

# *International Geographical Union* *Union Géographique Internationale*



## **2011 Annual Report**

### **The International Geographical Union (IGU)**

The IGU was founded under the auspices of the International Research Council in 1922 in Brussels, having been conceived some years earlier in Paris. Its debut as a formal, continuing organization was preceded by ten International Geographical Congresses, the first of which was held in Antwerp in 1871. Early congresses addressed such specific topics as the international standardization of the prime meridian for mapping and agreement on the world's time zones. In later years up to 1922 the congresses became more general in scope, establishing commissions to address salient facets of geography and cartography. The IGU was established as part of the broader organization of international science that occurred in the early decades of the last century. The IGU was a founding member of the International Council for Science (ICSU) and remains an active member of that organization, in addition to its membership in the International Social Science Council (ISSC).

Today's IGU is comprised of a General Assembly, 38 Commission, two Task Forces, one Special Committee, and the IGU Executive Committee. IGU membership is by country, and the general assembly consists of a delegate from each member country. The assembly normally meets every fourth year at an IGU Congress. Commissions and task forces are, respectively, the research and action components of the IGU. The IGU Executive Committee and General Assembly form commissions, task forces, and special committees in response to the changing needs of international geography. The elected executive committee guides the IGU between the IGU's International Geographical Congresses (held every four years) and Regional Conferences (held every fourth year midway between congress years).

Because 2011 was the year of an extraordinary IGU Regional Conference in Santiago, Chile, and the year prior to the next IGU Congress in Köln, Germany, considerable attention was devoted by the executive committee to the preparations for the Santiago and Köln meetings. In addition to their normal schedules of meetings, publications, and workshops, selected examples of which are summarized below, many of the IGU's commissions organized and sponsored sessions at the Santiago Regional Conference. The IGU Executive Committee keeps its community informed via the quarterly *IGU E-Newsletter*, which will launch a new series in 2012. The IGU relies mainly on dues from member countries to support its operations, supplemented by grants from outside organizations (especially ICSU) for specific projects. Dues payments fluctuate from year to year depending on national funding cycles. Payments were up in 2011, resulting in a modest surplus of income over the year's expenses.

### **2011 IGU Regional Conference in Santiago, Chile**

The highlight of an IGU conference or congress year is always the meeting itself. As is evident in the detailed report from the 2011 Santiago Regional Conference Local Organizing Committee report referenced below, the Santiago Conference went well, drawing 1,100 delegates from many countries of the world. In addition to plenary sessions some 550 paper presentations were given in 195 technical sessions, and 116 poster presentations were organized into four length sessions. Those who attended the technical visits, field excursions, and social events reported favorably on their experiences.

Many readers will be aware of the controversy regarding the conference venue, the *Escuela Militar del General Bernardo O'Higgins*, Chile's military academy, which was used as an interrogation site following

the overthrow of the Allende government in 1973. I responded on behalf of the IGU Executive Committee to the objections to the site raised prior to the meeting on the web sites at which those protests were recorded: <http://www.petitions24.com/forum/12103> Comment 21; and <http://www.petitions24.com/forum/12104> Comments 10 and 11.

The executive committee tried hard to think of a way to address the controversy at the meeting itself but we failed to find a way that was, in our view, appropriate to the time and place. Personally, I concluded that if the Chilean Army is not yet ready openly to confront the events of 1973 and their aftermath, it would not be helpful for a Yankee whose government was complicit in the overthrow of the elected Allende administration to address the topic.

As an outgrowth of our discussions, however, the IGU Executive Committee is currently exploring the possibility of preparing a session (possibly two) at the Köln Congress on *lieux de mémoire* thinking, both as it applies to sacred and profaned places generally, and with some attention to the ways such thinking bears on the locations and venues selected for IGU Conferences and Congresses.

The detailed report from the Santiago Conference Local Organizing Committee is available on the IGU Web Site at <http://www.igu-online.org/site/?p=1186> The IGU Executive Committee is deeply grateful to Chile, to the members of the Santiago Local Organizing Committee and its several Sub-Committees, and to Colonels Rodrigo Maturana, Juan Vidal García-Huidobro, and Alvaro Hermosilla Jarpa and their staffs for their excellent planning, organization, and execution of the 2011 IGU Regional Conference. Mr. Edwin Wallis Hunt, the IGU's chief day-to-day contact with the IGU Secretariat, greatly facilitated interactions between the IGU and the Conference organizers.

*--Ronald F. Abler, President*

### **Selected IGU Commission and Task Force 2011 Events and Activities**

IGU Commissions and Task Forces consist of a steering committee of 12-15 members of whom no more than one can be from the same country. Each commission may have unlimited number of members. Participation in IGU Commissions (membership) is open to all interested individuals regardless of affiliation, status (student, etc.), or nationality. Anyone may join a commission as a member by addressing a request to the commission's chairperson.

As of the end of 2011, the IGU sponsored 40 Commissions and Task Forces ([http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page\\_id=558](http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page_id=558)). The most recent commission the IGU established is IGU Number 38, devoted to Toponymy. It will focus on the myriad cultural, social, and political issues attendant on the names and naming of places, especially as they bear upon mapmaking and geography. As the new organization was, most appropriately, established jointly with the International Cartographic Association (ICA) it is known formally as the "Joint ICA Working Group and IGU Commission on Toponymy" and informally as the "ICA-IGU Toponymy Working Group," owing to differences in nomenclature and practice between the ICA and IGU. The intention of both organizations is that it will eventually become a joint commission. The IGU is pleased to establish closer collaboration with the ICA.

Twenty-eight of 38 of the IGU Commissions organized sessions at the 2011 Santiago IGU Regional Conference thanks to the energetic and persistent recruiting of commissions by the Santiago Local Organizing Committee. The strong commission presence was especially gratifying given the location of the conference deep in the southern hemisphere and the consequent expense of travel to Santiago.

Here we highlight just a few of the activities during the past year. Full activity reports for all commissions for 2010 are already posted at: [http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page\\_id=967](http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page_id=967) and the 2008-12 four-yearly reports will be available on the website shortly.

- The IGU Commission on Geographical Information Science was one of the organizers of the

International Conference on Spatial Data Mining and Geographical Knowledge Services (ICSMDM 2011) held in Beijing from in conjunction with the 8th Beijing International Workshop on Geographical Information Systems (BJ-IWGIS 2011) from June 29-July 1, 2011 in Fuzhou city, People's Republic of China. Along with numerous Chinese and overseas agencies and bodies, the IGU Commission on Modeling Geographical Systems was also a co-organizer of the meetings.

- The IGU Commission on Biogeography and Biodiversity held one 2011 meeting in conjunction with the Third International Geography Congress in Kozhikode, Kerala, India, from 6-8 May. The Congress was co-organized by Commission Vice-Chairman Dr. R. B. Singh (Delhi). Commission members presented papers on a variety of topics related to environmental problems associated with development and changing climatic scenarios. The Commission organized five sessions at the Santiago Regional Conference consisting of 18 presentations on vegetation dynamics, primarily in South American contexts.
- The IGU Olympiad Task Force devotes its energies to organizing an International Geographical Olympiad at every quadrennial IGU Congress and at occasion biennial IGU Regional Conferences. The Olympiad group has spent most of its effort in 2011 in preparation for the Olympiad that will be held in conjunction with the next IGU Congress in Köln, Germany from 26-30 August 2012.
- The IGU Commission on Global Change and Human Mobility organized two meetings in 1911: in Rome on 23-24 September and in Santiago from 14-18 November, at which, respectively, 19 and 14 commission members presented papers. The commission focuses on issues of human mobility in chronological perspective in relation to tourism and international economic developments and their effects on urban development and housing markets.
- The IGU Commission on Geographical Education held two meetings during 2011. The first was in London, from 18-20 April, devoted to the theme "Curriculum Making in Geography." Thirty papers were presented in seven sessions. The Commission organized six sessions at the Santiago Regional Conference on aspects of the overall conference theme "United and Integrated with the World" with simultaneous translation between Spanish and English. The sessions accommodated 22 papers and one workshop.
- The IGU Commission on Mountain Response to Global Change's sessions at the IGU Regional Conference in Santiago attracted 42 participants. The main themes address in commission sessions were the effects of global change on various ecosystem components, especially as regards mining and water conservation. The increasing use of remote sensing in monitoring and analysis of mountain processes were also emphasized.
- The IGU Commission on Karst (Limestone Regions) organizes an annual meeting within the framework of the annual International Karstological Schools (IKS). The 2011 session focused on the underground protection of karst attracted 120 delegates from 26 countries to Postojna, Slovenia, the usual site of the school. The commission also arranged six presentations at the Santiago Regional Conference where discussions and reports focused on the use of satellite-based multi-stacking interferometry to assess the active salt karst bordering the Dead Sea, documenting the current extent of human impacts on the approximately 50,000 km<sup>2</sup> of Central American karst, and noting how anthropogenic climate change will exacerbate karst landscapes that are already deteriorating in Central America.

A comprehensive list of IGU Commissions and Task Forces, together with contact information and links to websites detailing their activities, including the many publications in which their research results are being disseminated, can be found at [http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page\\_id=558](http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page_id=558)

### ***The IGU E-Newsletter***

The January 2012 issue of the IGU E-Newsletter will begin a New Series of the e-publication necessitated by the closure of the Rome Home of Geography. I sent the first issue of the old series in July 2005, following the wishes of then IGU President Adalberto Vallega, who had learned only two months earlier that the cause of the acute pain he had suffered for several months was a malignant stomach cancer. The first issues were crude, as I had no prior experience posting to the internet, but Vallega, who had been elected only ten months before, was pleased with the results, and the newsletter has continued to appear quarterly. I am happy that

Adalberto lived long enough to see the first six issues and that I was able to devote the seventh issue to comments received at the Rome Home of Geography by colleagues and friends from around the world.

With the support of the IGU Executive Committee the IGU E-Newsletter and activities of the Rome Home of Geography continued after Adalberto's death. But financial support for the Home of Geography ran out in 2009 and the *Società Geografica Italiana* retook possession of the two rooms that had hosted the Home of Geography since 2000. Since 2009 I have issued the *IGU E-Newsletter* and updated the Home of Geography web site from my home office. In October 2011 I was asked by the President of the *Società Geografica Italiana* to cease using the term "Home of Geography" in connection with the *IGU E-Newsletter* given the fact that the Home of Geography created by the 2000 agreement between the IGU and the *Società Geografica Italiana* no longer existed. Accordingly, and with the concurrence of the IGU President and Secretary General, the *IGU E-Newsletter* will begin in 2012 a New Series issued from the Home of Geographers, the spiritual successor to the Home of Geography. The web site will also continue with a matching name. All issues continue to be available via the IGU website – follow the links from [http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page\\_id=539](http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page_id=539)

--Giuliano Bellezza, Editor

[Note from Ron Abler: As always, the IGU Executive Committee and all members of the IGU family are most grateful to Giuliano for continuing to assemble and disseminate the newsletter. If you do not receive the *IGU E-Newsletter* and wish to do so, please address a request to [giuliano.bellezza@uniroma1.it](mailto:giuliano.bellezza@uniroma1.it)]

### **IGU Executive Committee Meetings and Decisions**

The 2008-2012 IGU Executive Committee consists of eleven elected members:

#### **President**

Professor Ronald F. Abler, 525 Pennsylvania Avenue, Unit 301, Sheboygan WI 53081-4666 USA  
Vox: +1 202 431 6271; Fax: +1 920 208 3452; E-Mail: [rabler@aag.org](mailto:rabler@aag.org)

#### **Secretary General and Treasurer**

Professor Michael Meadows, University of Cape Town, Private Bag X3, Department of Environmental and Geographical Science, South Lane, Upper Campus, Rondebosch 7701 South Africa  
Vox: +27 21 650 2873; Fax: +27 21 650 3456; E-Mail: [mmeadows@mweb.co.za](mailto:mmeadows@mweb.co.za)

#### **First Vice President**

Professor Vladimir Kolossov, Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Staromonetny per., 29, 119017 Moscow Russia  
Vox: +7 495 959 0029; Fax: +7 495 959 0033; E-Mail: [vladimirkolossov@rambler.ru](mailto:vladimirkolossov@rambler.ru)

#### **Vice Presidents**

Professor Irasema Alcántara-Ayala, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), Instituto de Geografía, Circuito Exterior, Ciudad Universitaria, C.P. 04510 México, D.F. México  
Vox: +52 55 5622 4341; Fax: +52 55 5616 2145; E-Mail: [irasema@igg.unam.mx](mailto:irasema@igg.unam.mx)

Professor Giuliano Bellezza, via Nomentana 261, 00161 Rome Italy  
Vox: +39 06 9761 0171; Mobile: +39 392 951 5439; E-Mail: [giuliano.bellezza@uniroma1.it](mailto:giuliano.bellezza@uniroma1.it)

Professor Ruth Fincher, University of Melbourne, Melbourne School of Land and Environment, Geography Program, 221 Bouverie Street, Parkville 3010, Australia  
Vox: +61 3 8344 0623; Fax: +61 3 9349 4218; E-Mail: [r.fincher@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:r.fincher@unimelb.edu.au)

Professor Yukio Himiyama, Institute of Geography, Hokkaido University of Education, Hokumoncho,

Asahikawa 070-8621, Japan

Vox: +81 (0)166 59 1283; Fax: +81 (0)166 59 1283; E-mail: himiyama.yukio@a.hokkyodai.ac.jp

Professor Aharon Kellerman, University of Haifa, Department of Geography, Haifa 31905 Israel

Vox: +972 4 824 2816; Fax: +972 4 826 2134; E-Mail: akeller@univ.haifa.ac.il

Professor Markku Löytönen, University of Helsinki, Department of Geosciences and Geography  
P.O. Box 64, FI-00014 Helsinki Finland

Vox: +358 9 191 50781; Fax: +358 9 191 50760; E-mail: markku.loytonen@helsinki.fi

Academician Dahe Qin, China Meteorological Administration, 46, Zhongguancun Nandajie  
Beijing 100081 China

Vox: +86 10 6840 8926 and 6840 7926; Fax: +86 10 6217 4797; E-Mail: qdh@cma.gov.cn

Professor Dietrich Soye, University of Köln, Department of Geography, Albertus-Magnus-Platz  
D-50923 Köln, Germany

Vox: +49 221 470 2261; Fax: +49 221 479 4917; E-Mail: d.soyez@uni-koeln.de

The IGU Executive Committee, as is customary, held two meetings in 2011: one from 17-18 May in Köln, Germany and the second from 13-14 November in conjunction with the IGU Regional Conference in Santiago, Chile. The Köln meeting was the IGU's first major use of internet media to conduct one of its meetings: IGU Vice President Dietrich Soye, Secretary General Michael Meadows, and President Ronald Abler participated from Köln whereas four of the eight other members (three were excused for conflicts and one was unable to connect at all) participated from their home locations in countries as longitudinally dispersed as Mexico east to Japan, that is, across 15 time zones.

The WebEx software worked reasonably well though not perfectly, or as President Abler put it, "better than I had feared but not as well as I'd hoped." Audio feedback and occasional signal loss were annoying but not insurmountable impediments. Until internet conference software is further perfected, however, such meetings will be better suited to small groups rather than ten or eleven people. For organizations such as the IGU, the dispersal of their officers across the globe will remain a challenge: there is no time frame that is convenient for all participants when participants are longitudinally dispersed. When weighed against the costs in time and money of travel to a single site, however, internet-mediated meeting is increasingly attractive. Intercontinental travel and a two-day meeting will normally absorb at least four days for some participants, and we estimate that structuring our Köln meeting as we did saved the IGU an aggregate of at least US\$15,000 in travel, lodging, and subsistence costs.

The approved minutes of the 2011 IGU Executive Committee meetings are made available via the IGU E-newsletters at: [http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page\\_id=539](http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page_id=539).

- The IGU will hold an Extraordinary International Geographical Congress in 2022 to mark the centennial of the formal establishment of the IGU in 1922 and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first International Geographical Congress held in Antwerp in 1871.
- Former IGU Secretary General and Treasurer Yu Woo-ik of South Korea, subsequently the Ambassador to the People's Republic of China from South Korea, was appointed Minister for Reunification in South Korea. Yu is an expert on the process and consequences of the reunification of the two Germanies.
- The executive committee increased to \$1,000 the annual allocation to each IGU Commission and Task Force in good standing, that is, which is up to date on its reports and other obligations. Commissions and task forces may apply to the IGU Secretary General and Treasurer for modest additional supplemental awards of IGU funds for special projects.
- The IGU received an award of €30,000 from the International Council for Science's (ICSU) competitive grants program to support a project entitled *Transdisciplinary Intercultural Ecological Research for Sustainability* (TIERS) that will seek to identify, collate, compare, and disseminate

examples of integrative research on coupled social/natural systems and their applications to environmental policies from a broad array of cultures and traditions.

- The IGU *Journals Project* continues to collate information on ‘geographical’ periodicals globally – thanks especially to Ton Dietz and colleagues for their efforts in this regard. The project will be formally launched at the IGU Congress in Cologne, but the data are already available on the website at [http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page\\_id=936](http://www.igu-online.org/site/?page_id=936)
- Other special projects include IGU involvement in the attempt to establish a new United Nations ‘year’ – the International Year of Global Understanding. Global thinking and global action demand global understanding. This initiative by the International Geographical Union aims to bridge the awareness gap between local acts and global effects. It will achieve this aim through research, education, and information. Ultimately, the International Year of Global Understanding will encourage everyone to make daily decisions in the light of global challenges. Read more about this at: <http://global-understanding.info/>
- The Mediterranean Renaissance Programme is a special IGU programme concerning human development in the Mediterranean region and was initiated in 2005 by IGU late President Adalberto Vallega. The programme continues to be very active. Read more at: [http://www.igu-net.org/uk/what\\_is\\_igu/specialcommittees.html](http://www.igu-net.org/uk/what_is_igu/specialcommittees.html) or email Maria Paradiso at: [paradiso@unisannio.it](mailto:paradiso@unisannio.it)
- Elections, arising from the completion of terms of office for several members of the IGU Executive Committee will take place at the Cologne Congress. The position of IGU President and four Vice-Presidents become vacant and will be filled by election at the Congress in August.
- The IGU website, [www.igu-online.org](http://www.igu-online.org) provides regularly updated features on a wide range of IGU activities, meetings and other events. Should you have any news or other information that you would like posted on the site, please forward the relevant information to IGU Secretary-General Mike Meadows at [mmeadows@mweb.co.za](mailto:mmeadows@mweb.co.za)

### **Preliminary 2011 IGU Financial Reports**

IGU accounts are denominated in United States dollars although IGU Secretariat funds are held in South African Rands. Funds in the IGU’s accounts in the United States and South Korea are held in US dollars in accounts in those countries. As noted in the standard financial statements below, IGU revenues in 2011 were \$167,499.62 versus expenditures of \$140,576.60 for a surplus of \$26,923.02. These data are preliminary, unaudited figures. We have no reason to believe that they will change substantially.

Most of the Grants Received income of \$38,110 consists of an award from ICSU of €30,000 to support an aspect of the IGU’s International Year for Global Understanding (IYGU) initiative. The Awards and Grants expenses have two major components: 1) transmittal of the IYGU grant to the IYGU initiative plus the IGU’s €6,000 contribution to IYGU; and 2) allocations to the IGU’s commissions and task forces. The Travel and Meetings item of \$28,505.44 is largely the costs of transportation and lodging for executive committee members attending executive committee meetings. That total is modest for an international organization owing to the ability of some members to obtain funding from their governments or employers for their participation in executive committee meetings, and to the generosity of the countries and institutions that host the meetings: Germany and Chile in 2011. The Membership and Dues expense line consists of IGU dues to ICSU and ISSC. The expense entry for Travel Grants reflects subsidies the IGU offered young and developing country scholars to defray the costs of their participation in the Santiago Regional Conference.

The year-end balance of \$205,948 is an improvement over prior year-end balances that we do not view as excessive. IGU income and expenses can fluctuate from year to year and a balance amounting to 1.3 times normal annual expenses seems prudent.

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02-06-12  
Cash Basis

**International Geographical Union**  
**Profit & Loss**  
January through December 2011

	<u>Jan - Dec 11</u>
<b>Income</b>	
Donations Received	3,250.36
Grants Received	38,109.52
Investment Income	5,525.44
Membership Income	
Country Membership	116,255.28
Institutional Membership	306.60
<b>Total Membership Income</b>	<u>116,561.88</u>
Travel Grant Reimbursements	1,306.62
Travel Reimbursements	2,745.80
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>167,499.62</u>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	167,499.62
<b>Expense</b>	
Accounting Fees	1,029.74
Awards and Grants	69,836.24
Banking Fees	3,010.31
Editing, Printing, and Publishi	333.33
Internet Access and Web Site	3,173.26
Memberships and Dues	9,263.15
Miscellaneous Expense	309.33
Postage, Mailing, and Shipping	117.76
Supplies	1,489.17
Travel and Meetings	28,508.87
Travel Grants	23,505.44
<b>Total Expense</b>	<u>140,576.60</u>
<b>Net Income</b>	<u><u>26,923.02</u></u>

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Cash Basis

**International Geographical Union**  
**Balance Sheet**  
As of December 31, 2011

	<u>Dec 31, 11</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>	
<b>Checking/Savings</b>	
Johnson Bank Deposit Certificat	4,474.44
Johnson Bank Operating Account	7,258.42
National Agricultural Bank	24,027.51
Petty Cash	590.95
Standard Bank Operating Acct	169,596.24
<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	<u>205,947.56</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<u>205,947.56</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u>205,947.56</u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
<b>Equity</b>	
Opening Balance Equity	106,061.72
Unrestricted Net Assets	72,962.82
Net Income	26,923.02
<b>Total Equity</b>	<u>205,947.56</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b><u>205,947.56</u></b>