

Bringing Geography to the World

Organizer: Susanne C. Moser, National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder, CO

Session Description and Call for Papers:

Geographers have a wealth of knowledge that is potentially highly relevant to ongoing public debates, social and environmental policy-making, and management and planning decisions. Many geographers already engage in such public outreach or work closely with practitioners, but there are probably more who do not, and many who would like to, but don't exactly know how to do this most effectively and without major risk to their credibility and productivity as academics. In fact, several past presidents of the AAG have expressed their concerns about the relative lack of such public outreach and engagement by geographers.

The proposed session responds to the growing demand for geographic knowledge in the world of praxis (as expressed for example in *Rediscovering Geography* (1997) and the AAG's recent Strategic Plan (2003). It begins from the assumption that if geographers are to partake more frequently and more effectively in public debate, they need the requisite skills and training to do so. Thus, the session will explore questions such as:

- How can we bring geography to the world? – What venues are useful, not useful, toward what end? What red flags might this raise?
- What good and bad experiences have geographers had with public outreach, communication, and with working at the science-practice interface? What lessons can we draw from those?
- How can we engage more geographers in public outreach and communication to the public, policy-makers, the media, business leaders and other practitioners?
- What do geographers need in terms of communications and outreach training to be effective, efficient, and comfortable engaging outside the halls of academe?
- What options are already available for geographers to obtain pertinent outreach, communication, and leadership skills? Are geographers taking advantage of these opportunities, and if not, why not?

If geographers are to do more public outreach and engagement, sophisticated capacity building is necessary to realize the hopes and visions of geographers as active participants in public debate. So what do geographers need? Is it available? And if not, can we build the capacity within the discipline – e.g., through ongoing graduate education, association-sponsored trainings, special leadership programs, or otherwise? How could such programs be financed? If we build it, will they come....?

Short, provocative, evocative, visionary, practical, cautionary and constructive papers are invited on the questions suggested above or any related ones. The goal is to have short, rather than full 20-minute papers, to set the stage for discussion among paper presenters and the audience. The intention behind the paper session is to generate interest among fellow geographers for public outreach, communication, and to ascertain whether interest in capacity building is needed to support it. And if the people lead, the AAG leaders will hopefully follow.

Session sponsorship: I will explore wide co-sponsorship from specialty groups and hopefully from the AAG central office as well.

Indication of interest and abstract submission:

Please email an indication of your interest to participate in this session, a title, and an abstract to:

Susanne C. Moser
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Deadline for indications of interest/title/abstract: **Friday September 15, 2006**

I will review all submissions after this deadline and compose a diverse and compelling paper/discussion session. The goal is to design a session with unique contributions and viewpoints, representing our discipline in membership, interests and specialties as best as possible. I will inform you of abstract acceptance to this session as soon as possible after the deadline.

Note that I will be away from my email August 26-September 6, so if you have any questions I will reply to them upon my return.

I look forward to your submissions.

Susi Moser