

Urban Geography Specialty Group Newsletter

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letter from the chair

When the 4th of July rolls around, while others might think national holiday (or the day that falls between the 3rd and 5th), I do a quick mental calculation. How many days are there before the beginning of the next academic year? (63 according to my university's schedule) That figure also helps with an assessment of how much time is left before the deadlines for the submission of AAG conference proposals. September 1st is the deadline for paper, organized session and field trip proposals. If you wish to submit a recent dissertation in geography for consideration in the Nystrom award competition that deadline is also the first of September. If those dates appear a little too close, you are allowed more time to contemplate a poster or illustrated paper. The deadline for those proposals is September 30th.

To extend the message of this 'wake-up call' to words of encouragement may I remind you of several opportunities. Our able board members Glen Elder and Sarah Elwood are interested in identifying sessions that might be sponsored by the specialty group and providing assistance where they can. As coordinators of the panel sessions, they can confer sponsorship on your group's efforts and perhaps even help to match up sessions with papers that are looking for a home. Students should also be reminded that there is a fund (albeit small) to support travel to the meetings for those giving papers. This last year we approved twenty grants of \$50 each for students presenting papers at the Pittsburgh meetings. You will be invited to submit a request for assistance closer to the date of the conference. For those of you less experienced conference participants, you may also wish to visit the AAG's conference website for information on the conference Enrichment Funds. This fund helps support distinguished non-geographers participation in the 2001 meetings. The UGSG's endorsement can help you with your application. We briefly discussed at the Pittsburgh meetings who might be invited and what might be done to further enliven what promises to be the exciting New York conference. Please let me know if you wish to explore the possibilities and/or seek support of the UGSG for your ideas.

Before ending, I would like to thank Helga Leitner for her leadership over the last several years. Her recent efforts to facilitate greater discussion between urban geographers in the U.K. and the U.S. exemplify the work that she undertook as chair of the UGSG. Fortunately that dialog will continue. Thanks, Helga.

Best wishes for a relaxing and productive time during the remaining days of summer !

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question from the editor

I have now been editing the UGSG *Newsletter* for a year. In that time I have come to greatly appreciate the efforts of everyone who has contributed items and the help of my department at Ohio State which contributes the time and materials needed for publication. I have also come to appreciate the large amount of paper used to publish the newspaper three times a year. It is this issue that I would like to pursue here.

I am interested in Specialty Group members' opinions on the future of the *Newsletter*. Should we continue to have a forum published primarily in 'hard copy' format? Alternatively, should the publication and distribution of the *Newsletter* be switched to electronic media – an email attachment or a web site with email notification when the new issue is posted (maintaining the opportunity for some to receive it by regular mail)?

I raised this issue at the business meeting in Pittsburgh. There was a mixed response. A number of people, perhaps the majority, felt that a shift to electronic publication is a good idea but there was concern on two major fronts: (1) care would need to be taken not to exclude those without the ability to receive email or access the web; (2) the *Newsletter* is only intended for distribution to UGSG members. Changes in the manner of publication and distribution must maintain existing membership restrictions. Others at the meeting were less enamored with the notion of switching to electronic format for a number of reasons (including, I must say, a valid concern that it might increase the editor's workload).

Please consider contributing this discussion. What should the future of the newsletter publication be? We are not at the point of making a binding decision, but your input would be very helpful.

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