



News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
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Esri Canada joins national initiative to advance geographic education for Canadians: Esri Canada today announced its support for the St. John's Declaration, a national agreement and action plan for advancing geographic education for Canadians. The company is the first private-sector organization in the country to sign the agreement, along with geographic educators and non-profit organizations led by the Canadian Association of Geographers and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. Esri Canada will provide leadership and support in promoting the value of geography and spatial thinking in Canadian schools to help maintain the country's leadership in geospatial science and innovation. Earlier this year, CBC News reported that many Canadian college students are not able to identify where continents are on a map. This reinforced the already recognized need among Canadian educators and professionals to enhance geographic literacy among students. The Canadian Association of Geographers and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society organized a meeting in August in St. John's, Newfoundland among geographic educators and professionals, which resulted in the St. John's Declaration. Signed by 18 organizations from academia, business and industry, the accord emphasizes the urgent need to improve and update geographic education in light of the current economic, social and environmental issues facing Canada and the world. "Canada is recognized as an international leader in geographic innovation," said Dr. Brent Hall, director, higher education and research, Esri Canada, and one of the original signers of the Declaration. "Geographic information system technology, which integrates vast amounts of data into easy-to-understand maps, was invented here in the 1960s to manage the Canada Land Inventory. For the country to maintain its geospatial leadership, it's important for Canadians to develop a solid understanding of geography and an appreciation of its role in our daily lives. Our goal is to help move the St. John's Declaration from a paper agreement into action by improving geographic education and research." GISuser.com

U Victoria's Reuben Rose-Redwood comments on corporate sponsorship of buildings: Selling the names of civic facilities to corporate sponsors could pump millions of dollars into city coffers, according to a Nanaimo city councillor supporting a look at naming rights. The City of Nanaimo is exploring the potential to cash in on naming rights for playing fields to public buildings, with aims to fill budget gaps and raise new revenue. It's not alone. Cash-strapped municipalities across the country are looking to corporate sponsors for alternative revenue to keep taxes down and user fees in line. But Dr. Reuben Rose-Redwood, a University of Victoria geographer studying naming rights across the country, said not all communities are jumping on board. Statistics show just over 14 per cent of municipalities in

Canada have some naming right agreement in place – leaving 78 per cent without. Rose-Redwood is convinced there is low economic return for small and medium-sized communities, which offer corporations less visibility and smaller entertainment markets than Toronto or New York. There could also be costs to create a sponsorship campaign and questions about the limits public spaces should be commercialized. These are public buildings, paid for with the public purse, Rose-Redwood said. “By slapping a corporate name on it, basically it’s privatizing public space,” he said. Nanaimo’s mayor, however, says the opportunities for corporate sponsorship should be considered. [Nanaimo News Bulletin](#)

Royal Canadian Geographical Society adds 4 Newfoundlanders to fellowship: The Royal Canadian Geographical Society — which has the goal of spreading knowledge and appreciation of Canada’s people, culture and geography — was founded in 1929 and bills itself as one of the country’s largest non-profit educational organizations. Shawn Stratton, TA Loeffler, Glenn Blackwood and Derek Wilton were inducted into the society’s College of Fellows Class of 2013 last month. As well, Newfoundland and Labrador Lt.-Gov. Frank Fagan was granted an honorary fellowship. The Royal Canadian Geographical Society — which has the goal of spreading knowledge and appreciation of Canada’s people, culture and geography — was founded in 1929 and bills itself as one of the country’s largest non-profit educational organizations. Stratton, Loeffler, Blackwood and Wilton join other fellows from around the world, including seven others from this province: Norm R. Catto, Stan Cook, Peter Laracy, Joyce C. Macpherson, Peggy M. March, Gordon Slade and Gerald Thom. [The Telegram](#)

Bandon U’s Doug Ramsey involved in a nation-wide study of disappearing farmland: “In the last 40 years, farmland approximately twice the size of Prince Edward Island has been taken over for urban activities,” says Dr. Doug Ramsey from BU’s Department of Rural Development and member of the research team that will spend the next four years studying agricultural land use planning in Canada. “We need to understand how this transfer affects our ability to be a food-producing nation and contribute to the conversation about policies for the future.” The study, spearheaded by the University of Northern British Columbia, is funded through a \$464,000 grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Ramsey says, “An important part of the research will be meetings with farmers and residents of rural and urban communities, in town halls, coffee chats and other informal gatherings to hear from the people directly affected.” [Brandon U News](#)

Memorial U’s Rodolphe Devillers and Arnaud Vandecasteele crowd sourcing geographic data: Rodolphe Devillers and his team are like kids with new toys at Christmas. The associate professor of geography and Dr. Arnaud Vandecasteele, post-doctoral fellow on his team, recently received funding from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada for two new pieces of equipment. The new unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and open source remotely operated underwater vehicle (ROV) will allow Dr. Devillers and his team to test affordable technologies for crowd sourcing aerial photos and underwater images. According to Dr. Devillers, the collection of geographic data by the general public has increased exponentially in past decades, but has been largely restricted to traditional mapping, such as the increasingly popular OpenStreetMap project. OpenStreetMap is a collaborative mapping environment onto which anyone can contribute by adding or modifying geographic data. “Our research group studies how geographic data can be crowd sourced and is now starting to explore how new types of geographic data, such as aerial photos, can be collected by the crowd using inexpensive UAVs or ROVs and shared to the general public,” he said. “Our vision is that such inexpensive systems will become increasingly available to the general public and will constitute a source of very interesting data for society.” Although satellites and airplanes have been historically used for collecting aerial photos, the recent development of drone technology opens up the potential for citizens and communities to use UAVs in a number of contexts, including mapping their communities and monitoring their environment. [Today.MUN.ca](#)

Trent U's Raul Ponce-Hernandez bridging gap between science and stakeholders: Dr. Raul Ponce-Hernandez is preoccupied with the transfer of knowledge. "There is a huge information gap between what scientists know, and what the public and policy-makers know, regarding the impacts of climate change," says the professor of Environmental and Resource Studies and Geography. As a member of a working group of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Professor Ponce-Hernandez has viewed climate change scenarios, some of which he describes as dire. "Although there is a band of uncertainty to these scenarios, and they may be unpleasant and scary for some, it's important that people know about these things so we can figure out how to adapt to the changes that will occur." That's why Prof. Ponce-Hernandez is excited about the prototype online tool he and his students have developed for mapping climate change impacts on agriculture in Ontario. It represents a useful example of how scientific knowledge can be made available to practitioners to help them understand the impacts of climate change and to help them make appropriate policy decisions. The Climate Change Mapper takes sophisticated calculations from general circulation models of the atmosphere and down scales them to one kilometer square areas along with local estimates of rainfall, evaporation, and temperature. Using crop growth models, it maps out crop growth and crop yields, to predict how they will be affected by future changes in the climate. The tool allows the user to choose from different climate change scenarios – benign, medium, and severe – to view a range of possible outcomes, along with a level of probability. [Trent Daily News](#)

Wilfrid Laurier U's Rob Milne to receive Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence: Wilfrid Laurier University's Associate Vice-President: Teaching and Learning and Teaching Support Services, Pat Rogers, is honouring the recipients of the 2013 Teaching Awards and others who have made significant contributions to the educational experience of Laurier students. The university will host a celebration early in 2014 to formally acknowledge Rob Milne, Associate Professor in Geography and Environmental Studies for his [2013 Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence](#). Milne was recognized for his extensive teaching dossier – 17 different courses and more than 8,700 students between 2003 and 2012 – the remarkable quality of his online course development, outstanding teacher evaluations, and his strong knowledge of ecology and environmental studies. A letter written by a former student describes Milne as a mentor who changed the course of his undergraduate studies. "I had been just another student on the fast track to a Liberal Arts degree and teacher's college," writes the student. "Dr. Milne not only provided focus to my degree, he inspired a passion for geography. It is a passion that persists." Milne said he tries to relate to students on an individual basis and consider how they both want and need to learn. "I try to simplify complex concepts by relating the course material to real-world examples that the student experiences in their daily life," he said. [WLU Headlines](#)

U Waterloo's Steffanie Scott investigating sustainable agriculture in China: From contaminated baby formula to tainted dumplings, China has a bad reputation when it comes to food safety. But look carefully in your grocery store. Chances are good you'll find fresh organic snap peas or frozen organic broccoli – produced in China. China has the world's second-largest land area devoted to organic food production and there is a burgeoning movement toward what geography and environmental management professor Steffanie Scott calls ecological agriculture – farming that is greener than average but may not be certified organic. Scott and three of her graduate students are researching ecological agriculture in China, and much of what they have found is encouraging. One major difference between Canada and China has been the role of the state in developing ecological agriculture. In Canada, civil society has led the growth in the organic and local food markets, while the government has done little, says Scott. In China, the state has led the development of the green and hazard-free agricultural sectors, primarily to address concerns about food safety, though it has been less supportive of organic agriculture. "There's generally quite widespread skepticism about the ability of organic agriculture to feed a large population," says Scott. In fact, research has shown that done right, organic agriculture can actually result in higher yields than conventional farming, she adds. [UWaterloo GEM](#)

Recent Theses and Dissertations

Michael Chambers. 2013. [Predictive power of film attributes with respect to audience demographics](#). Master of Spatial Analysis, Department of Geography, Ryerson University. Toronto, Ontario. Supervisor: Wayne Forsythe

Cameron Hare. 2013. [Assessing ozone and fine particulate matter concentrations and trends in Ontario, Canada, 2003 - 2012](#). Master of Spatial Analysis, Department of Geography, Ryerson University. Toronto, Ontario. Supervisor: Wayne Forsythe

Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

Trevor J Barnes. 2013. [Big data, little history](#). Dialogues in Human Geography 3:297-302.

Rosemary-Claire Collard. 2014. [Putting animals back together, taking commodities apart](#). Annals of the Association of American Geographers 104:151-165.

Patrick A. Dunae, Donald J. Lafreniere, Jason A. Gilliland and John S. Lutz. 2013. [Dwelling places and social spaces: revealing the environments of urban workers in Victoria using historical GIS](#). Labour / Le Travail 72:37-73.



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Other “Geographical” News

A whole new meaning to bad weather: Top ten worst weather places in the world: Ed Darack defines "bad" weather, what a "place" consists of, and the analysis of the conditions themselves. However, due to the lack of comprehensive global meteorological research, especially in the harshest climates where the risk to human life is significant. Find out which other places made the list by accessing "[The 10 Worst Weather Places in the World](#)" free until the end of December 2013

Who's missing in modern academia: solitary geniuses or something much more significant?

When Peter Higgs, of Higgs boson fame, was quoted in the Guardian on Friday as saying "Today I wouldn't get an academic job" because he would not "be regarded as productive enough", it prompted much nodding and retweeting from academics. When Higgs was quoted as saying "It's difficult to imagine how I would ever have enough peace and quiet in the present sort of climate to do what I did in 1964", many academics undoubtedly heaved a sigh and got back to the marking, teaching preparation, grant application, or whatever other non-research-related activity they were currently engaged in. It seems, though, that Higgs's comments struck a wider chord. [The Guardian](#)

In praise of the university lecture and its place in academic scholarship: Back in the 1970s, a small number of anti-authoritarian educators decided that the lecture was an archaic medieval relic that had no place in a modern enlightened university. It was denounced for stifling student creativity and active learning. This cultural reaction against being 'lectured at' has, in succeeding decades, been supplemented by more utilitarian claims that this mode of teaching is an ineffective instrument for engaging and capturing the imagination of students. Surely a practice invented in the pre-Gutenberg era has no place in a hi-tech digital world. Today, when higher education has become addicted to finding technical solutions to educational problems it is inevitable that all the buzzwords – innovative teaching, active learning, student engagement – are hurled at the poor old lecture and it is found lacking. [The Guardian](#)

New greenhouse gas discovered has highest impact on global warming: There are no known processes to destroy the chemical PFTBA in the lower atmosphere; scientists say it may live for hundreds of years before being destroyed in the upper atmosphere. Scientists from the University of Toronto have discovered a novel chemical lurking in the atmosphere that appears to be a long-lived greenhouse gas (LLGHG). The chemical – perfluorotributylamine (PFTBA) – is the most radiatively-efficient chemical found to date, breaking all other chemical records for its potential to affect climate. [UToronto Research](#)

Some not so “Geographical” News



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