

2011 MEDALS & AWARDS

GSA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Presented to
Richard C. Berg and Brendan Murphy



Richard C. Berg
Illinois State Geological Survey



Brendan Murphy
Saint Francis Xavier University

Citation by Craig Schiffries and Jean M. Bahr

We are pleased to nominate Richard C. Berg for the 2011 Distinguished Service Award based on his record of service to the Geological Society of America. His volunteer activities for the Society have been particularly noteworthy over the past five years during which he served as Chair of the Geology and Society Division (2005–2006), chair of the Geology and Public Policy Committee (2008–2009), and chair of the Joint Technical Program Committee for two very successful Annual Meetings (2009 and 2010). In addition, he has been an active member of the Annual Program Committee since 2006, organizing the hot topics for the 2007 Annual Meeting, and he also served on the ad hoc Committee to Review Committees. He has also been active in organizing public policy–related sessions for North Central Section meetings and is a regular participant in Shlemon Mentor events at those meetings.

While each of these activities would be meritorious on its own, the combination is unusual, and his leadership on the Geology and Public Policy Committee (GPPC) is truly exceptional. During his service as chair, GPPC completed work on nine GSA Position Statements that were approved by Council, including GSA's first statements on such key topics as water resources, energy and mineral resources, and government funding for Earth science research. Dick also developed a new and improved template for Position Statements that has been used for all subsequent statements. Dick reached out to committee members and galvanized the group, making committee service a rewarding and productive experience.

Response by Richard C. Berg

I am honored to be a 2011 GSA Distinguished Service Awardee. GSA over the years has provided me with tremendous opportunities, and to be able to give back and receive an award for service is doubly rewarding. My service to GSA began in the 1990s when I served as GSA representative on the selection committee for the John C. Frye Memorial Award in Environmental Geology. This appointment

Citation by Nancy Riggs

Brendan Murphy is a leader in his dedication to the geoscience discipline, to his university (St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia) and to the Geological Society of America.

Brendan has published 164 papers in his 35-year career. He specializes in large-scale orogenic processes, mantle plumes, isotopic systems (especially U-Pb), and other topics within those larger frameworks; his grant activities are greater than \$2 million. This takes place at an undergraduate-focused university where he teaches two classes per term, plus the field school. Brendan has supervised 12 M.Sc. theses and 50 undergraduate theses.

Brendan's service to GSA is exemplary. He became a GSA *Bulletin* science editor in January 2007, and worked with Karl Karlstrom until 2009. At the end of Karl's term, Brendan had the pleasure of training two new science editors, at the same time that the *Bulletin* was moving from AllenTrack to Editorial Manager. Brendan's wonderful demeanor and delightful sense of humor made him wonderful to work with, always available to answer questions, provide advice, smooth ruffled feathers, and encourage all the ideas that come with any new "blood" to an organization. In 2009, he joined the Publications Committee. GSA staff members in Boulder are unanimous in their praise and appreciation. Brendan has served on the Editorial Board of *Geology*, and is now an associate editor of the *Bulletin*.

Few geoscientists today have the record of excellence in professional endeavor, dedication to education, and record of service to the profession, and to the Society, that Brendan has offered. Brendan Murphy strongly deserves the GSA Distinguished Service Award.

Response by Brendan Murphy

I am pleased and humbled to receive GSA's Distinguished Service Award. For many years, I had benefitted greatly from my participation (along with my students) in GSA conferences and field

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Response by Dick Berg (continued)

followed about 15 years of experience with three-dimensional geological mapping and development of subsequent interpretive/derivative maps for land- and water-use planning. The Frye committee selects the best paper among those published by state geological surveys and the GSA over a three-year period. This experience permitted me access to about 20 publications per year, all dealing with explaining geoscientific issues, and in so doing permitting lay users to understand often complex geology and then implementing strategies for solving a myriad of environmental problems.

In 2004 I was asked to serve as First Vice Chair and Newsletter Editor of GSA's newly created Geology & Society Division; the latter post I served until 2009. As Division Chair (2005-6) and Past-Chair (2006-7), and up to the present, Division officers have striven continually to increase Division membership with the phrase "Geology Working for Society". We think that every member of GSA should be a member of the Geology & Society Division because of the relevance of geological research in dealing with numerous groundwater/surface water and other environmental issues, climate change, earth hazards, evolution, shores and coastlines, and many more. Particularly emphasized was the need to translate geological discoveries so that more than just scientific colleagues could understand outcomes. Although some refer to this popularization as "dumbing down" research, it actually "smartens up" research by making it more accessible to a wider audience, and particularly useable by planners and politicians, so that they can make informed, unbiased conclusions and base their decisions on the "best available information".

As Chair of the Geology & Society Division in 2006, one of my duties was to also serve on GSA's Joint Technical Program Committee (JTTC), with responsibilities to review and help organize public policy sessions for the Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. This work eventually led to being a member of the Annual Program Committee (APC) as Technical Program Chair (TPC) for the Annual Meetings in Portland in 2009 and Denver in 2010. The TPC serves as chair of the ~45 member JTTC and has overall responsibility for organizing sessions for the Annual Meetings. The process begins in December and January when the TPC addresses numerous questions from members who have submitted session proposals and seek sponsorships. After selection of sessions by the APC, the February to July period involves regular updates to the JTTC and overall GSA membership regarding proactively seeking speakers to ensure session viability, and also to keep everyone informed of particular session conflicts with other sessions as well as personal schedules. The most concentrated effort as TPC occurs in the three-week period following the abstract deadline submission date. Working with the JTTC, session chairs, and GSA staff, the entire technical program is organized into meeting rooms, keeping sub-discipline sessions in close proximity to one another while avoiding "like sessions" and some personal schedules, and trying to minimize problems.

The effort to balance competing interests in the Annual Meeting program is the biggest challenge for the TPC. However, it is the culmination of a very rewarding personal experience. I cannot think of another opportunity where I could get exposed to all of the sub-disciplines within the geosciences and work directly with JTTC representatives and session chairs who all have vested and strong research, service, and educational interests in their sub-disciplines. Working to bring these diverse interests into a coherent and seemingly flowing program with a minimum of glitches has been indeed rewarding. I particularly want to recognize GSA staff members Nancy

Response by Brendan Murphy (continued)

trips and from its peer review system when I submitted manuscripts to various GSA publications. When asked to be a co-editor of the BULLETIN, I jumped at the chance to contribute to a society that had played such a significant role in nurturing my academic life. As a co-editor of the GSA Bulletin I was fortunate to inherit from my predecessors a journal with a global reputation for data-rich, archival articles with a long shelf-life. As such, the BULLETIN continues to fill a very important niche in the ever-increasing array of geoscience journals. Its papers are cited for decades after they are published and they constitute a firm foundation upon which ideas can gestate and testable hypotheses can develop. Although we may be biased, many current and former editors believe that the success of the BULLETIN is one of the foundations for the success of the society.

Such a reputation is forged by a peer review system which encourages authors to submit their best science to the BULLETIN. In my experience this peer review process, although not perfect, is about as fair as any process mediated by humans can be. My particular role was to continue the efforts of my predecessors to strengthen our reach into the international community so that the BULLETIN would continue to be a prime option for publishing world-class geoscience. Even before my official term as co-editor commenced, I was struck by the team approach fostered by the GSA Publications team. This approach made sure that the end-product was better than the sum of its parts. I was well schooled and received sound advice from outgoing co-editor Yildirim Dilek. I had the pleasure of working with some great co-editors, Karl Karlstrom followed by Nancy Riggs and Christian Koeberl. Sound advice was only ever a phone call away.

It was also a privilege to work with the GSA Publications team. As science editor, I worked most closely with Jill Rothenberg, Jeanette Hammann and Jon Olsen. The positive culture of the entire GSA Publications team was immediately apparent from my first meeting and the GSA is indeed fortunate to have this team of outstanding professionals. They made my task as science editor much smoother than I anticipated and I would advise anyone who is thinking of contributing to GSA Publications to become involved: it is truly a rewarding experience. My Editorial Assistant, Cindy Murphy, did much of the day-to-day heavy lifting that smoothed and expedited the flow of hundreds of manuscripts through the peer review process. She would not only remember to do the things I had forgotten to do; she also did the things that I forgot I had forgotten! Among many duties, this involved direct communications with Associate Editors and reviewers gently reminding them of the deadlines for their reports and reviews and with authors, encouraging them to submit their revisions in a timely manner or helping them with on-line submission issues.

A lot of the credit for the success of the BULLETIN is due to the diligence and expertise of the Associate Editors and the reviewers. The vast majority of their inputs provided insightful and constructive advice. Annual meetings with the Associate Editors were a major source of inspiration and energy. Their dedication to the BULLETIN is clearly evident. Of course, the authors and the quality of the manuscripts they submit is the most important factor in the continuing success of the BULLETIN. One of my most important roles was to make sure that my decision letter to the authors explained the reasons for the decision reached, and the insightful reports and reviews from Associate Editors and reviewers certainly facilitated that task. I can confidently state that virtually every manuscript submitted benefitted from the peer review process. I was also impressed with the good

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Response by Dick Berg (continued)

Wright and Melissa Cumiskey for their efforts in working with the JTPC, APC, and me. They “know the ropes”, and they made sure that there was never too much slack.

Also beginning in 2006, I became the GSA North-Central Section’s Representative on the Geology & Public Policy Committee (GPPC). The GPPC is charged with providing advice on public policy matters to GSA Council and leadership, and it conducts a wide range of activities, prominently including the development of Position Statements. The specific charge of the GPPC is “developing and disseminating information about the geological sciences to promote the use of such information in the formulation, discussion, and decisions regarding public policies”. As GPPC Chair in 2008-9, I noticed that the Committee had fallen behind in updating existing position statements. Therefore, with a very willing and hard-working Committee, we successfully updated all expired statements and initiated and moved through a very tedious review system to produce several new statements. Many of these statements dealt with very delicate and highly politicized issues of climate change, evolution, and water and land use, to name just four. The development of Position Statements, which represent the GSA membership perspective, is the biggest duty of the GPPC and its Chair. Knowing that these statements are used directly for policy decision making required intense scrutiny of every word and its possible nuances, as well as agreement over wording by not only the GPPC, but also GSA Council and GSA membership.

Particularly challenging during my tenure was the suggestion that the GPPC be restructured to eliminate section representation. This I felt was a mistake, since each of GSA’s sections emphasizes different aspects of geology and how that geology impacts citizens, commerce, industry, transportation, agriculture, mining, and recreation. In the North-Central Section, for example, glacial geology and the Great Lakes dominate the region and directly affect issues related to water resources, the rust belt, and intense row-crop agriculture. Based on our collective wisdom, the structure of the GPPC remained intact. I want to particularly thank Jack Hess and Craig Schiffries for their assistance and contributions to the GPPC, and for always keeping me and the GPPC on the straight and narrow.

Finally, as I mentioned above, none of my achievements could have been accomplished without outstanding committee members and GSA headquarters staff who more than “shared the load” at a time when there was much to be done, and when many people relied on our outcomes. Thank you very much for this award.

Response by Brendan Murphy (continued)

nature of the vast majority of authors, irrespective of the decisions made or when some delays occurred in processing their manuscripts.

The professionalism and dedication of GSA Publications team, my co-editors, Associate Editors, reviewers and authors made my tenure a truly rewarding experience. I thank Nancy Riggs, my citationist, for nominating me for this award; I am truly grateful. Finally, it is a great pleasure to be a member of a society that values the science it fosters as well as the activities of all its members, from student members to seasoned professionals.