



Jennifer Kopf, editor  
[saacnmama@hotmail.com](mailto:saacnmama@hotmail.com)

HGSG President’s Column ..... 1  
 HG Forum:  
 Raising Historical Geography’s Profile ..... 2  
 HGSG Student Awards ..... 11  
 Book Reviewers sought for *Historical Geography* ..... 14

---

For more information on the AAG’s Historical Geography Specialty Group, visit  
<http://maps.cisat.jmu.edu/public/hgsg/>

---

**HGSG President’s Column**  
**Robert Wilson**  
**Syracuse University**

I would like to begin my first HGSG President’s Column by saying how delighted and humbled I am to serve as chair of our organization. As you may know, the HGSG is one of the largest AAG specialty groups. We are also one of the few to have its own journal, *Historical Geography*, and we sponsor sessions at the annual conference and support graduate student research through our awards. A few years ago, the HGSG started its own distinguished lecture series at the AAG. Past lecturers have included Laura Cameron, Miles Ogborn, and Richard Schein. I am pleased to report that the 2012 lecturer will be Graeme Wynn from the University of British Columbia. Graeme is one of the leading figures in our field and the current co-editor of the *Journal of Historical Geography*. Together, the robust membership, excellent journal, and lecture series show the strength of our sub-field.

Even so, all is not well with historical geography. As even a passing glance at the Jobs in Geography web site of the AAG shows,

departments are no longer advertising jobs in historical geography (at least in the United States) and have not done so for over a decade. If one were to judge our sub-field’s state by job ads, he or she would have to conclude that historical geography is in jeopardy. For established historical geographers, this is deeply troubling; for historical geography graduate students and newly minted PhDs it is downright terrifying. Yet the growth and contraction of sub-fields in geography and other disciplines is a normal affair. Historical geography had a good run, but maybe now the discipline is moving on to more interesting, fruitful research and topics?

The success of historical geographers in the AAG book award competition conveys a much different picture. Look for a moment at the past recipients of the awards: the AAG Globe Book Award for Public Understanding of Geography, the Meridian Award for the Outstanding Scholarly Work in Geography, and the John B. Jackson Award ([http://www.aag.org/cs/about\\_aag/grants\\_and\\_awards/book\\_awards](http://www.aag.org/cs/about_aag/grants_and_awards/book_awards)). By my count, 25 of 39 awards have gone to books on historical topics. Many of the recipients of these awards

are well-known historical-cultural geographers such as Craig Colten, Dydia DeLyser, Don Meinig, Blake Gumprecht, and Paul Starrs to name but a few. Indeed, 16 of the 18 J. B. Jackson Award winners are historical geographers. This award is for a book that “conveys most powerfully the nature and importance of geography to the non-academic world.” Though the discipline may no longer hire historical geographers, it turns to us when it wants to show what’s best in geography to convey to the public. With such stunning achievements, why are departments no longer hiring historical geographers? How can we better convey our achievements to our colleagues and convince them of the centrality of historical geography to the discipline?

With this in mind, *Past Place* editor Jennifer Kopf and I asked a number of historical geographers to comment on how we might raise the prominence of historical geography. As chair of the HGSG, I believe it is my responsibility to ensure the specialty group remains vibrant and to spread our accomplishments to geographers in other fields and to the public as well. These excellent contributions provide me with many ideas. But I would like to hear from other members of our specialty group, too. Please email me your comments: [rmwilson@maxwell.syr.edu](mailto:rmwilson@maxwell.syr.edu).

#### **HGSG Forum:**

##### **Raising Historical Geography’s profile**

Authors in this issue of the Forum are at various stages in their careers, from PhD candidacy to chairing a major department. They work in the USA and overseas. Their proposals comprise a broad array of ways to raise historical geography’s profile within and beyond the discipline. From arguing our case to STEM-seeking administrators to using historical geography on the airwaves and ether to explain the current events with precedent and passion, this distinguished panel suggests strong strategies to maintain historical geography’s position in debates. Enjoy the read!

Comments or topics for future issues of *Past Place* can always be sent to me, the editor, at the email in the masthead. -J. Kopf

#### **Re-Valuing Historical Geography**

**Craig E. Colten**

**Department of Geography and  
Anthropology**

**Louisiana State University**

A number of years ago in this forum, I made the case that historical geography could prosper if we convinced our colleagues that there were an ample number of applied tasks that we could address. I still believe that making that argument effectively can strengthen our position on campuses, but we have not been highly effective in that arena in the past twenty years, and in the meantime, the academic landscape has changed substantially. We have seen a near disappearance in advertised university positions for historical geographers as other specialties have monopolized the new hires. The erosion of our position has taken place as historical geographers have produced influential and award winning scholarship. Apparently, productivity alone is not enough to sustain our specialty.

If we are to restore the image and viability of historical geography in the academy, we need to come prepared to make persuasive arguments that will convince our colleagues that our work is equally important in maintaining balanced departments as that of GIS, climatology, and what some might consider trendy specializations. Our colleagues in other specialties must be convinced of the value in what we do for them to support allocating precious positions to historical geography.

Having spent a few years at a department (not my current position) that built its reputation on teaching undergraduates, I would argue that capturing the attention of undergrads is one important step to enhancing visibility. For those who teach introductory classes, take advantage of that access to large audiences to promote historical geography. Over the semester in a world regional or general human geography class, drive home the importance of a long-term perspective. Make sure every one of those 100-200-300 students knows that some of the best insights to current geography issues come from a solid grounding in historical geography. Be sure

you offer a historical geography class at the undergraduate level and make it damn interesting. Strive to have at least one student from that class ask your chair if there is another historical geography class on the books at the end of the semester. And encourage your best students to consider pursuing a graduate degree in historical geography. Toward that end, be sure you know the range of professional opportunities out there that you can share with them when they ask what are the employment prospects. I suspect many of you already have already taken these steps.

But we cannot count on academic survival coming from the undergraduate ranks. We must make a case to our colleagues and university administrators. Do not hesitate to toot your own horn or that of your historical geography colleagues to your chair and your dean. One of my colleagues recently shared in an Emmy Award for her role in a documentary film. The university loved learning about this and readily posted her accomplishment on the university web page. Since Hollywood does not come calling for most of us, relay your own successes to administrators. If you are involved in developing a museum exhibit, assisting with a local historic preservation program, or constructing a historical GIS or web site with a government agency, be sure you prepare a suitable press release and keep them coming as you and your students continue your involvement beyond the campus. Community engagement commonly wins over administrators.

Likewise, be sure to share news accomplishments of other historical geographers. Be sure administrators know the value of our work. Chris Boone and Geoff Buckley have been engaged for a number of years with the Baltimore Long-Term-Ecological Research Project. They have positioned historical geography as a fundamental component of this enterprise, and their efforts have payed their respective universities dividends in grad student stipends and high-visibility publications. In the 1980s Michael Conzen was very much involved in the formation of the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Historical Corridor. He was able to collaborate with

students and help shape the interpretation of the new National Park Service unit. More recently, Anne Kelly Knowles has been involved with a major historical GIS project in affiliation with the Holocaust Museum. If your chair and other administrators are reminded regularly of these type of high-profile practical applications, they will be more amenable to supporting a hire in historical geography. This takes some effort, but it is an important step to take.

In this era of hyper-accountability, we must take steps to ensure that our accomplishments are not diminished by accounting systems that favor hard sciences. As universities place more and more emphasis on science-oriented article accounting systems and the questionable "impact factors," those who spend a considerable amount of time on time-extensive, book-bound research cannot expect to find favor among colleagues wishing to ramp up the bibliometric measures of productivity. To offset this, it is essential to be prepared to make our own case for "slow scholarship." We must be poised to expose the fallacies of multi-authored article tabulations and citation tallies and also offer measures that boost our contributions in number-driven performance evaluations that ignore quality.

We may need to remind our colleagues that there is more than one way to advance knowledge and that it is important that our work be evaluated on its own terms. Certainly the scientific approach with short, multi-authored articles that need to respond to the latest response on a particular subject has merit. But we tend to work at a more deliberate pace. Extended visits to archives, slow solo analysis, and solitary composition can produce significant results. One way to drive home the point is to compare the number of citations of a hugely influential historical geographer with that of a well known, but moderately influential physical geographer. Almost without exception, if you briefly search the ISI you will find much larger numbers for those in the sciences than those in the humanities. The measure is not equally applicable to all specialities. Use this technique to resist the adoption of departmental/ university evalua-

tions that emphasize narrow science-oriented measures and also argue for appropriate weighting of books and other appropriate publications.

As universities turn toward article based accounting, there is the serious potential to inflate the value of publications. The potential for distorting the total number of multi-authored articles became clear to me while I was on a program review committee. In the course of evaluating a science department in my university, the chair proclaimed that his faculty had authored several hundred articles since the previous review. This was based on a article-by-article total of the faculty's cumulative curriculum vitae. Yet on closer examination, I realized that many of the department faculty had collaborated with other faculty and the same articles appeared in two, three, and sometimes four C.V.'s. While the total number of articles was still impressive, even after discounting the duplicate entries, it reflected an inadvertent inflation. No faculty member sought to mislead the review committee, but the total was not an accurate accounting. And inflated tabulations are rampant in higher education. Multiple authors are taking full credit for co-authored articles in the tenure and promotion process, departments claim exaggerated counts of articles, and universities compound the inflated counts when they tout their faculty's accomplishments.

The same situation may exist for grant revenue. Co-PI's claim the full dollar amounts in their annual reports, departments crow about the total amounts of grants they share with other units or universities, and universities perpetuate the distorted tabulations when they report on total grant revenue. Article tabulations and grant dollars used as measures of productivity threaten those engaged in solo-authored scholarship and who have less access to grant dollars.

All in all, I suggest that we need to convince our students along with our colleagues and administrators of the value of historical geography. We need to showcase the value of the long-term perspective and make a

compelling case for how historical geography can lend balance to a department.

### On lost causes

David Nally

Department of Geography  
University of Cambridge

In his justly renowned *The Making of the English Working Class*, historian and socialist commentator Edward P. Thompson famously warned against analysing the thoughts and deeds of dead generations in light of the subsequent evolution of society. For Thompson this teleological impulse, what he memorably called the 'enormous condescension of posterity', detects nothing meaningful in the actions of marginal groups who having spent their lives at the fringes of mainstream society are now in their death consigned to oblivion. By and large history has not been kind to lost causes, nor has it tried to understand the objectives of those who made history although not, as it has been said, under the conditions of their own choosing. It is 'only the successful (in the sense of those whose aspirations anticipated subsequent evolution), writes Thompson, that 'are remembered'

As awful as it first sounds, Thompson's spirited defence of 'lost causes' came to mind when I was commissioned to write a few words about raising the profile of historical geography. They did so less because I am convinced that like the 'obsolete' artisan of the handloom our field is on the 'wrong side of history', than from the belief that Thompson's scholarship provides us with a toolkit to think about how history might be more effectively used to make critical interventions in the present. The intention is not to draw 'lessons' from the past in any narrow functional or instrumental fashion, but to find ways of showing that outcomes frequently presented as 'inevitable' were in fact contested from a range of historical perspectives. If the crucial point about ideology is not whether it is true or false, but rather, in the words of Ania Loomba, 'how it comes to be believed in, to be lived out', then we might ask the question: What moments or aspirations can we resurrect from the deathbed of oblivion that might allow us to look on the

present with the conviction that things might be otherwise?

Let me try to illustrate this point with examples from my own work. As a scholar whose research focuses on the political, economic and cultural dimensions of colonisation, with a special interest in comparative histories of subsistence crises from the early modern period, I am particularly struck by the persistence of doctrines that originate in the nineteenth century and tend to portray famines as 'natural phenomena'. The on-going food crisis in East Africa is a case in point and in a range of media fora, including *The Huffington Post*, *Al Jazeera* and *BBC Radio*, I have tried to make the point that famines are a product of human rather than natural failings.

Indeed glancing at the mainstream media today it is clear that most commentaries blame the present famine on a combination of militia activity exacerbated by spiraling population growth and one of the worst droughts in the region since the 1950s. But droughts are not a new environmental condition in East Africa, nor are armed conflicts entirely local in nature. International actors, through supplying armaments and political patronage - so-called 'proxy force' - foment violent conflict to suit their own political agendas. During the Cold War, for example, the Soviets and the Americans supported dictators and military regimes in Ethiopia and Somalia in an effort to establish the regional supremacy of state socialism and free-market capitalism, respectively. The descriptions of 'failed states' and 'collapsed livelihoods', presented in contemporary news reports as uniquely 'African', are in truth the product of political brokering between two international superpowers. Looked at from an historical perspective the environmental collapse and immiseration of large parts of the so-called developing world is the direct product of an imperial impulse that lasted long after the period of formal decolonisation. History here is way of challenging bouts of collective amnesia about the root causes of the present crises.

I made the above points in an article I was commissioned to write for the news

channel *Al Jazeera*. A subsequent article published by geographer, William G. Moseley, challenged the Malthusian view, again popular in the press, that the events in the Horn of Africa are the result of a decline in the supply of food caused by the effects of overpopulation. Moseley is correct to suggest that measuring aggregate food supply against population totals is profoundly misleading because it ignores the ways that available resources are unequally apportioned among different social groups. One might add, however, that Malthus's original framing of the 'population problem' was punctuated by scathing remarks on the improvidence and moral lassitude of the down-at-heel. It was, according to Malthus, the scarcity of virtue as much as food that needed addressing - and all the more so in 'southern climates' where the inhabitants lived in a 'degraded state' and grew accustomed to surviving on the misguided philanthropy of their social superiors.

Across the British Empire colonial officials used Malthus' arguments to point blame at the victims and justify doing as little as possible to mitigate the deadly effects of famine. Lord Lytton (1831-1891), the Viceroy of India from 1876-1880, declared: 'The population of this country [India] ... has a tendency to increase more rapidly than the food it raises from the soil ... A people permanently living under such conditions, - a people that is to say, whose entire labour provides only just food enough for its own annual subsistence, - is, it must be confessed, a people removed only a few degrees from a state of barbarism.' This crude form of neo-Malthusianism was echoed by the US Secretary of Agriculture, Clinton Anderson, when testifying before a congressional committee in 1946: 'Some people are going to have to starve ... we're in the position of a family that owns a litter of puppies; we've got to decide which ones to drown.' One does not have to search Internet too long to find similar remarks about the 'population boom' in the Horn of Africa or the corrosive moral effects of aid to poor countries.

It is therefore important to recognise - and indeed amplify - the voices of those for whom famines have always been more a

creature of geopolitics than of 'bad latitude' or reckless human profligacy. In an article I wrote for *The Huffington Post* I make the point that many of the intellectual insights from modern famine theory were made with remarkable sophistication by those who observed conditions of starvation in Ireland during the 1840s. In particular the tendency to attribute social failings to 'natural causes' or divine justice was undermined and satirised by a number of Victorian commentators.

In a public lecture delivered in New York, for example, the Catholic Archbishop John Hughes (1797-1864) dismissed the view this was 'God's Famine', blaming instead the 'invisible but all pervading divinity of the fiscal, the unseen temporal affairs of this world'. Hughes's sentiments were echoed by Archbishop John MacHale (1791-1881) who berated the British Prime Minister for supporting the 'political casuistry' of economists while fellow clergyman James Warren Doyle (1786-1834) described the avatars of Robert Malthus as 'men who calculate human labour, and human life, as they do bales of cotton and quarters of wheat; who look upon the labouring classes as articles of merchandize, or machines for creating wealth, and who would calculate on the extinction by hunger of a surplus population, as the house-wife calculates the lives of bees to be smothered for their honey.' Such fiery comments were not confined to religious leaders or members of the intellectual classes in Ireland. To several foreign observers, such as the geologist and Member of Parliament, George Poulett Scrope (1797-1876), economic dogma was but an excuse to clear off the 'surplus population' of Ireland.

Others commentators placed Irish famine deaths in the context of food exports from the colonised periphery to the metropolitan core. The Irish landlord, William Smith O'Brien (1803-1864), informed the House of Commons that the Irish poor were 'starving in the midst of plenty', while the author and radical nationalist John Mitchel (1815-1875) described how one ship sailing to Ireland with aid was passed by several more ships leaving Ireland carrying cattle, oats, wheat, and other

commodities that were beyond the reach of the starving Irish. 'The exact complement of a comfortable dinner in England,' Mitchel went on to accuse, 'is a coroner's inquest in Ireland'. The history of resource expropriation that these authors call attention to echoes contemporary attempts by foreign governments and transnational capitalists to 'grab land' in the Global South in order to grow crops for biofuels, livestock feed, and export. As Cecil Rhodes knew well, imperialism has always been 'a bread and butter' question.

Historical narratives can therefore help us to draw important conclusions about the present. Firstly, there have always been individuals willing to insist that there is nothing natural about so-called 'natural disasters'. The record of these counterclaims reminds us that doctrines of inevitability almost always serve tacit or unspecified ideological purposes. Ideologies can kill people (especially ones that present themselves as 'common sense'), but they seldom do so without conscientious objection made by, or on behalf of, the victims. Secondly, such accounts, however marginal to mainstream thinking, can become a resource to challenge the deeper injustices that generate poverty and make subsistence crisis more likely to occur in the first place. To challenge the persistence of famine we must confront the everyday violence that leaves whole communities on the point of collapse. And finally from the detritus of 'lost causes' - for these accounts are not gleaned from the hymnbooks of the victorious - we might rediscover a moral imagination and political vocabulary that has been wilfully ignored or occluded, but is nevertheless central to creating a more just and equitable future. Indeed 'the struggle of man against power,' as Milan Kundera put, is always 'the struggle of memory against forgetting'.

**Water Disasters and the Soul and Passion  
of Historical Geography**

**Garth Andrew Myers**

**International Studies Program and  
Center for Urban & Global Studies  
Trinity College**

Historical geography continues to be a vibrant and yet under-appreciated sub-discipline in US geography. The AAG Historical Geography Specialty Group's (HGSG) membership has remained relatively steady, with somewhere between 433 and 515 members over the last 5 years (we have one of the larger specialty groups, actually). The specialty group has sponsored between 23 and 30 sessions at recent annual meetings, yet its vitality is arguably more noticeable in Canada, the UK and, indeed, within the discipline as practiced in much of the world. For example, the last three International Conference of Historical Geographers (ICHG) meetings, in New Zealand, Germany, and Japan, have showcased the global plethora of approaches, topics and themes that historical geography's practitioners take, and the 15<sup>th</sup> conference, scheduled for August 2012 in Prague, promises to continue this great triennial tradition (which was, tellingly I think, started by Canadian and British geographers). That diversity of approaches, topics, and themes, and the general tilt toward the non-US also pertain to the sub-discipline's two English-language journals, *Journal of Historical Geography* (JHG) and the annual *Historical Geography* (HG). The strength of the sub-field is evident in the continued improvement of JHG's impact factor and the enduring quality of the work in HG, regardless of the apparent comparably low profile of the sub-field in the discipline in the US.

Amazingly, HG is now planning the thematic content for its 40<sup>th</sup> issue (for 2012), having survived Hurricane Katrina and the tornado of digitization in academic journal publishing. As one of HG's co-editors (with Karen Morin (through 2011) of Bucknell University and Maria Lane of the University of New Mexico), I can say that we have worked hard on several tracks to increase the profile of historical geography within the AAG. The first

is in the institution of the annual Historical Geography Lecture at the AAG meeting (and the subsequent publication of the lecture as an essay in that year's issue of HG). Great and well-attended lectures from Miles Ogborn, Laura Cameron, and Rich Schein have been followed by their appearance as excellent articles in the journal. The second, related track, entails the formal association of HG with the HGSG, making HG the journal for members of the specialty group. Third, as of the HG 2012 issue, we will have moved the journal entirely to a digital format. In so doing, we have planned a themed section that will be guest-edited by Margaret Pearce dealing with alternative historical cartographies which will take advantage of the great technological opportunities a digital journal affords that a print version cannot have (sound, animation, and, we anticipate, other ambitious and newfangled things for the journal). None of the journal's accomplishments would be possible without all of you, nor without the terrific work of Kathy Carter at Deep River Press.

Beyond these kinds of pragmatic steps at the journal, there are many reasons why historical geography's continued relevance and vitality ought to translate into greater visibility with the AAG. Let me argue for two of these reasons that perhaps even us historical geographers under-appreciate: soul and passion. My essay gets a little personal from here on, given that it is rather hard to discuss those two words and to leave one's self behind.

I just moved across the country, having left the University of Kansas for a new position at Trinity College in Connecticut. The two-and-a-half day journey east took me through much of my life, in some ways (absent the 7 years in LA in grad school) - the ways that formed my soul. Lunch on the final day found me in the city of my birth, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. It is a city that has seen better days! I wondered to myself, how long ago did people start to say that this is a city that has seen better days? I asked my mother this question, and she said, probably facetiously, "Oh, 1923!" But in passing through, visiting the houses I'd lived in, schools I'd attended, or my father's old office, I could not help but remember the

terrible events of June 23, 1972, the tremendous flooding that followed Tropical Storm Agnes and destroyed so much of the Wilkes-Barre area and put the exclamation point after the better days. And, in a strange way, I understood the roots of why I do what I do. Even if in actuality I study urban political ecology and historical geography in eastern Africa, my work is driven by the concern for socio-environmental justice that the scars of Agnes embedded in me when my childhood was destroyed unnecessarily.

Listening to, reading, and watching the news of the city's September 2011 mass evacuation following another tropical storm's floods, perhaps I was the only person (though I may have been joined by fellow Agnes survivor-geographer Burrell Montz of East Carolina University: she studies floods, after all) saying that what we needed most of all was some good critical historical geography. Most of the Wyoming Valley was spared, this time around, because of recent flood control investments that had not been made when they could have been made in the 1960s and early 1970s. Yet several low-lying areas - unsurprisingly, most of them poor areas - were devastated again. Scarcely a day later, an overloaded ferry from Zanzibar to Pemba in Tanzania - the site of my dissertation fieldwork and much of my subsequent research over the last 20 years - capsized, killing 197 passengers. The disaster would have been so easily prevented, arguably if Zanzibar's shakily semi-autonomous government had either agreed to recognize the role of Tanzania's marine and surface water transport authority (Sumatra) or actually performed the functions it claimed it already performed when it rejected Sumatra a few years ago. So again: what we needed was some good critical historical geography instead of media sensationalism, to explain why nearly 200 people died unnecessarily.

I shouldn't be alone (and doubt that I am for this readership!) in thinking historical geography matters so much. Our sub-field combines sensitive understanding of the passions by which people make and break (or have broken for them) attachments to places with analysis of the soul of a place, and how

these passions and souls change over time, buffeted not simply by "natural" disasters but by political shenanigans and many other patterns. My own historical geography brings me to reside now high on the aptly named Ridge Road just south of Hartford, having developed the psychosis of checking the flood zoning of any place I'm ever contemplating living, and to fly to Zanzibar from Dar es Salaam rather than take a cheap, overcrowded ferry. But every one of us has our own historical geography.

And when we look at the composite picture from these historical geographies, we see a sub-discipline that I feel can be uniquely positioned to get at the passion and soul of geographical problems. The world over, historical geography has the opportunity to assess how places come to be as they are, and to critique the distribution of capabilities and life chances that these geographies engender. The staggering historical-geographical ignorance of American society, arguably, gives AAG-based historical geographers an even greater opportunity. Placing ourselves front and center - within the AAG, to say nothing of the general public - as explanatory agents and critical analysts of the roots of contemporary crises, for example, is a daunting task. But this is hardly impossible to imagine, given the often very personal intensity with which we approach our work.

**Bill Wyckoff**

**Department of Earth Sciences  
Montana State University**

So just *where is* North American historical geography? There are really several answers to that question. My book shelf suggests we remain an extraordinarily productive, creative force. But we are amazingly diffuse in our pursuits, hyphenating our work with connections with environmental history, post-colonial theory, urban, cultural, landscape studies and more. While not a bad thing, these myriad trajectories blur our coherence. The good news is historians, social scientists, and scholars from diverse fields are incorporating various "spatial" and "environmental" turns historical geographers have long claimed. Yet

often the term “historical geography” isn’t used. A further challenge is the dearth of university jobs. We have always struggled in the United States to survive within geography programs. The present atmosphere of contracting budgets and narrowed university priorities has made a marginal situation more tenuous. Newer members of our fraternity (wisely) train themselves diversely to increase their employability for jobs that do appear.

To sharpen our identity within geography and beyond, we need to direct our campaign at multiple constituencies. Within our departments and universities, we need to make historical geography a visible, essential part of the college curriculum, particularly at the undergraduate level. However defined, we need to teach courses entitled “Historical Geography,” require them for majors, and insert them into university requirements. We need to integrate our work with students and faculty in allied departments and make ourselves indispensable.

Within our communities, we need to connect with primary and secondary school teachers, offer workshops on what our message is, and contribute to the curricular development of geography, history, and social studies programs in public schools. More generally, we can build links with museums, historical societies, and community organizations. This can be woven into our educational mission by getting students into community-based field projects and involved with service-learning initiatives.

Within our discipline, we need to demonstrate our ability to ask big questions (challenges of environmental health, global climate change, political identity, social justice, refugee populations, etc.). Resist the temptation to carve out small topics in manageable niches. Some of our most productive colleagues (David Harvey, Bill Cronon, Don Mitchell, John Agnew, and Donald Meinig come to mind) demonstrate that the ways historical geographers ask questions and contextualize the past are essential pathways to understanding everything from nationalism and global

imperialism to environmental/landscape change and migrant labor issues.

Finally, we need to connect with a broader audience as a humanistic enterprise and tell good stories about places and why and how they have changed over time. Ultimately, historical geography’s visibility will be enhanced by convincing a sizable constituency that our stories are compelling. Whether it is Craig Colten’s timely saga of the unnatural metropolis of New Orleans (2004) or Paul Starrs’ exploration of California agriculture (2010), we can demonstrate our ability to engage a wider audience. Beyond all the pluralism and diversity that separate us run powerful themes that bring us together: that the past matters; place and environment matter; and the ways in which people and their social worlds flow through time and space define much of what makes us truly human. Telling those tales is essential and calling them “historical geography” may not be such a bad idea.

### **Raising the Profile: Social Media – Putting the Social in Social Sciences**

**Matt Fockler**

**Department of Earth Sciences  
Montana State University**

When I was asked to write a piece for *Past Place* on using social media to raise the profile of historical geography among geographers and associated scientists, three things immediately came to mind. First, I needed to find examples of academics and institutions that were using social media well and talk to them, if possible, about their motivation and methodology in using social media (you will be introduced to Jon Christensen and NiCHE later in this piece). Second, I wondered how the AAG was using social media to support its members. In this I had good timing as the AAG rolled out a new social media collective called Knowledge Communities for Specialty Groups this August. Finally, I thought of a quotation I had once heard from the actor Alan Alda. After some searching, I found the quotation (without a citation – you must forgive me for that) and it’s relevance to the topic of this *Past Place* seemed obvious. “(I)f scientists could communicate

more in their own voices – in a familiar tone, with a less specialized vocabulary – would a wide range of people understand them better? Would their work be better understood by the general public, policymakers, funders, and, even in some cases, other scientists?”

Now, this is not a call for dumbing down the language of social science. I also do not intend for this to be an instructional guide to using social media. Instead, the goal of this short piece is to hopefully create a dialogue on the efficacy of social media in creating collaborations, opportunities for outreach, and building collective knowledge bases. Once seen as the domain of teenagers and egomaniacs, social media has found increasing relevancy in academic circles. Blogs, podcasts, and social media have become a key communication tool for non-profit, conservation, academic, and governmental organizations. Critics of social media wonder about the sustainability of social media; what will happen when the next big thing comes our way? Of perhaps greater import is the misconception that social media is really just a virtual water cooler, only good for telling the world how great the (insert athletic team here) are. But social media platforms have come to serve greater roles than that, and as geographers we need to take notice.

“The reality of the situation is that social media is an extension of the same historical methods of communication that we have always used,” said Jon Christensen, executive director of the Bill Lane Center of the American West at Stanford University. “Technology has changed and the ways we connect and dialogue with each other has changed as well. At the base of it all are the same desires for collaboration, conversation, and critique.” Yet, a major drawback to academia has long been its isolation. The process of publication is long and drawn out and in many ways is a one sided communication device. Imagine a situation where you, as an academic or institution, can initiate nearly immediate feedback from a community of interested and knowledgeable participants – the type of feedback that makes conference attendance so appealing – and therefore engage in a conversation that not

only shares your research with other scientists, but encourages creating an ever-evolving knowledge base. Blogs and “projects”, such as those found at the Bill Lane Center and at the Network in Canadian History & Environment (NiCHE) provide scholars an opportunity to discuss geographic problems in an open forum. Most blogs carry links to Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking platforms, thereby becoming a kick-off point for dynamic conversations to unfold.

Social media’s greatest advantage is in its ability to democratize information. Podcasts, for example, create archives of time and location-shifting information; academics and students alike can access information from podcasts at their leisure (the podcast Nature’s Past is a wonderful example of effective podcasting can be found on the NiCHE page). A perceived drawback to social media has always been that it is unmediated. But that is its strength as well, especially if we, as an organization, a sub-group, or as individuals, seek collaboration. Social media is therefore, not just a promotional platform – it functions worst when it is serves as a stage for a sage. “Social media works most effectively when it is at least more about listening,” says Christensen. “It is a conversation, and that means having an authentic voice.” A rule of engaging in successful social media therefore is transparency. “The same sort of informed scholarly methods that you would use in any academic pursuit must be followed,” says Christensen.

As geographers we recognize that the social media landscape is ever-changing. And though we recognize that social media does allow for people to get and share information in a convenient fashion, we must also accept the fact that the prospect of engaging in social media can be daunting. Social media is not a replacement for the tried and true methods of academic information dissemination – the blog has not replaced the book, nor the tweet the journal. Social media is about finding audiences, sharing information, and, if you have something compelling to say, something to contribute, it is about creating your own community. As historical geographers, we

understand the utility and importance of our field. Social media is a timely opportunity to share our combined voices with the social science community.

The Historical Geography Specialty Group currently has three platforms for social media. On Twitter we are @HistGeogSG. On Facebook, you can search for us as the Historical Geography Specialty Group. You may also send an e-mail to the Historical Geography Specialty Group at HistGeogSG@gmail.com. By logging into the AAG website and clicking on the Knowledge Communities link in the Membership tab, you can access the Historical Geography (and many other) Community discussion pages. I also highly encourage everyone to explore the Bill Lane Center for the American West at <http://west.stanford.edu> and NiCHE at <http://niche-canada.org>. Both sites are excellent examples of putting social media to work as well as highly informative for historical geographers of North America. Links to their individual Twitter, Facebook, and RSS feeds can be found on those pages. I encourage you to join the discussion.

*Matt Fockler is the Graduate Student Representative to the Historical Geography Specialty Group. If you'd like to discuss social media, historical geography, or the American West personally, his Twitter feed is @mattfockler.*

#### **Historical Geography Specialty Group Student Research Awards**

The HGSG awards two sets of student awards each year: the Ralph Brown and Andrew Hill Clark Awards to recognize outstanding research presentations, and the Carville Earle and Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov Awards fund student research. The following two articles are the reports written by the 2011 winners of the research funds. The Spring 2011 Carville Earle (Ph.D. level) award winners were: First place- Don Lafreniere; Second place- Matthew Fockler. There were no Terry Jordan award (Masters level) applicants for Spring 2011 so the committee awarded that money to the second best Ph.D. proposal.

The reports are followed by the announcements of the 2012 competitions.

#### ***Socio-Spatial Interaction in Victorian Canada: Reconstructing the Spatial and Temporal Patterns of Daily Life in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Canadian Cities***

**Don Lafreniere**

**Department of Geography  
University of Western Ontario**

"Split wood before breakfast. Water is in our cellar has wet turnips & potatoes. Some folks can't get turnips or potatoes & therefore don't have such trouble. In the afternoon Ada & I took a walk out York St to Mr & Mrs McKnight. They are both poorly. I think it is the Grip. Very many have it. Later on I took a walk up to north end near C. P. R. where Mr. Reed my carpenter lives. Saw the frames he has made for the house then walked to the lot where he had the ground staked out."<sup>1</sup>

What is a typical day in the life of an urban Victorian in one of Canada's mid-sized industrialising cities? Rowland Hill, a 26-year-old clerk in a downtown shoe store, is reflecting on his long Saturday in mid-November. He is in the early stages of building his first house, where he and his fiancée Ada Read will start their family. Although we can argue if this diary entry is a 'typical' day in Rowland's life, what can be agreed upon is that this mundane practise of daily record-keeping provides the contemporary reader with a unique window into the daily lives and social interactions of Victorian citizens.

My research objective is to advance our understanding of the social structure in the industrial city by reconstructing the daily movements of people within two nineteenth-century Canadian cities: London, Ontario and Victoria, British Columbia. To what extent did people of different ethnicities or religions live in the same neighbourhoods, work together, or shop in the same stores? Did people of different classes mingle in places of worship or drinking establishments? Or did the desire to maintain social networks segregated along lines of ethnicity, religion, and social class result in people bypassing the nearest destina-

---

<sup>1</sup> Rowland Hill, Personal Diary, November 10, 1893

tion for one that better represented their peer group?

To answer such questions, I have developed a multi-dimensional historical GIS of both London and Victoria that combines individual and household data from several sources, including city directories, tax rolls, and a 100% sample of the individuals recorded in the 1881, 1891, and 1901 censuses. This means we know where and with whom each individual person lived and worked over these periods. In addition to these frequently used nominal sources, I have incorporated into the HGIS a host of archival sources rich with spatial and temporal data, such as personal diaries, business records, daily newspapers and church bulletins. Together, these databases have allowed me to recreate life in the industrial city, block by block, house by house, and even day by day, and hour by hour.

During this past summer, with the support of the Carville Earle Award, I was able to expand the number of diaries that are included in the study. In late spring, I travelled to Victoria to conduct some fieldwork with my colleague Patrick Dunae as well as locate and transcribe three additional diaries from the BC Archives. In July, I spent two days at the Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa securing another diary as well as some other records on business activities in nineteenth-century London.

By harmonizing spatial analysis from the discipline of geography with the narrative traditions of social history, I am able to recreate the daily life and movements of people in the industrial city. As a result, a new perspective on the behavioural choices and socio-spatial interactions of nineteenth-century individuals may challenge our assumptions about the meaning and impact of segregation. This doctoral project would not be possible without the invaluable guidance and passion of my supervisor Dr. Jason Gilliland. Important contributions have also come from my colleagues Dr. Patrick Dunae and Dr. John Lutz in Victoria. Financial support from the Vanier Canada Scholars program and the Historical Geography Specialty Group has allowed me to

focus on this work without further time away from my family.

***The National Forest Imperative: A Historical Geography of National Forest Landscapes, Land Use, and Policy, Northern Rockies, Montana***

**Matthew Fockler**

**Department of Earth Sciences  
Montana State University**

Within the American West, national forests comprise nearly thirty percent of the region's public lands. In many settings, they exist as contested landscapes - often caught between competing interests that include natural resource extractive industry, preservation advocates, and a general public that is often deeply divided about how best to utilize these lands. National forests have emerged as a middle landscape, in which conflicting ideas about nature are displayed in tangible and contested ways. Uncovering how these lands have evolved over time, the forces that have contributed to their evolution, and the unique geographies that have resulted is critical to understanding the American West's federal past, present, and future. This research uncovers the areal patterns and distributions of landscape features created through federal forest management. It explores how national forest landscapes are representative of broader economic, political, and cultural trends shaping the United States. Finally, it investigates the meaning of nature in American society as it can be gleaned through the evolution of United States Forest Service (USFS) policies and through the creation of a negotiated, hybridized middle landscape on forest service lands.

The heart of this investigation is a reconstruction of local historical geographies of the northern Rocky Mountains. This research assesses the tangible, material changes associated with national forest management and ties them to larger cultural, political, and economic drivers within the American West. Further, it creates a framework to better understand how the USFS manages land, interacts with local communities and land managers, creates and implements policy, and

how those decision directly affect the landscape.

The research support from the Historical Geography Specialty Group's Carville Earle Research award contributed greatly to a full summer of archival and field research. I spent over two months working at northern Montana United States Forest Service district and regional offices in Great Falls, Kalispell, Choteau, Missoula, and Helena. As some in the Historical Geography Specialty Group can attest, federal repositories are full of source information - often times TOO full. Financial support, in part from the Specialty Group, allowed for extended stays at these archives, thereby facilitating a research environment where a close and concentrated examination could be conducted. At each of these repositories I was able to collect key primary resources towards the goal of telling a historical geographic narrative of key forces driving forest landscape change through a reconstruction of pattern features, administrative and management elements, and designated land uses. Data collected on the changing amounts, distributions, and types of use dictated by management policy and national ideology answered questions about the larger interrelationship between people, federal control of public land, and the environment. I am currently analyzing my collected data and look forward to uncovering the complex patterns of USFS ideological and landscape change.

**Historical Geography Specialty Group  
Student Research Awards  
2012 Call for Submissions**

Student members of the Historical Geography Specialty Group (HGSG) are invited to submit proposals for the HGSG Student Research Award. The specialty group will grant two prizes in 2011. The awards will be \$400 for the Carville Earle Award recognizing research at the Ph.D. level and \$200 for the Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov Award supporting Master's level research. Students can win each award only once.

Students seeking funds to underwrite thesis or dissertation research should submit a

two-page summary of their proposed research on a topic in historical geography. The statement should spell out the research question and how archival and/or field work is necessary to complete the project, and specify the archives collection and/or field research site to be utilized. The award may be used to cover travel and related research expenses. In addition to the two-page summary, applicants should include a short budget of estimated expenses. The student's major advisor must also submit a letter of support to the committee's chair that verifies the student is making progress toward conducting their research. A two-page report will be required upon completion of the funded portion of the project and will be published in *Past Place*.

Please submit your two-page proposal with budget via e-mail by Monday, January 23rd, 2012, to Dr. Ben Tillman, Chair, HGSG Student Research Awards committee, Texas Christian University, [B.Tillman@tcu.edu](mailto:B.Tillman@tcu.edu).

**HGSG Student Paper Award Competition  
Call for Papers**

The Historical Geography Specialty Group (HGSG) of the AAG will sponsor two student paper competitions in 2012:

- \*The Ralph Brown Award - for papers written by Master's-level students

- \*The Andrew Hill Clark Award - for papers written at the Ph.D. level

Each award carries with it a \$250 first prize. Second prizes of lesser amounts may be

awarded at the discretion of the competition judges. In evaluating the papers, preference will be given to those based on primary sources of information rather than literature reviews.

**Eligibility notes:**

Eligibility for the awards is open to any graduate student who has or will present a paper at any professional conference beginning the day after the 2011 AAG Annual Meeting and ending the last day of the 2012 Annual Meeting. If the paper you wish to enter for the Ralph Brown award is based upon research conducted while you were a Master's student, you are eligible to enter this competition even

if you are now a Ph.D. student. Students who have already won a Ralph Brown Award or Andrew Hill Clark Award in the past are NOT eligible to submit for the same award again. (Previous winners of a Ralph Brown Award, however, are eligible to submit for the Andrew Hill Clark Award.)

**Submission procedure:**

Students wishing to participate should send digital copies of a conference-length paper of no more than 11 double-spaced pages (plus notes, figures, etc.) to each of the committee members listed below. Papers should be sent by e-mail in .doc or .rtf format. Please specify in your email [1] the name of the award for which you are applying, [2] the graduate program in which you are enrolled, and [3] the conference at which your paper was (or will be) presented. **The deadline for receiving materials is January 12, 2012.**

All questions should be directed to the Paper Awards Committee Chair.

The committee members are:

Dr. Maria Lane (chair), University of New Mexico, [mdlane@unm.edu](mailto:mdlane@unm.edu)

Dr. Innes Keighren, Royal Holloway University of London, [innes.keighren@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:innes.keighren@rhul.ac.uk)

Dr. Rebecca Sheehan, Oklahoma State University, [rebecca.sheehan@okstate.edu](mailto:rebecca.sheehan@okstate.edu)

**Book Reviewers sought for  
*Historical Geography***

The book review editor for *Historical Geography: An Annual Journal of Research, Commentary, and Reviews* is seeking a few additional book reviews. Book reviews are less than 1000 words in length, and the editor has a large number of current titles available. If you are interested in reviewing for the next issue, please contact Soren Larsen ([larsens@missouri.edu](mailto:larsens@missouri.edu)<<mailto:larsens@missouri.edu>>) with a request for the Open Titles list, a specific title in Historical Geography you would like to review, and/or a sub-area of interest in the field that can be matched with a contemporary title

Please visit [www.historical-geography.net](http://www.historical-geography.net)<<http://www.historical-geography.net/>> for additional information.