

PANTHER GEOGRAPHY

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

It is not often that the world around us changes so quickly! I had written a very different message to share with you (back on February 21st), but decided since it was possible (due to some production delays) I would prepare something new (written April 3rd) and more cognizant of the revised “normal” we are living with. Things have moved exceptionally fast, since our first campus leadership meeting about COVID-19 on March 10th. In short order UW-Milwaukee added a second spring break week, and decided to move all courses fully online from March 30th through the end of the spring semester. Unfortunately, our spring graduation ceremony has been postponed as well. Though this is far from the circumstances any of us would wish, I have been impressed and extremely grateful for all the hard work and collegiality the Geography faculty, staff, and graduate students have displayed in doing all the things necessary to keep us functioning and fulfilling our mission in these difficult times! As alumni and friends, you can all be proud of how your department and university has responded to this crisis.



A couple of other things to mention in departmental news. We were privileged to welcome a distinguished geographer to campus in March. Prof. Shaowen Wang (University of Illinois) gave the Spring 2020 Harold and Florence Mayer lecture on March 6th. We also would have had eleven of our graduate students presenting papers at the Association of American Geographer’s Annual meeting in Denver, CO, (April 6th-10th), but that was cancelled. Finally, this will be my last column in the newsletter as Chair (at least for now), as Prof. Changshan Wu will be Chair next year. I invite you to read about our many other noteworthy achievements in the rest of this newsletter! Please accept my best wishes for you all to stay safe and well. I hope that we will be able to return to the old “normal” before too long.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark".

Mark D. Schwartz

Chair, Department of Geography

Spring 2020 : Volume 16, Issue 1

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College of Letters & Science

DEPARTMENT EVENTS



Prof. Karen Culcasi Welcomed to Campus

The Center for 21st Century Studies and the Muslim Milwaukee Project, led by Kristin Sziarto, Anna Mansson McGinty, and Caroline Seymour-Jorn, welcomed feminist geographer Karen Culcasi of the Department of Geology and Geography at West Virginia University on February 28th.

Culcasi took part in a workshop with UWM professors and students where they focused on challenges in refugee and immigration research, discussing topics from ethical qualitative methods to conducting fieldwork with Syrian and Palestinian refugees while in refugee camps in Jordan.

Later in the day, the Geography Department invited Culcasi for a colloquium talk on “Displacing Territory and Challenging the International Refugee Regime: Syrian & Palestinian Refugees in Jordan,” where Culcasi featured interviews with refugees who challenged traditional Western ideologies of borders and territories.

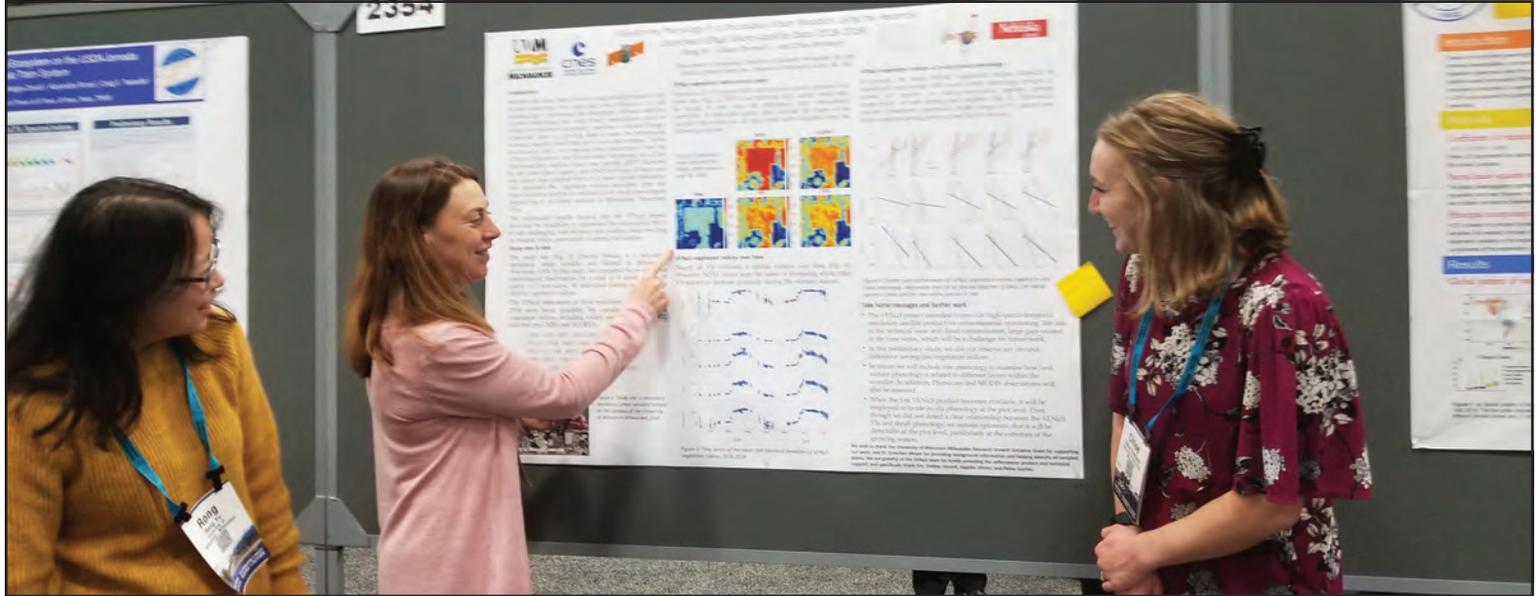
Harold and Florence Mayer Lecture Speaker

The Department was pleased to welcome distinguished geographer Shaowen Wang of Department of Geography and GIScience at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to deliver our spring semester Harold and Florence Mayer Lecture on Friday, March 6th. The presentation was entitled “Cyber GIS: Retrospect and Prospect,” and examined the history of GIS and its future growth potential.

In addition to the colloquium, the Geography Department was delighted to host a graduate student lunch with Prof. Wang. Students held a lively discussion over topics like big data mining, the future of GIS, and best practices for applying to graduate school.



NEWS AND UPDATES



Our own Rong Yu, Alison Donnelly, and Chloe Rehberg presented their research findings at the 100th American Geophysical Union annual meeting on Advancing Earth and Space Science held in San Francisco, December 2019.

Faculty

- **Anne Bonds** was elected as Vice Chair of the AAG Urban Geography Specialty Group and chair of the Committee on the Status of Women in Geography. She was also elected co-coordinator of the Critical Prisons Studies Caucus.
- **Alison Donnelly** was invited to give a talk in Vienna in May at the European Geosciences Union annual meeting, and she has been nominated to be chair of the National Ecological Observatory Network's Technical Working Group on Terrestrial Plant Diversity and Phenology.
- **Kristin Sziarto** has been appointed as Special Assistant to the Dean for Curriculum in the College of Letters and Science for the remainder of the calendar year.

Graduate Students

- Congratulations to **Sue Borchardt** and **Wei Fan**, who both received Distinguished Dissertation Fellowships for the 2020-2021 academic year!
- Congratulations to **Minji Kim** for receiving this year's student paper award from the AAG Recreational, Tourism, and Sport Specialty Group.



CONGRATULATIONS

Prof. Zengwang Xu and his wife, Yuan, are happy to announce the arrival of their daughter, Evelyn, on Friday, February 7, 2020.

GIS DAY 2019



The GIS Council, the Department of Geography, the Department of Urban Planning, and the GIS Club were again successful in organizing and executing a delightful day-long GIS Day celebration which took place on Wednesday, Nov. 20th at the American Geographical Society Library, in the Golda Meir Library.

The action-packed, educational, and entertaining program was ordered around this year's theme, "Discovering the World Through GIS." Over 200 attendees participated in six spatially focused workshops, listened to a litany of IGNITE speakers, and warmly welcomed keynote speaker Dr. Ryan Covington. This UWM Geography alumnus now leads the conservation technology program at SkyTruth. His work combines geographic

information science (GIS), remote sensing, and machine learning to identify, map, and monitor threats to the planet. His talk for the GIS celebration focused on "Navigating Geospatial Technology in 2020 and Beyond." The event served also as a homecoming for retired professor, Dr. Bill Huxhold, who led a discussion on the importance and future of GIS.

GIS Project Competition

There was fierce competition in this year's event; the winners were:

First Place: Trevor Iglinski, Geography MS student,
Project title: "Spatial Topic Model of U.S. Senators' Tweets"

Second Place: Gayantha Loku Kodikara, Geosciences PhD, Project title:
"Application of Machine Learning Methods for Identification of Surface Composition through the ExoMars PanCam Instrument"

Undergraduate Awardee: Max Rock, Geography BA, Project title: "The Superior Bio-Preserve"

Community partners for the day's event included the Bureau of Land Management, Continental Mapping, Mandi Communications, Maps by Scott, Seiler Instruments, SSP Innovations, the US Forest Preserve, the Wisconsin Land Information Association, American Transmission Company, Einstein Bros. Bagels, ESRI, Ruckert Mielke, and Zaffiro's Pizza.



Selected Publications

Lim SH and Sziarto K. (2020) When the illiberal and the neoliberal meet around infectious diseases: an examination of the MERS response in South Korea. *Territory, Politics, Governance* 8(1): 60–76. DOI: 10.1080/21622671.2019.1700825. (Cited in recent discussion of geography of quarantines: www.geographyrealm.com/geography-of-quarantines/)

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Chloe Rehberg ('20 MS)

I've accepted the position of Environmental Health Specialist at Walworth Public Health Department. My job will include assessing environmental health conditions (such as water quality, air pollution, invasive species, emergency preparedness, etc.), conducting laboratory work on water quality monitoring, and developing and implementing environmental improvement plans in relation to environmental and human health within the county. Walworth County is a county in South/Central Wisconsin with a large history and industry of farming and agriculture. The influence of farming on water quality is one of the main topics I will begin working on.

My background in physical geography, GIS, and environmental science will help me with many aspects of this type of work. Human and environmental interaction is one of the main focuses of this job and understanding how humans interact with our environment and how our environment plays a huge role in human health. I will also be using GIS skills to map components of the county environment for public use as well as potentially modeling areas at greater risk for environmental/human health concerns such as water contamination. I'm excited to put the skills I learned at UWM to use!



Sue Borchardt

Since joining the geography department as a master's student in 2014, and then as a PhD candidate, I have worked with Professor Choi on how groundwater withdrawals for agricultural irrigation affect the baseflow of Wisconsin's rivers and streams. We have been fortunate to have been able to publish three articles so far in both the *International Journal of Geospatial and Environmental Research* and *Environmental Earth Sciences*. Research in the area is important because understanding the factors that affect baseflow processes is critical to protecting both water quality and supply, but current literature presents conflicting data. This conflicting data puts environmentalists and agricultural growers across the state at odds with each other on how best to preserve the state's freshwater resources. The three studies have found that the withdrawal from high capacity wells is related to a 30 percent decline in the baseflow of the Wolf River, in northeast Wisconsin, over the last 30 years.

When I am not working on my dissertation work, I am active with several nonprofit groups located in northern Wisconsin. I am a committee member for the Wolfman Triathlon in Langlade county, I am also the treasurer for the Langlade Area Mountain Bike Association (LAMBA), and I have started my own nonprofit organization, Friends of the Wolf River (FOWR). The FOWR was started as a website to gather and distribute information related to groundwater research throughout Wisconsin. In recent weeks the focus has changed to distributing information related to the threat to the headwaters of the Wolf River. Badger Minerals is conducting exploratory drilling to determine the extent to which valuable minerals exist and could use this information to construct a metallic sulfide mine. The potential impacts of a mine include long term leaching of acid-producing wastes into the groundwater and the river, which would harm sport-fishing and essential sources of drinking water, and the hazardous wastes generated by the mine would degrade water quality and present risks to human health and the environment in Wisconsin.

Between schoolwork and the nonprofit work, I really do not have a social life, which I know is a common complaint of any PhD candidate. People ask me what I intend to do once I complete my degree. I think I will take a vacation.

Sue Borchardt's research has been featured by Great Lakes Echo here: <https://bit.ly/2xYJqve>

ALUMNI UPDATES

Ben Schroeder (BA, 2015)

My undergraduate geography courses at UWM introduced me to GIS – the perfect intersection of geography and technology, my two chief professional interests. Those passions solidified through internships at the American Geographical Society Library and State Cartographer’s Office while I was an undergraduate. I learned about cartography, programming, data science, and making geographic knowledge accessible to the public. That’s one of my favorite things about geography – it can be applied in a number of equally fascinating ways!

I was able to leave UWM with a job offer from Esri, one of the most prominent companies in the geospatial industry. The first two years of my career were spent on the Washington, D.C. Services team, where I assisted government clients with their unique geospatial challenges. Currently, I work from Esri’s headquarters in Redlands, CA, as the lead front-end developer on ArcGIS Analytics for IoT, a new software solution that allows users to ingest, visualize, and analyze real-time and big data in a geospatial context.

I love having a job on the cutting edge of an industry as dynamic and exciting as GIS. I am a programmer who needs to be acutely knowledgeable of geographic concepts like map projections, advanced spatial analysis, and cartographic design principles. These are all tools of the trade I learned at UWM.

I consider my professional success a testament to the quality of academics and faculty/staff in the UWM Department of Geography. I encourage current undergraduates to take full advantage of the world-class opportunities a UWM Geography education provides! (And, in particular, I wholeheartedly recommend exploring UWM’s wonderful GIS courses – I’m incredibly glad I did.)



Matthew Slawson (BA, 2018)

I attended UWM from 2013-2018, working full-time while I finished my last year. I worked for the LiDAR department of a cartographic company and greatly enjoyed it. I would generate highly accurate maps displaying various variables, such as ground elevation, power line and vegetation distribution, water elevation and flow, and much more. However, after working for a couple years I wanted to broaden my horizons, so I looked to work abroad. Thanks in part to a generous letter of recommendation by a very kind professor in the Geography Department, I currently teach classes in Japan. The experiences from studying at UWM were very valuable in shaping who I have become and have greatly helped me in getting me to where I am now. I still have a love for geography, and I browse maps every day for fun.



Wei Xu (PhD, 2019)

After completing my PhD in Health Geography in May 2019, I started working as a postdoctoral research associate at the Center for Demography of Health and Aging (CDHA) at UW-Madison. Extending my dissertation research on the socio-spatial disparities in dementia mortality in the U.S., my current work incorporates life course perspectives to examine “place effects,” especially the impacts of early-life (in utero, infant) environmental exposures, on the general aging processes and related inequalities.

The past few months have brought tremendous professional and personal growth. I have been involved with the UW Postdoctoral Association (UWPA) and contributed to a number of workshops on campus such as cultivating professional connections, research mentor training, and mental health in academia. I have also had the chance to develop collaborations with researchers from a wide range of disciplines on and beyond

campus; every day is a learning opportunity.

In November last year, I attended the conference on Demographic Responses to Environmental Changes held on the UW-Madison campus and was able to connect with many sociologists and demographers from across the nation. In March, I presented my research at the Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD) Research Day at UW-Madison. In April, besides our AAG annual meeting in Denver, I also presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America (PAA) in Washington D.C.

Although moving to a new city has been very exciting, I miss all my great mentors and friends back in Milwaukee. I am forever grateful to the geography department at UWM for an invaluable experience. I will not be able to grow as a researcher, educator and science communicator without help from so many people in the department. I look forward to opportunities to give back in the future!

Share Your Updates!

We’d love to hear about what you are doing since graduating from the geography program.

Send updates to Ryan Holifield at holifiel@uwm.edu





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