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Please send comments, questions, letters, and newsletter submissions to David J. Rutherford, Newsletter Editor, [dr1002@txstate.edu](mailto:dr1002@txstate.edu)

**AAG CONFERENCE IN DENVER**

The AAG Annual Conference in Denver (April 5-9, 2005) provided opportunity for GORABS members to meet together in paper sessions, the business meeting, and during various dinners, lunches, and other informal gatherings.

The paper sessions included (1) Diffusion of Religions, Belief Systems, and Ways of Life (Organizer and Chair: Simon Potter), (2) Scaling Geographies of Religion (Organizer and Chair: Mike Ferber), and (3) From Walden Pond to the Space Shuttle Columbia: Sacred space in the Americas (Organized by Mike Ferber; Chair Darrel MacDonald).

The business meeting allowed reflection on another busy and productive year for GORABS. Of major interest was discussion of the new online GORABS journal (see announcement on page 3). In addition, the 2005 Sopher Award was presented to Cathy Carter for her paper titled "Heaven on Earth: The Shakers and Their Space."

In addition, attendees at the GORABS business meeting had the pleasure of hearing the announcement by the GORABS Board that the first recipient of the new "Robert Stoddard Award for Distinguished Service to GORABS" would be Robert Stoddard. Thank you, Bob, for your long and ongoing service to GORABS!

More about the Stoddard Award can be found on page 2, and the minutes from the meeting begin on page 6.



*Mike Ferber presents the 2005 Sopher Award to Cathy Carter.*



*Robert Stoddard, the first recipient of the Robert Stoddard Award for Distinguished Service to GORABS*

**VISIT GORABS ON THE INTERNET**

**Webpage:**  
<http://gorabs.geo.wvu.edu>

## STODDARD AWARD

In 2004, the “Robert Stoddard Award for Distinguished Service to GORABS” was established. As implied in the title, this award is granted for service to GORABS and contributions to scholarship and teaching in the geography of religions and belief systems that is substantial and long-standing. It is not necessary to grant the award every year, but each year a call for nominations will be sent out on the listserv. GORABS officers will decide who, if any, of the nominees will receive the award, with the student member of the GORABS Board chairing the process.

At the GORABS business meeting during the AAG conference in Denver, a motion was proposed that the first recipient of the award be Robert Stoddard. Carol Prorok shared that Bob never allowed anyone in this sub-discipline to be “invisible,” but instead encouraged others to share and pursue their work. She relayed a story of how Bob encouraged her when she was a master’s student. The motion was passed unanimously, and Bob became the first recipient of the award that bears his name. Congratulations, Bob!



*Recipients of the Sopher Award. Shankari Patel (2004, on left) and Cathy Carter (2005, on right). Photograph from the 2005 AAG conference in Denver.*

## 2006 AAG CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO MARCH 7–11, 2006

The AAG is excited to be holding its 2006 meeting in Chicago, a city of world-class architecture, art, and music. The meeting will be held in the elegant Palmer House Hilton Hotel located in the heart of the Chicago Loop near the Art Institute of Chicago, Grant Park, Millennium Park, and the Navy Pier as well as the main thoroughfares of State Street and Michigan Avenue.

Attendees can travel to Chicago with ease from all over the globe. Chicago’s largest airport, O’Hare International, handles more passengers than any other airport in the world.

The Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers attracts about 5,000 geographers and related professionals from the United States, Canada, and abroad. Our Meeting forum stimulates discussion about research, education, accomplishments, and developments in geography. Your participation is most welcome and encouraged.

If you are interested in submitting a presentation please read the following guidelines carefully. To submit an abstract you must first register for the meeting. You may register online or by completing and mailing a printable form on the AAG website. Once we have received your form and it is processed, you will be able to submit your abstract online. No abstracts will be accepted that are not submitted online. Deadline for submission of abstracts is 13 October 2005.

The AAG website is <http://www.aag.org/annualmeetings/>

***Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems***  
**A GORABS Journal**

The 2004-2005 GORABS board initiated an Electronic Journal with the title: *Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems*. The Mission statement states: *Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems* seeks to forward the geographic study of religion and belief systems through the publication of high-quality peer-reviewed articles and book reviews showcasing research frontiers, methods and methodologies, pedagogy, and relevant advances in complimentary disciplines. The publication schedule will be one issue per year to start. A template is available at <http://gorabs.org/journal/index.htm>. Sections will include (1) full length articles, (2) scholarly essay, (3) comment, exchange, and debate, (4) reviews, and (5) a possible section titled "Alternative Voices" that would contain articles and perspectives from other disciplines besides geography.

**CALL FOR PAPERS**  
***GEOGRAPHIES OF RELIGIONS AND BELIEF SYSTEMS***

The Geography of Religions and Belief Systems Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers invites submissions for a new on-line journal, *Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems*. The journal, to be published once a year, will feature substantive articles, commentary, book reviews, and debate. Editorial Board members represent a wide range of geography of religion and religious studies approaches and include John Corrigan, Julian Holloway, Lily Kong, David Ley, David Livingstone, Carolyn Prorok, James Shortridge, and Roger Stump. All papers will be double-blind reviewed. Please visit the specialty group's website (<http://gorabs.org>) for information regarding length, format, and other particulars. Questions may be directed to Elizabeth J. Leppman, editor, at [ejleppman@alltel.net](mailto:ejleppman@alltel.net). Please consider submitting a paper based on recent research, collaborations, debates, or presentations for the inaugural 2006 edition. Book review inquiries can also be made to book review editor Robert Stoddard at [rstoddard@unlserve.unl.edu](mailto:rstoddard@unlserve.unl.edu).

**DAVID E. SOPHER NEW SCHOLAR AWARD**

The purpose of the David E. Sopher New Scholar Award is to promote intellectual enquiry from new scholars into geographies of religions and belief systems through the presentation of papers at the AAG annual meeting. Both graduate students and untenured faculty who are not serving on the GORABS board can apply for the award which is a travel grant of \$250. The recipient will also be given an official certificate at the AAG awards luncheon.

One important requirement in the Sopher Award competition is that the paper be presented at the annual AAG meeting. Anyone considering competing for the 2006 award should plan ahead in order to submit an abstract of the paper to be presented and register for the AAG conference prior to the deadline of October 13, 2005.

Details of the award can be found on the GORABS website at <http://gorabs.org/>

## MEMBER NEWS

*From Ceri Peach*

[ceri.peach@geography.oxford.ac.uk](mailto:ceri.peach@geography.oxford.ac.uk)

**A recent publication:**

Peach, Ceri and Gale, Richard. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the new religious landscape of England. *The Geographical Review*, 93(4) 469-490 2003 (the date is 2003, but it was published 2005).

The study reports in part on a research grant which conducted a survey of the 1,000 officially registered Muslim Mosques, Sikh Gurdwaras and Hindu Mandirs in England and Wales at the beginning of the new millennium.

*From Carolyn Prorok* [carolyn.prorok@sru.edu](mailto:carolyn.prorok@sru.edu)  
*Mike Ferber* [mferber@geo.wvu.edu](mailto:mferber@geo.wvu.edu)

**Doing Geographies of Religions**

The following authors are presently working on chapters for "Doing Geographies of Religions," a text which we hope will break beyond the boundaries of geography of religion to transcend other closely related disciplines: Jeanne Kay Guelke (introduction), William Noble (traditional GOR), Michael Pacione (mapping religion), Carolyn Prorok (phenomenology & existentialism in GOR), Len Guelke (idealism & GOR), Michael Ferber (realism & GOR), Peter Hopkins (religion & feminist thought), William Norton (behavior analysis & GOR), and Frank Fillebeck (post-structural methods). The editors still seek an author for a chapter on Marxism and GOR, hence if you know of one or are personally interested, please contact the editors, Carolyn Prorok at [carolyn.prorok@sru.edu](mailto:carolyn.prorok@sru.edu) or Michael Ferber at [mferber@geo.wvu.edu](mailto:mferber@geo.wvu.edu).

*From William A. Noble*

[wnoble@coinet.com](mailto:wnoble@coinet.com)

**Current off and on project:**

My last field session in the Nilgiris of southern India involved the quest for remnants of the earliest Badaga religion. My colleague, The Rev. Phillip Mulley, a Church of South India priest who is also a Badaga, is the main fountainhead of information, myself supplying site maps and other data gathered in the field. We have, for example, recorded the only remaining Badaga temple – the *banagudi* site of the old faith. Once, *banagudis* were always located far within forests, but a noticeable measure of change is how so many are now in exposed sites, sometimes surrounded by fields. Hinduization has led to temple reconstruction guided by general Hindu architectural precepts, along with surmounting figures of well know Hindu deities. Another facet of the old Badaga faith is the evidence for satis among the Badagas. For this, we turn to sculptured dolmens with motifs that are broadly related to the practice of sati in southern India.

*From Charles Fuller* [cfuller3@triton.edu](mailto:cfuller3@triton.edu)

I was talking with Larry Simon of Brandeis University back in March. We considered the idea of the role religion plays in social and economic development. It occurred to us that this might be a good topic for a session at the Chicago AAG. Depending on feedback from this group, I'd be happy to explore a session or two sponsored by GORABS and other specialty groups, such as the Developing Areas SG, or the Ethics, Justice and Human Rights SG. Any thoughts? (Any thoughts possible during the slow, hot summer?)

**MEMBER NEWS**  
(continued)

*From Daniel H. Olsen*  
[dh2olsen@fes.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:dh2olsen@fes.uwaterloo.ca)

**Recent Publication**

Olsen, D. H. and Guelke, J. K. 2004. Spatial Transgression and the BYU Jerusalem Center Controversy. *The Professional Geographer*. 56(4): 503-515.

Abstract: Dominant groups tend to construct the meaning of places to justify and sustain their ideology and orthodoxy in order to solidify power and to maintain their control over others. New outsider groups whose ideology disrupts the established order and sovereignty of the dominant group can be labeled transgressive (Cresswell 1996; Sibley 1995). Transgressions of hegemonic spaces force dominant groups to re-examine themselves and to reaffirm or to modify their position. This concept of transgression is used to examine the controversy surrounding the building of the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center in the mid-1980s in Jerusalem. The public outcry among some Israelis over the building of this educational edifice concerned the potential use of the Jerusalem Center as a focal point for Mormon (Latter-day Saints) proselytizing efforts. We examine the way the Jerusalem Center was viewed and depicted by its opponents, suggesting how basic geographic concepts such as scale and site further refine the concept of spatial transgression for buildings and urban redevelopment.

*From David J. Rutherford*  
[dr1002@txstate.edu](mailto:dr1002@txstate.edu)

**The GORABS Newsletter**

The goal of the GORABS Newsletter is to facilitate development of an energized group of interacting scholars in the geography of religions and belief systems, scholars that together produce a synergy leading to expansion of the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge in our sub-discipline. Toward that goal, the Newsletter seeks the following types of submissions:

1. A report on your research. Submissions of this nature would be very welcome. Use a short essay format to tell us what you are pursuing or preliminary results of what you have discovered.
2. Also using a short essay format, write about promising ideas for future work. What topics seem important to pursue? What observations have you made that seem interesting or need attention? These submissions could be just two or three paragraphs that provoke further thought.
3. Items for Member News section. Items can be short bullet point type items or longer reports, but the focus is upon what we are all doing in our professional lives that relate to the geographies of religions and belief systems. Items to submit include completed and planned travels, research projects and/or progress, research ideas, recent publications, papers in progress, and announcements such as opportunities of which you have become aware, funding sources, or sources of information

Please submit items to David Rutherford, Newsletter Editor, at [dr1002@txstate.edu](mailto:dr1002@txstate.edu).

## **Why Don't We Teach Ethics?**

**By Cathy Carter**

At the GORABS business meeting in April, we discussed possible dialogues that might interest our members in the various GORABS venues. I suggested that one discussion might center on what the role of GORABS should be in the larger world of Geography. I offer the following as one aspect of that topic in the hope that it will spark discussion among our members.

Ethics deals with the right and the wrong of human behavior. It is most often taught in philosophy departments and often incorporates belief systems as the foundational principles for ethical systems. A relatively recent development in the world of ethics concerns the behavior of humans toward the environment; this topic seems to me to be critical in the development of future policy and decision makers, in short, our geography students.

In most of our geography departments we do well in training students to analyze the ecological aspects of the environment, but what are we doing to provide students with the ethical foundations they will need for doing their future jobs? Few departments require their students to take a course in Environmental Ethics (even from philosophy departments) and even fewer departments offer such a course themselves.

An intersecting branch of Environmental Ethics is Environmental Theology. In this area researchers ask, "How does what we believe about God impact the way we behave toward the earth?" This research area fits squarely within the scope of both Geography of Religion and Belief Systems and Cultural Geography. Needless to say, there are even fewer departmental offerings of this subject than of the more general course.

With this extremely brief background, I propose the following questions. Responses might be best discussed on the GORABS listserv.

Should GORABS promote the offering of these classes? Does the topic fit within the GORABS agenda? Should geography departments require students to take an ethics class? Does environmental ethics fit within the various programs for environmental policy?

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### **MINUTES FROM THE GORABS BUSINESS MEETING (unapproved draft)**

GEOGRAPHY OF RELIGIONS AND BELIEF SYSTEMS (GORABS)  
SPECIALTY GROUP OF THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN GEOGRAPHERS

BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES  
APRIL 6, 2005  
DENVER ANNUAL MEETING

Call to Order – Mike Ferber

Members in Attendance

Mike Ferber (current chair)

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David Rutherford (current secretary/treasurer)  
Darrell MacDonald (past chair)  
Carol Prorok  
Dan Olsen  
Cathy Carter  
Ed Davis  
Simon Potter  
Shankari Patel

Minutes from 2004 Meeting (Mike Ferber)

Approved (unanimous)

Financial Report (David Rutherford)

Accounts at Slippery Rock University Credit Union

Account	Current Balance
Savings	\$2,323.84
Checking	\$505.58
Dues check still to deposit	\$468.00
Total balance	\$3,297.42

Interest earned \$22.36

Actions since 2004 business meeting

2004 Sopher award payment (7/12/04)	\$250.00
2003 Sopher award payment (7/12/04)	\$250.00

Report of GORABS activities for the year

- Sessions at 2005 Annual Meeting
  - Diffusion of religions, belief systems, and ways of life (Organizer and Chair: Simon Potter). Session had much participation
  - Scaling geographies of religion (Organizer and Chair: Mike Ferber). Session had much interest and participation.
  - From Walden Pond to the space shuttle Columbia: Sacred space in the Americas (Organized by Mike Ferber; Chair Darrel MacDonald).
  
- Creation of Online Journal
  - Major activity of the year for GORABS
  - Journal title: *Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems*
  - Mission statement: *Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems* seeks to forward the geographic study of religion and belief systems through the publication of high-quality peer-reviewed articles and book reviews showcasing research frontiers, methods and methodologies, pedagogy, and relevant advances in complimentary disciplines.
  - Publication schedule: One issue per year to start
  - Template available at <http://gorabs.org/journal/index.htm>
  - Call for papers will be distributed within a few weeks
  - Sections include 1) full length articles. 2) scholarly essay, 3) comment, exchange, and debate. 4) reviews. Suggestion was discussed for an “Alternative Voices” section which would contain articles and perspectives from other disciplines besides

### Old business

- Sopher Award winner for 2005 – Cathy Carter
- Stoddard Award
  - Creation of this award was approved last year. The award is for recognition of distinguished service and contributions in the geography of religions and belief systems.
  - Motion was proposed that the first recipient of the award be Robert Stoddard. Carol shared that Bob never allowed anyone in this sub-discipline to be “invisible,” but instead encouraged others to share and pursue their work. She relayed the story of how Bob encouraged her when she was a master’s student.
  - Motion was passed unanimously

### Motions and discussion from the floor

- Question was raised, Why is there such poor attendance at this GORABS business meeting this year?
  - Attendance is somewhat low this year generally.
  - Everyone should more actively talk to and recruit attendees in sessions.
  - Each person on the board should make it a point to intentionally recruit someone.
  - Business meeting next year could include a short talk by a well-known scholar (possibly David Ley)
- What do we want people to do as members of GORABS?
  - Share ideas
  - Share their research
  - Network – share resources with one another
  - Field trip leadership at AAG in Chicago
- Consideration of ways to increase participation during the Annual Meeting in 2006 in Chicago
  - Develop interesting field trip ideas. Communicate over the Listserv about this.

### New business

- Elections were held for offices that are open this year – unanimous results follow:
  - David Rutherford – automatically moves from Secretary/Treasurer to Chair.
  - Ed Davis – elected as Secretary/Treasurer
  - Board position (1) – Cathy Carter elected to serve second year of an open position
  - Board position (2) – Dan Olsen
  - Board position (3) – Shankari Patel
  - Graduate student member – Lisa Jordan (provisional pending acceptance)
- Nominating committee for next year – same as last year except Darrel (previous past chair) will retire and Mike Ferber (current past chair) will take his place.
- Ideas for 2006 sessions.
  - Place of the geography or religions and belief systems within the overall discipline of geography
  - Discussion of the papers that emerged from the “Approaching Geography of Religion and Belief Systems” session in 2004 and are scheduled to be published in the Annals.