period of heightened interest in the world outside the US then this would appear to be one of those ideal opportunities for us to strengthen the “invisible discipline”.

While great work has been done to promote geographic literacy and geographic thought in the K-12 system through the geographic alliances; the role of college geographers in that process is necessarily limited, both by time and access to schools and students. Our role is to take those students, being primed by their Alliance-trained teachers, and persuade them that geography is their opportunity to know the world a little better. Not just to understand the immediate and ongoing conflicts, which may entice them into our classes in the first place, but to gain a little knowledge, and perhaps an understanding of the forces that are working to create the conflicts (and potential solutions) of the future.

Fiona M Davidson
Chair

SWAAG Business Meeting Minutes **November 15th, 2001, Fort Worth, Texas**

Chair Darrel L. McDonald called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. McDonald extended thanks and recognition to the UNT faculty for the splendid meeting, with particular thanks to Andy Schoolmaster and Don Lyons. Minutes of the 2000 business

meeting were attached to the agenda and were approved with one change: an amendment to the effect that Jonathan Philips had left the region to go to the University of Kentucky, not Kansas.

Fiona Davidson, Secretary, apologized for the lack of a newsletter in 2001, due to an unfortunate series of miscommunications. As there was no Treasurer, Darrel McDonald indicated that the accounts are currently in limbo.

The Chair introduced President of the AAG, Janice Monk, who discussed some of the activities of the national office. Doug Richardson has been hired to create a series of bridge-building initiatives between academia, business and government. Initial projects include an international educational project called “My Community/Our Earth” and an NSF rapid Proposal Response on managing hazards associated with terrorism.

Other points included a reminder that the 2002 IGU will be in Durban and travel grants are available from the central office. Concern was expressed about the lack of participation by Mexican colleagues at the Annual Meeting and initiatives have been put in place to subsidize registration fees for visiting scholars to attend the LA meeting. The central office would like the regional divisions to consider sponsoring a certain number of these registrations per year. Membership is stable but still down on a few years ago and the AAG is anticipating an endowment campaign in conjunction with the centennial.

Regional Councilor Fred Shelley commented that the 2003 Annual Meeting will be in the region and the members should play an active role. He asked for problems and success stories from the floor to take to the November 17th council meeting in Kentucky. Success stories from the floor included new programs at Baylor and the University of Houston-Clear Lake; 5 new faculty and 200

majors at UT-Austin; a new line at Stephen F. Austin; 2 new lines and a \$1 million endowed chair for the department at TAMU and new Ph.D. programs at OSU and Arkansas.

Lawrence Estaville took this opportunity to welcome the new department chairs – Doug Sherman at TAMU and Craig Colton at LSU. Jim Norwine asked whether the membership thought that the increased success of GIS was hurting the discipline. There was a short discussion that concluded that GIS could only support the discipline by attracting majors.

John Tiefenbacher reported on our journal, *The Southwestern Geographer*. He is awaiting manuscripts and plans to get the next issue out as soon as possible. The sequencing of manuscripts on department histories by Ph.D.; then M.A./M.S., and finally, B.A./B.S was reiterated.

In old business, the first issue to be settled was the failure to collect dues in 2001. As \$7 of the \$10 is marked for journal support, this is a critical issue and, since much of the problem results from having no Treasurer, Lawrence Estaville suggested that an election be held immediately. SWAAG bylaws state that there must be a mailout ballot to elect officers, however the by-laws can be set aside at the Annual Business Meeting. Lawrence Estaville made a motion to bypass the bylaws to allow for the election of a Treasurer and Secretary at the meeting. The motion was carried by the Ayes. The floor was opened for nominations for Treasurer and Lawrence Estaville suggested that the membership begin by considering last year's slate of candidates: Sarah Bednarz (TAMU), Don Lyons (UNT) and John Tiefenbacher (SWT). Clarrisa Kimber moved that the membership vote on that slate – the motion was carried. The candidates left the room and the membership voted John Tiefenbacher as Treasurer. The floor was reopened for nominations for Secretary. Lawrence Estaville nominated Don

Lyons, and as there were no other nominations he was unanimously voted in as Secretary. Darrel McDonald reminded the membership that a vote for Chair was still needed. Fiona Davidson was nominated for Chair by Lawrence Estaville. There were no other nominations and the membership unanimously voted for Fiona Davidson as SWAAG Chair.

Michael Yoder reported on his progress in planning the **2002 SWAAG meeting** in Laredo. The meeting will be held at **La Posado Hotel on the Rio Grande, from November 6-9**. Rod Squires volunteered to be program chair and Bill Dolittle volunteered to organize the field trips. The membership congratulated Michael on his preparations so far. The **2003 meeting** will be in **Stillwater** and the **2004 meeting** at **Stephen F. Austin**. There was some discussion of holding the 2005 meeting jointly between NSU and UA-Fayetteville.

Don Lyons then asked for a vote of thanks for all the work Darrel McDonald has done in his two years as Chair. Darrel then announced the winners of the student paper competition and thanked the committee – Doug Hurt – Clarissa Kinber – John Milbauer and Kent McDonald.

2001 Winners

- 1st D Mohini (SWT)
- 2nd Joy Adams (UT-Austin)
- 3rd James Gray (SFA)

Lawrence Estaville moved to adjourn the meeting, the motion was carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 5:20pm.

SWAAG/SWIG Sponsored Panel Session –

Women in the Field

The panel sponsored by the University of Texas at Austin, Southwest Texas, and University of Arkansas chapters of Supporting Women in Geography (SWIG) at last year's regional SWAAG conference was a resounding success. The title of the panel was, "Women in the Field: Lifecycles in Geography Fieldwork" and included AAG President Janice Monk, University of Arkansas professor and SWIG faculty liaison, Fiona Davidson, and graduate students Maria Elisa Christie and Stephanie Shaw, of the University of Texas and Southwest Texas respectively. The idea behind the panel was to create a forum for exchanging experiences, ideas and strategies that would enable more of the gifted women in our field to thrive. Each panelist spoke and then it opened up to a lively discussion with the large audience present.

Two themes connected the panelists' talks and the wider discussion: the importance of 'cohorts,' and issues of accommodation. The panelists shared strategies for creating 'a cohort of supportive people' within departments, across campuses, and even, through organizations like SWIG, across the nation. These connections of professional mentors and friends facilitate growth on a personal and professional level. The second major recurring theme was how different universities have tried to accommodate varying lifecycle choices made by women. The consensus was that some accommodations were very helpful in keeping women in our discipline.

Katrinka Somdahl

SWAAG 2002 MEETING

Laredo – November 6-9th 2002

The Fall 2002 meeting will be in Laredo at TAMU. For information contact: Michael Yoder at 210-326-2634 or by email: myoder@tamiu.edu.

FUTURE SWAAG MEETINGS

**2003: Oklahoma State University,
Stillwater, Oklahoma.**

**2004 : Stephen F. Austin University,
Nacogdoches, Texas**

**LAST CALL FOR SWAAG DUES FOR
2001 AND 2002.**

Faculty \$10 _____ (for each year)

Students \$5 _____ (for each year)

Check payable to SWAAG

Please send dues to:

**John Tiefenbacher– SWAAG Treasurer
Department of Geography and Planning
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos,
TX. 77843-010**

**SWAAG Secretary
Department of Geography
University of North Texas
P.O. Box 305279
Denton, TX, 76203-5279**

Please Post
The Southwestern Geographer

A CALL FOR PAPERS

Journal of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers

The Southwestern Geographer is the flagship journal of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers (SWAAG). SWAAG is composed of geography departments and AAG members residing in the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. SWAAG's journal highlights geographic research by geographers in the region, research about the region, and research presented at meetings held within the region.

The journal editor is presently seeking research manuscripts that fit one of the following criteria: articles written by geographers and members of SWAAG and AAG, articles on topics germane to the southwestern United States and northern Mexico, and articles based on research presented at SWAAG meetings. In particular, submissions by emerging scholars (recently-appointed faculty and/or students) are strongly encouraged, but others will not be excluded.

All research manuscripts will be peer reviewed. To be included in the next volume (Volume 6) of this annual publication, manuscripts must be submitted by August 31, 2002.

Manuscripts should not exceed 8000 words and should be submitted to the editors in hard-copy form. Please provide three copies of your manuscript for review. The style of the journal follows the style guidelines of the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Please remove name and address from title pages, abstracts, and notes of submitted manuscripts and please do not include acknowledgements or "authors" on maps or figures in the manuscript for review. Please consult either the most recent issue of the *Southwestern Geographer* or the *Annals* for citation, cartographic, and manuscript style. If accepted for publication, final, revised manuscripts and illustrations should be submitted in electronic form.

For further information please contact the editor at: John Tiefenbacher, Editor of *The Southwestern Geographer*, Department of Geography, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, TX 78666. E-mail: JT04@swt.edu, Phone: (512) 245-8327.