

**CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY SPECIALTY GROUP OF THE AMERICAN
ASSOCIATION OF GEOGRAPHERS
2017-2018 ANNUAL REPORT**

I. Mission Statement

The Cultural Geography Specialty Group (CGSG) seeks to promote and encourage scholarly research and superior teaching in the field of Cultural Geography through the exchange of current thoughts, trends and information focusing on all areas of the field. The CGSG shall encourage, facilitate and sponsor the organization of paper sessions and discussion panels at national and regional meetings of the American Association of Geographers (AAG) as well as other seminars, symposiums, and conferences at which themes relating to cultural geography are discussed. The CGSG will also reward junior scholars by hosting paper competitions and awarding research grants. The CGSG aims to stimulate dialog about and among the discipline and represent the members in all matters related to membership in the national association (AAG).

II. 2018 Dues

Regular Members: \$5.00

Students: \$2.00

III. Board of Directors

Sharon Wilcox
Chair | 2017-2019
University of Wisconsin-Madison
sewilcox@wisc.edu

Don Colley
Secretary-Treasurer | 2018-2020
Oklahoma State University
don.colley@okstate.edu

Matt Cook
Program Director | 2018-2020
Eastern Michigan University
mcook40@emich.edu

Timur Hammond
Awards Director | 2017-2019
Syracuse University
twhammon@maxwell.syr.edu

Weronika Kusek
Nominations Director | 2018-2020
Northern Michigan University
wkusek@nmu.edu

Mark Rhodes
Grad Student Rep | 2017-2019
Kent State University
mrhode21@kent.edu

Ian Spangler
Grad Student Rep | 2018-2020
University of Kentucky
itsp222@uky.edu

Andrew Husa
Grad Student Rep | 2018-2020
University of Nebraska at Lincoln
husa.15@hotmail.com

Outgoing

Ola Johansson
Secretary-Treasurer | 2016-2018
University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown
johans@pitt.edu

Nicholas Jon Crane
Program Director | 2016-2018
University of Wyoming
ncrane@uwyo.edu

Hannah Gunderman
Grad Student Rep | 2016-2018
University of Tennessee
hgunderm@vols.utk.edu

Jordan Brasher
Grad Student Rep | 2016-2018
University of Tennessee
jbrashe3@vols.utk.edu

IV. Updates and Future Plans

1. Business Meeting

The CGSG Business Meeting was held in New Orleans on April 12, 2018. The meeting was declared open by Chair Sharon Wilcox.

The Chair's report (Sharon Wilcox): After attending the meeting of the Chairs of AAG specialty groups, Sharon shared that the AAG is in very good shape fiscally and has reached an all-time high in annual memberships. The AAG is heading into a new era, as Executive Director Doug Richardson is retiring late summer 2019/winter 2020. The AAG Council has adopted a succession plan and will be launching a year-long process to identify the next director. This will not be a democratic process (legal responsibility to process); but input will be requested of AAG members. The flagship publications of the AAG, the *Annals* and *the Professional Geographer*, are important revenue stream for AAG (royalties from Taylor & Francis). The Council believes the PG "deserves an upgrade," and they are soliciting perspectives on the focus, format, etc. This annual meeting has 8500 registrants with 6204 abstracts for presentation. International attendance represents approximately 30%, and students approximately 45%. Concerns were raised by numerous people from the floor with regards to the expense of attending the AAG, particularly scholars from Global South as well as disadvantaged, underrepresented, and underemployed scholars. Richardson encouraged Specialty Groups to play the role in helping people meet this gap. The CGSG remains deeply concerned about this issue and hopes to make a measure of impact through the creation of the Adjunct Travel Award.

The Nominations Director's report (Matt Cook): CGSG is now in our fourth year of holding online elections to allow broader participation from the CGSG community, including those who cannot be present at the annual AAG conference or the CGSG business meeting. Forty-nine CGSG members voted. This year, online elections were administered using Google Forms and required users to submit an email address for verification. Elections ran from March 23 to April 6, and results were announced at the CGSG business meeting. CGSG had four open board positions this year. Don Colley was elected Secretary/Treasurer, Weronika Kusek Nominations Director, and Matt Cook Program Director. Matt reported that there was a tie at 24 votes apiece for Ian Spangler and Andrew Husa, the two candidates for graduate representative, and both have been tapped to fill the role. Bylaws may need to be amended to allow for this practice, now in its second year.

The Program Director's report (Nicholas Jon Crane): CGSG sponsored 101 sessions for the 2018 annual meeting of the AAG. The 2018 program included our annual marquee lecture, delivered this year by Dr. Michael Crutcher on "Revisiting Treme, New Orleans' most endangered neighborhood." The CGSG also co-sponsored the 2018 *Geographical Review* lecture by Dr. Richard Campanella.

The Awards Director's report (Timur Hammond): This year, CGSG-sponsored awards were given to the best graduate paper, as well as PhD and Master's level research grants. CGSG had a very competitive research grant competition, with a total of 30 submissions. Our paper competition, now combined to accept submissions at both the Master's and PhD levels, reflected the methodological, conceptual, and topical breadth that characterizes Cultural Geography today. We would especially like to thank the three anonymous referees who judged our paper competition. Continuing a tradition established by Joni Palmer, previous Awards Director, the judges provided generous and critical feedback to all of the authors who submitted papers for consideration. This past year, the Cultural Geography Specialty Group also established a new award for Best Paper by Adjunct or Non-Tenure Track Faculty. Although we did not receive any submissions during this application cycle, we hope to receive more applications in the future and have adjusted timelines for award applications to be better in sync with registration deadlines for the annual conference. In creating this award, we also hope to increase the visibility of precarious labor and to make one – however small – contribution to helping those scholars continue to participate in our discipline. In 2018 we also established a new online system for submitting and evaluating applications.

Grad Student Rep report (Hannah Gunderman, Jordan Brasher, and Mark Rhodes): The landscape photo exhibit attracted 18 submissions this year, which represents a significant uptick from 2017. This year the winning entry will be submitted for publication in the journal *Material Culture*. As in the recent past, the CGSG organized a graduate student breakfast at the AAG. For the 2018 event, twenty-two people attended the event over two hours. The event was held at a Starbucks at a cost of \$ \$128.41.

2. Future Plans and Directions

In general, CGSG has a large membership but few individuals who are actively involved in the group. With student membership growing within AAG, CGSG could also consider adding an undergraduate position on the CGSG board. Another way for the CGSG to expand its activities would be to be affiliated with existing academic meetings, either those with a strong cultural geography component or regional meetings of the AAG. Exactly how such an arrangement could be organized will require further discussion, and the CGSG is currently exploring potential options.

3. 2018 CGSG Student Paper and Research Grant Awards

Denis E. Cosgrove Research Grant (\$1,000)

28 applications received

Winner: Mae Miller (Graduate Center, City University of New York)

Title of Proposal: *Sea Stories: Maritime Labor and the Geographies of the Global Black Freedom Struggle*

Master's Level Research Grant (\$250)

2 applications received

Winner: John Kendall (University of Minnesota)

Title of Proposal: *The evangelical mission and its Orient: American Protestantism in Kurdistan*

Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov Student Paper Award

5 applications received

Winner: Jessa Loomis (University of Kentucky)

Title of Paper: *Holding Hope: Aspirational Economic Subjects and the Temporalities of Hardship*

Adjunct Travel Award

No applicants

4. Newsletter

The CGSG Newsletter is an online publication distributed directly before the AAG meeting. The newsletter was sent to each specialty group member via email and was placed on the CGSG web page. The 2018 newsletter was updated and edited by Sharon Wilcox.

5. Plans for AAG Annual Meeting in Washington, DC

A Marquee Speaker, Photo Exhibit, and Breakfast activity are being organized for the AAG meeting in Washington, DC. CGSG will also explore hosting a sponsored poster session.

V. Membership and Participation

According to the AAG Knowledge Communities, there were 814 paid members of the Cultural Geography Specialty Group at the time of the 2018 annual meeting. The CGSG uses Knowledge Communities platform to contact its members. Both Facebook and Twitter accounts are also utilized as means to communicate with the members. Kent State University hosts the CGSG website, and CGSG officers affiliated with that University currently maintain web content.

VI. Financial Report (*Submitted by Secretary-Treasurer Ola Johansson*)

The CGSG bank account is kept by the AAG Central Office, and the current account statement can be obtained from Michelle Ledoux. The balance of the CGSG account decreased from \$3780 at the end of 2016 to \$3352 at the end of 2017. This is a result of our total expenses increasing slightly (see below) as well as a modest decrease in incomes, which comes from collected membership dues. In 2017, we collected \$2406 in membership dues compared to \$2505 in 2015. This 4 percent decline can be explained by

the fact that membership in the group has dropped at corresponding levels, from 850 one year ago (March 2017) to 812 currently (as of March 2018). Faculty members pay the full \$5 membership fee while students pay \$2. It is possible that some geographers seek out membership in more specialized groups within AAG rather than broad-based ones, such as the CGSG. This year, following deliberation, the board of directors voted to increase dues for faculty members from \$5 to \$6.

Our expenses include monetary awards given to the recipients of our student research grant and paper competitions. We especially emphasize the Denis Cosgrove Research Grant for Ph.D. dissertation research (it is a \$1000 award), which attracts a large number of high quality applicants every year. In addition, the annual marquee speaker at the AAG meeting receives an honorarium, in part to offset registration and other expenses. Last year's speaker in Boston was Anne Whiston Spirn, Professor of Landscape Architecture and Planning at MIT. One additional minor expense (\$150) this year was a co-sponsorship of the *Geographical Review* speaker in Boston. We also spent \$100 more on awards judges' honorarium than during the previous year, as we employed more judges. On the other hand, we reduced expenses for the hosting of the 2017 AAG graduate student breakfast social by \$129 compared to 2016, as it was held in a low-cost location (Dunkin Donuts). See the balance sheet for details. In sum, the overall modest decrease in available CGSG funds this year is not a cause for concern as \$3352 is still above the level two years ago (\$3038). Also, extrapolating from last year's AAG expenses, the CGSG should have approximately \$1000 remaining after bills from the upcoming New Orleans meeting are paid. The financial situation of the CGSG remains stable.

Date	Description	Receipts	Disbursements	Balance
12/31/16	Dues collected for Dec. 2016	104		3,780.31
1/31/17	Dues collected for Jan. 2017	220		4,000.31
2/28/17	Dues collected for Feb 2017	155		4,155.31
3/29/17	Paper Judge Honorarium		-50	4,105.31
3/29/17	Paper Judge Honorarium		-50	4,055.31
3/29/17	Paper Judge Honorarium		-50	4,005.31
3/29/17	Masters Research Grant		-250	3,755.31
3/31/17	Dues collected for March 2017	129		3,884.31
4/17/17	Breakfast meeting reimbursement (Cook)		-84.06	3,800.25
4/18/17	Terry Jordan-Bychkov PhD Paper Award		-250	3,550.25
4/3/17	Denis Cosgrove Research Grant		-1,000.00	2,550.25
4/17/17	AAG Marquee Speaker Honorarium (Spirn)		-950	1,600.25
4/30/17	Dues collected for April 2017	98		1,698.25
5/31/17	Dues collected for May 2017	141		1,839.25
6/30/17	Dues collected for June 2017	85		1,924.25
7/31/17	Dues collected for July 2017	55		1,979.25
8/31/17	Dues Collected for Aug 2017	103		2,082.25
9/30/17	Dues Collected for Sept 2017	182		2,264.25
10/5/17	Sponsorship of Geogr. Rev. AAG speaker		-150	2,114.25
10/31/17	Dues collected for Oct 2017	895		3,009.25
11/30/17	Dues collected for Nov 2017	246		3,255.25
12/31/17	Dues collected for Dec 2017	97		3,352.25

VII. Special Requests or Questions for Council

It has again been brought to the board's attention that students lack funds to attend the annual AAG meeting. Additionally, many junior faculty have reported that due to financial issues at their institutions they do not have enough funds to cover the AAG membership, conference fee, accommodation, transportation, etc. This is particularly true for underemployed and underprivileged scholars, and those traveling from the global south.

Respectfully submitted by:
Sharon E. Wilcox
Chair, 2017-2019