

Running a Successful Department

It has been a year since Professor Marwan Hassan took up the reins as Department Head of Geography. In his next two years, Professor Hassan hopes to make Geography the benchmark for all the other arts and science disciplines at UBC. He strongly believes that this can be achieved with our team of dynamic and diverse faculty, staff, and students working together to enhance our current connections and increase our global visibility.

The department has come a long way thanks to the faculty for their continued dedication. In 2013, UBC Geography is placed in the top 10 World University Rankings by Subject. Our department continues to gain recognition in areas such as studies on water issues, worldwide urbanization and immigration.

We are also excited about the continuing research on biogeography, hydrology, spatial information sciences, geomorphology and climatology as we bring Physical Geography to a new level by making use of the new Biogeomorphology Experimental Laboratory located in the new Ponderosa Commons. Other goals for the forthcoming year include developing our innovative Environment and Sustainability Program with our newly awarded Flexible Learning Initiative and investing resources in maintaining and improving our Human Geography research needs. To engage international students, selective first year Geography courses will be offered as part of the 12-month International Program at UBC Vantage College. Existing courses will be structured differently to accommodate the students in the Vantage program. Our current tri-mentoring program, Arts co-op program and field-based studies will expand learning opportunities outside of the classroom. With goals set and target in sight, the department is enthusiastic about its future. The diversity of the programs offered will allow the department to get more involved with the community and UBC.



Professor Marwan Hassan would like to thank the faculty, staff and students for their strong commitment and looks forward to the exciting changes ahead.

Photo and article by Connie Cheung, Communications Assistant

John Chapman's 90th Birthday Celebration

On Tuesday, September 24, 2013 a group of 45 colleagues and friends of John Chapman, Emeritus Professor of Geography, gathered at the Teahouse Restaurant in Stanley Park for an evening to celebrate the many contributions that John has made to our community. John was the second Head of UBC's Geography Department (1968-1974).

Three themes of John's career were stressed: his contributions to the Higher Education System of British Columbia; his teaching and research on the geography of natural resources and energy; and his playing and organizing of field hockey at the national and international levels.

Marwan Hassan, Professor of Geography and current Head of Department, set the tone by pointing out that, historically, there are three pillars on which the UBC Geography Department was built: the late Lew Robinson, who created a community; Ross Mackay, who set the research standards for the department; and John Chapman, who moved the department from its relatively parochial beginnings in the direction of a globally recognized research and teaching unit.

GEOGRAMME

alumni UBC

Emeritus Professor of English, Ron Baker, OC and a former university President, recalled arriving on the same boat from the UK as John in 1947. He emphasized the fundamental work carried out by John on the Macdonald Report (1962) which set the scene for the founding of Simon Fraser University and opened the opportunity for university education to so many thousands of Canadians.

John Stager, Emeritus Professor of Geography, a former Assistant and Associate Dean at UBC, brought a message of congratulations from Emeritus Professor of Geography Ross Mackay, who is now in his 98th year. He also drew attention to John Chapman's formative role on the UBC Senate and quoted from Minutes containing references to John's sterling qualities, prepared in verse(!) by the late Roy Daniells, Professor of English.



Emeritus Professor of Higher Education, John Dennison, author of important books on Canada's community colleges was also appreciative of John Chapman's role in the Macdonald Report. He emphasized the way in which John had influenced the whole of the Higher Education system by his continuing support for the founding of not only Simon Fraser University, but also the University of Northern BC. In an institution with many contradictory voices, John's, he said, had been a voice of sanity which was respected throughout the BC higher education system.

Emeritus Professor of Geography, Mike Church, Fellow of the Royal Society, put his finger on the seminal role of John in the evolution of the UBC Geography Department. "It is my hypothesis" he said "that John Chapman was the most important Head of UBC Geography because he appointed more outstanding talent than any previous or subsequent Head and set the department on a trajectory of greatness".

Alan Hobkirk, Senior Partner with the law firm Miller Thomson, also an Olympian, Rhodes Scholar and winner of the Bobby Gaul Award, recalled the way in which John had played, managed and organized Canadian field hockey and Alan's pleasure in being taught economic geography by John.

Len Evenden, Emeritus Professor of Geography at SFU recalled the special efforts made by John to bring the Geography departments at the University of Victoria, SFU and UBC together, especially in the work of producing thematic and regional atlases.

Dr. Jon O'Riordan, a former BC Deputy Minister, recalled the inspiration he received while receiving his MA and PhD under the direction of John Chapman in the 1960's. Other guests invited because of their special relation to John, included his son Ian and daughter-in-law Judy, longtime field hockey associates Charlotte Warren and Peter Buckland, Harry Swain, a former Federal Deputy Minister, Charles Slonecker, a former UBC Director of Ceremonies and Sandy Lapsky, our wonderfully accomplished Departmental Administrator of thirty years.

This event was truly special in the history of UBC Geography, bringing together as it did distinguished guests, emeriti, current faculty, former undergraduate and graduate students and staff. It was a memorable community celebration of the lifetime accomplishments of a great gentleman, a great geographer and a great institution builder who we are all privileged to know as a friend.

*By Olav Slaymaker and Tim Oke, Professors Emeriti
Photo from J. Chapman's personal collection*

Below-grade Vancouverism: Rent and work in the livable city



Having completed a Master's degree, a PhD, and soon also a Post-Doctoral Fellowship in this department, my time here will be sadly coming to an end this fall. As of January of next year, you will find me at Carleton University, starting a tenure-track position in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies. Many of you have

heard me talk about how much I have enjoyed UBC Geography over the years, so you can imagine how happy (and honoured) I was to be invited to present my research as part of the department's Colloquium series this spring. Unfortunately, a throat infection forced me to cancel my presentation. For those of you who were intrigued

by the title, here's a very brief summary of the talk I intended to give on that occasion:

Over the past three decades, the City of Vancouver has sought to increase local residential densities while also promoting urban livability. The loose set of land use priorities and directives adopted by City Hall to attain this dual goal has come to be known internationally as "Vancouverism." Emblematized by a downtown skyline of primarily residential condominium towers and by a bustling food-and-leisure consumer culture, Vancouverism has brought worldwide attention to the city, particularly among planners, architects and, more importantly, global real estate investors. Today, Vancouverism is not only a blueprint for urban development imitated by many cities around the world; it is also a crucial element underpinning Vancouver's transnationally oriented post-Fordist economy. Seen from this political economic perspective, Vancouverism reveals its other side: one where inequality appears more starkly as a defining feature of Vancouver's otherwise celebrated urban development. This alternative Vancouverism prevails in the city's inner suburbs rather than the downtown core, and is characterized by City Hall's receptive attitude toward a sizeable and largely informal local market in basement apartment rentals.

I argue that the city's market in unauthorized "basement suites" has become an important mediator of the relationship between Vancouver's "convivial" economy, transnational capital, and the uneven transformation of the city's social and built environment. Because secondary suites are typically seen as merely a niche segment of the local housing market, we have failed to see how tightly integrated this phenomenon is with Vancouver's dependence on external flows of money. This relationship is evident when we consider that following three or four decades of economic restructuring, the city has come to rely heavily on external investment flowing into real estate development and property trading, and therefore on the creation of a bustling consumption-oriented landscape to help attract this capital. As a result, Vancouver's economy today depends on the city's ability to retain a population with sufficient disposable income to sustain the leisure and consumption sector, but also a low-waged population of workers residing in close proximity to their services-sector and construction workplaces. Achieving these two goals poses a dilemma because low-wage workers find themselves unevenly competing for housing in the city, while the residential market in turn competes for the consumption dollars of more-affluent residents.

Below-grade Vancouverism – the name I've given to City Hall's policy of mainstreaming the basement suite rental market – has acted as a "band-aid solution" to this contradictory state of affairs. Today, basement apartments provide an estimated 10 percent of all housing in the city, while also providing "mortgage-helpers" that enable many households to afford both homeownership and an urbane lifestyle of leisure and consumption. But enabling the basement suite submarket to flourish only reinforces Vancouver's dependence on value that is produced outside the city. It also masks the inequities underlying this asset-based approach to urban development: on the one hand, external capital is welcomed into the city's real estate markets, regardless of the conditions under which

it was generated; on the other hand, efforts to attract investment put pressure on land prices and help make housing unaffordable or unavailable, contributing to the displacement of people into increasingly distant and unequal suburbs, or pushing growing numbers of residents into homelessness. Moreover, promoting a narrowly defined concept of livability to attract external capital is a strategy that leaves Vancouver vulnerable to the capricious nature of global financial flows. This sort of economic structure is not only unsustainable but it is also ultimately indefensible, for it rests on the backs of those residents who cannot afford homeownership and who therefore derive little benefit from this highly financialized external orientation in the local economy.

*By Pablo Mendez, Post-Doctoral Fellow, MA'06, PhD'11
Photo by Arianne Loranger-Saindon*

2013 AAG Presidential Plenary: Emerging Asias

Professor Jim Glassman was honored at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers (AAG), held in Los Angeles, by being asked to participate in the Presidential Plenary. The plenary, organized by AAG President Eric Sheppard, Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of California-Los Angeles, took as its topic "Emerging Asias," and featured four speakers, Professor Ananya Roy of the University of California-Berkeley, Professor Fulong Wu of University College London, Professor Anna Tsing of University of California-Santa Cruz, and Glassman. The theme of "Emerging Asias" was chosen by Sheppard in part because of the location of the meeting: as the description of the plenary puts it, "The 2013 Presidential Plenary seeks to draw members' attention to the remarkable geopolitical and geoeconomic changes underway on that continent and their implications. With the AAG Annual Meeting now the global meeting place for geographers, this occasion of meeting in the US' most Asian metropolis, on the Pacific Rim, is singularly appropriate for such a discussion" (see the plenary description at <http://www.aag.org/cs/annualmeeting/speakers>).



All of the plenary speakers were each in their own ways representative of emergent and transnationally-connected Asias, both because of their sites of research (variously in South, East, and Southeast Asia) and their academic institutional locations, which include others among the world's most Asian metropolises outside the Asian Continent (the Bay Area, London, and Vancouver). Each speaker focused on one or another aspect of the processes by which transnational connections have shaped distinctive features of Asia's geographies: Roy addressed the discordance between images of Asian urbanization associated with Singapore and the realities of urbanization in India, Wu analyzed China's urban transformation and the effects of globalization on Chinese cities, Tsing followed the international travels of the much sought-after matsutake mushroom through global commodity chains centered on Japan, and Glassman traced the ways seemingly distinctively Asian phenomena such as the "East Asian developmental state" were historically shaped by transnational Cold War-era geopolitical connections. Collectively, and through their own diversity in styles and content, the talks helped exemplify some of the phenomena Sheppard had called on speakers to address:

"Asia' is a vast land mass characterized by enormously diverse biophysical systems, landscapes, languages, cultures, identities, politics and economies. On the one hand are the Asias of spectacular dynamism, wealth creation and emergent political power; yet there also are the Asias inhabited and made by those whose labor makes such spectacles possible. They may cohabit the same place, but with very different connectivities and



livelihood prospects. Different Asias are entwined with one another and with other regionalized dynamics. The various Asias stretch around, across and through one another, dialectically entangling the emergent places,

networks and scales through which they are constituted. Yet they also long have been complexly co-implicated with variegated and emergent Europes, Americas, Africas and Oceanias that they co-evolved with."

The AAG will eventually post a video of the entire Presidential Plenary, including Professor Glassman's talk, at this site: <http://www.aag.org/cs/annualmeeting/videos>.

Visit Jim Glassman's blog at <http://blogs.ubc.ca/glassman/>

By Jim Glassman, Professor

Course Reflection of Research in Environmental Geography



Upon reaching the end of an undergraduate degree, it is natural for a student to reflect upon their most valuable learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom. I have found GEOG 419: Research in Environmental Geography, to certainly have been one of the personal highlights of my time at UBC. This class, led by Dr. David Brownstein, challenges fourth-year students to answer a community partner's 'question' through rigorous research and investigation.

My community partner was the Green Party of British Columbia and I was tasked with determining their official policy stance on the proposed KGHM Ajax Mine in Kamloops, BC. This brought together my passion for environmental issues and politics, allowing me to apply my four years of classroom learning to a real-world situation. I gained valuable experience working with an external partner and felt that my work had a genuine political impact.

The course culminates at an end-of-term research conference at which time all 20 students present their research in short presentations to their peers and community partners. The sense of accomplishment and celebration felt by the class that day was inspiring. In a program like Environment and Sustainability in Geography, students learn about a plethora of complex challenges to human and environmental wellbeing but are rarely equipped with tangible solutions. For me, GEOG 419 facilitated the development of solutions to real issues faced by community and governmental organizations across British Columbia.

It was exciting to learn from my peers as they, too, navigated the ups and downs of conducting one's own research. The sense of satisfaction felt from completing an assignment that actually has a broader impact than one's own grade made this class extremely memorable. In the end, I gained real-world skills with regard to consultancy and research, improved my quality of writing greatly through many re-writes and much peer-editing, had the opportunity to deliver an academic presentation, and, ultimately, made a positive contribution in my community. I highly recommend GEOG 419 to any prospective student considering enrolling.

*By Quinn Runkle, Undergraduate Student
Photo by Jason Ammerlaan*

Geography 419 Builds Concrete Skills

"This will be the most difficult course that you take at UBC" assured Dr. Brownstein on the first day of Geography 419: Research in Environmental Geography. "Although, I assure you," Dr. Brownstein continued, "that it will also be the most rewarding." Those are some big words to kick off a semester with, and it is a wonder that so many of the students kept their enrollment in the class. Perhaps, like me, they were thinking that these were just scare tactics to weed out the weak. However, in the end it proved to be true. The course is as difficult as one cares to make it, and with the challenge comes a great reward.



Geography 419 gave me what I had been craving more and more as I neared the end of my Arts degree: applying practical skills to real problems. Not that the Arts courses that I had taken had been unpractical, instead the course provided an avenue for dealing with issues (and people!) outside of academia in a first-hand leash-free environment. I got to interact with high-level industry and government professionals in an entrepreneurial way. I was out there in the working world arranging interviews and acting as a detective to find the answers to my research question: "what are the barriers to increasing the use of recycled concrete in Metro Vancouver?"

For my project I was partnered with the Technical Advisor for Solid Waste in Metro Vancouver. She developed the rough research question, and I acted as a research consultant delivering high-quality research, a formal report describing my research and findings, and a presentation of my findings at a symposium with the other Geography 419 students. The opportunity to have my ideas heard, and maybe even have my suggestions come to fruition, was a driving force of both motivation and overall satisfaction with my project. The rewards of the course continued beyond personal satisfaction; I built a strong working relationship with my community partner and published my first piece of research to the UBC library.

*By Jason Ammerlaan, BA '13
Photo by Michael Miller and Noah Rosen*

Geography 429: Vancouver's Hidden Gem

Did you know that the first Georgia Viaduct was once used as a fair ground? Or that Victory Square was once planned as the site of a war museum? Over the course of this past semester, I discovered these and many other facts about Vancouver's hidden history while conducting research for Geography 429: Research in Historical Geography, taught by Professor David Brownstein.

The course was designed to instruct students in primary historical research and encourage inquiry into British Columbia's past through the completion of a unique research project with a community partner. The projects and community partners arranged for the course addressed a variety of topics related to Vancouver and British Columbia, including the Camosun Bog restoration project, Squamish place naming and language revitalization, and race relations at the North Pacific Cannery; in addition, the format of these projects varied from standard research papers to walking tours and museum exhibitions. My project was to create a walking tour of Vancouver for the

Vancouver Heritage Society, exploring the city's experiences during the First World War in preparation for the centenary of the conflict in summer 2014.



research.

Prior to conducting my research project, I had not considered how the events occurring in Europe during the First World War impacted specific locales, instead adhering to the myth of the collective Canadian home front; however, Vancouver's strong ties to Great Britain and position as a gateway to the Pacific significantly influenced the city's response to the war. The walking tour format of the project thus required me to illustrate how the war effort played out within the city's contemporary social climate using historical buildings in downtown Vancouver that were involved in home front activities (including the Beatty Street Drill Hall, Waterfront Station and Victory Square), as well as archival

In addition to gaining more experience in archival research (particularly in terms of creative searches for materials), Geography 429 also helped me to develop my presentation skills, in class with my peers as well as at a conference held at the Museum of Vancouver in late March. Attended by all of the involved community partners, the conference allowed my classmates and I to formally present our findings to local experts for critique and discussion. Both presentations provided me with a sounding board for my findings and analysis, and better equipped me to prepare an entertaining and informative tour experience for Heritage Vancouver's audiences.



My research for Geography 429 made me curious about the built environments that I pass through on a regular basis and encouraged me to seek out the history hidden in the mundane spaces of everyday life, as it was in some of the city's unassuming office buildings and vacant lots that I uncovered the most information about Vancouver's home front experience.

*By Courtney Stickland, BA '13
Photos by Kuk Lam Wong*



Professional Leadership Network



UBC Geography's Professional Leadership Network offers a unique opportunity for connecting interests of young Geography scholars with government, industry, and NGO representatives. The Network aims to enhance alumni and community relations, provide relevant and integrated educational opportunities for graduates, foster knowledge exchange, and establish important research and community partnerships.

The Network connects graduate students with professionals in their field, in a relationship that directly links their research and career interests. The PLN offers annual teaching and learning programs that incorporate members into graduate educational experiences. Events include: Annual PLN reception, Geography Department Speaker Series, Annual Graduate Symposium, and more!

Through the Network, members have the opportunity to contribute to students' learning outcomes and share knowledge, relevant to students' career and/or research interests. Additionally, members gain access to the latest research and new personal contacts, which may lead to research partnerships and greater dissemination of knowledge.

Funded by the University of British Columbia's Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund, the Network is aligned with the University's aim to promote and strengthen broader student learning and participation both within the University and across sectors. As such, the Network provides membership to graduate students and community representatives. Industry, Government, and NGO representatives are also invited to participate as mentors and are recognized as Network members.

The Professional Leadership Network is an innovative project and is fast becoming a University model for integrating community and industry knowledge into new and dynamic learning opportunities for the entire Geography Department.

For more information about the Professional Leadership Network, or to enquire about membership, contact us at geography.PLN@ubc.ca or 604-822-2663.

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By Suzanne Lawrence, Department Staff