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Annual Conference 2005

Welcome from the chair of conference

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**Royal
Geographical
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning

The RGS-IBG Annual International Conference is one of the most important events in British Geography, and London 2003 represented a bold attempt to reinvigorate a traditional format which was looking increasingly tired. In 2004 the conference was held in attenuated form in Glasgow, in association with the IGU meeting, but it has now returned to London and the headquarters of the Royal Geographical Society with IBG. The 2006 conference will also be hosted here, as London becomes the usual – but not necessarily the only - home of this annual event.

The conference theme this year is **Flows and spaces in a globalised world**. Geographical research on flows and spaces has been reinvigorated in recent years because they are seen to encapsulate three major themes in contemporary research: the changing ways in which these are articulated and mutually shaped and shaping; the globalisation of flows and their impacts, at many different scales; and the interweaving of natural and social flows and spaces. Hopefully, the conference will question how the relationships between flows and spaces are shaped, their impacts on society and nature, and how these can be mediated in pursuit of greater social and territorial justice.

Whatever progress is made towards the above goals depends, above all, on the Research Groups and their members. There would be no conference without the Research Groups who invest an enormous amount of time and resources to organizing sessions, and bringing speakers to the conference, both from geography and other disciplines. In recognition of the timetable pressures on their activities, we have redistributed one of the four main time slots on Thursday from the penuries to the paper sessions.

One feature of this conference which has been particularly pleasing is the attraction of large numbers of participants from outside the UK. You are especially welcome, for we wish the RGS-IBG annual international conference to be more than a meeting place for British geographers. Instead, as the early conference registrations suggested at the time of going to press, it is becoming a place that hosts international discourses between geographers and geographies from around the world. Although this is symbolised by the plenary on International Voices, it is even more important that international engagement is routinely reflected throughout the programme, as it increasingly seems to be.

Where should the RGS-IBG conference be held in 2007? Is London the most accessible venue for most of our delegates? Perhaps once in every three years we should meet in another university location in the UK? This is your conference, and we would like to hear as many views as possible on the location of the 2007 conference either through the questionnaire in your delegate pack, or by email after the conference to l.craig@rgs.org

Finally, as chair of conference I wish to thank a number of individuals for their support in planning and organising this meeting. First, I especially wish to thank those who have organised modules, whether plenaries or paper sessions, the Conference Planning Group, and Keith Richards, who – as Vice Chair for Research – has been closely involved throughout in planning this event. However, my greatest debt is to Lorraine Craig and Sarah Jones who have worked tirelessly and imaginatively to turn conference ideas into the reality of the conference programme.

I hope you all have a great time, and will also join us again for the 2006 RGS-IBG Annual International Conference.

Allan Williams
University of Exeter