

Cultural Geography Specialty Group
Annual Business Meeting Minutes
New Orleans, LA
April 11, 2018

Chair Shari Wilcox called the meeting to order at 11:55.

Chair's Report:

After attending the meeting of the Chairs of AAG specialty groups, Shari reported that the CGSG was one of only a dozen specialty groups to submit an annual report to the AAG. This is an important process, as specialty groups that go three years without submitting a report can be called into question.

Shari also 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. for the PG.

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. It was noted that almost all specialty group awards go to students, with over \$50,000 spent on student research and travel by the groups.

Sponsorships at AAG:

Shari shared a report from Nick Crane, who as not able to attend the annual meeting. The CGSG sponsored more than 100 sessions and fieldtrips this year. We organized the Michael Crutcher marquee talk, and we would do well to begin thinking about who to invite as our marquee speaker for Washington DC next year. Nick noted that we can play an active role in recruiting session organizers to sponsor their sessions, as he has done as Program Director; this may have a knock-on effect of promoting membership. We might also consider what themes or debates may be of interest to members of the board, and we could create a CGSG board-organized panel for next year's meeting as we have sometimes done in the past. This is a great way to facilitate professionalization for our grad student reps.

Nick noted that Oscar Larson is interested to have specialty groups sponsor poster sessions. We did not do that this year because of the late notice and lack of enthusiasm but it may be something to do in the year to come.

Elections:

Nominations Director Matt Cook reported on elections, which were held in late March and early April 2018. As last year, elections were held via online balloting. Forty-nine CGSG members voted. Matt noted

that no quorum of the total membership is required for elections, and that online voting has increased participation compared to years when elections were held during the 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. Matt noted that the bylaws should be consulted to see if any provisions should be made for having three graduate representatives instead of two, as has been the practice now for two years.

Awards:

Awards Director Timur Hammond shared the results from this year's grant and paper award competitions. CGSG awarded the Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov Paper award to Jessa Loomis (University of Kentucky) for her paper, "Holding Hope: Aspirational Economic Subjects and the Temporalities of Hardship." We awarded our MA Research Grant (\$250) to John Kendall (University of Minnesota) for his project, "The evangelical mission and its Orient: American Protestantism in Kurdistan." Finally, CGSG awarded the Denis Cosgrove PhD Research Grant (\$1,000) to Mae Miller (Graduate Center, City University of New York) for her project "Sea Stories: Maritime Labor and the Geographies of the Global Black Freedom Struggle."

Timur noted that the adjunct award did not receive applications, which was surprising. The group discussed the timeline for that award, and agreed that the submission date should be in the fall, to better align with the CFP and registration. The group then turned to the question of criteria for the travel award, agreeing that the award should be based on self-nomination, with each applicant asked to submit a statement describing why meeting is important to their professional development and characterizing their financial need. Applicants should also submit their abstracts and a 2 page CV.

Budget:

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.

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.

Ola cautioned against allowing the balance to drop below \$1000. The group discussed ways to decrease expenses and/or increase income slightly. A major cost is the Marquee speaker, and it may be possible to find a speaker with lower costs in DC. The group then turned to the idea of raising dues in order to help correct for the slight drop in revenue. Timur motioned to raise the faculty dues by \$1 to a total of \$6. Matt seconded the motion. The group considered the fact that dues have not been raised in many years, and a slight raise would still place dues well within the range established by other groups. The vote was unanimous in support of making this increase. The group decided not to raise graduate student dues at this time.

Graduate Student activities:

Jordan Brasher shared that the landscape photo competition and the breakfast were both a success. Submissions for the photo competition are back up, with 18 entered for 2018. Jordan raised the issue of recognition for the photographers, as at this time photos are hung without attribution to allow for blind judging. Following discussion, the board determined that in future years, digital copies of the photos will be pre-circulated to the judge(s), with the winner still announced at the meeting. This will allow display of the names of the photographers at the conference.

Jordan also flagged that it is important that future breakfast organizers ensure they connect with board members to make sure someone is present to pay for the meal at the start of the event.

Pending Business:

Chris Post inquired as to the status of the Cultural Geography website currently hosted at Kent State. At this time, the arrangement continues to work well and grad rep Mark Rhodes has been maintaining the site. Shari noted that last year's vote authorized purchase of a domain, with the plan of moving towards an independent site. Shari and Mark will coordinate to explore what domains are available, and the board will revisit timelines with regards to transitioning the website at a future meeting.

New Business:

Chris Post raised the idea of CGSG partnering/sponsoring the annual meeting of the Society for Landscape, Place, and Material Culture, making this an annual cultural geography meeting for professionals as well as academics. The nature of this relationship will need more exploration and no decisions were made at this time.

The meeting concluded at 1.00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Shari Wilcox, Chair