



News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
No. 232, April 4, 2013
Compiled by Dan Smith [<cag@geog.uvic.ca>](mailto:cag@geog.uvic.ca)

Strengthening geographic education in Canada: The Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG) and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society have embarked on a joint initiative to strengthen geographic education in Canada. Fashioned as a ‘national conversation on geographic education,’ the goal is to effect positive change by building a coalition of organizations and associations committed to enhanced teaching and learning in geography. Beginning in April, CG Education and CAG President and RCGS Fellow Dr. Jean Andrey will lead monthly Google+ Hangouts with articulate Canadians around questions such as “How is technology changing the field of geography?” and “What must Canadian students know about geography before they graduate high school?” These conversations will culminate in a gathering at the time of the CAG annual conference in St. John’s this August at which time a declaration or call to action will be drafted. Another element of the joint initiative is pictorial in nature. Canadians are invited to submit photos that illustrate “This is geography.”

Concordia U’s Damon Matthews argues CO2 emission cuts will immediately affect the rate of future global warming: There is a persistent misconception among both scientists and the public that there is a delay between emissions of CO₂ and the climate’s response to those emissions. This misconception has led policy makers to argue that CO₂ emission cuts implemented now will not affect the climate system for many decades. This erroneous line of argument makes the climate problem seem more intractable than it actually is, say Concordia University’s Damon Matthews, Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, and MIT’s Susan Solomon in a recent Science article. The researchers show that immediate decreases in CO₂ emissions would in fact result in an immediate decrease in the rate of climate warming. Explains Matthews, professor in the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, “if we can successfully decrease CO₂ emissions in the near future, this change will be felt by the climate system when the emissions reductions are implemented – not in several decades. [Concordia NOW News](#)

AAG introduces mobile App for its annual meeting: A mobile application is now available for this year’s Annual Meeting in Los Angeles. The new smartphone application allows attendees to search the program for sessions, events, and other pertinent conference information. Users can also receive alerts about program changes or notices. Networking features offer colleagues tools to share schedules and exchange contact information. The AAG mobile app also integrates with social media networks on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. [Get the App](#)

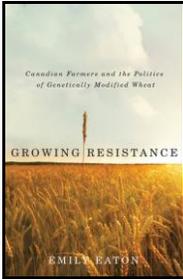
Trent U students develop management plans for watersheds in Mexico: Students enrolled in Trent University's Integrated Watershed Management course are receiving an education that goes well beyond book-learning. The Environmental Resource Science/Studies and Geography students are gaining real-world experience by developing integrated watershed management plans for four watersheds in Mexico. "There's only so much you can learn from theoretical study," says Dr. Raul Ponce-Hernandez, associate professor in the Departments of Environmental and Resource Science and Geography, who is the course instructor. "Students in this course are learning by doing. They are engaged in a case study that is realistic because they are working for clients in Mexico." The students are working in collaboration with a Mexican NGO, Salvemos Rio Laja, local and federal offices of the Ministry of the Environment, and Natural Resources of Mexico. Integrated Watershed Management (ERSC-GEOG 4640H) is a fourth-year, half-credit course that began in January. The students in the course have been divided into four teams of five to six members, each working on a different watershed area: La Laja river watershed in Central Mexico; the Grijalva river watershed on the southeast Gulf of Mexico; the Coatzacoalcos river watershed on the central Gulf of Mexico; and the Candelaria river watershed on the eastern Gulf of Mexico. [Universities News](#)

U Victoria's Ian Walker featured on The Weather Network: Beaches in British Columbia see frequent visitors every year, but as the topic of climate change intensifies, so has the concern of coastal erosion. "Essentially what happens when we have an erosive event is the water level gets high enough on a beach to start to wear away the beach surface or the land surface in behind it," says Ian Walker, Associate professor of geography at the University of Victoria. Walker was recently awarded a grant from the Canada Foundation for Innovation to help equip a coastal erosion and dune dynamics lab research unit. Walker says coastal erosion is a widespread problem along Canada's low-lying and most populated coastlines and the research will help communities prepare for and adjust to the coastal impacts of climate change. "I think we're at sort of the cusp in terms of our perception of coastal erosion as an issue, and again in a country with the largest coastline in the world and 80 percent of it sinking, it's something we really need to be paying attention to," adds Walker. [Watch on The Weather Network](#)

Memorial U's Josh Lepawsky looks to reassemble rubbish electronics in Fronteras, Mexico: Fair trade has both its proponents and its detractors, but the vast majority of the research devoted to it draws on cases of agrofoods and textiles or, more generally, on production in the 'South' for consumption in the 'North'. What fair trade electronics refurbishment and recycling might look like and how it might be organized – indeed, whether such a thing is possible or desirable – remain open questions. These are questions that members of RDM and Memorial University's Department of Geography are attempting to research together. The research with RDM is part of a SSHRC Insight grant led by Josh Lepawsky. The recent workshop at RDM was devoted to several goals. These included enabling RDM members to act as co-researchers through discussions of the nature of research, methods, and collectively conceptualizing key concepts for the project: attempting to better understand the knowledge, skills, and creativity of people who re-imagine and rework electronics disposed of in Canada and elsewhere into valuable commodities. Other goals included collaboratively working through what it might mean to tell research stories through a technique called 'photovoice'. Photovoice is a form of participatory action research. It involves equipping participants (who act as co-researchers, not research subjects in the classical sense) with cameras so that they can tell their stories visually and through their own words. The research team is interested in, among other things, eliciting narratives about the variety of skills that co-researchers at RDM possess in terms of re-imagining that which is considered waste in some places (e.g., Canada) into various forms of value. The team thinks that this research approach may offer a way for the people and places consistently framed by others (e.g., ENGOs, media, policy circles) as victims whose lives are defined solely in terms of needs, deficiency, and victimization to frame their stories on their own terms and diffuse them to a wide audience. [MUN Geography News](#)

New Book

Emily Eaton. 2013. [Growing Resistance: Canadian Farmers and the Politics of Genetically Modified Wheat](#). University of Manitoba Press. 208 p.



Growing Resistance, the first book by University of Regina geography professor Emily Eaton, will soon be published by University of Manitoba Press. In 2004 Canadian farmers led an international coalition to a major victory for the anti-GM movement by defeating the introduction of Monsanto's genetically modified wheat. Canadian farmers' strong opposition to GM wheat marked a stark contrast to previous producer acceptance of other genetically modified crops. By 2005, for example, GM canola accounted for 78% of all canola grown nationally. So why did farmers stand up for wheat? In *Growing Resistance: Canadian Farmers and the Politics of Genetically Modified Wheat*, Emily Eaton reveals the motivating factors behind farmer opposition to GM wheat. She illustrates wheat's cultural, historical, and political significance on the Canadian prairies as well as its role in crop rotation, seed saving practices, and the economic livelihoods of prairie farmers. Through interviews with producers, industry organizations, and biochemical companies, Eaton demonstrates how the inclusion of producer interests was integral to the coalition's success in voicing concerns about environmental implications, international market opposition to GMOs, and the lack of transparency and democracy in Canadian biotech policy and regulation.

Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

Owen W. Brown and Chris H. Hugenholtz. 2013. [Quantifying the effects of terrestrial laser scanner settings and survey configuration on land surface roughness measurement](#). *Geosphere* 9:367-377.

Paul Cordy, Marcello Veiga, Ben Crawford, Oseas Garcia, Victor Gonzalez, Daniel Moraga, Monika Roeser and Dennis Wip. 2013. [Characterization, mapping, and mitigation of mercury vapour emissions from artisanal mining gold shops](#). *Environmental Research*. doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2012.10.015

C.M. Hall, David Harrison, David Weaver and Geoffrey Wall. 2013. [Vanishing peripheries: Does tourism consume places?](#) *Tourism Recreation Research* 38:71–92.

S.E.L. Howell, T. Wohlleben, A. Komarov, L. Pizzolato and C. Derksen. 2013. [Recent extreme light sea ice years in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago: 2011 and 2012 eclipse 1998 and 2007](#). *The Cryosphere Discussions* 7:1313-1358.

Marie-Élise Parent, Mark S Goldberg, Dan L Crouse, Nancy A Ross, Hong Chen, Marie-France Valois and Alexandre Liautaud. 2013. [Traffic-related air pollution and prostate cancer risk: a case-control study in Montreal, Canada](#). *Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, doi:10.1136/oemed-2012-101211

Other “Geographical” News

New camera system creates high-resolution 3-D images from up to a kilometre away: The new system works by sweeping a low-power infrared laser beam rapidly over an object. It then records, pixel-by-pixel, the round-trip flight time of the photons in the beam as they bounce off the object and arrive back at the source. The system can resolve depth on the millimeter scale over long distances using a detector that can "count" individual photons. Outside of target identification, photon-counting depth imaging could be used for a number of scientific purposes, including the remote examination of the health and volume of vegetation and the movement of rock faces, to assess potential hazards. [ScienceDaily](#)

The seas of plastic: Plastic pollution in the oceans represents a major global environmental challenge. At a global scale, man-made debris has been observed to accumulate in remote areas of the ocean in large circulating gyres. The source of this plastic is assumed to be mostly land based, however little is known about the relative contribution of different land based sources to each gyre. [Visual.ly](#)

Rocky Mountains originated from previously unknown oceanic plate: The mountain ranges of the North American Cordillera are made up of dozens of distinct crustal blocks. A new study clarifies their mode of origin and identifies a previously unknown oceanic plate that contributed to their assembly. Geologists were able to locate the remnants of several deep-sea trenches that mark subduction sites at which oceanic plates plunge at a steep angle into the mantle and are drawn almost vertically into its depths. [ScienceDaily](#)

Show me the money: is grant writing taking over science? Science is an art. As you progress in your career, the doing of science is largely relegated to younger trainees, and the bigger picture – the thinking about science – becomes increasingly important. All of this takes a surprising amount of time and energy, and the more people you have working for you, the more time and energy it takes. Unfortunately, these efforts have to be juggled alongside other tasks; if you're in a university, you probably have teaching obligations, and various committees and other administrative tasks. But by far the biggest time-suck is the writing of research grants. There is some evidence that having the vast majority of scientists spend the vast majority of their time writing grants instead of doing and thinking science might be a tad inefficient, and not, perhaps, the best way to get science done. It's not just time; it's money too. Canadian researchers calculated that the cost of administering a major national grant scheme in 2007 exceeded what it would cost simply to give every qualified researcher \$30,000, no questions asked. [The Guardian](#)



Twitter feeds from Canadian geography departments

[@UVic Geog](#) - Department of Geography, University of Victoria

[@UBCgeog](#) - Department of Geography, University of British Columbia

[@UFVGeography](#) – Department of Geography, University of Fraser Valley (*new)

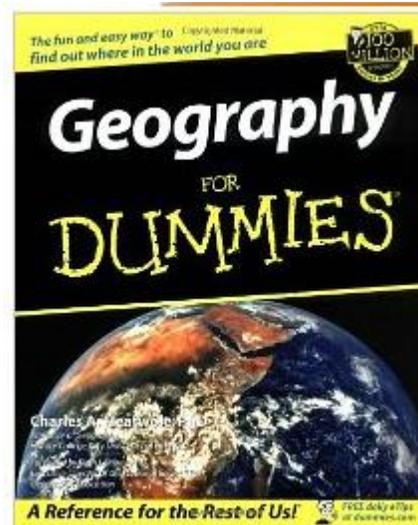
[@UNBCGeography](#) - Geography Program, University of Northern British Columbia

[@UWGeography](#) - Department of Geography, University of Winnipeg

[@SGESmedia](#) - School of Geography and Earth Sciences, McMaster University

[@GPEConcordia](#) - Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, Concordia University

Some not so “Geographical” News



The CAG now works for geographers on [Twitter](#). Keep up-to-date by following [CanGeographers](#)
GeogNews Archives: <http://www.geog.uvic.ca/dept/cag/geognews/geognews.html>
