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# TGRG page[1]

This is my final TGRG page as Chairperson of the Transport Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers. As my term and the previous three years as secretary of the TGRG (1993–96) have seen a number of major changes, it seems appropriate to look back at some of the highlights and to comment on the broader issues affecting transport geography as we move towards a new millennium.

Throughout my periods in office, the Group has been as active as ever, especially on the conference and publication front. The TGRG has held a major session at each of the annual RGS-IBG conferences which have covered an impressive range of topics including: Air Transport and Airport Planning (1993); Transport and the Environment (1994); Tracked Solutions to Urban Congestion (1995); Sustainable Transport Horizons (1996); Transport Deregulation and Privatisation (1997); Mobility Leisure and Lifestyle (1998). These sessions have resulted in two book publications and numerous individual papers, several in the *Journal of Transport Geography*. Such a publication record more than compensates for the Group's in-house publications which ceased in 1994. In parallel, *Modern Transport Geography*, edited by Brian Hoyle and Richard Knowles and first published by Belhaven in 1992, has been up-dated and enlarged and a second edition will be published by Wiley during 1998.

Promoting postgraduate interest in transport geography has also been a major aim of the TGRG. Successful postgraduate seminars were held in 1995 and 1996 at the RGS-IBG headquarters in London and both resulted in the publication of edited working papers. In 1996 the seminar was linked with the awarding of a postgraduate prize and this process will be repeated in 1998 and thereafter on a two yearly basis. As in previous years, the 1998 seminar and subsequent publication is being overseen by Brian Turton (Keele) and the TGRG is very grateful for the dedication with which Brian has undertaken this task. One modification to the seminar reflects the current changes in the education system. In 1998, the seminar and prize will also be open to graduate contract research assistants. This move recognises the importance of contract researchers in transport geography, a feature which is repeated throughout much of geography as a whole.

Links with overseas transport geographers have been one of the great pleasures of my involvement with the TGRG. Our corresponding members have made a valuable contribution to the Group's activities and enabled an international dimension which would not have been possible without them. Whilst formal links have been made at conferences, individual contacts between Group members and overseas academics have also been very fruitful. At a personal level, the joint sessions with the Transportation Geography Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers at their annual conference in Boston in March 1998 will remain a highlight. I am indebted to the Specialty Group for encouraging this collaboration and to Ron Scheck (Florida) for undertaking the administration of the jointly convened sessions, and for masterminding a very memorable one-day field excursion which saw both Groups riding on Boston's transit system. Again, individual contacts were either made or strengtherned at this joint meeting and it is my hope that further collaborative work will follow.

Whilst the activities outlined above represent the public face of the TGRG, as with most Committees, much goes on behind the scenes. Links have been maintained with similar bodies to our own, especially the Universities Transport Study Group which draws its membership from a number of disciplines including economics, engineering and planning. At a national level, Group members have contributed on a regular basis to the British Government's Foresight programme and commented on research strategy. Together with 25 other research groups, the TGRG has also been involved in policy decisions affecting its original parent body, the Institute of British Geographers, which has now completed its merger with the Royal Geographical Society. In undertaking this liaison, the support which I have received from other committee members, both past and present, has always been very forthcoming and very welcome.

However, there are a number of issues about which the TGRG cannot afford to be complacent. There is a need for more members to become actively involved in the TGRG activities. According to the RGS-IBG central office records, 160 members have asked to be informed of the activities of the TGRG. Unfortunately, only a small number are actively involved and greater assistance is required with convening conferences, publications and publicity. In particular, there is a need to encourage postgraduate students and younger academics and build on existing achievements. It is also important to remember the undergraduate base for our subject. Transport geography options remain popular on a number of first degree courses, but they have ceased to be offered in a number of departments where lecturers have retired or left and not been replaced with staff with a transport geography interest. This is somewhat ironical, given the current standing of transport issues on the national political agenda and the opportunities for geographers in transport oriented careers. Consequently, our research base remains strong but we need to address these issues to ensure a viable future for transport geography.

## RGS-IBG Conference: Leicester 1999

The theme of the Transport Geography Research Group session will be 'Urban Transport Futures'. The topic has been chosen to comply with the overall

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theme of the Leicester conference which is 'Geographies of the Future' and to encourage discussion of the Government White Paper on Transport which was published earlier this year. Details are available from Miss J A Smith, Department of Geography, University of Salford, Salford M5 4WT, UK. Tel 0161 295 5000, ext. 54228. E-mail j.a.smith@geography.salford.ac.uk.

**Postgraduate prize 1998**

The TGRG will be making a postgraduate award in 1998 to encourage the writing of high-quality research papers in the field of Transport Geography. The 1998 Prize will be awarded to the best submitted paper from either a postgraduate student or a contract research assistant who does not have a higher degree. The value of the 1998 award will be a £50 book token and one year's subscription to the *Journal of Transport Geography*. The paper will be published, subject to editorial approval, in the Seminar Working Paper. The criteria for the award will be based on:

- originality and relevance of the research
- application of research methodology
- analysis of results
- quality of the written paper.

There must be clear evidence that the paper represents the student's or assistant's own work. Papers submitted jointly with supervisors will not be considered. Papers will be adjudicated by a panel of three Transport Geography specialists and the results will be announced at the AGM of the TGRG in Leicester in January 1999.

Applications should be sent by November 30, 1998 to: Dr Brian Turton, Department of Geography, University of Keele, Keele, Staffordshire ST5 5BG. Tel: 01782 583169. E-mail: eva18@keele.ac.uk

*José Smith*
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