



Geography News

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Coordinator's Corner

Alex Oberle

This has been a great year for the GAI. After over two years of focused effort from a subcommittee of our Steering Committee, the draft of our comprehensive five year strategic plan was approved by the GAI Steering Committee and is under review by National Geographic. Despite the continuation of unsettled economic conditions, our funding from NGS (which includes our foundation money plus a National Geographic Society match) is once again approaching pre-economic downturn levels. Our membership continues to grow and we currently have GAI members in all but one Iowa county. We continue to offer excellent professional development opportunities including five workshops in 2012 and several opportunities for professional development this next summer.

Yet most importantly—above and beyond future planning, sheer number of GAI members, quality workshops, or even funding—is the commitment and dedication of our excellent GAI Steering Committee. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of our GAI Steering Committee, but especially several individuals who have had a particular impact this year and/or in recent years, as well as a "Lifetime Achievement" award for one longstanding GAI member who retired from teaching this past year and who has stepped down from the GAI Steering Committee—Anne Hoepfer.

I sincerely thank Anne Hoepfer (Davenport) for her longstanding commitment to the GAI and all that she has achieved on behalf of the organization. Anne's contributions are far too numerous to list so I'll highlight just a few: steady, unflappable leadership during four Fulbright-Hays projects; years of organized and effective oversight and orchestration of the Iowa Geography Bee; and years of successful management and maintenance for the GAI website. Next time you see Anne please thank for all that she has done for the GAI. Anne has just retired from the Davenport School District this May, but the GAI was not ready to let her set sail down the Mississippi just yet. . . and we enlisted her once again this past summer.

I want to thank George Kuhter (South Tama) for excellent, well-run Iowa Geography Bees in recent years and for joining me this year in Washington DC to participate in the Annual Coordinators Meeting and provide our congressional delegation with a grounded, real-world context regarding the need for more federal funding for K-12 geography education. Thanks to Kathy Sundstedt (Dike-New Hartford) and Steve Oaks (Waterloo) for continuing to lead our very successful "Geography, Technology, and the Iowa Core" workshops and

for beginning a new "advanced" version of this workshop this next summer. Chris Joslin just announced her retirement from the GAI Steering Committee and I'll highlight all of Chris' generous past support to the GAI in our next newsletter.

GAI Updates

Strategic Planning: As most of you know, the National Geography Society has engaged all state alliances in a comprehensive strategic planning process and the GAI is nearing completion of its strategic plan (pending approval from NGS). Extra special thanks to the GAI Strategic Planning Committee of Eric Schulz (Anamosa), Kimn Hassenfritz (Mt. Pleasant), Marcia Hummel (Lake View), and Tracy "T" Elmer (Iowa City) for their hard work, thoughtful input, and first-rate effort to represent the collective GAI's best interests when drafting this plan. The GAI Steering Committee has approved a draft of the plan including a new vision and mission statement as well as goals, strategies, and action steps. We await NGS' review before the document goes to the Steering Committee for final approval.

GAI Website: As many of you know, our new website is now live. Many thanks to Anne Hoepfer for all of her years of effort and expertise on the earlier website—you'll see a lot of Anne's excellent work carried over to our new site. The new site was designed by UNI ITS and is in a format specifically designed for smart phones and tablets as well as traditional computer screens. Among the many new parts to the website are a link to our new GAI Facebook and Twitter sites; an on-line calendar of events; a place for news feeds to showcase all the great work that alliance members are involved in; a spot to highlight other alliance's curricular materials and/or other free, high-quality educational resources; and many, many other items. One of the most significant aspects of the new website will be an in-depth search function where you can search for lesson plans/curricular materials by several different keywords. So, if you want an economic geography lesson plan that relates to East Asia AND is designed for 7th graders AND connects to a particular one of the Five Themes of Geography AND to one of the Iowa Core Geography standards, you can search and find just that.

Google Earth Resources

The annual Alliance Coordinators Meeting in Washington DC in April 2012 included a series of presentations by the educational outreach staff from Google. This includes some outstanding resources for geography educators at all levels, especially those of you who teach grades 7-12. With many administrators encouraging cross curricular activities, an excellent resource can be found at (googlelittrips.org). This project was started by a veteran high school teacher who has since won awards from Microsoft and the Goldman-Sachs Foundation (just to name a couple). Google Lit Trips has students work on projects where they use Google Earth to map different events happening in literary works. Examples include the "Grapes of Wrath", "Night" "The Kite Runner", "Macbeth", "The Odyssey", and many, many others. Through the website, you can also learn how to create your own Google Lit Trip so a book used in your school or in your class could be transformed into this exciting, highly geographic Google Earth format and then shared for others to use. Other Google Earth resources are the Google Lat Long Blog where exciting and innovative applications are regularly discussed (<http://google-latlong.blogspot.com>) and GE Teach (<http://geteach.com/>) which has some easy-to-use global views of historical maps, physical features, etc. If you teach high school geography/social studies you should know about Google Fusion Tables (<http://www.google.com/fusiontables/Home/>),

something that I wasn't aware of that I plan to use in my own classes at UNI. Fusion tables are data tables that have geographic coordinates/spatial data that can be linked directly with Google Earth. There are dozens of data tables that include all sorts of state, national, and international geographic data that range from poverty to earthquakes to election information. With the rapidly changing nature of technology and Google, I'm sure that this list of educational resources will explode in the coming months and years.

Upcoming 2013 Workshops

While specific dates and registration will be announced via the listserv and the Spring 2013 newsletter, I'm pleased to announce funding for four types of professional development opportunities for Summer 2013:

- Kathy Sundstedt (Dike-New Hartford) and Steve Oaks (Waterloo) will lead two "Geography, Technology, and the Iowa Core" workshops. Based on extraordinarily successful past workshops in various parts of the state, we plan to offer one of the workshops in west-central Iowa and the first in a series of "advanced" workshops here in Cedar Falls that will build on the 2009 workshop for Waterloo Community School District teachers. The anticipated west-central Iowa workshop will be the last of its

kind and the GAI is quite proud to have offered this workshop across the entire state of Iowa. While we have not quite matched Senator Grassley with his earnest efforts to visit all 99 counties, in the past five years the GAI has held workshops (pending west-central Iowa) that have been in a location that was no more than 50 miles from each and every school district in the state. Despite the end of this professional development, the Part II workshop here at UNI promises more Google Earth and other technologies, computer activities that deal with population and development, and new "tried-and-true" pencil and paper activities. We then hope to visit all parts of the state during the next five years to provide this same advanced workshop.

- The GAI is once again teaming up with UNI's Center for Holocaust and Genocide Education and UI's Center for Human Rights to provide a repeat of last year's outstanding UNI workshop that connected geography and human rights. Designed as an enduring tribute to the late Rex Honey, Holly Hanna (Muscatine) and Brittany Lassen (Mt. Pleasant) will co-lead this workshop that will once again present geographic aspects of contemporary human rights issues such as the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sudan, and Congo. We have planned this workshop for the Quad Cities area, so if you are an educator in Iowa City, the Quad Cities, or SE Iowa please do join us to explore this critically important topic
- Texas State University's Grosvenor Center for Geography Education has developed an on-line delivery system for high quality geography education lessons, currently "globalization", "water resources", and "water and agriculture". We have teams of GAI teacher consultants (TCs) lined up to teach the modules in Summer 2013. This will be an excellent opportunity for you to enroll in a distance-based course, blended, or face-to-face course (your choice), and we expect 4-5 courses offered throughout the whole June-August summer period.
- Despite our recent focus on secondary educators, the GAI has not forgotten about those of you who teach grades K-5. I'm pleased to announce a workshop this summer especially for elementary educators who are in one of the almost 120 MISIC-affiliated school districts in Iowa. Focusing on integrating literacy and geography, this workshop is co-sponsored by both MISIC and the GAI and will support K-5 teachers who wish to incorporate the Iowa Core, new National Geography Standards, and the Common Core English/Language Arts.

Teaching with the Stars



GAI member BJ Van Vleet (Hoover H.S., Des Moines) enters his GPS data into Google Earth at a Summer 2012 workshop in Chariton.

Common Core English/Language Arts

The GAI is pleased to have contributed to a nationwide task force to develop an alignment document that directly links geography with the Common Core English/Language Arts (and therefore the ELA part of the Iowa Core). Due to be released in about March, the final version of this document will greatly support efforts to infuse reading, writing, and speaking into geography, and geography into the ELA curriculum. The “crosswalk” will be professionally produced by NGS and will allow educators to search by ELA standard or by National Geography Standard (which aligns well with the Geography essential skills and concepts in the Iowa Core). With the national and statewide focus on the Common Core we expect this document to have quite an impact. Below are some examples of how this Geography-ELA link could happen at the 11th/12th grade level:

Common Core ELA—Reading Informational Text (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas)

- Specific ELA Content Standard or Skill: “Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.”

National Geography Standard—Standard 17 (Perceptions of Geographic Concepts)

- Specific NGS Performance Statement: “Analyze and evaluate the role that people’s past perceptions of places, regions, and environments played as historical events unfolded.”

Classroom-ready example that integrates both standards:

- Evaluate the role of people’s past perceptions of places and environments on Thomas Jefferson’s reasoning for the Land Ordinance of 1785.

The GAI is working with the Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education at Texas State University to develop and deliver web-based Geography workshop for Iowa teachers (grades 6-12). Starting in Summer 2013 and continuing for at least the next couple years, we expect to provide 4-5 workshops per year called “Teaching With the Stars”. Led by veteran GAI teachers, these workshops will focus on geography pedagogy and content relating to some combination of four modules: Globalization, Watersheds, Agriculture and Water, and Headwaters to Oceans. Like our other workshops, we anticipate that participants will be able to earn one UNI credit hour in Geography (either graduate or undergraduate) at a substantially reduced rate. Our lead teachers (TCs) for “Stars” have already designed a basic framework for the upcoming summer workshops, with some opting to host traditional face-to-face workshops, some delivering the workshop entirely on-line, and others electing for “blended” instruction that includes a mostly on-line component but with some face-to-face interaction such as a field trip or in person meeting.

Besides the fact that many of the “Stars” workshops will be delivered on-line and led by our outstanding GAI TCs, the other real strength of this program is that it focuses on how best to teach geography rather than just geography content. Award-winning teachers in Texas and Michigan are the central focus on these modules and each one includes actual footage of classroom implementation and a discussion of the teachers’ teaching techniques by experts in the field. In addition, each module includes professionally-produced video and print materials that provide the background and context for each topic. “Teaching With the Stars” promises to be a key part of GAI programming in the next few years and we are pleased to finally be able to offer you some on-line workshops, something that many GAI members have been requesting for some time. I’ll provide more information on these workshops in the Spring, but for now you can take a close look at “Stars” content at the following website: <http://www.geoteach.org/>



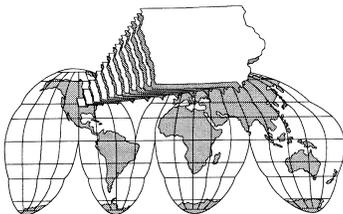
Summer 2012 GAI workshop participants at the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory near Okoboji

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