ABSTRACT

This article reviews the activities of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) Applied Geography Specialty Group over 2009/2010. The Applied Geography Specialty Group provides support to members in applied geography practice, education, and research. We also promote the discipline, facilitate dialogue amongst our members, and recognize remarkable individual applied geography contributions through our award programs. Highlights from the year include our student paper competition, newly launched class exercise competition, member communications including our electronic listserv and newsletters, linkages and collaboration with the Applied Geography Conference, AAG Annual Meeting paper and panel sessions, and annual business meeting with the election of our new board officers.

Keywords: Applied Geography, Association, Awards, Education, Specialty Group

INTRODUCTION

The Association of American Geographers (AAG) Applied Geography Specialty Group is made up of over 300 members from 15 countries, including more than 150 students. Here, I review the group’s activities and progress over the past year. The objectives of the group are to support and advance the provision of geographical services in aid of customers, clients, and stakeholders in the public, private, and non-governmental sectors. We are also focused on applied geography education, as well as research activities which advance the theory, methodology, and in particular the practice of applied geography. The group strives to enhance the visibility of the field within the geographical community, and also more widely to the general public. We encourage and support communications among our members. Finally, our various award programs recognize contributions to the field of applied geography made by individuals; these include the Anderson Award, Citation Award, Praxis Award – Public Sector
and Private Sector, and the Student Paper and Class Exercise Competitions.

We made progress on several fronts this year with our student and class exercise competitions; communications with members; collaboration with the Applied Geography Conference; and, our sessions at the Annual Meeting. While we did not issue any of our awards this past year, I describe the various programs which we continue to offer and recent award winners. Finally, I outline the proceedings of our annual business meeting and our directions for the coming year.

BOARD OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

Our collaborative team of board officers during the 2009/2010 year were Nairne Cameron (Algoma University) as Chair, Dave Clark (California Department of Transportation and University of California Davis) serving as Vice-Chair, Lucy Stanfield (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) as Secretary, and Demetra Voyagidis (Army Engineer Research & Development Centre) as Treasurer.

Board members during 2009/2010 included: Ed Butterworth (CACI International), Dawna Cerney (Youngstown State University), Michael DeMers (New Mexico State University), Sonya Glavac (University of New England, Australia) (Immediate Past Chair), Doug Heivly (City of Allentown), Jay Lee (Kent State University), Seth Marcus (US Department of Housing and Urban Development), Michael Ratcliffe (U.S. Census Bureau), Nancy Torrieri (U.S. Census Bureau), Barry Wellar (Wellar Consulting), and Richard Wright (San Diego State University). Bill Hodge from Penn State and the City of Midland (Texas) became a new student representative, joining Melinda Butterworth who is a doctoral student at the University of Arizona.

STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION

Dr. Dawna Cerney of Youngstown State University spearheaded the revitalization of our student competition. Students were asked to submit a paper prior to the conference in which they employ “geographic methods, techniques, or analysis …in service to a real world client” (Applied Geography Specialty Group, 2010). We received six entries for the competition representing diverse topics. These included: Stephanie Day (University of Kansas) “The Decline of the Greasy Spoon: Implications of Truck Drivers’ Spatial Perceptions and Preferences for the Truck-Stop Industry”, Jinwoong Yoo (with DeWitt D Braud and Robert V Rohli) (Louisiana State University) “Visualizing Null Value Locations from LIDAR Image Mosaics”, Clio Andris (with Dietmar Offenhuber and David Lee) (MIT) “Trash Track”, Emily Pabst (University of Kansas) “Locally Crafted and Produced: Placemaking Within a Marketing Strategy”, Nicholas Cuba (Clark University) “Spatial Analysis of Resettled Refugee Populations in Worcester, MA”, and Anna Klimeszk-Patterson (New Mexico State University) “Geography and Geographic Education with Smartphones”. We held an Interactive Short Paper Session at the AAG Annual Meeting that allowed each presenter 10 minutes, followed by an interactive group discussion. Nicholas Cuba won the competition and received a $500 prize. Another student paper competition will be offered in advance of next year’s 2011 AAG Annual Meeting in Seattle.
CLASS EXERCISE COMPetition

New this year, we initiated a class exercise competition in December 2009 led by Ed Butterworth. Our objectives in launching the competition were to place a focus on applied geography education. The competition is targeted towards junior faculty and senior graduate students and calls for an exercise that leads students through the provision of geographical services for a ‘fictional or real-world client.’ Our first winner was Timothy Hawthorne, then a doctoral student at The Ohio State University, for his exercise entitled “Maps 2 Serve: Serving the Community with Cartography.” Dr. Hawthorne is currently an assistant professor of geography at Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia (Figure 1). A second round of this competition was held in June 2010 with Brandon J. Vogt, assistant professor of geography at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, winning this go around. Dr. Vogt’s exercise is entitled “Colorado 14ers, Pixel by Pixel.” We plan to hold a third round of the competition in June 2011. Awardees received a $500 prize and an offer to submit their exercise as articles to the International Journal of Applied Geospatial Research for publication (see this issue – Hawthorne, 2011; Vogt, 2011).

COMMUNICATIONS WITH MEMBERS

Faced with challenges in communicating with our members previous years, we launched an electronic listserv. Dr. Jay Lee offered to host the listserv at Kent State University, and Secretary Lucy Stanfield prepared and moderated the list. The listserv has enabled us to obtain newsletter contributions from our members. With these member contributions, plus articles written by our board members, along with the design talents of our newsletter editor, Anna Patterson (New Mexico State University) we produced two newsletters, one in September 2009, and another in March 2010. The newsletters can be viewed at: http://agsg.binghamton.edu/. Also, on the communications front, Seth Marcus, our longtime webmaster, stepped down this year, and Anna Patterson took over his duties managing the website hosted by Binghamton University.

Figure 1. Timothy Hawthorne (The Ohio State University) at the AGSG Student Paper Competition Session, April 16, 2010, at the AAG 2010 Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C.
**APPLIED GEOGRAPHY CONFERENCE**

We have forged greater collaborative connections with the Applied Geography Conference. Two of our board members are associated with the Conference: Dr. Jay Lee is the Executive Director of the Conference and Dr. Dawna Cerney is on the Applied Geography Conference Board. The winner of our student competition received an offer of a free registration to attend the 33rd Annual Applied Geography Conference in October 2010 and an opportunity to submit the winning paper for review and possible publication in the Conference annals.

**AAG ANNUAL MEETING SESSIONS**

At the AAG Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. in April 2010, we sponsored and co-sponsored 19 sessions. Key sessions included the “Best Practices in Applied Geography Education” session organized by Dr. Michael DeMers (New Mexico State University) which was co-sponsored by our group and the Geography Education Specialty Group. Speakers in this session included: Michael Ratcliffe (U.S. Bureau Of the Census) “Training Applied Geographers: Understanding Relationships Between Geography and Statistical Data”, Darcy L. Boellstorff (Bridgewater State College) “Research-Embedded Instruction Focused on Engaging Second-Year Non-Majors”, Michael N. DeMers (New Mexico State University) “Project-Based GIS Design Education in the University”, William J. Gribb (University Of Wyoming) “Geography and Planning: A Mix of Disciplines for Applied Experiential Education”, James E Lightfoot (National Defense Intelligence College) “Geography Education at the National Defense Intelligence College”.

Another important event was the Geospatial Information Officers Session organized by Lucy Stanfield (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) and Dr. Matt Koepp (George Washington University). Dr. Joseph Fontanella (U.S. Army), Dr. Jerry Johnston (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency), Barney Krucoff (District of Columbia), Stephen Lowe (U.S. Department of Agriculture), Karen Siderelis (U.S. Geological Survey), and Timothy Trainor (U.S. Bureau of the Census) participated. There was a lively discussion of the rising importance of geospatial information within and across the government. In fact, the title of ‘Geospatial Information Officer’ was rare until recently. The participants discussed volunteered geospatial information (VGI), the challenges of collaboration and transparency, and how universities can better prepare students for geospatial careers.

The 2010 Census was also a focus of our group at the Annual Meeting. Two of our board members, Michael Ratcliffe and Nancy Torrieri, are from the U.S. Census Bureau. Panel sessions included: “Meeting Rural America’s Need for Data: Rural Statistical Areas and the American Community Survey”, and “Geographic Areas for the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey”. And, the following census-related paper sessions were also held: “We Counted You, Now What? Update on the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey”, “Census Geography: New Developments and New Challenges”, and “Census Mapping Challenges and Issues”.

Sessions), and “Contributions to the Development and Application of Geographically Weighted Regression: Methods, Applications and Theories”.

**SPECIALTY GROUP AWARDS AND LECTURES**

The Anderson Medal is our distinguished service career award for applied geographers. Recent winners include Michael Sutcliffe (City Manager, Durban, South Africa) in 2007, Marilyn A. Brown (Oak Ridge National Laboratory) in 2004, Barry Wellar (University of Ottawa) in 2003, Richard Wright (San Diego State University) in 2002, William B. Wood (United States Department of State) in 2001, and Kingsley E. Haynes (George Mason University) in 2000. We did not award an Anderson Medal in 2010, but are seeking nominations for next year. Dr. Barry Wellar (Wellar Consulting) who headed the Anderson Medal Committee for several years stepped down from this position in December 2009. His long term of devoted service was gratefully acknowledged by the Specialty Group Board. Dr. Michael DeMers (New Mexico State University) and Dr. Nairne Cameron (Algoma University) are the new administrative co-chairs for the Anderson Medal. A committee of former Anderson medalists has been assembled to evaluate new nominations.

An annual Anderson Award Lecture was initiated in 2002 to highlight the contributions of Anderson Medal winners. Recent lecturers and their topics have included: Kingsley E. Haynes “Geography of Infrastructure Evaluation” (2009), Marilyn A. Brown “Carbon Lock-In: Barriers and Enablers of a Climate-Friendly Future” (2008), William L. Garrison “Increasing the Flexibility of Legacy Systems” (2007), T. R. Lakhshmanan “The Entrepreneurial City in the Global Marketplace” (2006), and Barry Wellar “Significant Advances in Applied Geography from Combining Client-Driven and Curiosity-Driven Research Methodologies” (2005). We did not host an Anderson Award Lecture in 2010, but there is one planned for next year’s 2011 AAG Annual meeting in Seattle. Two of these lectures have been published by the *International Journal of Applied Geospatial Research* (see this issue – Garrison, Wellar, MacKinnon, Black, & Getis, 2011; Wellar, 2010).

We also offer a Citation Award which recognizes “a project, report, or study that has had a significant impact upon the field of Applied Geography” (Applied Geography Specialty Group, 2010). Recent award winners include in 2004, Steven Branting and his co-researchers Ian Coleman, Nathaniel Ebel, Emerson Follett, Matthew Schulz, and Christopher Wagner from Lewiston High School in Lewiston, Idaho, for the applied geography project “The 5th Street Cemetery Necrogeographical Study” which was also recognized by the History Channel. Also, in 2001, Dr. Barry Wellar, University of Ottawa, received a citation for his development of “The Walking Security Index Project”.

Another recognition that we bestow is the Praxis Award – Public Sector which “recognizes outstanding research studies that demonstrate the practical application of geographical concepts, methods, techniques, and/or technologies to the investigation or implementation of government policies, plans, programs or projects” (Applied Geography Specialty Group, 2010). The Praxis Award – Private Sector is similar to the Public Sector Award but applies to “private enterprise policies, plans, programs, or projects” (Applied Geography Specialty Group, 2010). Details on award nomination procedures are available on the specialty group website at: http://agsg.binghamton.edu/.

**ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**

We had a productive business meeting on April 16, 2010 at the Annual Meeting with 15 participants. Elections were held and the following board officers were appointed for this upcoming year 2010/2011: Dave Clark (University of California Davis) as chair, Lucy Stanfield (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) as vice-chair, Bill Hodge (City of Midland) as secretary, and Demetra Voyagidis (Army Engineer Research
& Development Centre) as treasurer. Initiatives proposed for next year include a potential Jobs Panel at the Seattle AAG Annual Meeting. Also, there was discussion of making connections with AAG regional divisions and potentially offering student awards at regional meetings.

CONCLUSION

The Applied Geography Specialty Group continues to evolve in its mission to support its members in applied geography practice, education, and research. During the 2009/2010 year, important advancements were made with a greater focus on applied geography education and the debut of our Class Exercise Competition, as well as Dr. Michael DeMers’ “Best Practices in Applied Geography Education” session at the AAG Annual Meeting, and also strong participation in our student paper competition. Increased communications with our members were also facilitated by way of our new electronic listserv. The ability to easily interact with our membership in turn has led to greater member contributions to our biannual newsletter. We also deepened our linkages with the Applied Geography Conference for mutual support of our organizations. These achievements were possible through the collaborative work of the board and contributions from our wider membership. Looking forward, the board has discussed launching and sponsoring student competitions at regional meetings. This plan, supported by our new Chair, Dave Clark, seeks to forge connections with regional divisions of the AAG to broaden our interaction with applied geographers who may not regularly attend the Annual AAG Meeting.

REFERENCES


Nairne Cameron is an assistant professor of Geography at Algoma University and an adjunct assistant professor in the Centre for Health Promotion Studies and School of Public Health at the University of Alberta. Her teaching and research interests include urban and regional development, health geography, spatial analysis and geographic information systems (GIS), comparative studies, and transportation geography. Recently, her research has focused on spatial patterns of food access and legal restrictions blocking supermarket operations in urban neighbourhoods. She has served on the board of the Association of American Geographers Applied Geography Specialty Group for several years, including her tenure as chair of the group in 2009/2010.