

# PANTHER GEOGRAPHY

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Happy autumn from UWM Geography! We are now back in full swing, and it certainly feels like fall. If you haven't visited the UWM Union for a while, you should check it out. The renovation appears to be getting close to completion.

We are delighted to welcome three new graduate students this fall from Bangladesh, Ghana, and the U.S. The weather cooperated enough to hold another beginning-of-fall gathering at Hubbard Park, and the graduate students have recently reintroduced a weekly brown bag lunch and other social events to build community. Meanwhile, we said farewell to longtime faculty member Professor Rina Ghose, who transferred to UWM's College of Engineering and Applied Sciences. We wish her well in her new department.

Professor Anne Bonds and her colleague Derek Handley (English) were featured in the recent PBS documentary "[Wisconsin in Black & White](#)," discussing their ongoing research on the geography and rhetoric of racial covenants in Milwaukee County.

With support from a grant from the National Science Foundation, Professor Alison Donnelly hosted a successful regional kick-off workshop for the first [NEON](#) (Near Earth Orbit Network satellites) regional user group in the Great Lakes Domain.

Since May, three new [WaterMarkers](#) have been installed in Milwaukee as part of the WaterMarks project, funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation's Advancing Informal STEM Learning program. The grant has a large interdisciplinary team that includes me as Principal Investigator, Professor Woonsup Choi as co-Principal Investigator, and PhD candidate Dulmini Jayawardana as research assistant.

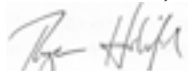
We've streamlined our undergraduate major with the creation of a new human geography track, which combines and replaces our former regional and urban tracks.

We have several wonderful guest speakers in the colloquium series this fall: Professor [David Seitz](#) from Harvey Mudd College, Professor [Joshua Inwood](#) from Penn State University, and Harold and Florence Mayer speaker Professor [Jennifer Fluri](#) from the University of Colorado.

The Alpha Mu chapter of Gamma Theta Upsilon, now led by PhD candidate Alex Hamilton, remains highly active and continues to grow!

We are continuing to adjust to a changing UWM. With fewer young people in Wisconsin – and fewer of them choosing to attend college – we continue to see our enrollments declining. Over the next few years, we'll see significant changes to the way we practice our mission at UWM and in our department. Regardless of changes, we remain committed to advancing geographic education and research and feel fortunate to have the ongoing generous support of our alums and the funds that have long nurtured our work, including the Mary Jo Read Fund, the Clinton Edwards Fund, and the Harold and Florence Mayer Fund.

All best wishes,



Ryan Holifield, Chair



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## Contact Us:

Department of Geography  
PO Box 413  
Bolton Hall, Room 410  
Milwaukee, WI 53201-0413  
(414) 229-4866  
[npapakis@uwm.edu](mailto:npapakis@uwm.edu)  
Chair: Ryan Holifield



College of Letters & Science



# DEPARTMENT NEWS

## Orientation for New Graduate Students

Orientation for new graduate students took place on August 30<sup>th</sup> in the geography conference room. We are delighted to welcome two masters students and one PhD candidate. The event kicked off with a welcome address from the Graduate Program chair, Alison Donnelly and the Department Chair, Ryan Holifield followed by introductions from all faculty members and the new graduate students.

The Graduate Program chair went over all the main policies and procedures pertaining to successfully navigating graduate school, and guided the new students on where to find help with various aspects of their academic journey such as finding funding and support, how to deal with conflict and the importance of time management. This was followed by a chat with experienced graduate students who shared their top tips on how to succeed in the graduate program.

Following an informal lunch, we went to the American Geographical Society Library for a tour of all the collections with an emphasis on the digital collections which students may find useful for their research.

## Gamma Theta Upsilon (GTU)

From the President, Alexandra Hamilton (PhD candidate) of GTU: We are excited to welcome everyone back to campus this fall, and we are looking forward to another great year with GTU! We started the year with a Welcome Back pizza party, and we participated in the UWM Panther Prowl 5k. We are looking forward to hosting a mapathon this year and a geography bowl! We are hoping to attend the ESRI Midwest User Conference this year, and of course support our fellow geography colleagues at the AAG. We are actively recruiting new members, but would also love to hear from o. ur alumniBest wishes for this year!

## The GLUG Kick-Off Workshop

Alison Donnelly and Mark Schwartz attended the National Ecological Observatory Network Great Lakes User Group (NEON-GLUG) kickoff workshop at Kemp Natural Resource Station in Northern Wisconsin from September 28-30, 2023. The aim of the GLUG workshop was to build a network of researchers interested in ecology (terrestrial and aquatic) and related fields focused on the Great Lakes Region.

## 2023 Fall Semester Kick-Off

Geography graduate students and faculty at Hubbard Park on September 10<sup>th</sup>.



## Fall Colloquia

The lectures committee hosted several thought-provoking colloquia this semester, including a talk by Dr. David Seitz (Assistant Professor, Harvey Mudd College) on “What does Paddington Bear tell us about Geography” on September 29th.



Twenty-eight participants, representing three states (Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan) and a range of career stages, from undergraduate to late stage career, were in attendance. The topics covered and expertise of the group included measurements of carbon flux across temperate forests, potential for using remote sensing to map leaf area, investigation of airborne microbes over cities, quantifying nitrogen fluxes in streams and variation in soil carbon across the region.

The Great Lakes User Group facilitates regionally-focused, nationally-relevant collaborative research, and creates a mechanism for communication among regional stakeholders and NEON staff. The workshop consisted of short presentations, keynote addresses, breakout brainstorming sessions and site visits to create a network of researchers, facilitate exchange of research knowledge, integrate data from a range of ecologically-focused disciplines, establish a framework to facilitate other user groups to organize and develop a roadmap for a collaborative project proposal. The outcome of these activities will strengthen existing collaborations and foster new ones, together with raising greater awareness and promoting the use of NEON observations.



## Geography Student Spots Rare Bug on Field Trip

As part of the newly revamped Geography Field Work course, Alison Donnelly brought students on a site visit to the UWM Field Station at Saukville, Wisc. The aim of the trip was to give students an opportunity to see for themselves the management practices and challenges associated with conservation efforts for a range of natural habitats including, woodland, grassland and bog. Field station manager, Paul Engevoled, lead us on a walk through the entire property to visit each of these unique ecosystems. While walking on the boardwalk through Cedarburg bog, Stephanie Barker's keen eye spotted an unusual insect sitting very still on the branch of a northern white-cedar (Thuja occidentalis) shrub. Paul came to inspect the discovery and knew immediately that it was something unusual for the bog but wanted to get a second opinion so he emailed the BugLady (Kate Redmond) who immediately confirmed his suspicion by identifying the moth as a buck moth (Hemileuca maia). This is a species of special concern in the area. The importance of bring students out into the ecosystems they study in the classroom is invaluable and you never know what you might find!



Geography Field Work students in the old growth beech woodland at the UWM Field Station, Fall 2023. Cory Chiconas, Akash Pradeep, Kain Pearson, Collin Adams, Cade Kufahl, Dianna Davis, Stephanie Barker and Paul Engevoled (Field Station Director)



Stephanie Barker



Buck moth (Hemileuca maia) resting on a northern white-cedar (Thuja occidentalis) shrub



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

## Alex John (AJ) Segneri (PhD student)

AJ was a summer fellow at the Center for 21st Century Studies where he gathered oral histories from community members around Milwaukee to document food journeys. From elementary school youth to senior residents and in locations ranging from farmer’s markets, grocery stores, and block parties, individuals shared how they access their food source. The stories were gathered by way of the “story cart” which was also featured in [local news media](#). AJ is also the coordinator for the article that is under preparation for a journal review.

AJ was also invited to be on a roundtable at the Peace and Justice Studies Conference at Iowa State University on September 16<sup>th</sup> to present on queer geographies in relation to queer justice.

## Miracle Oluwasegun Mark (MS student)

I’m thrilled to share some exciting updates from my summer adventures. In July, I had the fantastic opportunity to attend the Green and Healthy School Conference. This event allowed me to delve deeper into sustainability efforts within the city of Milwaukee, expanding my horizons and sparking new ideas.

Another highlight was my participation in the NSF I-Corps Bootcamp, where I immersed myself in the world of innovation, honed critical thinking skills, and improved my communication abilities. The experience was nothing short of transformative!

Lastly, I dedicated my summer to giving back to the community by volunteering at the Urban Ecology Center and Nearby Nature Milwaukee. It was immensely rewarding to contribute to invasive species control and conservation efforts, making a tangible impact on our environment.

## Mathew Chidera Ugwuanyi (MS student)

I hope this finds you well! During summer break, I had an opportunity to volunteer with Nearby Nature Milwaukee. The experience brought me close to nature and added to my knowledge of native and invasive species in the ecosystem.

Also, I took part in several online courses and a MOOC: mapping racial disparities in breast cancer mortality rates in USA using ArcGIS Insights, classifying objects using deep learning in ArcGIS Pro, and spatial data science: the new frontier in analytics. All were hosted by ESRI, a multinational geographic information system software company. The MOOC and online courses helped me advance my geospatial skills.

In addition, I participated in the National Science Foundation (NSF) I-Corps Bootcamp, which was hosted by the UWM Lubar Entrepreneurship Center. The encounter enhanced my capacity for effective communication, active listening, teamwork, and networking.

I also joined the UWM grounds department planting the flowers you see all over campus. It was awesome planting, watering, and watching the flowers grow. My favorite part was planting flowers that had no chance of surviving, yet most of them somehow survived. “Where flowers bloom, so does hope.” — Lady Bird Johnson



*The story cart at Riverwest Food Co-op*



## Richard John (BS student)

My name is Richard John. I am a senior studying Geographic Information Science (GIS). I choose to go to Berlin since it has been a goal of mine to study abroad. Berlin is a vibrant city that I got to call home for the last few months. In my time, I got see famous sites such as the Reichstag Building, The Berlin Wall, and even Europe’s best and famous Berlin Zoo. I got to travel to other countries as well, such as Prague in the Czech Republic. I even got the opportunity to go to Humboldt University and talk to their Geography Department.

With all these opportunities, Geography has taught me to be open minded. The world is a place to explore and to learn from. To use cultural, economic and transportation practices abroad are key. Let’s face it... we are not in Kansas anymore!

While my time is coming to a close at UWM, I have enjoyed everything in the Geography Department – getting to know the staff, working with my peers, and making new friends inside and outside the Department. I will be venturing out into the job market for GIS. I hope to use everything I have learned to further myself and my surroundings.

## Bismark Owusu Asare - new student!

My name is Bismark Owusu Asare, a graduate from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana, with a bachelor’s degree in Geomatic Engineering. I am happy to start my new journey as a graduate student in UWM’s Geography Department.

After my bachelor’s degree, I worked as an Assistant Geomatic Engineer at the lands commission of Ghana and later continued my career at one of the biggest mining companies in Ghana - Abosso Goldfields Limited, Damang mine as a graduate mine surveyor.

My research interests focus is on GIS, cartography and remote sensing. Currently I’m interested in human population and its impact on the environment. Dr. Zengwang Xu is my advisor. I look forward to having a very successful journey at the Geography Department for my graduate studies.

## Shamsun Nahar - new student!

My name is Shamsun Nahar, although I prefer to be addressed as Proma. I am thrilled to be embarking on my PhD journey this fall. I completed my undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Dhaka, majoring in geography.

Prior to pursuing my PhD, I had the privilege of serving as a lecturer in the Department of Environmental Science at the State University of Bangladesh in my home country. My research aims to focus on human-environment interaction and social vulnerability.

I am enthusiastic about the prospect of advancing my academic pursuits and contributing to the field of geography through my PhD studies. I look forward to engaging with fellow scholars and making meaningful contributions to the understanding of the complex relationship between humans and the environment. Thank you for your attention, and I am excited to be a part of this academic journey.





# STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS (CONT.)

## Lacey Kay Fever - new student!

I am proud to share my extensive involvement in both academic conferences and practical internships, which have enhanced my learning and expertise in the field of geography.

In 2022 and 2023, I had the privilege of participating in the Illinois State University Research Symposium, where a variety of research topics were shared by Illinois State University students. Additionally, I had the opportunity to experience the American Geological Society Conference in 2022 where I shared my research on “Do Animals Use Streams As Corridors?” The Illinois Geographical Society Conference in 2023 is where I engaged with leading experts in the field of Geographical Information System (GIS) and Geography.

Complementing my conference experiences, I actively sought hands-on learning through various internships. Over two years, I served as a Research Assistant at the Town of Normal, Illinois, Ecology Action Center (EAC), where I contributed to meaningful research on how animals used the city’s corridors to navigate for resources. In the spring of 2023, I furthered my skills as a GIS Technician / Research Assistant with the Bloomington, Illinois, school district 87, gaining valuable insights into geospatial technologies and research methodologies on providing a digital map of affordable and accessible resources for lower-income families. This summer, I had the privilege of joining Stratus Networks as a GIS and Permitting Technician, where I had the opportunity to apply my knowledge in a professional setting, contributing to impactful projects with telecommunications.

These experiences have not only expanded my technical skills and professionalism, but also reinforced my passion for utilizing geospatial data to drive meaningful change. I am eager to continue my journey of exploration, innovation, and contribution to the fields of geography and GIS.



## Congratulations to our Recent Graduates:

Wei Fan, PhD	Devin Conway, BS	Eli Norlander, BA
Sarah Ryniker, PhD	Christian Luster, BS	Rachel Oelsner, BA
Elliot DeGuilme, MS	Lily Norvold, BS	Juan Olmos-Garcia, BA
		Klaudia Rixmann, BA

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS

## Woonsup Choi

I was on sabbatical during the 2022-23 academic year and returned to the normal UWM life. I had a paper published in *Environmental Earth Sciences* with Sue Borchardt and continued to work on hydrological drought in catchments with an intermittent streamflow regime in the U.S. Last summer, I visited Sangmyung University in Seoul, South Korea, and had a meeting with their international office team to discuss potential collaboration. I also gave a talk during the visit to the geography faculty and graduate students promoting our graduate program. My summer activities culminated when I appeared live on [Wisconsin Public Radio](#) to talk about extreme heat in Milwaukee. When it comes to service, I was elected Director of the Climate Specialty Group of the American Association of Geographers and Chair of the UWM Academic Policy Committee.

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS (CONT.)

## Anna Mansson McGinty

After serving as Chair of Women’s and Gender Studies for four years, I’m enjoying the opportunity to have more time to devote to a new research project as a Center for 21st Century Studies fellow. This new project looks at public self-representations and discourses of Muslim Americans around identities and politics in relation to citizenship, gender, and feminism. I had a recent article published in [Annals of the American Association of Geographers](#) on Muslim youth in Milwaukee and “lived Islam” in youth’s everyday lives titled “Lived Islam: Embodied Identities and Everyday Practices among American Muslim Youth”. In addition, I’m finalizing a co-authored book manuscript, *Muslims in Milwaukee: Place, Identities and Activism*, together with Caroline Seymour-Jorn and Kristin Sziarto drawing on the decade long Muslim Milwaukee Project.



## Judith T. Kenny (Associate Professor Emerita)

Only partly in jest I’ve said that I’d like to “come back” as Ken Burns in my next life. Fortunately, I have an outlet for those “wannabe” sentiments. As a National Research Associate for the Living New Deal, I’ve produced two “virtual tours” in the last two years – and have plans for more. Links for the completed videos are shown below. This grew out of my decade-long research involvement in the national nonprofit that began as a research project in the UC Berkeley’s Geography Department ([www.livingnewdeal.org](http://www.livingnewdeal.org)).

Recently, I realized that it’s ten years exactly that Richard Walker, director of the LND, contacted me asking if I would consider documenting Oregon’s New Deal sites. Since I have always been fascinated by the transformation of Oregon’s landscape during the Great Depression, it was a good fit and I signed on as a LND National Research Associate. As Walker and Gray Brechin so aptly explained in a recent PBS NewsHour interview, we document, map and educate the public about New Deal projects in order to draw attention to the civic landscape created during the Depression. Revealing “a hidden history right in front of our eyes” – of such elements as bridges, parks, schools, and public art – allows us to create greater landscape literacy. It also asks us to imagine what government might do yet to improve the quality of all our lives. While I enjoy my roles as producer, writer, and narrator in LND “virtual tours,” I continue to research and edit the Oregon project sites for the Living New Deal. My work with local historical societies helps develop public awareness of what was accomplished ninety years ago – and, with a critical lens, what might yet be done.



I would love to hear from you all – and, if you should wander out West, please stop to say hi. In the meantime, here are the “virtual tours”:

- [Mapping New Deal Oregon: The CCC’s Legacy at Eagle Creek Campground](#)
- [In Landscape Harmony: New Deal Bridges for the Oregon Coast](#)

## Anne Bonds

Anne Bonds and Derek Handley (English)’s research project was featured in [“Wisconsin in Black White” on PBS](#).



# ALUMNI UPDATES

## Chenbin Deng (PhD, 2013)

Hello! I studied in the Department of Geography at UWM as a PhD student from 2008 to 2013, under the supervision of Professor Changshan Wu. I am always grateful to all professors in our department (especially my advisor), because they opened the door in different fields of geography for me and made my eyes wide open to the geography world. After I graduated in 2013, I got a faculty position at the State University of New York at Binghamton. After staying in upstate New York for nearly a decade, I decided to make some changes in my life. In 2022, I moved to the University of Oklahoma (OU) as a tenured Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Environment Sustainability. I am also serving as the Director of the Center for Spatial Analysis, a research center in the College of Atmospheric and Geographic Science at OU. Moving to an unknown place might be risky, but it is also a very exciting adventure.

My wife, my daughter, and I enjoy the sunshine in the south, as well as the football games. We went to Dallas to support the OU Sooners, and we beat the Longhorns (U Texas Austin) and won the Red River Rivalry this year. My wife and I are also excited that we will have our second child next year – very soon we will have one New Yorker and one Okie at home. I wish I could bring my family members some day in the future back to visit my professors, both new and old friends in Milwaukee – where my dream begins and where my memories reside!



## Minji Kim (PhD, 2020)



It is hard to believe that nearly three years have passed since I graduated with my PhD in Geography from UWM under the guidance of Professor Holifield. Since I graduated during a difficult time due to the outbreak of COVID-19, I have had to go through a very tough job market, which marks one of my life's most anxious and stressful times. Nonetheless, I am glad that I received an offer to work at the National Territorial Planning & Regional Research Division at the Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements (KRIHS) as an Associate Research Fellow.

KRIHS is a leading institution committed to conducting a series of research projects in national territorial development, environment, regional and urban development, infrastructure, land use, transportation, and geographical information systems. By addressing various spatial issues, the ultimate goal is to contribute to sustainable national development and improve citizens' quality of life. Currently, I am working on a research project addressing the spatial injustice issues due to the excessive concentration in the Seoul Capital Region and rapid depopulation in rural areas of South Korea, and a project for

improving historical and cultural areas by focusing on a paradigm shift of historical and cultural heritage policy.

Since KRIHS is located in Sejong City, a Special Self-Governing City that officially became the administrative capital of South Korea in 2012, I relocated to the city at the end of 2021. While I have been enjoying conducting new research projects, collaborating with different experts, and discovering the unique joys and challenges of living in Sejong, I miss often UWM geographers, Lake Michigan, Colectivo Coffee, and the pack of snow in town! I am grateful for all the great memories and support during the pursuit of my degree at UWM, and the relationships formed that still keep me connected from the other side of the earth!

## Gainbi Park (PhD, 2021)

As a UWM alum, it is my pleasure to share my experiences at UWM and my recent updates. I received my PhD in geography in the summer of 2021 with a specialization in social vulnerability to natural hazards and geospatial data analysis. Immediately after completing my doctoral program, I moved to the United Kingdom in the midst of the pandemic to gain more research experience as a postdoctoral researcher in the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS) at Newcastle University. Moving to a new country was nerve-wracking, but it was also incredibly exciting to take the first step in my academic career. Recently, I transitioned to the role of Lecturer (equivalent to an Assistant Professor in U.S. academia) in Quantitative Human Geography in CURDS and the School of Geography, Politics, and Sociology here at Newcastle.

During my stay at UWM, I was grateful to have the opportunity to engage with both human and physical geographers in the department. I also gained valuable teaching experience, which has given me the skills that I needed to get to where I am today. I miss Milwaukee sometimes (especially Kopp's custard!), but not the weather.

Currently, I am teaching several courses including quantitative geographical analysis, research methods, and GIS applications in urban settings. As an early career researcher, I am also exploring new research topics, such as population decline and shrinking cities. I am also collaborating with the Regional Studies Association to investigate the pandemic's potential impact on publications in their journals from the perspective of gender dynamics in research productivity. As a new transplant into UK academia, I am adjusting to the new academic culture, expanding my network and getting to see new parts of the world! I enjoy wandering around different cities and exploring new hiking areas, like Hadrian's Wall.

Looking back, my time spent in the Geography Department at UWM was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I hope to build future connections between Newcastle University and UWM.



## Wei Xu, (MS, 2014 and PhD, 2019)



I received both my MS ('14, supervised by Dr. Zengwang Xu) and PhD ('19, supervised by Dr. Changshan Wu) from the UWM Geography Department. My dissertation explores the social and spatial disparities in dementia mortality in the United States and underlying mechanisms.

Upon completion of my PhD program in summer 2019, I started working as a Postdoctoral Research Associate, and subsequently Assistant Scientist, at the Center for Demography of Health and Aging at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. During my time there, I continued doing research on the relations between environment and age-related clinical outcomes such as dementias. One specific area of my ongoing research, generously funded by the National Institute on Aging, delves into the relationships between residential air pollution and physical activity, aiming to shed light on their combined influence on dementia incidence. Meanwhile, I had the privilege to participate in many interdisciplinary collaborative initiatives in that space, broadening the scope of my work. This expansion

included exploring the impact of place-based exposures over the life course on health inequalities, with a focus on epigenetic biomarkers of aging. (continued next page)

# ALUMNI UPDATES (CONT.)

In February this year, I began my current role as an Assistant Professor in the Division of Epidemiology and Social Sciences, located within the Institute for Health & Equity at the Medical College of Wisconsin. I am very excited to be embarking on this new chapter and move back to the beautiful city of Milwaukee where my academic journey initially took place. While continuing my research on the influence of place on aging biomarkers and age-related clinical health outcomes, I am developing a new research program dedicated to examining long-term care access in Wisconsin and its contribution to divergent health outcomes among older adults across the state. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionately detrimental impact on the older adult population and led to substantial long-term care resource loss due to facility closures, especially in many rural areas. These developments have the potential to exacerbate health inequities among this vulnerable population. My aspiration is that the insights generated from this research program can be translated into actionable policy interventions that can tangibly improve access to and utilization of long-term care services, and ultimately improve health outcomes among older adults in the state.

I very much appreciate the tremendous support I received from my advisors, mentors, and fellow graduate students during my time at UWM. The trainings I received really laid the foundation for my current work and equipped me with the knowledge and skill sets that are greatly valued by my collaborative teams. Now living and working within a much shorter distance from UWM, I look forward to opportunities to engage with faculty and students in the department in the near 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](mailto:holifiel@uwm.edu)

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