

Canadian Women  
and Geography  
Study Group  
Newsletter

THIS ISSUE

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ca

# CWAG

## NEWSLETTER

### SEPT. 2004



*S. McWhirter (2004), Lake Simcoe, Ontario.*

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## Editor's Notes

Bonnie Hallman  
University of Manitoba

At long last, the second online edition of the newsletter arrives! Please forward to others interested in the work of CWAG, and encourage them to keep watch for new editions on our soon to be up and running webpage.

As I sat down to pull this edition together, it occurred to me that my biggest challenge in taking on this newsletter has been in soliciting enough content. I know – we are all very busy people with incredible commitments to research, teaching, service, and to our families and ourselves. And I was thinking that the real purpose of such a newsletter is both to share information about our work, and also to help us to take care of ourselves a bit, by sharing our stories of success, of coping and yes, of struggle, and to share our insights from our experiences as women in geography. It is to this end that I think this newsletter can make real contribution.

This leads me to comment on the very interesting findings reported here from the CWAG Survey. Three things struck me: 1) Students really value this group,

and urge us to do more; 2) Our name may not truly reflect who we are and what we do – perhaps something like 'Gender and Feminist Geography Study Group' should be considered, and ; 3) Many of us are feeling overworked and overwhelmed, and perhaps there is a role for CWAG to play in uncovering the causes, and working to alleviate, this burden so many of us work under.

So I encourage you to take a moment, to think about what you might like to share, what your reaction are to the survey findings, and consider what directions you would like this group to take in the near and long term. When that email 'beeps', take a moment to have a look at the newsletter – print it off and sit down with a tea or coffee and come and visit with your colleagues. We want to hear from you.

Until next time.

Bonnie



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## CWAG Chair Notes

Jennifer Hyndman

I would like to welcome Margaret Walton-Roberts of Wilfrid Laurier University who will take over in January 2005 as CWAG Chair. Margaret is known to many of you already, but has been involved in SWIG (Support Women in Geography) in Vancouver, CAGONT, and other CAG venues, including CWAG, for some time. Find out more at her website

[www.wlu.ca/~wwwgeog/facstaff/MWaltonRoberts.htm](http://www.wlu.ca/~wwwgeog/facstaff/MWaltonRoberts.htm)

It has been a real pleasure to chair CWAG over the past couple of years. I have met a lot of new members, especially students who I hope will be part of Geography in its many forms over the years to come. The newsletter, the webpage, the survey of CWAG membership are all new innovations over the past year or so, and I invite those interested to propose new initiatives that can invigorate CWAG and the CAG more generally.

We are looking for volunteers to write equity columns for the CAG newsletter, and hope that many of you will participate in the CAG at the University of Western Ontario, in London, next June. I

will be helping out in terms of organizing CWAG sessions, among other things.

Warm wishes to you all for the coming year,

Jennifer.

P.S. If you want to join the CWAG listserv, write to [cwag@geog.ubc.ca](mailto:cwag@geog.ubc.ca) with 'subscribe' in the subject heading.



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## Student Profiles

Joanna Kafarowski  
*Doctoral Candidate in Natural Resources and Environmental Studies, University of Northern British Columbia*

Since successfully defending her thesis proposal and receiving Research Ethics Board approval in the spring, Joanna secured the formal support of the two organizations partnering with her on her thesis project, Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association and Nunavik Nutrition and Health Committee. She is currently negotiating with potential fieldsite communities in Nunavik.

This summer, Joanna presented the preliminary project results of the Arctic Council Gender and Decision-making in Arctic Fisheries Project in Pangnirtung and Iqaluit, Nunavut and in Holman,

Northwest Territories. She will be representing this project at the Sustainable Development Working Group Session of the Arctic Council in Whitehorse, Yukon. The Final Report will be released this fall.



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## Department Updates

**DEPARTMENT OF  
GEOGRAPHY  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN  
BRITISH COLUMBIA (UNBC)  
PRINCE GEORGE, BC**  
<http://www.unbc.ca/geography>  
Submitted by Catherine Nolin,  
[nolin@unbc.ca](mailto:nolin@unbc.ca)

Geography at UNBC continues to be a dynamic and engaging community of faculty members and undergraduate and graduate students. Graduate students are involved in a variety of graduate programs, ranging from Interdisciplinary Studies (MA) to Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (MA, MSc, and PhD) and Master of Environmental Science. In this update, we want to highlight the accomplishments and ongoing commitments of our female faculty and students.

**Please see our "What's New @  
UNBC Geography" updates at:**  
<http://web.unbc.ca/geography/whatsnew/>

## **FACULTY MEMBERS**

### **Gail FONDAHL, PhD**

Associate Professor,  
[fondahlg@unbc.ca](mailto:fondahlg@unbc.ca),  
<http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/gail/>

- In mid-April, Gail attended the British Universities Siberian Studies Seminar in Houston, Texas (go figure!), where she co-chaired a session on 'The Numerically Small Peoples of the North' with colleague Sergei Savoskul (Moscow State University), and presented a paper on "Legal Constructions of Aboriginal Geographies."
- Gail is the Principal Investigator for a newly funded **CURA** research partnership between UNBC and Tl'azt'en Nation. The project has a new website at: <http://cura.unbc.ca>.
- Gail and family will enjoy her sabbatical at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland) from July to December 2004.

### **Catherine NOLIN, PhD**

Assistant Professor,  
[nolin@unbc.ca](mailto:nolin@unbc.ca),  
<http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/catherine/>

- At the invitation of [Canadian Foundation for the Americas \(FOCAL\)](#), Catherine traveled to Guatemala City to present

- the paper "Transnational Ruptures: Understanding the Geographies of Transnational Social Networks" at the "Hemispheric Integration & Transnationalism in the Americas" conference co-hosted by FOCAL and the Canadian Embassy, February 16-17, 2004.
- Organized and facilitated the 2-week Geography field school to Guatemala (Guatemala: The Global Order, Injustice, and Resistance) along with two colleagues, Toronto-based human rights lawyer Grahame Russell (Rights Action) and Guatemala-based Caren Weisbart (CCDA – Campesino Committee of the Highlands). Ten UNBC students (8 undergraduates & 2 graduate students) participated in field school after one week of intense coursework on campus focusing on issues of human rights, social justice, development models, indigenous rights, and political & economic violence. The course ran May 3<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Please see the Geography Program website <http://web.unbc.ca/geography/whatsnew/guatemala2004/> for more details.
  - Catherine and Jenn Reade (MA Candidate, Interdisciplinary Studies) attended the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers (CLAG) in Antigua, Guatemala from May 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>. Catherine and colleague Krista House (Population and Forced Migration Unit, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, NY) organized one session on Gender and Development / Solidarity / Accompaniment and two sessions on Transnationalism and Migration. Catherine presented the paper "Sanctuary Spaces: Placing Transnational Solidarity," and Jenn presented the paper "Community Development in Guatemala: Bringing Women In."

**Ellen PETTICREW, PhD**

Associate Professor,  
[ellen@unbc.ca](mailto:ellen@unbc.ca),  
<http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/ellen/>

- Ellen attended the International Association of Hydrological Sciences meeting in Moscow, Russia, 3-7 August 2004

**Debra STRAUSSFOGEL, PhD**

Associate Professor,  
[straussd@unbc.ca](mailto:straussd@unbc.ca),  
<http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/debra/>

- Deb attended the "Climate Disturbance Interactions in Boreal Forest Ecosystems" conference from May 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> in Fairbanks, Alaska; the *International Boreal Forest Research Association's* 12<sup>th</sup> annual scientific conference. Deb presented the paper "A Proposed Integrative Framework for Considering Regional Livelihoods in Boreal Forest Ecosystems."

### **UNDERGRADUATE & GRADUATE STUDENTS**

**Greg Halseth, Neil Hanlon, and Gail Fondahl** traveled to Medicine Hat with 10 undergraduate and 2 two graduate students from the Geography Program, to attend the Western Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers meeting (18-19 March 2004). Also, traveling was **Laura Ryser**, a former GEOG MA and current Research Associate, and Kent Sedgwich, Adjunct Professor of Geography. Greg, Neil, Laura, **Karen Heikkila** (MA NRES GEOG candidate), and **Jessica McGregor** (GEOG undergraduate) presented papers at the conference. Gail and undergraduate **Jamie Reshny** will be presenting papers.

Undergraduate Students:

**Kathryn Fields** (BSc Geography) received the Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG) award for top geography student in the 2004 UNBC graduating class.

**Jessica McGregor**, mcgregorj@unbc.ca, received "Honourable Mention" in the Undergraduate Student Presentation competition at the WD-CAG meeting in Medicine Hat, Alberta, 18-19 March 2004.

**Sophia Raby** (BA Geography) received the Geography Program's award for top human geography student in the 2004 graduating class.

Graduate Students:

**Rachael Clasby**, rclasby@hotmail.com (NRES – Geography, MA Candidate), Supervisor: Neil Hanlon

- Recently elected as a Student Representative on the Western Division-Canadian Association of Geographers (WD-CAG) Executive.
- Rachael is busy conducting research on seniors' housing and service needs in Mackenzie, BC. Together with two other researchers, Rachael conducted a series of key informant interviews and focus groups in May, and distributed a community survey to all households in

the community in June. This research is being done on behalf of the District of Mackenzie, with additional support from a Community Research Grant from the UNBC Northern Land Use Institute (PI: Greg Halseth). Rachael will build upon the findings of this study to carry out her Master's research on Mackenzie's preparedness for the service needs of an aging population.

**Nancy Elliot**, nelliot@mag-net.com (PhD Candidate, NRES)

- Nancy is working on her dissertation in which she is developing a new methodology to represent First Nations values with geospatial tools. Nancy works with the Halfway River First Nation, northwest of Fort St. John, deep in the heart of BC's oil and gas exploration area. Nancy collected data this summer and returns to the reserve this fall and winter to continue work.

**Jenny Lo** (MA NRES – Geography), Supervisor: Greg Halseth

- Successfully defended her thesis which passed with no revisions required (May 12, 2004)! Title: 3Cs for CED – Concepts, Case Studies, and Consequences: Building Capacity for Community Economic Development

**Joanna Kafarowski**,

gypsy\_four@hotmail.com  
(NRES – Geography, PhD Candidate), Co-supervisors: Dr. Deborah Poff and Dr. Leslie King (University of Manitoba)

- Successfully defended her proposal, April 15, 2004. Proposal Title: *Inuit Women, Decision-making and Contaminants*
- Recently awarded the Canadian Federation of University Women's "Alice E. Wilson Award," an Arctic Institute of North America Grant-in-Aid and funding from the Northern Scientific Training Program.
- Joanna organized a gender issues session and presented a paper at the *International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences* in Fairbanks, Alaska, and at the National Gathering of Graduate Students interested in Aboriginal Health. She also presented a paper at the Northern Feminist University in Steigen, Norway and is conducting fieldwork in Nunavik in late summer.

**Sandra Paradis** (MA Candidate, Interdisciplinary Studies; Supervisor: Catherine Nolin)

- Participated in Dr. Nolin's "Geographies of Culture, Rights and Power: Indigenous and Gendered

Human rights in Guatemala" field school

- Engaged in preliminary research in El Salvador after completion of the field school
- Continues to work as a research assistant for Catherine Nolin on BC rural migration and settlement issues.

**Jennifer Reade** (MA Candidate, Interdisciplinary Studies; Supervisor: Catherine Nolin):

- Spent the winter months conducting four months of fieldwork in the highlands of Guatemala while pursuing an internship with a women's development organization. Jenn's research examines the new and increasing involvement of women in community development projects in the department of Huehuetenango.
- Continues to work as a research assistant for Catherine Nolin on Guatemalan refugee and immigrant settlement experiences in Vancouver.

**Jacqui Stephens,**

stephenj@unbc.ca  
(Interdisciplinary Studies, MA Candidate), Supervisor: Catherine Nolin

- Successfully defended her proposal, April 6, 2004. Proposal Title: *The Power of Resistance: Indigenous*

*Rights in Guatemala and the Russian Federation.*

- SSHRC Graduate Scholarship (Master's Program) recipient
- After participation in the Geography Field School to Guatemala, spent one month of field research in Guatemala exploring issues of indigenous rights and resistance to resource development.
- Continues to work as a research assistant for Catherine Nolin on gender and migration issues along with a media analysis of rural BC migration issues.

#### **NEW PUBLICATIONS:**

Nolin, Catherine (2004) Spatializing the immobility of Guatemalan transnationalism in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 29 (57 & 58), 267-288.

Halseth, Greg and Ryser, L.\* (2004) Gender at work and gender at home: the mediating role of the household economy in northern British Columbia's resource dependent towns. In *The Structure and Dynamics of Rural Territories: Geographic Perspectives*, pp. 163-194, eds. D. Ramsey and C. Bryant. Brandon, University: Rural Development Institute.

Halseth, Greg, Bruce, David, and Sullivan, Lana\* (2004) Leading and lagging: The long run role of



institutions and social capital in fostering community economic development, In G. Halseth and R. Halseth, eds., *Building for Success: Explorations of Rural Community and Rural Development*. Brandon, MB: Rural Development Institute, Brandon University.

Sullivan, Lana\* and Halseth, Greg (2004) Responses of volunteer groups in rural Canada to changing funding and service needs: Mackenzie and Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, In G. Halseth and R. Halseth, eds., *Building for Success: Explorations of Rural Community and Rural Development*. Brandon, MB: Rural Development Institute, Brandon

David Bruce, Greg Halseth, and Laura Ryser\* (2004) *Economic Development Framework for Small Communities in Canada: Economic clustering approaches for small communities*. Ottawa: Ontario, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

David Bruce, Greg Halseth, and Kelly Giesbrecht\* (2004) *Economic Development Framework for Small Communities in Canada: An inventory of "small" communities*. Ottawa: Ontario, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Greg Halseth, Nora King, and Laura Ryser\* (2004) *Communication Tools and*

*Resources in Rural Canada: A Report for Mackenzie, British Columbia*. Montreal: Concordia University, New Rural Economy Project.

Greg Halseth, Nora King, and Laura Ryser\* (2004) *Communication Tools and Resources in Rural Canada: A Report for Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia*. Montreal: Concordia University, New Rural Economy Project.

\*recently completed graduate students

**DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENT AND  
GEOGRAPHY  
UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA  
WINNIPEG, MB**

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/environment/envirogeog/>

Submitted by Bonnie C. Hallman

**Faculty Member's Research Focii**

**S. Mary P. Benbow** (Ph.D. Liverpool 1991)

- Animal geographies, popular culture and zoo maps, narratives of conservation at the zoo
- Climate change, climate and biogeochemical cycles

**Bonnie C. Hallman** (Ph.D. Guelph

1997)

- Gender/feminist geographies of care-giving, health care and food
- Social outcomes of economic restructuring
- Rural communities

**Jill Oakes** (Ph.D. Manitoba 1988)

- Northern communities and development
- Meaning and significance of social and economic environmental relationships throughout the circumpolar nations and the American Southwest

### **Recent Publications**

S. Mary P. Benbow (2004) *Death and Dying at the Zoo*. Journal of Popular Culture.

S. Mary P. Benbow (2003) *Directing the Visitor: The History and Development of Zoo Maps*. Proceedings of the Eastern Regional Conference of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association.

J. Oakes and R. Riewe (in press) *Alaska! Environment, Culture and Clothing*. Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press.

J. Oakes and R. Riewe, Eds. (2003) *Native Voices in Research*. Native Studies Press, University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg MB.



## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Geography and Gender Reconsidered**

The Women and Geography Study Group (WGSG) of the Institute of British Geographers, has produced a CD-ROM publication: *Geography and Gender Reconsidered*. The collection celebrates the twentieth anniversary of the first WGSG publication, *Geography and Gender*.

Edited by Kath Browne (University of Brighton) , Jo Sharp (University of Glasgow) and Deborah Thien (University of Edinburgh), the CD offers eighteen essays reflecting the exciting diversity of contemporary feminist geography. The essays demonstrate the ongoing politics and projects of feminist geography in teaching and research.

Contributors to the collection include: *Liz Bondi, Sophie Bowlby, Gillian Rose, Kath Browne, Jacky Tivers, Clare Roche, Deborah Thien, Catharina Williams, Avril Maddrell, Elsbeth Robson, Carol Ekinsmyth, Kate Boyer, Amy Trauger, Clare Madge, Saraswati Raju, Lisa Doyle, Sarah Cefai, Amriah Buang, Parvati Raghuram, Judith Burnett, Erika Cudworth, Maria Tamboukou, Becky Elmhirst, Sarah Holloway and Helen Jarvis.*

As the WGSG chose to produce this CD-ROM independently, we are able to offer the CD for only



5GBP/\$12 CDN.

For sales in Canada, please contact Deborah Thien at:  
Institute of Geography,  
School of GeoSciences,  
The University of Edinburgh,  
Drummond Street,  
Edinburgh EH8 9XP  
Scotland, UK  
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## ARTICLE

### A New Political Economy of Higher Education in the Making?

By Robert Chernomas,  
Economics, University of  
Manitoba, and Mark Gabbert,  
History, University of Manitoba  
*Reprinted with permission from:  
Manitoba Alternatives, published  
by the Canadian Centre for  
Policy Alternatives-Manitoba,  
Spring 2004.*

The contemporary university is an institution with multiple, often conflicting roles. On the one hand, universities carry out their traditional intellectual and scientific functions, preserving the artistic and cultural legacies of the past, encouraging creativity and the pursuit of knowledge without concern for immediate practical applications, providing independent expertise in the public interest, and promoting a

critical stance toward existing society. On the other hand, universities are expected to play a major part in reproducing the existing socio-economic order. From this perspective, supporting government policy, providing up to date skills for an ever-changing labour market, and making scientific and technical expertise available to an increasingly knowledge-based private sector are among the university's central tasks.

These conflicts should not, of course, be overdrawn. The humanities, social sciences and pure sciences make important practical contributions to the creation of a sophisticated, productive labour force. The development of communication skills, a capacity for analysis, the sophisticated handling of evidence, and the experience of creative work are all major contributions the less directly applied disciplines make to Canadian society. Still, the university inevitably faces a challenge balancing the potentially conflicting roles of traditional academic work and that of the more directly applied disciplines.

In recent years, such conflicts have intensified. The politics of neo-conservatism have pressed the university strongly in the direction of applied research that emphasizes short and middle

term commercial payoffs. Governments have increasingly seen the universities as a means to upgrade the labour force and promote technological innovation in the private sector, all in an effort to make the national economy more competitive. They have targeted funding to disciplines that promise immediate economic payoffs. They have devised research-funding strategies that reduce the amount of public funding for research carried out in a context of traditional academic freedom and institutional independence. Instead, they have put increasing pressure on university faculty to make direct links with the private sector with the aim of commercializing the results of research. In the process, support for independently undertaken pure science as well as for the humanities and social sciences risks having a lower priority. A new political economy of higher education is emerging that threatens to undo the precarious balance between the university's critical and knowledge-oriented functions and its role as a provider of practical expertise for the state and the private sector.

Canada: The Federal Government's Industrial Strategy Pressures for commercialization began in Canadian universities during the 1980s, as cutbacks to public funding of universities and the demands of the 'new' hi-tech

economy began to have their impact. The private sector saw the universities as a source of skills and state of the art innovations that would contribute to competitiveness. For their part, the universities turned to the private sector for needed resources as government grants began to dwindle.<sup>1</sup> In the 1990s, the private sector-university alliance became government policy as Liberal government actions were increasingly aimed at turning the universities into instruments of national economic development based on corporate priorities.

This shift reflected a number of underlying economic factors that raised alarms in government circles. By the 1990s, Canada's per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was growing at its lowest rate in fifty years, and falling behind with respect to its competitors<sup>2</sup> The Federal Liberals blamed this in part on low productivity rooted in a failure of Canadian business to invest in research and development – an

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of this shift and its impact on academic freedom see Michael Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) pp. 333-349.

<sup>2</sup> For a more extensive account of Canadian fiscal policy, including its impact on research, see Robert Chernomas, "The Tax Cut Context" in *Missing Pieces II* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2000-1), pp. 99-105.

area where Canada lagged significantly behind other developed countries. The government concluded that addressing this problem required updating Canada's labour force and pace of technological innovation.

But if core funding for post-secondary education (PSE) is any indicator, during most of the nineties the government showed a very limited and selective interest in research or upgrading the labour force. Between 1992 and 2000, the federal government's cash contribution to PSE fell by a huge 34% from \$2.9B to \$1.9B, reaching the lowest share of GDP in more than 30 years.

The government is currently reinvesting in "knowledge", but in a way that suggests university based research should increasingly serve the private sector. As one government spokesperson put it during a conference focused on the changing relationships between the corporate, government and university sectors (The Innovation Canada Conference, held in Ottawa on Dec. 1 and 2, 1999, was hosted by the Canadian Foundation for Innovation), "We in government are expecting some payoff in the form of improving the commercialization of university research." The contribution of universities to

Canada's economic problems is to be found in a partnership model where the private sector and the universities "must share the costs and the results because interaction produces better results."

In the interest of promoting commercialization, new public cash has more strings attached. Granting councils have introduced strategic programs and partnership arrangements that steer university research priorities to outside, often commercial interests. Programs specifically targeted to encourage links between the university and the private sector are the networks of Centres of Excellence, Genome Canada, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, and the Canada Research Chairs program, all established since 1989. Together, these programs target hundreds of millions of dollars for research "partnerships".

Drawbacks of the Rush to Commercialize  
*Even if one agrees that research should eventually produce commercial results, the government's approach may be counterproductive. Critics have pointed out that short-term, commercially-oriented research projects have much less potential for major breakthroughs than longer-term efforts undertaken with state support in a context of*

*traditional academic cooperation and independence.*

*As Nobel Laureate John Polanyi recently warned (The Toronto Star, April 5, 1999), there is an unfortunate shift underway in the university's attitude toward its central product, namely knowledge. Once regarded as a 'common good', knowledge is now being redefined as 'intellectual property'. Polanyi sees this as a very negative development. Turning scientific discoveries into the private property of universities, researchers and corporations seriously inhibits the free exchange of ideas and findings, which is essential to scientific progress. In contrast, the widespread sharing of intellectual resources offers by far the best hope that research will advance.*

*In an article in The Globe and Mail (Nov. 4, 2000 p. A13), Nobel Laureate Arthur Kornberg warned of the dangers of neglecting basic research in favour of direct commercialization. His comments sum up a number of the negative consequences of commercialization and deserve to be quoted at length.*

*"We must protect basic research in view of the growing connections between academia and industry..."*

For 30 years my research on the biosynthesis of the building blocks of nucleic acids, their assembly in DNA replication and the training of more than 100 young scientists was funded with many millions of dollars from the U.S. National Institute of Health without any promise or expectation that this research would lead to marketable products or procedures. No industrial organization had, or would ever have, the resources or disposition to invest in such long-range, apparently impracticable programs. We carried out these studies to satisfy a need to understand the basic process in cellular function. Yet to my great pleasure, such studies of the replication, repair and rearrangements of DNA have had many practicable benefits...

Investigations that seemed totally irrelevant to any practicable objective have yielded most of the major discoveries of medicine: X-rays, MRI, penicillin, and the polio vaccine. In the biochemistry department of Stanford, where recombinant DNA was discovered in 1972, we never anticipated the awesome biotechnologies of automated genome sequencing or computer-based bioinformatics. The discoveries on which these technologies were developed came from the pursuit of basic questions in physics, chemistry, and biology, unrelated at the

outset to a specific medical or practical problem...

But companies are not in business to do research and acquire knowledge for its own sake. Rather, they are in research to turn a profit. They possess neither the mandate nor the tradition to advance scholarship. Biotechnology companies must, instead, prove their profitability in the ebb and flow of financial markets and focus on short-term goals. Litigation and biotechnology has itself become a significant industry.

We cannot let the money-changers dominate our temples of science. Rather, let us understand the nature of the creative process and provide for its support. No matter how counter intuitive it may seem, basic research remains the lifeline of practical advances in medicine; pioneering inventions are the source of industrial strength. The future is not predicted, it is invented."

For Polanyi and Kornberg, tying the universities to the short-term, profit-oriented preoccupations of business will eventually be counterproductive even for the corporate sector. Instead, basic research supported by public funds and operating in a context of academic freedom and independence holds the most promise for scientific advance

and hence for applied breakthroughs in the long run.



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## Web-Links

This section is reserved for links to websites and/or articles that are thought to be of interest to the CWAG membership. Please forward your suggestions for consideration!

([hallmanb@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:hallmanb@ms.umanitoba.ca))

**Want to join the CWAG listserv? Simply write to [cwag@geog.ubc.ca](mailto:cwag@geog.ubc.ca) with 'subscribe' in the subject heading.**



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## **CWAG Survey Results**

**“And the survey said...”**

**By Shannon Stunden-Bower  
and Sharmalene Mendis**

As soon as we took on the roles of student representatives to CWAG for the 2003/2004 year, we began asking ourselves what we could do in service to the organization at large and its student members in particular. As we struggled to hit on a satisfactory project, other questions suggested themselves. What do grad students want from CWAG? What sorts of folks comprise the CWAG membership? What is CWAG's purpose? We were obliged to recognize that the questions far outnumbered the answers. With this, a survey was born. Sincere thanks to all who took the time to respond to the Membership Survey circulated in February 2004, as well as to Jennifer Hyndman, Bonnie Hallman, Maureen Reed, and Scott Bell for valuable advice over the past year.

In keeping with our special concern for students' experiences, there were small differences between the questions asked of students and those asked of faculty/post-docs. This report will address in turn each section of the survey, lingering on the responses that seem to us particularly interesting

and highlighting differences between the replies of students and faculty/post-docs. While the number of responses was not overwhelming, we hope that what follows is a useful starting point for discussions of who we are and where we are going. And, of course, that it provides some guidance to future grad student representatives who may be casting around for projects.

### **Invasions of Privacy**

We are happy to report that CWAG is viewed as a welcoming organisation. Our faculty/post-doc respondents ranged from 30 to 60 years old; the students, from 25 to 35. All were female. Of the total, 25% identified themselves as lesbian or queer while 12.5% described themselves as belonging to a visible minority.

Students identified junior status (seen as more a function of experience than age) and financial constraints as factors that affect their experience of CWAG. The annual incomes of students ranged from approximately \$17 000 to approximately \$25 000, before tuition and taxes. The lowest income among those in Ph.D. programmes was \$21 000, and only one respondent was at the M.A. level. According to students, limited financial resources hinder their ability to attend the CAG annual meetings



and thus to participate in face-to-face CWAG events.

### **Professional Experience**

**Why do members maintain their standing in CAG/CWAG?** For faculty, it is to keep abreast of new research, to remain in touch with others in the profession, and to know 'who is working on what' not only for their own purposes but also so as to be able better to advise students. Membership in CWAG is an opportunity to associate with a group of "good people, academically and personally speaking," who have "important aims".

Students shared many of these motivations, but also exhibited a more concerted interest in the networking opportunities that CWAG provides. The connections sought were personal as well as professional, with CWAG seen as a "social context for academic practice." CWAG exposes the 'doing' that lies behind the 'telling' that fills the journals. These aspects of the organization help to inspire students to continue work in the discipline. Travel grants, low-cost opportunities to connect with other members, and informational resources are things that students value in organizations such as CWAG.

**How can CWAG improve the professional experience of our members?** Faculty members

suggested that CWAG could provide more information on opportunities such as conferences and networks that appeal to feminist and/or female geographers. This could be achieved at minimal cost through more deliberate use of our listserv.

From the varied responses of students, two key themes emerged. First, along with some faculty, many students expressed a desire for a formalized relationship with SWIG.<sup>[1]</sup> CWAG was seen as an existing network that could support the organization of local SWIG chapters, perhaps through the sharing of ideas and experiences. Second, many students would like to participate in formalized mentoring programmes or informal discussions with more senior scholars on topics of concern (i.e. What has been your experience in balancing academic life with outside interests/family? Are the expectations for graduates increasing, and if so, in what ways?). Some expressed concern that, due to heavy workloads,

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[1] Supporting Women in Geography (SWIG) is a loose association of local groups that seek to address the otherwise unsatisfied personal and professional needs of members. This common goal is pursued through a diverse range of strategies. Operating norms vary significantly from group to group. There are a number of SWIGs across the United States. To our knowledge, Vancouver is the location of the only Canadian chapter. For further information on SWIG, please consult the past two issues of the CWAG newsletter.

faculty might be reluctant to participate. Interestingly, the more intimate connections sought by students seem of the sort that could be provided by SWIG groups that are organized locally and that have relatively small memberships.

Students have big ambitions for CWAG. It was suggested that CWAG might engage in advocacy on behalf of women and minorities at the level of the university. Also mentioned was the possibility of a meeting at the CAG of CWAG student members. This would provide a chance to connect with each other and to discuss our graduate programs. CWAG sponsorship of a panel dedicated to students' work was another suggestion. Through these last two, a more coherent student membership might be created. Perhaps this would lead to more active student involvement in the general CWAG business meetings. Students also expressed appreciation for the opportunities currently offered by CWAG, such as social events for members. This tradition seems particularly well attuned to the needs and desires of graduate students.

### **Organizational Navel-Gazing**

**Who 'belongs' in CWAG?** This is a matter of confusion, perhaps even of discord. To judge from the admittedly brief responses to

our questions, some assume that males are not part of CWAG. A sense of organizational coherence is derived from the interests, experiences and issues that it is assumed males do not share. However, our membership list indicates that we do have a few male members. Further, as the utility of binary distinctions such as male/female has been challenged in the literature, it seems particularly important to ensure that we recognize the breadth of our organization. Certainly most will agree that there is much to gain by welcoming all interested people to our community. This does, however, raise an interesting question. If female is not a useful descriptor of our membership, perhaps we must consider whether Canadian Women and Geography is an appropriate title. Are we about women or are we about gender? Are we made up of women and people who study women, or is it more appropriate to think of our organization as uniting those who are concerned professionally and affected personally by gender issues?

**What divides CWAG's membership?** An interrogation of the divide between students and faculty was fundamental to the survey, and the character of the divide is considered throughout this article. Other divisions mentioned by respondents

include longstanding rifts among members and sub-disciplinary differences (such as that between the human and the physical). A number of respondents commented on the significance of what one described as a distinction between feminist geographers and female geographers. Female geographers do not necessarily present in CWAG sessions, as their current research may not relate explicitly to gender. With professional activities that are more removed from the shared concerns (however diffuse) of CWAG members, female geographers feel less at home within our organization.

To facilitate the bridging of divides, our respondents called for greater participation in informal CWAG events. Casual mingling and friendly conversation were seen to have the potential to bring us together, not by the imposition of some artificial unity but through the cross-fertilization that results from sharing ideas in a respectful environment.

One respondent suggested that the impact of divisions within CWAG is heightened by the structure of academe: members are unable to dedicate much effort to fostering CWAG due to "time pressures that constrain participation in intellectual communities and a professional

reward system that recognizes individual over community achievement". This echoes Andre Roy's sentiments in the CAG newsletter, Volume 11, Number 1 regarding heavy academic workloads that stifle efforts to create intellectually stimulating communities. He observes that "we are at the point when we have to let some things fall by the wayside if we want to make ends meet in a minimal state of mental and physical health..." (10). Unfortunately, it is informal commitments, such a valued aspect of CWAG, which can most easily be allowed to fall away.

Getting together in any casual manner is further complicated by the fact that we all live so far apart. Respondents were asked to comment on how better to cope with the dispersal of the CWAG membership. The establishment of a system of regional representation was viewed as redundant and, indeed, impossible because of the difficulty of freeing up the necessary time and energy. The consensus seems to be that we should further develop our national CWAG electronic community while supporting the development of local groups by building connections with SWIG and using the CWAG network to further the SWIG movement.

**What unites the CWAG**

**membership?** This question prompted a variety of short and specific answers: our discipline, shared research interests, common struggles (e.g. getting tenure), our connection to academia. At a higher level of abstraction, one respondent asserted that we are united by a "belief that organisations such as CWAG perform a needed and useful function." Another response suggests something of the nature of this function, identifying CWAG as part of the redress of "the archaic and very white, male, and British geography tradition within Canada." Clearly, CWAG remains relevant to members' efforts to bring about positive change.

**Should advocacy figure in the CWAG mandate, and if yes, how?**

Most said yes, but were unsure how we would identify issues and develop strategy. One workable suggestion was that CWAG could support the work of existing equity committees by highlighting emerging issues. One respondent commented that CWAG's current role is more one of support than of advocacy. It was suggested that CWAG might offer more vigorous support to individual members tackling particular issues, such as salary parity among genders at individual institutions. Perhaps it is more useful to consider how CWAG

could better support the efforts of individual members rather than to think in terms of any sort of shared CWAG project.

**From advocacy to recruitment:** a faculty member wondered about how CWAG solicits potential student members. Is there a formal attempt to contact geography student associations to increase awareness of CWAG? The answer, it seems, is no. As far as we can tell, CWAG has relied on faculty to encourage their students to explore the relevant study groups. If we are interested in cultivating a larger membership, one effective means would be to develop a brochure describing CWAG. This could be distributed to all geography departments and regional CAG associations. A student suggested that information about CAG and CWAG should also be distributed to American geography departments. This emphasizes that, as CWAG has the opportunity to welcome all genders, so does its appeal transcend national borders.

Faculty are concerned about the experiences of students. Indeed, one asserted that "student involvement is the *raison d'être* of CWAG in my view." However, as we have already intimated, many students feel that they remain on the periphery. CWAG functions do present good opportunities to

meet established scholars, and students recognize and appreciate this. However, students experience intimidation even in the most congenial of circumstances. Many are unsure how to join the networks of personal and professional relationships that connect established scholars. Students noted appreciatively that some faculty make deliberate efforts to interact with students. Perhaps if more faculty were aware of the significance of such encounters for students, they might be inclined to find the time to get to know another budding scholar.

In sum, it is clear that students and faculty/postdocs alike value CWAG. Nevertheless, in its current incarnation, CWAG seems to be more successful at meeting the expectations of faculty/postdocs than of students. In the responses we received, any suggestion of organizational change was followed by an expression of concern regarding the additional time and effort that might be required. CWAG, it seems, is perceived as an additional commitment, piled on top of other personal and professional responsibilities. Respondents appreciated the informal nature of our meetings and social events, but were adamant that they were neither willing nor able to take on much else. Any substantial reorientation of CWAG must take this into account. Or

perhaps we might try to imagine what CWAG could do to ease the personal and professional load on its membership. If overwork is the theme that is most common to CWAG members, should addressing this in some deliberate way be part of our mandate?

Thanks again to all who assisted with this survey, whether through advising, editing, or responding. We very much appreciate the feedback we received, and we invite your responses to the results of the survey.

### **CWAG Survey Contest Winner!**

Sarah Wakefield is the happy winner of the prize awarded to a lucky survey respondent. She won free movie tickets worth \$30.



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