

.....

# Annual Conference 2000

## Welcome from the chair of conference

.....

**Royal  
Geographical  
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography  
and geographical learning

The faculty and non-faculty staff of the Geography Subject Group at Sussex University extend a warm welcome to the delegates attending the January 2000 Annual Conference of the RGS-IBG.

Some of those coming this year might remember the only previous occasion (in 1971) that the IBG came to Sussex. The weather was quite spectacular. A small low pressure system had travelled up the English Channel depositing a thick layer of snow on this newly-built university campus and its parkland surroundings. At this time Sussex University was considered to be both socially fashionable and academically exciting (though far too politically radical for many of the county's residents!); it was seen as the first and most successful 'new' universities.

... Geography, however, was not a very large component of the University at that time. There were just nine faculty and two technicians, and the Geography Laboratory had only recently moved into permanent accommodation. But the essential features of the 'Sussex system' were already in place. First, both students and faculty had dual allegiance—towards Geography, **and** towards their School of Study—geography was studied in context. The Schools provided 50% of the students' degree programme in the form of interdisciplinary 'contextual' courses, so that students then, as now, studied Geography in conjunction with courses on (i) the Biological Sciences; (ii) Africa and Asia; (iii) Europe; (iv) Culture and Community; and (v) the Social Sciences. Secondly, there was, and remains today, a strong emphasis on small-group teaching. Tutorials and seminars have always been important in the Sussex scheme of things.

Today, the Geography Subject Group at Sussex has seventeen faculty, five technicians, about 350 students, and two fine, newly refurbished Laboratories (why not visit them while you are here?). It still belongs to the five Schools it belonged to in 1971, but is now a major player as well in the School of Chemistry, Physics and Environmental Science. Its members are leading figures in several of the University's research centres, notable the Graduate Research Centres in Culture, Development and Environment and the Sussex European institute, and a number of more specialised units that include the Centre on European Political Economy, the Centre for Urban and Regional Research and the newly established Sussex Centre for Migration Research.

Both the academic traditions of the University and the specific research interests of the Geography faculty are reflected in the January 2000 Annual Conference programme. Interdisciplinarity and the Changing Geography of Europe figure prominently in the plenary sessions, and Sussex-mounted parallel sessions include papers on urban and regional studies, rock weathering, and transnational communities.

Organising the Annual Conference involves a certain amount of hard work and has its moments of frustration and short-lived crisis. But it also has its enjoyable side and its humorous aspects. Foremost amongst the good things is the willingness of colleagues to help out with the arrangements. Every member of faculty and each technician has already had, or will soon have, an important role to play in the organisation of the event. At the time of writing, it is the contribution of those who collected and edited, designed and type-set the materials needed for this Conference Handbook, that is uppermost in our minds. Soon it will be the turn of those who manage the conference booking process, while others will make their contribution at the Registration Desk and in the Press Office during the Conference itself. Another positive experience is the generosity of those who are providing sponsorship. The list of helpers and sponsors is to be found inside the back cover of this Handbook. I very warmly thank all of these people for their support, and add to this list the names of four people who are not members of the Geography staff at Sussex — Lorraine Craig (and her team) at the RGS-IBG, Cat Stead (and her team) in the Conference Office at Sussex, Jonathan Young (last year's Local Secretary at Leicester and his team), and last, but not least, Pam Fielding (this year's Conference Assistant).

You are probably asking where is the humour in all this? Well, some of the excuses for the late submission of titles and abstracts are pretty amusing, but my favourite (having just struggled with some heavy-going reports on these subjects) is the juxtaposition in the timetable for Thursday January 6<sup>th</sup> 2000, of a plenary session on the RAE and Subject Benchmarking (13.30-14.30), followed immediately by a parallel session on 'Geographies of Fear and Violence' (14.30-16.00)!

Anyway, I hope that the Conference is as academically rewarding as it promises to be, and that the members of the geography community gathered at Sussex University will have a lot of fun together in the first week of the new millennium.

*Tony Fielding*  
*Local Secretary, RGS-IBG 2000*