

SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICAN GEOGRAPHERS

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Web site: <http://www.ssag.co.za/>



PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICAN GEOGRAPHERS 2012 CONFERENCE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN, CAPE TOWN 20-22 JUNE 2012

I have pleasure in submitting my Presidential Report to the Society of South African Geographers (SSAG). This Report is presented as part of the proceedings of the 2012 Biennial Conference of the SSAG at the University of Cape Town.

The Report documents various matters that related to my term as President of the SSAG (September 2009 to June 2012).

1. Finance

I am pleased to report as follows:

- (a) Audited Reports have been obtained for each of the Financial Years 2009, 2010 and 2011.
- (b) In May 2010, Council transferred funds in excess of the equivalent of two years of running costs into two interest bearing accounts. An amount of R300 000 was deposited into one account with availability at 32-days notice. A second amount of approximately R453 000 was deposited into a fixed deposit account for five years. On 27th February 2012 – just prior to the last Council meeting on 09th March 2012 - these two accounts had a total of approximately R870 000.00.
(The fixed deposit funds will mature in May 2015 and be available, as necessary, for additional expenditure that the Society may incur during the 2016 Centenary celebrations).
- (c) A tax exemption status was obtained for the Society (SSAG) from the South African Receiver of Revenue (SARS) on 14th February 2012. The tax exemption status has to be renewed annually. Council engaged - at nominal costs - a tax consultant firm to assist in this process.
- (d) In early 2010, Council agreed to an amount of R34 000.00 for the Geography Education Project.
- (e) The honorarium paid to the Administrative Assistant of the SSAG was reviewed in 2010. Council agreed on a mechanism for the annual review of the honorarium.

2. Society's Centennial Celebrations

Council at its meeting on 02 February 2010 decided to appoint Professor Gustav Visser as Editor of the publication designed to celebrate the Centennial anniversary of the Society in 2016.

Professor Sanette Ferreira, Head of the Department of Geography at the University of Stellenbosch, confirmed at the 9th March 2012 SSAG Council meeting that the University of Stellenbosch had accepted the Council's invitation to host the Centennial SSAG Conference in 2016. The invitation was extended to Stellenbosch University given that the first Geography Society in the country was convened at Stellenbosch University.

3. Newsletters/Guide to Departments

Council members of the Society have undertaken to produce and edit the SSAG Newsletters. In recent years Professors Brij Maharaj and Sanette Ferreira were responsible for the SSAG Newsletters. In 2011 and 2012 the production of the Guide to Departments – covering the Years 2010 and 2011 - was the responsibility of Melanie Nicolau. We are thankful to Maharaj and Ferreira and especially to Nicolau for the outstanding Guides.

4. Visits to University Geography Departments

Council has authorised that the President and President-Elect of the Society undertake visits to various Departments of Geography, by arrangement with the Departments. Visits have been planned to two University Departments, and another three Departments have been identified for visits.

5. Students' Conferences and Meetings

The South African Geography Students Conferences were hosted by the University of South Africa in 2009, Rhodes University in 2010 and the University of Witwatersrand in 2011. The SSAG wishes to place on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to the host Departments and Universities for these exceptionally successful conferences. The SSAG also wishes to place on record its sincere thanks to the School of Environmental and Geographical Science at the University of Cape Town for hosting the 2012 Geography Students Conference (18-19 June 2012). The Conference at UCT will be the 42nd Annual Conference of South African Geography students.

Council has approved four prizes to be awarded to the best student presentations at the University of Cape Town Student Conference. Prizes will be awarded in Physical Geography, Human Geography, Environmental Science, and Geographical Information Systems and Remote Sensing.

The SSAG provided limited financial contribution in 2011 to assist with the organizational costs for the second hosting of the PhD and post-doctoral seminar that Professor Ronnie Donaldson initiated at the University of Stellenbosch in 2010. The Council is debating a range of initiatives to more actively engage with Geography and Environmental Science students.

6. South African Geographical Journal (SAGJ)

The South African Geographical Journal (SAGJ) remains an important flagship of the Society. Professors Maano Ramutsindela and Paul Sumner (Editors) and Stefan Grab (Review Editor), like Professor Michael Meadows before them, have served the Society with distinction as honorary Editors. Ramutsindela has played a key role in consultation with Council in transferring the Journal from an in-house publication to a publishing contract with Routledge, of the Taylor and Francis Group. Council also engaged with Ramutsindela and Sumner for the smooth transfer of editorial responsibility to Professors Brij Maharaj and Trevor Hill in 2011-2012. Council is in discussion with the Editors on various innovative aspects of the Journal. Council has also decided that a fixed honorarium be paid to the research accounts of the new Editors.

I wish to record our sincere thanks and appreciation to the School of Environmental and Geographical Sciences at UCT for having housed the activities of the SAGJ over many years. In 2010, John Bwalya (then PhD student at the University of Fort Hare and now Dr Bwalya at the University of Namibia) and Ms Sharon Adams (of UCT) provided excellent support to the Society in distributing copies of the excess journals to some 20 University libraries in Southern Africa. I wish to express our thanks to John Bwalya and Sharon Adams for their efforts in this exercise.

7. Fellowships and Gold Medals Awards

The Council of the Society has regularised the process for accepting nominations and deciding on the Award of Fellowships and the Gold Medal Prize. Nominations will be accepted in the year following the SSAG Conference and adjudicated thereafter, with the presentation of the awards at the biennial Conference of the Society. In addition, Council has adopted a process whereby current Fellows are enlisted to assist in the adjudication of the awards. Council places on record its thanks to the three Fellows who assisted in the 2011-2012 adjudication process. In 2012, the Society's Fellowships Awardees are Professor Maano Ramutsindela and Professor Kevin Hall, while the Society's Gold Medal Award is to be made to Professor Peter Beets.

8. Honours Degree Bursaries

Council, in 2012, decided to increase the value of the Honours Degree bursaries with effect from 2012 to an amount of R10 000.00 per bursary. Two bursaries are awarded each year. In 2012, the recipients of the Honours Degree bursaries are Ms Samantha Watts from University of Cape Town and Ms T Ndlovu from Rhodes University. The Society extends its congratulations to Ms Watts and Ms Ndlovu on their awards.

9. Award of Bronze Medal and Certificate to Best Masters Degree Dissertation and Best Masters Coursework Dissertation

The Society's 2012 Prize for the Best 2011 Masters Dissertation has been awarded to Ms B. L. Melly from Rhodes University for her dissertation entitled, "The Zoogeography of the Cetaceans in Algoa Bay". The Society's Certificate for the best coursework Masters dissertation for 2011 has been awarded to Mr. Marius Marais from North West University (Potchefstroom) for his research entitled, "The Quality of Environmental Management Framework in South Africa". The Society extends its congratulations to Ms. Melly and Mr. Marais on their success. The Bronze Medal and the Certificate are to be awarded at the 2012 SSAG Conference at the University of Cape Town and the Society is pleased that both Ms. Melly and Mr. Marais are scheduled to attend the Conference Dinner and Awards function.

10. Department of Geography, University of Free State – Logistical Support to SSAG

The Department of Geography at the University of Free State (UFS) has for many years provided logistical and institutional assistance to the Society of South African Geographers via its support to Ms Sandra Brits, the Society's Administrative Assistant. I wish on behalf of the SSAG to once again place on record our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Department of Geography at UFS for all the support.

11. Council Executive

In keeping with the SSAG Constitution, Council appointed Cecil Seethal, Sophie Oldfield, Gustav Visser and Melanie Nicolau as the SSAG Council's Executive (to June 2012).

12. SSAG Conference 2011, 2012 and 2014

The SSAG biennial conference for June 2011 was scheduled to be held at the University of Witwatersrand. However, the School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Science advised the Council of the SSAG on 28th March 2011 that it was unfortunately no longer in a position to host the Conference. Although the Council subsequently received communication from two other centres that were prepared to host the 2011 Conference, Council decided to postpone the Conference to 2012. On behalf of the Society we thank the School of Environmental and Geographical Sciences at UCT for kindly hosting the 2012 SSAG Conference.

Council has approved that the Department of Geography at the University of Fort Hare will host the 2014 SSAG Conference.

13. Professional Registration of Geographer – The South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP)

The Council of the SSAG received a request to examine the matter of the professional registration of geographers with the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP). Two meetings were held with representatives of SACNASP, with Professor Michael Meadows leading the discussions on behalf of the SSAG. Council is expecting to discuss this matter further at its June 2012 Council meeting.

14. Request to Support Associate Membership of the IGU

The SSAG received a formal request from the Secretary-General of the IGU to pay the IGU affiliate membership fees for the Zimbabwean and Palestine Geographical Unions. Council has to date paid the IGU membership fees for the Zimbabwean Geographical Union.

15. 'Snapshot' Presentation on South African Geography at the 2012 AAG Conference

I was invited to present a 'snapshot' presentation on South African Geography at the 2012 AAG Conference in New York City on 26th February 2012. Thirty-one country presentations were made at the Conference. The SSAG Council granted its approval to my attendance and presentation. (This presentation is posted on the SSAG web-site). I wish to thank the University

of Fort Hare and the Govan Mbeki Research and Development Centre for financial assistance to attend this Conference.

Conclusion

It was a pleasure to serve as President of the SSAG from September 2009 to June 2012. I wish to thank all members of the SSAG for their support and assistance during this period. My special thanks go to the members of Council for all their time and effort in furthering the aims and objectives of the Society. In particular, I wish to record a sincere word of gratitude to Mrs. Sandra Brits for the tremendous support she had given me. Finally I wish to take this opportunity to welcome Sophie Oldfield as President of the Society.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cecil Seethal', with a horizontal line underneath.

Cecil Seethal (Professor)
18th June 2012