GEOGRAPHY IN AMERICA

Edited by
GARY L. GAILE
CORT J. WILLMOTT

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GARY L. GAILE
University of Colorado, Boulder

CORT J. WILLMOTT
University of Delaware

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To
William A. V. Clark
Werner H. Terjung
William L. Thomas, Jr.
and
The UCLA Department
of Geography

Contributors

Stuart C. Aitken
San Diego State University

Shakib Al-Khameri
University of Kentucky

Roger G. Barry
University of Colorado, Boulder

Thomas J. Bassett
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Duane D. Baumann
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University of Wisconsin, Whitewater

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Ray Bromley
State University of New York, Albany

Lawrence A. Brown
The Ohio State University

Marilyn A. Brown
Oak Ridge National Laboratory

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Kent State University

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University of Texas, Austin

Luisa M. Freeman
Freeman and Associates, New York

Gary L. Gaile
University of Colorado, Boulder

J. H. Galloway
University of Toronto

Lay J. Gibson
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Patricia Gober
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University of Colorado, Boulder

Katherine K. Hirschboeck
Louisiana State University

Michael Hodgson
University of Colorado, Boulder

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Texas A&M University

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Stephen C. Jett
University of California, Davis

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University of Texas, San Antonio

P. P. Karan
University of Kentucky

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Carleton University

Lisa A. LaPrairie
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N.A.S.A. Johnson Space Center

Edward J. Malecki
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University of Washington

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Wright State University

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University of Wisconsin, Madison

Philip R. Pryde
San Diego State University

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The Ohio State University

John Rees
University of North Carolina, Greensboro

David R. Reynolds
University of Iowa

David Robinson
Syracuse University

Peter A. Rogerson
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William D. Romey
St. Lawrence University

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San Jose State University

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George Towers
University of Arizona

Stanley W. Trimble
University of California, Los Angeles

Thomas T. Veblen
University of Colorado, Boulder

Richard Walker
University of California, Berkeley

David Ward
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Contributors

Roy Welch
University of Georgia

Niels West
University of Rhode Island

Stephen E. White
Kansas State University

Cort J. Willmott
University of Delaware

Dick G. Winchell
Eastern Washington University

William Wyckoff
Montana State University

Foreword

This volume, *Geography in America,* edited by Gary L. Gaile and Cort J. Willmott, is one of the most interesting and insightful books about American Geography ever published. Although it is only a snapshot at a given time, it is an extraordinarily detailed view of what American Geography is all about and what American geographers are doing. The contributing authors are the leaders of the specialty groups of the Association of American Geographers. These groups are indeed the *cores* of geographic research in the United States; they represent the pulse of American geographical research and related activity. Unlike the slick inventories and overviews of intellectual disciplines, in which a small group synthesizes and condenses trends in a field, this work is a grass-roots, factory-floor version of a discipline in America. This "from-the-bottom up" approach provides the reader with a view of what's going on in an incredible range of geographic subfields. Topics cover large, mainstream specialties, such as urban and industrial geography, as well as more focused aspects of the discipline, such as "Geography from the Left" and "Canadian Geography." The material includes recent directions in remote sensing and historical geography, as well as exciting developments in cartography and geographic information systems. In short, just about everything you ever wanted to know about American Geography is here for the reading.

One is struck, in reading *Geography in America,* by the robustness of the discipline and particularly by its multifaceted nature. Despite all rumors to the contrary, American Geography is alive, well, and active. Although there have been some difficult times for the discipline in the past, when a number of departments in American universities were closed, we have been witnessing a resurgence of commitment—from the University of Southern California to Swarthmore College. The contents of the pages that follow help to explain this renewed interest in the venerable old art and science of Geography. The editors are to be commended for carrying out the Herculean task of organizing, administering, and editing the material for this collection. I am already looking forward to its sequel.

George J. Demko, Geographer
U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.

Preface

Geography in America was conceived near the shores of Lake Mendota on the campus of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, on the patio of the University's Rathskeller. Following the 1985 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) in Detroit, the coeditors met with other geographers at this famous venue to consider events just past.

Among the topics discussed was the expanding role of the specialty groups within the AAG. For several years, these groups had organized a significant number of the paper sessions at the Annual Meeting, and there was every indication that their influence was increasing.

It was also clear that the specialty groups had not attained their potential. While they enhanced within-group viability and communications, there was a larger, though undeveloped, cohesive role that they could play within the Association. They should serve as conduits for better communication among specialty groups, among geographers. Early examples of this new role include jointly sponsored paper sessions (by two or more specialty groups) at the Annual Meetings, and the specialty-group chairs' luncheon which takes place at the Annual Meeting and serves as an informal senate of the groups.

Another way to improve communications was also explored at the informal meeting in Madison. This involved using the specialty-group framework to survey and report on the state and future of Geography. It was felt that specialty-group outlooks were representative of grass-roots or collective views of the discipline. In that specialty groups are identified and developed by geographers themselves, they approach the imperfect but wholesome structure characteristic of successful democracies. Specialty-group authors for this publication could be chosen by the membership by democratic means. Participation would be encouraged through the publicity of elections and the project, itself. There was a strong likelihood that a specialty-group-based format would net a relatively comprehensive and unbiased synthesis. Balanced coverage would be maintained by assigning page-length restrictions based on specialty-group size and levels of activity at the Annual Meetings. The very diversity of specialty groups would

ensure that the broad spectrum of approaches to the study of Geography would be represented. Furthermore, communications among AAG members would be promoted through the presentation and discussion of draft specialty-group syntheses at an Annual Meeting.

With these considerations in mind, the *Geography in America* project was formally launched and publicized at the 1987 Annual Meeting in Portland, with many groups electing authors at that time. Paper sessions to report preliminary thoughts to the groups and to the Association at large were organized and became reality at the 1988 Annual Meeting in Phoenix. Specialty-group presentations and ensuing debates were often lively, and many syntheses were revised on the basis of these discussions.

Quality was a major goal of this project. Written versions of the specialty-group syntheses were subjected to external reviews. Based on these external reviews, as well as on editorial and within-group peer reviews, the authors were asked to make appropriate revisions. While a concerted effort was made to attain comprehensiveness, quality first and foremost dictated the inclusion of a specialty-group contribution within *Geography in America.*

Geography in America is the written formalization of the process by which the AAG membership explored the state and future of Geography. We, the coeditors, believe the final product is one of which its contributors can be proud.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Geography in America required the cooperation of numerous people, and we are most pleased to be able to formally acknowledge our debt to them. The AAG specialty groups themselves deserve the lion's share of our thanks for their overwhelming support and participation. Many long hours were spent by specialty-group authors and other members to produce high-quality and comprehensive essays. The AAG, too, played an important role in the project by alternately encouraging and questioning our efforts. On occasion, their pointed queries spurred us to clarify our goals and procedures. *Geography in America* is better for their concerns.

George Demko, past president of the AAG and a friend, saw the project as a sign of new scholarship and institutional structure. It was George's belief in our vision and his supportive words before the AAG Council that paved the way for official AAG "encouragement" and for *Geography in America,* itself. George, please accept our heartfelt thanks, as well as some small part of the blame.

Merrill Publishing Company agreed to our many pleas concerning timetables. Administrative Editor Wendy Jones and Product Manager David Garza suffered through our anxieties and helped promote the work. The production and manufacturing staff, including Tanya Tiberi, JoEllen Gohr, Linda Peterson, Diane Jordan, and others, kept the massive ball rolling. Fred Schroyer copyedited with a lightning and frightening blue pencil. To all of you, we are most grateful.

We would also like to acknowledge those publishers who allowed the use of copyrighted graphic material. These are *Cartographica, The Cartographic Journal,* and *Social Science and Medicine.*

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Tom Wilbanks
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Whoever they are, we would like to thank the people responsible for BITNET. They made the mass of communications between the coeditors, and among the coeditors and the authors, timely and manageable. The "computer age" made this project's many drafts, revisions, and communications immensely more efficient and expedient.

As geographers, we believe it is important to acknowledge *places* that influenced this work, with regard to either the production thereof or the respite therefrom. In addition to the above-mentioned Lake Mendota venue and our respective departments, we would like to acknowledge the intangible contributions of Boulder, Colorado; Lewes and Newark, Delaware; Nairobi, Kenya; Phoenix, Arizona; the road through Taos and the Peak-To-Peak Highway; and the Boulderado, Quinns, the Deer Park, and the "Baboon." The Continental Divide also played an editorial role—man-

uscripts edited on the deck overlooking the mountains were required to maintain one editor's unDivided attention.

We most happily acknowledge our friends who helped us, tolerated us, or simply distracted us: the Fergusons, Deuce Aguado, Spud and Mavis Murphy, Lefty Westside, Andy Weyl-Mark Diamond and the Jazz Showcase, Tim Harris, Stu Lilly, Mike McNulty, Steve Peterson, Jeff, Wes and Jan, Tim and Jim, Cousin Brucie, Jay and Marie, Buzz and Elayne, the Wards, Mike Rich, Smokie, Perfect, Tom Waits, the Four Directions, Orchestra King Mama, and the people of Kenya.

Finally, our families want us back. They earned an elephant's share of gratitude for their support and their tolerance of the unremitting unsocial behavior caused by the hours that *Geography in America* consumed. Susan, Pat, Abby, and Julia—we love you dearly and we'll be home more—soon.

We must say, however, we really enjoyed our work.

GLG, Boulder
CJW, Newark

Foundations of Modern American Geography

Gary L. Gaile | Cort J. Willmott

Geography is an old interest and field of study. Classical scholars from Eratosthenes to Kant attempted to set down Geography's distinctive place among the scholarly endeavors of their time. They thought it necessary to establish an intellectual framework for interpreting the expanding knowledge of the world and its inhabitants. Much knowledge has been acquired since then, and yet little has changed. Geography continues to be a growing contemporary discipline that is actively acquiring, debating, and applying new outlooks and methods.

Modern Geography's foundations are built on syntheses of traditional approaches to the organization, study, and understanding of geographic processes and phenomena, and new approaches that have been made possible through the coevolution of philosophical, theoretical, technical, and informational advances. It would be difficult, for instance, to overstate the fundamental changes that have occurred and will continue to occur within Geography as a consequence of the ongoing electronic revolution. The purpose of this volume is to chronicle the state of the discipline as it is being practiced in the 1980s, and to explore avenues over which geographic inquiry will likely advance.

The discipline of Geography is difficult to define in a few phrases. Unlike many other scholarly fields, it is not characterized by a discrete subject matter or method or even philosophy. For comparison, consider that Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science, and Sociology are perceived as well-defined by their subject matter, while Mathematics and Statistics seem relatively unambiguously characterized by method. Recognition by geographers and other scholars that Geography is not so neatly categorized led to several earlier treatises on "the nature of Geography" (cf. Hartshorne 1939, Harvey 1969, Gould 1985), as well as to numerous philosophical debates (e.g., between Harvey and Berry in 1974) and methodological debates (cf. Gould 1984). All have attempted to interpret or prescribe the essence of Geography. Geographers have debated, for instance, whether the core of the discipline is nature-society relationships, regional synthesis, or spatial analysis. While much of the debate

has been instrumental in advancing the field, it also has projected a fragmented image to the larger academic community (Nuhfer 1988), and fostered defensiveness among some geographers. The search for distinctiveness on the basis of simple content, method, or philosophy has been unsuccessful because it presupposes that a boundary around the "core" of the discipline exists, and therefore can be articulated.

A simple, easily articulated definition of Geography, consistent with the traditional notions about how the pursuit of knowledge should be compartmentalized, simply does not exist—nor should it. Geography, like History and a few other fields, is not bounded. Such disciplines are set apart by integrative perspectives, themes, or approaches to organization of many interacting processes and phenomena. In the case of History, time underlies historical descriptions and explanations of virtually all types of events. In the case of Geography, place and its dimensions serve as the bases for geographic descriptions and explanations of events. It is the roles that place and its locational attributes play in natural and human processes occurring on the Earth's surface that are at the heart of geographic inquiry and knowledge.

Geographers traditionally have concerned themselves with describing the state of the Earth's surface, using maps as the standard means for storage and communication of such information. But it is an understanding of the dynamic processes occurring in the landscape (which give rise to spatial flows of people, commodities, money, energy, etc.) that underlies any fundamental knowledge of Geography. Only this understanding of spatially dynamic processes can adequately explain past and present patterns on the land, as well as provide the conceptual bases necessary to forecast or plan future geographies.

REFLECTIONS OF OURSELVES

Geographers' reflections on the discipline have been heightened recently with lively debates and analyses of the role of specialization (Goodchild and Janelle 1988a; Buttimer 1988; Marcus 1988; Gatrell 1988; Wheeler 1988). Concern also has been expressed over the very process of self-examination—does it reflect paranoia, smugness, or simple lack of direction? Self-evaluation is natural, and group stock-taking is a to-be-expected extension of this tendency. It may well be desirable and an ". . . essential overhead of academic and professional activity" (Goodchild and Janelle 1988b, 4). Further, better data and the efficiency of computers make this process easier and thus more likely to occur.

External evaluation also has struck human chords. The 1980s, for instance, will be marked in American Geography as the decade when widespread geographic illiteracy was "discovered." Geographers' reactions varied from "it is not our fault" to "what an opportunity!" and they are chronicled by Hill and LaPrairie in the next chapter on Geography in American education. The 1980s also will be remembered as the decade in which several major departments were closed by their university administrations. These events frightened, saddened, and angered many geographers, but most importantly, they instilled a resolve to make Geography a viable and competitive intellectual discipline.

Introspection, while certainly intensified of late, is not new to Geography. There is a rich tradition upon which this book builds, and a synopsis follows.

James and Jones and Fundamental Changes Since 1954

American Geography: Inventory and Prospect is a benchmark volume edited by Preston James and Clarence Jones and published for The Association of American Geographers (AAG) in 1954. It features 26 chapters on geographic specializations authored by a who's who of American geographers. It is interesting to note how this work differs from the present volume. James's and Jones's book contains greater coverage of economic geography, including chapters on the geography of resources and the geography of mineral production. It also covers some areas that are not covered separately in *Geography in America,* notably military geography and field techniques.

Conversely, *Geography in America* includes several specializations that are not reviewed by James and Jones. Interestingly, "culture," a traditional focus within Geography, does not appear in their table of contents. Field techniques, while still a central methodology of many geographers, have been overshadowed by the technological wizardry associated with quantitative methods, remote sensing, and geographic information systems (GIS), all of which are surveyed in *Geography in America.* Applications of geography have extended far beyond the purely economic arena to include considerations of energy, hazards, aging and the aged, regional development and planning, and medical and recreational geography. Geographers also are pursuing ideas arising from the "left" and from gender equality that cast the discipline as a new whole. These changes reflect a dynamic discipline that has avoided entrenchment while maintaining its traditions.

Continuing Self-Examination

More than 10 years after *American Geography: Inventory and Prospect,* Saul Cohen edited *Problems and Trends in American Geography* (1967) from a series of lectures and interviews prepared for the Voice of America. This book's 19 chapters survey the field of Geography and document some of the dynamic changes in its research agenda. Cohen's book also reflects the heightened social consciousness of the 1960s, as it contains chapters on poverty, the inner city, planning, and peace in Vietnam. The diversity of research that is so apparent in *Geography in America* was beginning to develop.

Over a decade later, a retrospective assessment, *The Association of American Geographers: The First Seventy-Five Years 1904–1979,* was written by Preston James and Geoffrey Martin (1978). Their chronicle concluded with the conjecture that:

> Unity of the discipline has given way to ever-increasing diversity. From simplicity came dichotomy, from unity emerged diversity, and from diversity came pluralism. (James and Martin 1978, 200)

James and Martin expressed fears that specialty groups might break away from the core of the discipline:

> Eventually these groups may break away from the parent society, hoping to form a new professional field, and in many cases these separations have been successful. . . .The greatest difficulty occurs perhaps when scholars who use quantitative procedures find no common grounds to justify their continued association with those who use the literary methods (198)

On the one hand, their trepidation was warranted—consider, for instance, the independent climatological and geomorphological groups founded in the United Kingdom, largely by geographers. On the other hand, since the AAG now supports specialty groups to such an extent that "they are at this time remarkably free from many of the practical constraints faced by other groups and divisions" (Goodchild and Janelle 1988b, 9), it is unlikely that sufficient impetus exists for the formation of new geographical societies.

A more personal view of Geography was written in the 1980s by Peter Gould (1985). In it, Gould accuses geographers of work. While it is difficult to ascribe "work" to the obvious joy with which *The Geographer at Work* was written, the "explosion" of the old field of Geography which Gould chronicles over the last 30 years must have been caused by some force—perhaps it *was* work. Gould's Geography has "a number of threads of continuity" with the old discipline, but also recognizes many new fields and approaches which "bear little resemblance to those of the past." Gould's impressions of what geographers do are convincing arguments that not only are geographers working on diverse research problems, but this diversity has kept us healthy, curious, and relevant.

Our colleagues abroad also are diversifying at a brisk rate, as evidenced by their recent state-of-the-discipline volumes (Cori, Fondi, and Zunica 1988; De Moor 1988; Dietvorst and Kwaad 1988; Hobbs and Walmsley 1988; *Revue Belge de Geographie* 1988; Slaymaker and Troughton 1988). Diversification as well as self-examination, it seems, are characteristics of all nationalities of geographers. Through *Progress in Physical Geography* and *Progress in Human Geography,* for example, our British associates make a regular habit of self-examination.

UNITY AMIDST DIVERSITY

Despite the aggressive search for new directions, Geography remains firmly grounded in its traditional concerns. Location and distance remain important. Sense of place remains important. Interaction between nature and society remains important. Regions, too, are still major organizing frameworks. Maps, though often produced by different methods, are still a basic means by which geographic information can be conveyed. Another aspect of Geography, which has changed only slightly in the 35 years since *American Geography: Inventory and Prospect,* is that Geography "is new in the significance of the role it plays; but it is old in terms of its traditional point of view" (James and Jones 1954, 16). To these traditions, however, has been added the plurality that comes with attention to new epistemological approaches, related disciplines, policy concerns, applications, and just plain creative impulses.

Resurgence of the Traditional

Traditional points of view in Geography have evolved through research, but their essence remains. This can best be seen in the resurgence of several traditional fields of Geography which had waned in previous decades.

Renewed dynamism in geographical education can be attributed, in part, to the much-publicized geographic illiteracy that pervades American classrooms. The result has been a marked rise in the quest for information on geographic education and a