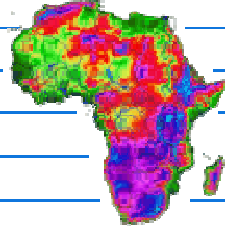


The Africa Specialty Group



Africa Specialty Group (ASG) Annual Report 2007

Mission: To enhance the standing of African Regional Geography and to promote better representation of African Scholarship.

ASG Officers

Chair:

Francis Owusu (2005-2008)
Department of Community and Regional Planning
Iowa State University
126 College of Design
Ames, IA 50011
e-mail: fowusu@iastate.edu

Directors:

- Abigail Amissah-Arthur (Communications), Slippery Rock University, 2005-2008
abigail.arthur@sruc.edu
- Seth Appiah Opoku (Financial), University of Alabama, 2005-2008, sappiah@bama.ua.edu
- Calvin O. Masilela (Social/conference coordinator), 2005-2008, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, cmasilel@iup.edu

Student Directors:

- Sarah Smiley, University of Kansas, 2005-2008, ssmiley@moac.morgan.edu
- Kojo Owusu, University of Florida, 2005-2008, kowusu@ufl.edu

	ASG membership		
	2005	2006	2007
Students	104	95	98
Non-students	147	132	148
Total	251	227	246

Membership Dues 2007

Faculty and Non-Students \$10.00 a year
Student members \$5.00 a year

Financial Status

The Financial Report: During the 2006/2007 academic year, the ASG generated funding from two main sources:

- a. Membership dues (our major source of revenue)
- b. Journal subscriptions from libraries (Our goal is to improve marketing of the journal to increase subscriptions)

Balance as at February 28, 2007: \$2,210.43

The ASG Newsletter:

The ASG newsletter is published twice a year, Fall and Summer. It is edited by the Director in charge of Communications, Dr. Abigail Amissah-Arthur, with the assistance of the other executives. The newsletter is distributed to members via e-mail and is available at the ASG website hosted by Iowa State University at: <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~asg/homepage.htm>

African Geographical Review Journal

The ASG is also the owner of the African Geographical Journal, which is published once a year, in December. All of our registered members receive a copy of the journal as part of the \$10.00 membership dues paid to the specialty group. The editor for the journal is Ian Yeboah and the associate editor William Moseley. The Editorial board includes: Abdi Samatar, Jeffrey Popke, Joseph Oppong, Ben Ofori-Amoah, Godson Obia, Asefa Mehretu, Mike McNulty, Gary Gaile, Jonathan Crush, Susan Craddock, Tom Bassett, Ibipo Johnston-Anumonwo, Ezekiel Kalipeni, Sam Aryeetey-Attoh, Francis Owusu and Abigail Amissah-Arthur.

A search Committee made up of Joseph Oppong, Florence Margai and Francis Owusu did a nationwide search for a new editor. Professor Ian Yeboah and Bill Moseley were appointed as the editor and associate editor respectively for a 2-year term. At the end of the two years, the Associate editor will become the editor. Their term of office started on 1st June 2006.

African Geographical Review Editor's report

Submitted by: Ian Yeboah, Editor, & Bill Moseley, Associate Editor.

Our term of office started on June 1st, 2006. Since then we have embarked upon two things: capacity building and managing the journal.

a. Capacity building

1. We created a website for the journal that included (among other items): instructions for contributors, an index of past issues, a history of the journal, subscription information, and a listing of editorial board members. This website has received over 1500 hits since it went public on June 2, 2006. The link for the website is: <http://www.macalester.edu/geography/agr/>.
2. We have expanded the range of possible submissions to include not only peer-reviewed research articles, field notes and featured reflections, but also book reviews and commentaries.
3. We put out a call for papers in various journals and listserves and this has resulted in 12 submissions. So far three manuscripts have been rejected outright, one accepted, and another has been given the option to resubmit after revisions. The remaining submissions were received fairly recently and are still out for review.
4. We have signed a contract with EBSCO to carry the journal as part of its Academic listing and soon all editions since the journal came to North America will be available electronically in all libraries.

5. We have revamped the editorial board by inviting past editors as member. So far Ezekiel Kalipeni and Florence Margai have been invited and have accepted invitations to the editorial board. We intend to invite two other former editors to the board in the near future.
6. Board member Gary Gaile organized a virtual conference of the editorial board during the November-December 2006 period. The editorial board will also be meeting at the San Francisco AAG.

b. Managing the journal

1. Volume 25 (for 2005) of the journal was published by the previous editor, Florence Margai, in June 2006. It is anticipated that we will publish Vol. 26 in July 2007.
2. We inherited one manuscript from the previous editor, that was under review. All manuscripts published in the forthcoming issue will have been received since we took office in June of 2006.
3. We have already accepted a book review for the next volume.
4. We have simplified the review guidelines to expedite the review process.
5. We have been fortunate to have Tatenda Mambo (a graduate student at Miami University serving as editorial assistant for the journal).

c. Challenges and prospects for the future

1. Our main challenge has been a low level of submissions. Very few articles have been submitted by Specialty Group members. We hope that the electronic distribution of the journal via EBSCO, and an increase in visibility, will encourage Specialty Group members to consider AGR as a main outlet for their research.
2. Our second challenge has been the slow turn-around time for reviews. One way by which we can make the journal attractive to potential authors is to minimize the review turn-around time. Ideally we would like to shorten the review period to two months. It has been extremely difficult getting reviewers to submit their reviews in a timely manner.
3. Our key goal for the next year will be to catch up with publication. As of now, we are a six to seven months behind schedule.
4. Our second goal for next year is to begin the process of acquiring ISI certification. This will require us to maintain high quality over a period of time and to stay current in our publication.

We would like to remind members of the Specialty Group that this is their journal and it reflects their values and research. We strongly urge members to consider the AGR as a first outlet for their research findings and to offer their services as reviewers. We look forward to strengthening the journal with your support.

Student Director's report:

Sarah Smiley one of the student directors reported that she had attempted to spread the word about the ASG to other graduate students. She had passed on information about the Student Paper Competition and encouraged other students to join the ASG. She was successful in recruiting one additional student member for the ASG. She also reports that she had been doing some fieldwork in Tanzania and was finishing up her PhD over the 2007 summer.

ASG Listserve:

Dona Stewart of Georgia State University had managed the ASG listserv for a number of years. The executives would like to thank her for her service. Since the summer of 2007 the listserv has migrated and is now set up at Iowa State University under the management of Dr. Francis Owusu.

Accomplishments

2007 ASG Sponsored Sessions: The African Specialty group was successful in putting together several sessions at the 2007 AAG conference. Listed below are the sessions that were sponsored by the ASG.

1. Adapting to Statelessness
2. Christian Missions and Christians Overseas
3. Colonial Spatial Planning and Contemporary Land Use Change in sub-Saharan Africa
4. Environmental Degradation, Resource Use, and Socio Economic Implications in the Niger Delta
5. Geographic Tools and Perspectives on Health and Disease Prevention in Africa
6. Historical Ecology 1: Plant Distributions
7. Historical Ecology 3: Constructing and Manifesting Historical Ecologies
8. Land Degradation and Population Growth: the negative and the positive examples
9. Minority Faculty in Academia: Surviving the Promotion and Tenure Process

Future Plans and Directions

The ASG business meeting was held on Wednesday, April 18 at 7pm in the Hilton Hotel San Francisco. The following are the minutes:

1. Meeting started at 7.05pm.
2. A moment of silence was observed in honor of the Virginia Tech massacre victims.
3. **Introduction:** The president of ASG, Dr. Francis Owusu introduced other executive council members: Dr. Abigail Amissah-Arthur, Dr. Seth Opoku-Appiah and Dr. Calvin Masilela.
4. **Chair's report:** President presented his report on i) the sessions for the AAG 2007; ii) budget statement; iii) operating budget from dues collected; and iv) expense items included publication of journal, student award. Details of the president's report are discussed above.
5. **The 2007 student paper award:** Dr. Amissah-Arthur reported that the committee (Seth Appiah-Opoku, Bill Moseley and herself) for the student paper award received several entries. She noted that the paper submitted by Sara Nelson of Macalester College was the best paper in quality and therefore would be given the student paper award. The title of Sara's paper was "Farming on the Fringes: Changes in Agriculture, Land Use and Livelihoods in the Peri-Urban Zone of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania". She reminded the membership that in addition to receiving a certificate and the winner would also receive a check for \$150.00. She urged Faculty members to encourage their students to submit their papers for next year's award. The award was subsequently presented to Sara Nelson.
6. **Africa Geographical Review:** The president introduced the editors of the journal, Ian Yeboah (editor) and Bill Moseley (associate editor). Dr. Yeboah reported on the improved capability of the journal and that this was achieved by building up the journal website to include detailed information on requirements for publication; expanding circulation of the journal by signing a contract with EPSCO. He also mentioned that he has been working on getting an ISI rating for the journal. He mentioned that he is targeting having 2 issues of the journal per year. He mentioned the need to have special issues of the journal by using papers presented at sessions organized by the group. He also informed the meeting that PDF documents of all articles ever published in the journal are now online at www.macalester.edu/AGR. Dr. Yeboah hopes to ensure a quick turnaround in the review and publication of submitted articles. He therefore urged members who have been requested to review articles quickly to achieve this objective. Altogether, the quality of papers accepted for publication in the journal has improved over time.
7. **Benneh foundation:** Dr. Francis Owusu reported that last year, he had received a request to contribute to a foundation that was being set up in Ghana in honor of Professor George Benneh. Professor Benneh is a renowned African geographer who taught for many years at the University of Ghana, Legon and is currently an Emeritus Professor and dealing with the effects of a stroke.

He was not only a great geographer; he also modeled the application of geographic research in public policy to solve practical problems. His long and distinguished career as an academic, a university administrator, a cabinet minister, sports administrator and a lay church leader have helped advanced geographic education in Ghana and beyond. Another significant achievement of Professor Benneh is his mentoring of a number of scholars and academics. Many ASG members have benefited from geography's in Ghana's goodwill that Professor Benneh helped to build, his mentorship and the institutional support that he often provided to researchers working in Ghana. http://www.newtimesonline.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6452&Itemid=181. Dr. Joseph Oppong observed that the setting up of the foundation is an effort to recognize the contributions of distinguished geographers on the continent. The foundation was formed to keep the work of Prof. Benneh alive. He noted that the easiest way to generate fund for the effort to go through the AAG to set up a tax exempt foundation to collect money for the foundation. A committee of three has been formed comprising Drs. Godson Obia, Joseph Oppong and Calvin Masilela to organize the foundation. The president then gave a brief biography of Prof. Benneh. He noted that the expectation is that the foundation would provide scholarship to students to attend conferences etc. More information will be communicated to members later.

8. 2008 AAG meeting: Dr. Calvin Masilela observed that the ASG was contributing to 9 sessions during the 2007 meeting. He noted the need to start early to develop sessions for next year. The following sessions were suggested by members for the 2008 AAG annual meeting: hydro power issues, water privatizing, urban planning problems in Africa, health, transportation, poverty, women and development, HIV and women. Members were informed that ASG has to maintain a critical mass of sessions in order to be maintain and be allotted time slots in prime time.
9. Others: The president informed the members that the AAG would like to see cross disciplinary collaborations between geographers and other groups. AAG is willing to provide some support for efforts along these lines.
10. Meeting adjourned at 8pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Abigail Amissah-Arthur, director of Communications.

Obituary

Since the last AAG meeting in San Francisco, we have lost a very productive member of our group. Dr. Kwadwo Konadu Agyemang of the University of Akron, Ohio lost his battle to cancer on July 27th 2007. A memorial service was held for him in Akron on September 2, 2007. Representing the ASG were colleagues Abigail Amissah-Arthur, Ben Ofori-Amoah, Ian Yeboah, Calvin Masilela, Isaac Luginaah, James Saku, J. Henry Owusu and Godwin Anku. He has since been buried in Kokofu, Ghana. May his soul rest in peace.

A bereavement fund was set up for his family. I want to take this opportunity to remind members to make their contribution to the bereavement fund. To do so, please make a check payable to

Konadu-Agyemang Family and mail it to:

Dr. Abigail Amissah-Arthur
326 Advanced Technology and Science Hall
Slippery Rock University
Slippery Rock PA 16057

Contributions will be accepted till the end of the year.

In Remembrance of Professor Kwadwo Konadu-Agyemang
Homily delivered by Professor Calvin O. Masilela,
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
on behalf of the Africa Specialty Group, American Association of Geographers,
September 2, 2007

If there has ever been a moment to reflect on the impermanence of all things, we have arrived there. We come together today, this wonderful gathering of people, to celebrate and give thanks for the life of Kwadwo Konadu-Agyemang. We come aware of our mortality and mourning the one who is no longer among us. What are we to say about death and life, about the impermanent and transitory nature of things and people we cherish?

This tragic occurrence provides us an opportunity to note that there are times when we celebrate success and good will. Then, there will be times when we will join together to endure loss. While this loss saddens all of us, it also affords us a moment of reflection and the comfort that we will endure and overcome. Kwadwo Konadu-Agyemang wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

On June 23, 2007, I had the good fortune of spending an afternoon with Kwadwo. His condition notwithstanding, he was in good spirits: we reflected on the highs and lows in his journey; and we laughed and joked about many things including the implosion of Zimbabwe's development condition under Mugabe, its tragic consequences on the people of Zimbabwe notwithstanding. Through it all you could not help but marvel at Kwadwo's modest, beaming smile and agile mind. It is this memory that remains etched in my mind.

Professor Kwadwo Konadu-Agyemang fought a good fight. His passing on is overwhelming at different scales. We have lost a friend. Africa has lost yet another young dynamic mind. And above all we have lost a husband and father. His children will never get to benefit from the wisdom all fathers impart to their off-spring as they prepare for life's challenges, among other things. But, Kwadwo's fight and loss should not be in vain. In his short life, he gave so much to so many.

Reflecting on Kwadwo's legacy in a recent email to the Africa Specialty Group community Professor Samuel Attoh writes "Professor Kwadwo Konadu-Agyemang leaves a legacy of versatile scholarship and dedicated service to his profession. His research on the social and spatial implications of structural adjustment programs, along with its interdisciplinary and holistic nature, appealed to scholars internal and external to the field of geography. His research provided a major contribution to our understanding of urban/ national systems development and the effectiveness of global and local initiatives in achieving social and economic justice." Ensuring that his legacy endures is no small challenge to us all.

To the Africa Specialty Group family, Professor Kwadwo Konadu-Agyemang was an outstanding educator, mentor and colleague who represented and served his profession well. The outpouring today reflects that. How are we going to perpetuate the legacy of this outstanding educator and good citizen?

Kwadwo where ever you are, you touched us in profound ways, your endearing personality and beaming smile of hope and optimism will be greatly missed. Rest in peace friend!