President's Column

Lynn Resler, BSG President, 2013–15

Dear Biogeographers,

This column reflects a time of transition for the BSG and also the AAG. First, this will be my final column as the President of the BSG before Dr. Jacob Bendix steps into the role. I wanted to thank you all for the opportunity to serve the BSG, to the board members, and to Taly Drezner for her impeccable voluntary service as Treasurer/Secretary. Second, as many of you know, last year’s meeting was the last under the name “Association of American Geographers.” As of January 1, 2016, the official name of our professional organization will change to the American Association of Geographers.
Thanks also to all of you who attended the 2015 Annual Biogeography Specialty Group business meeting in Chicago. As a recap, in total, there were BSG-sponsored 23 sessions, many of which were organized by students. Our group co-sponsored sessions with several other AAG specialty groups including the Paleoenvironmental Change SG, Climate Change SG, Mountain Geography SG, and Human Dimensions of Global Change SGs, and many of us participated in the Physical Geography Symposium. The BSG also highlighted a very successful special session organized by Glen MacDonald entitled, “Geographers on John Muir-Critically assessing his Legacy and Relevance 100 years on.”

The BSG survey we conducted last year had a great response rate (n=100), out of 356 members (as of April 1, 2015). Based on the outcome of the survey and your input at the Business Meeting, we decided to increase the non-student BSG dues from $8.50 to $10.00. We will keep the student dues at $5.00 at least for the time being. We will also omit the cash prize associated with the student presentation awards, given the rationale that the cash prizes do not seem to be drawing in applicants and that the CV line item is (and should be) the most important driver. We anticipate that these changes will help improve the budget situation into the near future.

With regard to BSG demographics, the survey also revealed the top 5 additional specialty groups to which our members belong. These are (ranked in order from high to low): 1) Paleoenvironmental SG, 2) Mountain Geography SG, 3) Geographic Information Systems SG, 4) Geomorphology SG and 5) Human Dimensions SG. In 2008, with the development of the Paleoenvironmental SG, the BSG lost approximately 100 members, and membership has not fully recovered its membership. Many of you have remained BSG members while joining other groups, and your loyalty is greatly appreciated and assists in maintaining a sense of community among biogeographers within the geographic tradition.

Thank you again for your continued support to the BSG. I hope all of you have a wonderful summer!

Best,
Lynn Resler
Graduate Student Representative Column

Amanda B. Young, BSG Graduate Student Representative 2014–15

Biogeographers, we rocked AAG. I don’t know if I have been to one with so many wonderful sessions – with near constant sessions from 8 am Tuesday morning with Dendro and Paleo sessions, Pyro on Wednesday, the Symposium on Physical Geography with an awesome poster session on Thursday, Vegetation Dynamics and the Muir Panel on Friday, and concluding on Saturday with the BSG Student Panel. It was great to catch-up and meet so many of you at these amazing sessions and events.

This year’s BSG Student Panel was on “Communicating Biogeographic Research: outreach, the press, and social media”. Though the panel was at a less than ideal time slot (2–4 pm on Saturday), we had a very interactive panel session where panelists and participants discussed new and traditional ways to communicate biogeographic research. Our panelists were Carissa Brown (Memorial University), Henri Grissino-Mayer (University of Tennessee), Glen MacDonald (University of California – Los Angeles), Jennifer Marlon (Yale) and Jack Williams (University of Wisconsin – Madison). The participants included an undergraduate, two graduate students, a researcher, two assistant professors and an associate professor.

Our discussion covered types of twitter platforms, how to create a good YouTube video, write a press release, what makes a good Instagram post, and taking reporters into the field. Experiences were shared about successes and gaffs when talking with the press and public as well as how social media is used in communicating research. The range of experiences in the room made for an engaging conversation; for instance, when talking about social media, the undergraduate member of the audience had much to contribute.

Here are a few resources on science communication that were mentioned during the panel:

- Alan Alda – Center for Science Communication
- Randy Olson’s book ‘Don’t be Such a Scientist’
- Duke University – Center for Documentary Studies
- Amy Cuddy – TED talk.

For those of you new to the Biogeography Specialty Group, or new to Facebook, check out the Biogeography Specialty Group Facebook page.

It has been an honor to serve as the BSG’s student representative during 2014-2015. I would like to introduce you to your 2015–2016 BSG student representative Chris Kaase. Chris is a Ph.D.
student at the University of South Carolina with research interests in biogeography, geomorphology, hydrology, landscape ecology, and conservation. Have fun and good luck, Chris. If you have any suggestions or ideas concerning future BSG graduate student activities feel free to contact me (aby113@psu.edu) or Chris Kaase (kaase@email.sc.edu) as he starts his tenure as the BSG student rep.

Have a great summer

BSG Board Elections
Joy Fritschle, BSG Board Member 2014-16 and Elections Organizer

On behalf of the BSG Specialty Group, I am pleased to announce the newly elected members of the BSG Executive Board:

- Student Representative, Chris Kaase, University of South Carolina
- Board Member, Matt Bekker, Brigham Young University
- Board Member, Melanie Stine, The University of Texas at San Antonio
- President, Jake Bendix, Syracuse University

Congratulations and thanks to everyone who ran and volunteered their time to BSG. There were 46 voters, two candidates running for the board, one candidate for president, and two candidates for student representative. Special thanks goes to the outgoing board members Lynn Resler (President), Grant Elliott (board member), Justin Hart (board member), and Amanda Young (student representative) for their service to BSG.
Awards and Competitions

James J. Parsons Award for Distinguished Career in Biogeography & Henry Cowles Award for Excellence in Publication in Biogeography

Justin Hart, BSG Board Member 2013–15 and Awards Organizer

On behalf of the BSG board, thank you to everyone that submitted nominations for the Cowles and Parsons awards. We received excellent nominations for the Cowles Award and all nominations received votes. We were also grateful for the opportunity to read the nomination packet for the Parsons Distinguished Career Award.

Henry C. Cowles Award for Excellence in Publication in Biogeography


Abstract. Although many studies have associated the demise of complex societies with deteriorating climate, few have investigated the connection between an ameliorating environment, surplus resources, energy, and the rise of empires. The 13th-century Mongol Empire was the largest contiguous land empire in world history. Although drought has been proposed as one factor that spurred these conquests, no high-resolution moisture data are available during the rapid development of the Mongol Empire. Here we present a 1,112-y tree-ring reconstruction of warm-season water balance derived from Siberian pine (Pinus sibirica) trees in central Mongolia. Our reconstruction accounts for 56% of the variability in the regional water balance and is significantly correlated with steppe productivity across central Mongolia. In combination with a gridded temperature reconstruction, our results indicate that the regional climate during the conquests of Chinggis Khan’s (Genghis Khan’s) 13th-century Mongol Empire was warm and persistently wet. This period, characterized by 15 consecutive years of above-average moisture in central Mongolia and coinciding with the rise of Chinggis Khan, is unprecedented over the last 1,112 y. We propose that these climate conditions promoted high grassland productivity and favored the formation of Mongol political and military power. Tree-ring and meteorological data also suggest that the early 21st-century drought in central Mongolia was the hottest drought in the last 1,112 y, consistent with projections of warming over Inner Asia. Future warming may overwhelm increases in precipitation leading to similar heat droughts, with potentially severe consequences for modern Mongolia.

James J. Parsons Distinguished Career Award

Glen MacDonald, UCLA
Katrina Moser (Western University) presented the Parsons Award to Glen MacDonald. Katrina read highlights from the recommendation letters and then spoke directly about the influence Glen has had on her career. Some highlights of Glen’s career include the publication of over 150 peer-reviewed articles, many book chapters, and several books including his introductory biogeography textbook that won the Cowles Award. Glen has been awarded over $5 million in research funding, mainly from US NSF. Glen has been honored with a Guggenheim Fellowship, election to the AAAS, several visiting fellowships, and other national and international honors. He has given many invited lectures and frequently participates as an invited panelist and workshop participant for important interdisciplinary meetings in the US and abroad. Glen has supervised 16 PhD students and 10 MSc students and he has won teaching awards at both UCLA and McMaster University. These highlights certainly fail to capture the enormity of Glen’s contributions and I am certain we are all thankful to have someone with Glen’s abilities moving biogeography and indeed geography forward.

Congratulations to the award recipients!
Student Paper Awards
Carissa Brown, BSG Board Member 2014–16 and Student Paper Awards Coordinator

It was a pleasure to organize the 2015 Student Paper Awards Competition for the annual AAG meeting in Chicago this spring. We had several excellent entrants, with a diversity of topics covering many sub-disciplines of biogeography, including pyrogeography (which, let’s be honest, is one of the coolest discipline names around), paleoenvironmental change, invasion ecology, and environmental planning. Congratulations to all of the students who presented at AAG this year – the presentations were excellent. I am pleased to announce this year’s winners of the competition:

**Tera Del Priore** (University of Colorado – Denver) is the winner of the M.Sc. Student Paper Competition for her presentation *4,000 Years of Environmental Change in Central Colorado: A Paleoecological Perspective*. The evaluators commented that Tera’s presentation was extremely well done, and gave her very high marks on content, organization, and presentation style.

**Lucas Harris** (Pennsylvania State University) is the winner of the Ph.D. Student Paper Competition for his presentation *Drivers of fire severity in an old-growth mixed-conifer forest, Yosemite National Park, California*. The evaluators noted that Lucas’ presentation was very well done in all regards, and summarized very interesting and timely research.

Congratulations Tera and Lucas, and thank-you to all of the judges who volunteered to evaluate the presentations.
Student Research Grant Competition
Grant Elliott, BSG Board Member 2013–15 and Student Research Grant Coordinator

Ph.D. Winner: Stephani Michelson-Correa
Department of Environmental and Forest Sciences
University of Washington

Title of Project: Tracing the fate of applied nitrogen in Douglas-fir forests of Oregon and Washington
Master’s Winner: **Jordan Adams**  
Department of Geography  
Texas State University  

Title of Project: Examining hydrodynamics of the endangered Texas wild-rice to inform restoration

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**Recent Publications**

**Articles:**


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Back to the Top
News

NADEF Celebrates Its 25th Year!

The North American Dendroecological Fieldweek, or NADEF, just finished up its 25th year with this year’s fieldweek at the Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park in Maine. NADEF provides an intensive learning experience in dendrochronology. This year approximately 50 participants from all over the US and Canada gathered to learn everything from the basics to dendroecology, dendroarchaeology, fire history, sclerochronology (annual dating of marine organisms), and advanced dendroclimatology. Previous experience in field and laboratory-based tree-ring techniques is not required so participants range from new initiates in the field to seasoned veterans. Group leaders of the fieldweek are among the top scientists in the various fields of study in which tree-ring analysis is applied. Everybody that participates in the fieldweek learns new things because the projects and locations are different every year.

Each year we award Undergraduate Scholarships to offset the cost of attendance and encourage developing scientists to incorporate tree-ring analysis into their current and future research. Additionally, we award Graduate Research Fellowships ($3000) to a masters or doctoral student in each group to compile data, presentations, and papers from the fieldweek, to present at a national conference, and to submit a manuscript for publication. These programs are generously funded by the National Science Foundation with the goal of improving our intellectual merit contributions and broader impacts. We are in the process of planning for next year’s NADEF. Please follow us on the web for updates!

Website: https://sites.google.com/site/northamericandendrofieldweek/home
Facebook: North American Dendroecological Fieldweek
Twitter: @DendroFieldweek
Instagram: dendrofieldweek

Thank you for the support of the tree-ring community in the Biogeography Specialty Group and the broader American Association of Geographers. We will be presenting some of this year’s projects at the tree-ring sessions in San Francisco. See you there! #dendrotilyoudie!

From the organizers of NADEF,

Dr. Stockton Maxwell, Radford University
Dr. Jim Speer, Indiana State University
Dr. Chris Gentry, Austin Peay State University
Dr. Henri Grissino-Mayer, The University of Tennessee
Dr. Peter Brown, Rocky Mountain Tree-ring Research
Dr. Grant Harley, University of Southern Mississippi
Dr. Bryan Black, University of Texas-Austin Marine Science Institute
Janet Franklin to become Editor-in-Chief of *Diversity and Distributions*

Janet Franklin will become the new Editor-in-Chief of *Diversity and Distributions*, a journal of conservation biogeography, beginning January 1, 2016. She is taking over from Professor Dave Richardson (University of Stellenbosch, South Africa) who has built the journal, over the past 18 years, into a world class, highly ranked biogeography journal.

Janet is a Regents’ Professor in the School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning at Arizona State University. She is a biogeographer who grew up, studied, and worked in California, USA, before moving to Arizona in 2009. She received her PhD in geography in 1988 from University of California, Santa Barbara. She then spent 20 years on the faculty of San Diego State University.

Her research interests encompass conservation biogeography and build on her foundations in plant community ecology. She is an expert on species distribution modeling. Her work emphasizes patterns and dynamics of terrestrial plant communities at the landscape scale and addresses the impacts of human-caused landscape change on the environment. Terrestrial plant communities are important and dynamic elements of regional biodiversity. In recent years her research has been located in California, the Caribbean and South Africa.

Janet has published more than 130 papers and book chapters, authored one book and co-edited one book. She is an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences, USA, and a Fellow of the Ecological Society of America.

2016 Annual Meeting of the AAG, San Francisco, California

Registration is now open for our next annual meeting and our first as the American Association of Geographers. The meeting, March 29 to April 2, will have its headquarters at the Hilton San Francisco-Union Square. Please see the AAG Annual Meeting webpage for further information and updates ([http://www.aag.org/cs/annualmeeting](http://www.aag.org/cs/annualmeeting)).

The Dos and Don’ts of Attending an International Conference:

Insights from a Grad Student at the Association of American Geographers

(AAG) Annual Meeting 2015

By Maegen Rochner, M.S. and Tree-Ring Scientist at the University of Tennessee

As a graduate student, I have found that attending conferences is an essential component of the graduate school experience, crucial not only for the obvious element of networking, but also for the importance of learning how to communicate your research, not only to a room of experts in your field, but to the general audience, to those who have no idea what you mean when you use terms like “mean sensitivity” or “dendrogeomorphology.”

During the week of April 20 to April 24, 2015, I attended the Association of American Geographers (AAG) Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois to present research as the Graduate Fellow for the Dendroecology Group at the North American Dendroecological Field Week (NADEF), summer 2014, in a talk titled: “Climate-Growth Relationships and Stand Dynamics of High-Elevation Whitebark Pine in Shoshone National Forest, Wyoming.” Dendrochronology, or tree-ring science, is my specialty in the discipline of Physical Geography, and my focus is on dendrogeomorphology, or the use of tree-rings to reconstruct past geomorphic events, such as debris slides in the Smoky Mountains, or glaciers in the Beartooth Mountains of Wyoming. But . . . blabbering on all day about dendrochronology is not my intent for this article, so I will resume with AAG 2015.

During my time at AAG 2015, I learned much about what it means to be more than a graduate student in Geography, but to be considered an expert in my field, a colleague on equal par, or near equal par, with my scientific heroes. Learning how to be confident in your knowledge and in your contributions to your discipline is an important component to success and to having a productive conference experience. As a result of my experiences at AAG 2015, and many other conferences before, I have assembled a list of dos and don’ts to help the conference first-timer reduce their presentation jitters and to make the most out of what I feel to be an advantageous time.

Do: Be a Presenter

Although attending a conference without the stress of preparing a presentation can be a relaxing way to take in the current research in your field and boost your own knowledge, attending without presenting is a lost opportunity to prove that you are part of such developing research and an active participant in your discipline. So, it just makes sense to present something each time, or at least participate in some way; volunteer, organize a panel, or chair a session. If you are traveling there anyway, you might as well make the most out of it.

So if you’re a first-timer, warm up with a poster presentation, but make sure that you move to talks (paper presentations) soon. These allow you to practice public speaking and to learn how to tell others, either professionals in your field or a more general audience, about what you do in a clear, concise manner. The sessions are not always specific to a discipline so do not always assume that everyone in the room is an expert on your methods. Gear your talk towards your session, and your audience, as best you can. I always aim at a general audience, pretending that I am a teacher, and I am never satisfied unless I get one chuckle out of the audience. It is okay to lighten the mood a bit. People remember speakers that initiate some response from them, so balance the serious with the lighthearted. It will not only benefit the audience, but may also help you feel more comfortable, and this leads to a better talk.

Don’t: Present a Poster Every Time

Posters are nice and easy. Once they are done, you are done. You just have to show up to your poster session and be prepared to explain your research to a few passers-by, talk casually and accept constructive criticism, feedback or suggestions from session attendees. Now do not get me wrong, the work that goes into a poster can be just as intense as that for a presentation, and for some, being prepared to give a two-minute spiel about their research, being ready to talk “off the cuff” is more intimidating than presenting a practiced speech. One of the perks of giving a poster is extra time to talk about your research and get suggestions from colleagues. And the fact that they can be just as time consuming as a talk is true. The problem is that posters are often seen as the easy way out. Give a couple posters at your first couple conferences, and people will recognize that you’re new to the game and testing the waters. Give a poster at every conference
you attend, and people will assume that you are too afraid to give a talk. Don’t be the person that sticks to what they know; don’t get caught in a groove and stay there. Posters are a good way to get warmed up to the idea of attending a conference, but be prepared to start giving talks as soon as you can.

Do: Network, Network, Network

Conferences provide a unique opportunity to meet future colleagues, co-authors, advisors and career mentors. Many graduate students can likely attest to the lack of exposure to colleagues and co-authors outside of the limitations of their own campus and their own time. Life as a graduate student is busy, and opportunities to collaborate, except for with those within your own lab or your own department, are few. Conferences serve as a chance to get away from the “confines” of your own grad school department, to meet fellow scientists from around the world, and to develop relationships with future collaborators.

As an example, during the Chicago AAG meeting, I made a point to attend a Physical Geography session featuring Dr. Markus Stoffel of the Université de Genève Switzerland and founder of the Swiss Tree-Ring Laboratory, practically the man whose research formed the bulk of the literature review for my thesis, and the premier dendrogeomorphologist in Europe. It was so exciting to see his talk because it aligned so well with what I do, but in the American Southeast. After the session, I made it my mission to talk to him, learn more about his research, and discuss my own. The next thing I knew, he was inviting me to Switzerland to attend one of his dendrogeomorphology workshops, all expenses paid except travel, basically the chance of a lifetime for a dendrogeomorphologist like myself. Being proactive, and confident, paid off. So, plan to network. When planning out your conference, look for names that are important in your discipline, look for the people whose research has been featured in your literature reviews, and look for people that will help you to further your professional goals. Then, take a deep breath, and approach them. A hint: It always helps to have a two-minute research spiel ready to go for this sort of thing, but be prepared to improvise. Practice boosts confidence, but don’t practice so much that you sound like an automated message.

Do: Dress to Impress, Even on “Off” Days

Consider the entire conference a job fair or job interview. Any moment can become that moment when you are speaking about your research with a potential future advisor or employer. Be ready. It also helps to have business cards, even if you are not yet in the job market. Now, the level of “dress to impress” that you need to attain can depend on the conference. Geography conferences are more relaxed than some business conferences I’ve accidentally attended by being in the same hotel. Gauge your dress by your audience, but look professional at all times.

Don’t: Be a Clique

Resist the urge to hang out only with your advisors, professors, and classmates from the university that you attend. I know . . . it’s easy. I often find myself attending sessions with my University of Tennessee (UT) colleagues, going to talks and poster presentations given by UT colleagues, and going out for social “networking” with people that I already know. For your first conference, this is the less scary option: you avoid being around strangers and the consequential periodic awkward introductions and conversations with people you have never met before or who you think to be so intellectually above you that you feel there is no possible way that you could converse on the same level. Do not be afraid! If I had been afraid to talk to Dr. Stoffel, I would have missed the chance to work with him in Switzerland.

My advice is this: For your first conference, by all means, start with talks and posters by people you already know, but use these to branch out and discover someone/something new. Pop the conference “bubble” so to speak and get away from your friends and lab colleagues. Look through the abstracts and find something that interests you, or a few things that interest you, and go, without first checking with your colleagues or roommates. If they happen to be there when you get there, be so be it, but avoid the “lost puppy dog” syndrome of following your friends or more experienced conference-goers around. Believe me, being confident and pursuing your own goals pays off.

Do: Branch Out From Your Own Specialty

Conferences are a great time to attend talks, panels and poster sessions in your own discipline, to “beef up” on your own concentrations and network with those in your usual circle. However, conferences are also a great opportunity to broaden your knowledge and explore new things. You are essentially surrounded by experts; take advantage of it! Take the time to explore other realms of your science. You never know when you might stumble
upon some new application of your methods, or
might find a collaboration you would have never
thought possible. Most of my “aha” moments have
not come from sessions in my own field of tree-ring
science, but have come from sessions that concern
connected, but not altogether similar, ideas. For
example, I attended a full day of sessions in
dendrochronology, but found sessions on
geomorphology, environmental reconstruction,
human-environment interactions, and even pollen
and charcoal from lake cores to be very helpful to my
research. Branching out just a bit from the same-old
thing that you’ve been doing for the last two to four
years of your academic life will allow you to look at
things from alternative perspectives, or give you the
boost you might need to get out of an academic rut.
(We’ve all been there.) Getting excited about something is the best
medicine for a tired grad student. And hey, attend some sessions
that just interest you, for no academic reason but to satisfy your
own curiosity. And think about your future. Don’t think only about
what might benefit you now, think ahead to what might benefit
your future; if you want to teach someday, attend some sessions
about teaching or lesson planning. If you want to write, attend a
session on science communications. Take advantage of the
resources surrounding you.

Do: Explore the Exhibit Hall
Most conferences feature an exhibition of schools, businesses and
organizations whose programs and products align with the subject/
goals of the association/sponsor of the conference. In the case of
AAG, a nonprofit educational society that seeks to contribute to the
advancement of Geography, the expo featured companies such as
ESRI and National Geographic, publishing companies, and
universities seeking to recruit to their Geography programs. The
Oak Ridge National Lab was also present at the AAG Conference.
But, more so than to be a place to sell wares and books to
professionals and educators in the field, the exhibition is essentially
a miniature job fair. Treat it as such. Even if you intend to stroll
through the exhibits on your “off” day, make sure to dress to
impress, because you never know when talking to someone at the
National Geographic booth could lead to a job offer. In addition, for
those seeking future graduate schools, maybe looking for a PhD
program, the exhibition is a great place to start, ask questions, and
maybe stumble upon an offer. In alignment with the networking
suggestions above, be prepared to give a two-minute spiel about
your research. Many a colleague of mine has stumbled upon
excellent graduate school offers at a conference, either by checking
out the booths at the exhibition or by speaking with presenters
after sessions.

Do: Meet your “Heroes”
So you’ve been reading so-and-so research for the last two years
and bam, you see their name pop up as a conference presenter.
Resist the urge to tuck into some hiding place and avoid them. As a
graduate student, leaders of our own discipline often seem
unapproachable, like we have to somehow work our way up to
their level to be able to speak with them. This is not the case!
Conferences are a great place to meet your scientific heroes.
Attend their talks, take notes, and by all means make sure you talk
to them in person. Your hero may be your next advisor or co-
author.

Do: Grow Your CV
When you’ve warmed up to the whole conference idea, plan to do
more than just be a presenter. Giving a talk or poster proves that
you are a part of the research community, but when you become
the chair or organizer of a session, panel or symposium, you can
prove that you’ve gone yet another step forward. So, present, be a
chair, be a session organizer. Get creative! Take charge! It shows
that you are more than just a graduate student, but working
towards becoming a professional in your field. Not to mention it
makes an excellent addition to your CV.

Don’t: Miss the Opportunity to Learn About/Explore the
Conference Destination
As a Geographer, place matters to me, so I try to explore the
conference destinations as much as I do the conference. The AAG
offers field trips and tours with every conference, but you can also
trek out on your own. Don’t see it as slacking (unless you spend
more time “exploring” and less time conferencing). I personally
believe that one’s knowledge always benefits from exploring new
places and cultures, from branching out of their own comfort zone,
even if their discipline has nothing to do with culture or Geography.
Conferences often give us the chance to travel to new and exciting destinations. As long as it doesn’t turn from conference to vacation, make sure to take some time to explore. If anything, it can provide a welcome respite from the sometimes exhausting matter of all-day sessions.

**Do: Be Proactive and Productive**

Take some time before the conference to plan out which events you would like to attend, when you will be exploring the exhibition hall, and when you would like to attend a field trip or explore the conference destination on your own. Don’t wing it. A planned, but flexible, itinerary will keep you on track and lead to a more productive conference. The AAG provides a conference app for smartphones that allows you to look up events by presenters or topics and build your own conference schedule. Look up the names of important people in your discipline, find out if they will be there, and add any sessions, panels, or symposia that they will be attending. Squeeze in all you can, because again, conferences are one of your best chances to network and grow professionally.

**But Don’t: Burn Yourself Out**

As part of being proactive and productive, be sure to not overburden yourself. If you attend a week-long conference and attend all-day sessions every day, you will be a zombie by the end. Zombies are not productive. Take some time to refresh your brain and take a break from the conference. Go to lunch with some colleagues, take a walk, or go on a field trip. You would take breaks if you were working a full eight hour day in a job somewhere. Do the same for the conference. Have a half day off, plan some fun activities. It’s okay. This doesn’t make you a slacker. The trick is balance. When you are building your itinerary, build in some breaks. Make sure you attend important sessions, support colleagues, and explore any events that interest you, but when you find yourself digging for a session just to fill in a one-hour slot that you didn’t have filled, perhaps instead you could use that time to take a break or stroll around the exhibit hall. You might as well face it; those sessions that you use just to fill in slots are often uninteresting anyway. Don’t waste your time napping off in a session that does not interest you. If there is not a session that furthers your career goals or that even remotely interests you for a particular time slot, it is okay. Don’t panic. Go grab a coffee, relax, and watch other frantic conference-goers hustle by for a time.

**Do: Catch Up with Old Colleagues/Friends**

Conferences also offer a unique opportunity to catch up with old colleagues and friends: people that you used to attend grad school with, past advisors and professors, people that have moved on to other graduate programs or careers, or people you’ve worked with or collaborated with in the past. Take some time to find out about their current research. Past colleagues can easily become current colleagues again, and can present an opportunity to collaborate outside of your current institution.

**Do: Have Fun!**

Enjoy the conference, the people, the destination! Yes, conferences are a place to further your professional career, meet new people and grow your CV, but this doesn’t make them a strict and boring place. As a Geographer at least, I have found that seemingly unapproachable leaders of the discipline are everyday people just like you and me, easy to talk to and altogether welcoming. Geography conferences are not suit and tie affairs. In fact, blue jeans, hiking shoes/boots, and flannels seem to be the norm. Networking not only leads to meeting future collaborators but also future friends and mentors, people that you can call with questions about your research, but also with questions about life and the struggles of graduate school. I am reluctant to say that this is the case with all conferences, but from my experience I can say that networking with professionals in my discipline has not only benefitted me professionally, but has led to my becoming a part of a great circle of people, a support group that I can call on both professionally and personally. This is one of the priceless benefits of becoming a major player, not a bystander, in your chosen discipline.

This Brings Me to a Final Do: Attend a Conference

Or better yet, attend many. As far as I’m concerned, conferences are all perks and no drawbacks. Put in the work, and it always pays off.
Meeting Minutes
Biogeography Specialty Group Business Meeting, Chicago AAG, April 25, 2015

Submitted by Matt Bekker, incoming board member

1. Welcoming Remarks

Lynn Resler, Biogeography Specialty Group (BSG) Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm, welcomed the audience, and introduced the BSG board. New members will be announced after elections. Lynn also thanked Taly Drezner for her service as Secretary-Treasurer, John Kupfer for handling the BSG website and to Christopher Underwood, who volunteered to take over as editor for the newsletter.

Lynn noted that Taly has been Secretary-Treasurer for more than a decade, and is ready to offer the position to someone else. She notes that Taly cannot be here tonight, but sends along the following message:

“I have been the Secretary-Treasurer of the BSG for, amazingly, more than a decade. I have thoroughly enjoyed being involved in the specialty group in this way and I am happy to continue in this capacity. However, if there is someone else who would like to take over in this role, please contact me to arrange that. The main duties of the BSG Secretary-Treasurer are: (1) to take the minutes at each annual meeting, and then type them up and distribute them (eventually to the BSG newsletter), (2) to present the financial status of the BSG at the annual meeting, (3) to be responsible for getting the documents from award-winners to the AAG to get checks drawn and sent, (4) to answer questions associated with our finances for the membership and BSG board, and (5) to sit as a non-voting member of the BSG board. Please let me know if you would like to do this!”

Lynn noted that the BSG sponsored or co-sponsored 23 sessions this year and offered thanks to the organizers, many of whom were students that organized sessions. Lynn mentioned that this was the first year the BSG highlighted a session (to her knowledge): Geographers on John Muir, organized by Glen MacDonald. Glen told everyone it was a full house and thanked the BSG for highlighting the session.

2. Chairs’ Meeting report

This year there were ~8907 attendees at the AAG, with 1700 sessions and 7000 abstracts. At the Chair’s meeting it was noted that approximately $50,000 is awarded annually to students from SGs.

Lynn noted it is now possible to sign up for SGs any time during the year through the AAG website. Donations can be made to specialty groups in general through the website, but at this time, you cannot specify to which group the donation will go. A follow up with Michelle Ledoux (AAG) will enable the donation to go to the appropriate group. The Association’s name will officially change to the American Association of Geographers on January 1, 2016.
3. Treasurer’s report (submitted in advance by Taly Drezner)

Last year, we awarded $1700 in awards plus $500 support to the student rep, and anticipate doing the same this year:
$1000 for Ph.D. grant
$500 for Masters grant
$100 for best PhD paper
$100 for best MA paper, plus $500 for student rep

We also had $161.50 in miscellaneous expenses last year. Thus, in total we spent $2361.50 last year (March 1, 2014 to Feb 28, 2015). Unfortunately, our membership has been on the decline over the last few years (will return to this point in a moment). From March 1, 2014 – February 28, 2015 (last 12 months of record), our intake was only $2056.50 from membership. That means we spent $305 more than we took in last year. This gap was generously narrowed to only a $20 shortfall due to the generous donations by Scott Mensing ($100 – thank you!) and collections during last year’s meeting that were collected and then matched by George Malanson ($225 – thank you to George and the attendees of last year’s meeting). We have been in the red for several years now, to varying degrees. How do we cover such a deficit? Years ago we generally spent less then we took in when our membership was higher and that surplus was ‘rolled over’ from year to year. Our shortfalls are simply covered by our balance from yesteryear being carried forward. Our balance as of Feb 28, 2015 (the last update on our books) is $2834.07. Do note that we pay our award winners after conferences (e.g., April-May-June), dropping our balance dramatically, and then our funds are replenished primarily in October-November when people register for the next conference and renew their memberships at the same time.

SOME MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION
I was able to get some membership numbers from the AAG this year. Our membership fluctuates from day to day as memberships expire and are renewed and registered. On April 1, 2015 we had 356 members (214 Regular; 131 Student; 11 Developing regions). On December 31 of the following years our membership was (AAG did not provide a breakdown of membership types):
2011: 374
2012: 320
2013: 382
2014: 362
So this year we are between our lowest and highest of the last 4 years.

4. Dues and Awards
Survey results from Tampa meeting regarding dues & awards: based on the survey results and discussion from the Tampa meeting, the Board suggests: 1) raising professional dues from $8.50 to $10.00; and 2) dropping the financial prize for student presentation awards.
A motion was made to adopt the proposed changes, the motions was seconded and approved.
5. Board Member Reports

Elections – Joy Fritschle
Incoming Members:
- Christopher Kaase, Student Representative
- Matt Bekker, Board Member
- Melanie Stine, Board Member
- Jake Bendix, Chair

Student Research Grant Competition – Grant Elliott
-13 proposals submitted
M.S. winner: Jordan Adams, Texas State University, title of project: Examining hydrodynamics of the endangered Texas wild-rice to inform restoration
Ph.D. winner: Stephanie Mikelson Correa University of Washington, title of project: Tracing the fate of applied nitrogen in Douglas-fir forests of Oregon and Washington

Student Presentation awards – Carissa Brown
Chicago 2015
M.S. winner: Tera Del Priore, University of Colorado – Denver, title of project: 4,000 years of environmental change in central Colorado: a paleoecological perspective
Ph.D. winner: Lucas Harris, Pennsylvania State University, title of project: Drivers of fire severity in an old-growth mixed-conifer forest, Yosemite National Park, California

Tampa 2014
M.S. Sarah Quan
Ph.D. Daryn Hardwick

Professional Awards – Justin Hart
Parsons Award: Glen MacDonald, presented by Katrina Moser

Student Representative Report: Amanda Young
Reminded everyone about her organized session on Saturday afternoon.

6. Meeting adjourned, ~8:00p
1. Back issues of The Biogeographer are posted on the BSG website ([www.biogeographer.org](http://www.biogeographer.org)).

2. Please consider adding the BSG domain to your favorite links and promote it on your homepage, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. ([www.biogeographer.org](http://www.biogeographer.org)).

3. The BSG Facebook page is managed by Arvind Bhuta and is available here: [https://www.facebook.com/groups/141655989204924/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/141655989204924/).

4. John Kupfer is presently managing the BSG website ([www.biogeographer.org](http://www.biogeographer.org)). If you have links (or other materials), send up to 2–3 pages to John, including syllabi for biogeography courses. You can contact John at [kupfer@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:kupfer@mailbox.sc.edu).

5. Communications among BSG members is usually by email through the AAG’s discussion forum. For instructions to access and post messages on the BSG forum, login to the AAG website ([www.aag.org](http://www.aag.org)), then:

   - Select Memberships
   - Select Specialty Groups
   - Scroll down to Biogeography and click on “learn more”

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**Submission Guidelines**

**Chris Underwood**, Editor, *The Biogeographer*

Submissions to *The Biogeographer* should be sent directly to the editor ([underwoodc@uwplatt.edu](mailto:underwoodc@uwplatt.edu)) as email attachments in Word format. Please spell-check and proofread your submissions carefully. Submissions should be concise and written in a style consistent with the rest of the newsletter.

**Notes and News Items:** *Notes* are intended to convey topical information of interest to the BSG community.

*Notes* topics may include:

- Research Notes: new projects and progress reports or general research-related ideas and issues
- Field Notes: recent field work or field trips or retellings of classic tales from the field
- Course Notes: news, announcements, or articles related to teaching biogeography or pedagogical issues affecting the discipline
- Book Notes: book reviews or announcements
- Miscellaneous Notes: anything that doesn't fit in any of the other categories
News items can be personal, departmental, institutional, or simply biogeography-related stories from the press.

Recent Publications
Only publications that have actually appeared in print or online will be listed, so please do not submit in-press items until you have page numbers or a permanent URL.

Finally, apologies for the late posting of this edition of The Biogeographer. A cross-country move and settling into a new job this summer have me running a bit behind on a few things; therefore, you’ll notice this edition is subtitled “Spring/Summer 2015.” It will be back to the traditional fall and spring delivery with the next edition.

Kind regards,

Chris

Back to the Top