

Geography in New Zealand 2008-2012

National Report to the Executive of the International Geographical Union (IGU) under IGU Statutes Article II, Section D

The issues that have faced geography in the 2008-2012 period have been transitional rather than transformational. The ten sections of this report should be read against the impact of the economic events of 2008 (reduced research funding and the move to an auditing approach to research); the establishment of research themes in cultural geography that now sit alongside Geography's traditional interests and skills; the implementation of the new National Curriculum (2007) in the secondary sector and the demographic transitions across staffing in the discipline.

1. Institutional frameworks and Geography. In terms of a national presence, Geography operates under the umbrella of the national agency *Te Aparangi*¹. *Te Aparangi* was established in 1867 as the Royal Society of New Zealand and the NZ Geographical Society is an affiliated member of this agency. Geographers have served as Vice Presidents² of the Society, Council Members and on the governance panels that operate within the Society. In the reporting period, participation in the activities of the International Geographical Union (IGU) has been funded through *Te Aparangi* by the New Zealand Ministry of Science and Innovation. *Te Aparangi* funding supports the payment of a Category B Country subscription and assistance for the national delegate to attend Congresses and Regional Conferences of the IGU. Michael Roche³ will replace Lex Chalmers as the national committee representative for the 2012-2016 period. Between 2008 and 2012 there were five New Zealand chairs of IGU commissions, Gary Brierley (Geomorphic Challenges for the 21st Century), Lex Chalmers (Geographical Education), Brad Coombes (Indigenous Knowledges and Peoples' Rights), Robyn Longhurst (Gender and Geography) and Etienne Nel (Marginalization, Globalization, and Regional and Local Responses).

2. The New Zealand Geographical Society. The professional and academic community of geographers work in association with the New Zealand Geographical Society⁴ with six branch offices of the Geographical Society serving the country. The branch areas were originally determined by the national network of state-funded universities. Towards the end of the 2008-2012 period, the Head Office of the Society was relocated from Auckland to Massey University in Palmerston North. The Executive of the Society meets regularly using the high speed internet-based video conferencing system⁵.

The branches are complemented by a national body representing school-based geographers, the New Zealand Board of Geography Teachers⁶ (NZBoGT). The NZBoGT is a sub-committee of the Geographical Society that works with the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority on matters related to the school curriculum and assessment.

¹ More commonly known as the Royal Society, or RSNZ. See <http://www.royalsociety.org.nz/>

² Professor Richard Le Heron (http://web.env.auckland.ac.nz/people_profiles/leheron_r/) chairs the Social Sciences Advisory Panel, and is a Vice President of the RSNZ.

³ Michael Roche's contact email is M.M.Roche@massey.ac.nz

⁴ See <http://www.nzgs.co.nz/> or contact the Administration Office at admin@nzgs.co.nz

⁵ Using AccessGrid on the Kiwi Advanced Research and Education Network (or KAREN). See the site <http://www.reannz.co.nz/>

⁶ See <http://www.nzgs.co.nz/welcome-to-the-nzbogt> or contract the chairperson at bi@burnside.school.nz

3. National Conferences. In the reporting period, the Geographical Society has continued to organise biennial national conferences at which there are always a good number of international delegates. Victoria University in Wellington organised the 2008 Conference entitled *Inequality, Sustainability, Policy: Geography across the Divide*⁷. In response to the call for themes, new cultural geographies were well represented. There were multiple sessions on feminist geographies, and strong session on impacts of colonialism, health and inequality along with papers on the Pacific. In January 2010 the *Positioning Geography* conference was organised at the University of Waikato. Three IGU Commissions (*Gender and Geography*, *Geographical Education* and *Geography of Tourism, Leisure, and Global Change*) ran meetings and field trips. The Canterbury branch of the Society organised a conference with the Institute of Australian Geographers in July, 2010. The Canterbury meeting featured new digital geographies. The December 2012 conference of the Society, *Connecting Landscapes*, will be held in Napier on 3-6 December⁸.

4. Journals. Two academic journals provide the basis for a steady stream of research publications in Geography. The *New Zealand Geographer* has been published by the New Zealand Geographical Society since 1945⁹ and *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*¹⁰ has been published since 1960 from the Victoria University in Wellington through Blackwells. One hundred and fifteen issues of the *New Zealand Geographic*¹¹ have been published since 1989. This publication and the related Geographic Trust promote local geographies, supported by superb photography.

5. Geographic Board. Geographers participate in a number of public statutory bodies. One of the most long-standing is the New Zealand Geographic Board¹². Michael Roche followed the late Dame Evelyn Stokes onto this Board. The independent Board handles a number of matters including confirmation and maintenance of the [New Zealand Gazetteer of Official Geographic Names](#). Perhaps one of the Board's most important functions is name change deliberations in association with processes of cultural redress for Māori through the Treaty of Waitangi process. The visibility of Māori geographies and the growth of research done by Māori and for Māori builds on the legacy of geographers like Dame Evelyn Stokes.

6. Geography in the Tertiary sector. Departments of Geography are now comparatively rare as geographers work in interdisciplinary research teams and teach in broad degree programmes. This change has been progressive during the last decade and involves both physical and human geographies. The following list invites inspection of the place of Geography in tertiary institutions from the north to the south of the country.

- At Auckland University the School of Environment is the place to study and research in the disciplines of Geography, Geology, Environmental Science, Environmental Management and Geographical Information Science¹³. Research and teaching in the School of the Environment addresses the Earth's surface and subsurface, climate, social, economic and cultural processes that shape our world. Glenn McGregor is Director of School, with forty academic staff including five professors in Geography.

⁷ See programme detail at <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/nzgs2008/detailedprog.html>

⁸ The Napier conference detail is at <http://www.nzgs.co.nz/nzgs-conferences/annual-general-meeting>

⁹ <http://au.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-NZG.html>, currently edited by Etienne Nel. Digital copies of back issues to 1945 are available through Blackwells.

¹⁰ Asia Pacific Viewpoint at <http://au.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-APV.html>

¹¹ The NZ Geographic (<http://www.nzgeographic.co.nz/>) is published by Kowhia Media in Auckland.

¹² For the NZ Geographic Board see <http://www.linz.govt.nz/placenames>

¹³ Geography at Auckland is at <http://www.env.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/our-school>

- Geography at Waikato is distinctive in its focus on human geography and the leadership of two women professors, Robyn Longhurst and Lynda Johnston. The Geography programme¹⁴ offers papers in social and cultural geography as well as in environmental planning, tourism and GIS. A number of the papers have particular emphasis on Māori and feminist perspectives. Colin McLeay chairs the Geography programme within the School of Social Sciences. Earth and Ocean Sciences are located nearby, with cognate papers offered through their programmes.
- The main campus for Massey University is at Palmerston North, with satellite campuses in Wellington and Albany. At Massey, Geography bridges the social and natural sciences by offering degrees in two complementary areas: human geography and physical geography are available for BA and BSc degrees. Geography is taught within the School of People, Environment and Planning¹⁵. Physical Geography is taught in the Institute of Natural Resources. Russell Prince co-ordinates the Geography programme, Matt Henry the Resources and Environmental Planning programme.
- The School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences is found at Victoria University in Wellington. Michael Hannah leads a School of 34 staff, with three professors of Geography. The interdisciplinary School features teaching and research programs anchored in a passion for planet Earth and expressed in an extraordinary range of courses ranging from deep earth geophysics to feminist geography. The School has close links with government research institutes and departments. The School's website is at <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sgees>
- Canterbury University, the oldest and one of two remaining departments of Geography, lists four professors among 14 staff in physical and human geography. Andy Sturman is head of department. The department offers streams in physical geography, human geography; geo-spatial science, and resource and environmental management. A bequest from John Angus Erskine¹⁶ enables the award of up to 70 Visiting Erskine Fellowships each year, and up to six fellowships have been held in Geography.
- Otago University in Dunedin is the other university retaining a departmental structure for Geography¹⁷. The Department offers courses in physical geography, human geography and environmental studies. Sean Fitzsimons heads a department of 13 academic staff with two professors. Current research falls into three broad thematic groups; two encompass processes in either the physical or human environments (including planning), while the third involves staff whose interests in environmental management connect both physical and human systems.
- There are also a number of geographers on the staff of the Auckland University of Technology and Lincoln University in Canterbury¹⁸.

7. Funding tertiary sector research. The state, state agencies, corporate and philanthropic interests have funded research in Geography in the reporting period. The most significant driver of research, however, has been government support for research in Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) under a scheme known as the *Performance Based Research Fund* or PBRF, first introduced in 2003. The PBRF is the New Zealand equivalent of the *Excellence in Research for Australia*¹⁹ (ERA) or the British *Research Assessment Exercise*²⁰ (RAE).

A census process for the 2006 PBRF in New Zealand identified the equivalent of 65 full time equivalent staff in Human Geography nationally. Physical geographers were included in the Sciences, generally under Earth Sciences. It is difficult to identify geographers in Planning, Tourism and the field Sciences,

¹⁴ The Geography programme at Waikato is found at <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/study/subjects/geog.shtml> with Earth and Ocean Sciences at <http://sci.waikato.ac.nz/about-us/earth-and-ocean-sciences/>

¹⁵ See http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/departments/school-people-environment-planning/school-of-people-environment-and-planning_home.cfm

¹⁶ Visiting scholars under the Erskine bequest are described at <http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/erskine/>

¹⁷ Geography at Otago is found at <http://www.geography.otago.ac.nz/home>

¹⁸ See <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about-aut> and <http://www.lincoln.ac.nz/About-Lincoln-University/>

¹⁹ See the site <http://www.arc.gov.au/era/>

²⁰ The 2008 process is described at <http://www.rae.ac.uk/>

but the best estimate is probably a total of well over 100 geographers in the national University system. The national tertiary education system registered 8,000 FTE.

The PBRF research assessment process was based on four categories of research quality; A, B, C and research inactive (or R). Nine geographers nationally were assessed as A, 23 as B and 28 as C, allowing Human Geography to record an Average Quality Score (AQS) of 4.36. This compared nationally with Anthropology 4.29, History 4.10, Political Science 4.05, Psychology 4.06 and Sociology 2.56. Human The Earth Sciences AQS was 4.70, fourth on the list of 42 subjects; Human Geography ranked seventh. The range in all 42 subjects surveyed in the 2006 PBRF was from an AQS of 5.11 (Philosophy) to more modest AQS values of 2.15 (Accountancy), 1.31 (Education) and 0.48 (Nursing) for research in more applied subjects.

The impact of the 2006 PBRF on research productivity was significant; while the processes and distribution of the annual PBRF funding to tertiary education organisations (expected to grow from \$200m in 2011 to \$300m by 2016²¹) are often challenged, the research support has produced a transition in the attitude of many tertiary staff towards the conduct and production of research outputs. Submission of individual portfolios of research outputs, measures of peer esteem and contributions to the research environment for the 2006-2011 period closed on 20 July, 2012, with the results of the assessment announced in April, 2013. While there are some changes since the 2006 process, it is likely that Earth Sciences and Human Geography will continue to score well in the current assessment.

8. Emerging geographers. A successful national meeting of post-graduate students at the 2010 Canterbury conference of the NZ Geographical Society led to the establishment of a post-graduate research network. While face-to-face meetings take place at regular conferences, the most effective networks have been virtual ones. Starting from two 'webinars' on the KAREN network in 2011, the Post-graduate geography community has found a place for emerging scholars to talk about research and share their experiences of becoming active in research communities. The research themes are invariable fresh and often the launching pad for new (cultural) geographies, the geographies of Māori and Pacific interest and the geographies of class and gender. On 4th April 2012, for example, there was a webinar entitled *Thinking about Environmental Activism*. Two speakers explored the questions is environmental activism dead? What could environmental activism look like? A subsequent webinar on 19th July explored *Geographic Perspectives on the Canterbury Earthquakes*. Gail Hutcheson from Waikato spoke on *Mobile methodologies; mobile participants* and Nicholas Kirk from Lincoln spoke on *A preliminary analysis of the 'growth machine' in post-earthquake Christchurch: Impacts on response and recovery*.

Geography in the secondary education sector also supports the emergence of young scholars through a national competition²² that runs annually, first in schools at the regional level and ultimately at the national level. The winning school is acknowledged, and the top students from the national finals go forward to a selection and training process for the IGU International Geography Olympiad²³. Over the last decade about one third of all secondary schools in the country have entered teams in Mātangi Whenua.

9. Primary and secondary education. While there are regional teachers' associations that focus on developing local programs, the national group that represents teachers of Geography in secondary schools is the NZ Board of Geography Teachers²⁴. In the 2008-2012 period the Board has been very

²¹ See <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/Budget/Budget2012/TertiaryEducation.aspx>

²² See the site <http://www.nzgs.co.nz/student-competitions/maatangi-whenua-year-11-geography-quiz> The competition is known as Mātangi Whenua.

²³ <http://www.geoolympiad.org/>

²⁴ See the website <http://www.nzgs.co.nz/welcome-to-the-nzboqt>. The chairperson of the Board is Suzanne Baldwin at bj@burnside.school.nz

active as a consultative group to the Ministry, Geographical Society, conference organisers and publishers. The Board's *Network* goes out to member schools, and often to up to 300 secondary schools in the country, and it is invaluable in keeping teachers in touch with recent developments in curriculum and assessment.

Significant change in the organisation of Geography as a subject took place in the reporting period. After two decades of effective teaching and learning in Geography as a discrete subject in the final three years of compulsory education (years 11-13), curriculum reviews to produce a new national curriculum began in the 1990s leading to the establishment of a National Curriculum Framework in 2007. After a significant linking of physical and human geography over 50 years, the determination of the 'essential learning areas' (ELA) approach in to curriculum development engineered a split in traditional Geography. The subject was retained as a year 11-13 option, but embedded within the Social Sciences ELA alone. Physical geography appeared in the Science ELA.

A significant change has been the increased emphasis on geographical understanding; *Important Geographical Ideas* have been replaced by understanding of geographical concepts. The traditional learning objectives of human geography have been incorporated into the new National Curriculum Framework²⁵, and a parallel site shows the curriculum for Māori²⁶. The achievement standards (against which student performances are assessed) are specified by an independent authority, the NZ Qualifications Authority²⁷.

The NZQA Geography Framework²⁸ details the standards against which student assessment is measured. At each of three levels (Years 11-13) at which internally and externally standards are examined there are up to eight standards; teachers and students have some choice in those that they select. The most 'popular' externally examined standards may have more than 10,000 students sitting the examination at Level 1, where there are three standards. At level 3 these numbers drop to about 5,000 for each of the three, externally-examined standards.

For teachers of Geography, time during most of the reporting period has been committed to professional development and the progressive reshaping of pedagogy and curriculum content. The Teachers Council accredits Colleges of Initial Teacher Education, and these institutions have also played a role in the provision of in-service professional development. All of the established Universities offer secondary education training, and a number of them offer training in geography explicitly²⁹.

10. Obituaries. In the 2008-2012 period, Geography in New Zealand lost a number of distinguished scholars and significant contributors to the discipline.

The *New Zealand Geographer* (67, 3) carries the obituary of one of New Zealand's most distinguished geographers, **Kenneth Cumberland**, 1913–2011. The obituary is written by R Gerald Ward. In the previous issue Eric Pawson offers *Creating public spaces for geography in New Zealand: Towards an assessment of the contributions of Kenneth Cumberland* (67, 2). Ken Cumberland was the foundational professor at Auckland University after an initial appointment to the University of Canterbury.

The *New Zealand Geographer* (67, 1) notes the passing of **Ben Garnier**. Garnier was appointed as lecturer-in-charge when the University of Otago established its geography department in 1946. He had

²⁵ The site <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-documents/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum/> describes the national curriculum.

²⁶ See <http://mataurangamaori.tki.org.nz/> for the curriculum in *te reo Māori*.

²⁷ The site <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/> includes reference to the Geography assessment framework.

²⁸ See <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/explore/domain.do?frameworkId=75700#standards>

²⁹ See www.teachnz.govt.nz/.../TeachNZ-Secondary-Qualification-Booklet-2012WEB-1.pdf

come to New Zealand to teach at Rongatai College, after being educated at Cambridge. He was associated with the establishment of the New Zealand Geographical Society in 1944 and served as its first Secretary/Treasurer. In 1952, his contribution to the Society was recognised when he was made the first Life Member. The work for which he was best known outside New Zealand is the book *The Climate of New Zealand*, published in 1958.

In the same volume Sean Fitzsimons and Thomas Glade note the loss of **Nick Preston**, geomorphologist and dedicated teacher. Nick studied Geography at Victoria University; his Master's thesis investigated the change in geotechnical slope resistance to shallow land-sliding with time. His PhD studied the use of radio-caesium to determine sediment distributions. Nick returned to teach at the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences at Victoria. He continued his research on landslides and erosion and excelled in teaching.

Roger McLean and John Rayner record the deaths and provide obituaries for **Bill Parkard** (1925-2009) and **Reginald College** (1937-2009) in the *New Zealand Geographer* (65, 3).

In the *New Zealand Geographer* (65, 2) Les King, Richard Bedford, Murray Fastier and John Macaulay pay tribute to the contributions of **Leslie Leigh Pownall** (1921-2008), **Leslie Curry** (1922-2009), **R Jeremy Low** (1945-2008) and **Jeff Pepper** (1946-2008).

Murray Wilson offers a commentary of the contribution of **James (Jim) Fox** (1914–2008). Fox was an important influence in the foundation of geography in New Zealand, co-authored *New Zealand: a regional view* in 1959 with Kenneth Cumberland. The obituary is in the *New Zealand Geographer* (64, 3).

June Logie and Peter Curzon acknowledge the lives of the Royal Society's **Peter Spratt** (1950-2007) and the demographer **Hans Zwart** (1923-2007) in The *New Zealand Geographer* (64, 1).

With reference to Ken Cumberland, Jim Fox, Ben Garnier, Leigh Pownall and Les Curry these losses are from a cohort of *men* who established human and physical geography in New Zealand. The transition that followed the departure of these men from active teaching and research saw the arrival of the 'baby-boomers' (born in the demographic boom years of 1945-1955) in the 1960s and 1970s. Demographic changes are just one part of transition; social, cultural and political factors also play a part. A good number of the baby boomers have now reached retirement age and a new wave of appointments has begun a third staffing transition. While women and Māori appointments have been more frequent in the last decade, any sort of balance in professorial numbers would seem to be a target for the fourth transition.

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