



Society of Woman Geographers  
415 East Capitol Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20003  
[iswg.org](http://iswg.org)  
202.546.9228

# **Society of Woman Geographers 2019 Annual Report**



**President's Message**  
**Sarah Oktay**

These are strange and difficult times. As you all know we had to postpone the Triennial originally scheduled for May to November 6-8. We appreciate your patience and are working hard to reschedule the same agenda, great speakers, and field trips. Now more than ever we are reminded that science and data accompanied by the three C's of communication, compassion, and camaraderie are needed to navigate new challenges like the novel coronavirus.

I want to thank all of our outgoing board members (Carmen Masó, Maria Pia Casarini, Karen Morin, Holly Heintz Budd, Susan Leonard, and Jennifer Grathwol Thomas) and welcome our new board members: Caroline "Siffy" Torkildson (President-Elect), Judy Dollard, Karen Barton, Debbie Fugate, Katherine "Katie" Glover, Ann Oberhauser, and Janice Terry. Thank you Sheila Cavanagh and Cynthia Pope for your second year as board members and Verna Lee for serving a second time. I especially want to thank our past president, Mollie Webb, who has done an amazing job chairing our membership committee and expanding the reach of the Society of Woman Geographers (SWG), especially in the St. Louis region.

We want to make sure our members can get the most out of their membership and share our message far and wide of celebrating women who "know no boundaries." My goals are to have a productive and fun Triennial and to cultivate more visibility for SWG. The Triennial gives us a chance to truly network and share our stories of accomplishments and vision. We will be celebrating the 95th anniversary of the SWG and the 90th year we have met as a group.

I also want to encourage every member to bring in a new member so we can grow our organization. My personal goal is to recruit at least 10 new members this year. Last year we had a productive year with 23 new members, our first honorary memorial membership, and a new membership framework that allows us to standardized membership costs, welcome new categories of supporters, and grow our "fan base."

I'd like to build on that exceptional progress while encouraging our members to share their thoughts on how SWG can be even more relevant as our climate changes and women become a force for STEM careers, international policy, and global (and planetary) exploration. I think now more than ever we should capitalize on the inspirational stories each of us represents to encourage the next generation of women to reach even higher.

The membership committee has worked hard to bring in new levels of members and help us all understand the many benefits of membership. I'd love to hear your thoughts on how SWG could reach out at regional and national meetings of potential partner organizations (once those start happening again). Executive Director Mary van Balgooy has done a great job of attending various conferences and sharing information about SWG.

Our member-led webinars are occurring more frequently and are so interesting. Please make a point of attending one and volunteering for one. This is a great way to keep spreading science and news without in-person meetings.

I am not sure they need us, but we sure need them: From Greta Thunberg to Mahala Yousafzai, young women in the Y (millennial) and Z generations are taking the lead in making the planet a better place. We need to support them and encourage that love of the unknown and exploration. Our scholarships are enabling many young women to complete their theses, and we should all share their research and stories widely. Thank you for letting me steer the ship for a while; here's to an incredible 2020!



**Executive Director's Report**  
**Mary A. van Balgooy**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are making changes at the Society. We have been communicating with members electronically through our website, Facebook group, and blast emails, and now we are moving the newsletter online as well.

Another type of change involves in-person contact. The Triennial is postponed to November 6-8. However, you can still meet other members through our webinars, and although groups are unable to gather, I am happy to set up a virtual meeting for groups via Zoom, which allows us to invite members from around the globe.

While COVID-19 has affected all of us, SWG staff has also had to respond to the care of our Headquarters building on Capitol Hill. We lost our long-term tenant in one of the apartments, and with the assistance of a professional management company, we welcomed a new tenant within a month. In addition, a radiator pipe burst during the coldest days of February, which took more than a month to repair because of its location in a crawl space. Although the heat is back on, we need to patch the walls, paint, and fix two other small pipe leaks that will take much longer to repair due to the pandemic.

I hope you are safe and healthy, especially members in pandemic hot zones such as China, Italy, Spain, Washington, and New York plus fellows who are or were abroad on their research. Please keep in contact with one another and take care of yourselves in this extraordinary time.

**SWG Financial Statements**  
**January-December 2019**

**Revenue**

Dues	\$ 24,165
Contributions	\$ 8,052
Rental Income	\$ 36,979
Investment Income	\$844,662

**Total Revenue** **\$913,858**

**Expenses**

Program Services	\$148,250
Management & General	\$143,734
Fundraising	\$ 1,736

**Total Expenses** **\$293,720**

**Revenue Less Expenses** **\$620,138**

**Assets**

Cash, non-interest accounts	\$ 110,760
Fixed Assets	\$ 108,827
Savings and Investments	\$4,871,611
Prepaid expenses	\$ 3,521

**Total Assets** **\$5,094,719**

**Liabilities**

Current Liabilities	\$53,921
Deferred Revenue	\$ 8,330
Other Liabilities	\$ 3,300

**Total Liabilities** **\$ 65,551**

**Total Net Assets** **\$5,029,168**

## **Fellowship Committee Report**

### **Melinda Laituri and Helga Leitner**

The Fellowship Program continues to attract substantial interest, a reflection of the significant participation of woman students in doctoral programs in geography and related fields in the US and Canada. Forty-seven applications were received by doctoral candidates for the February 1, 2019 deadline for awards for the 2019-20 academic year. The majority of applications came from students in geography programs, but also represented were those in fields such as anthropology, environmental studies, earth sciences, and planning.

### **The following students were selected to receive the Evelyn L. Pruitt Dissertation National Fellowship for Dissertation Research**



**Marissa Bell** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Geography and a Dean’s Fellow at SUNY University at Buffalo. Interested in energy justice, environmental governance, and political economy of risk, her dissertation examines negotiations of “consent” in consent-based nuclear waste siting management in Canada. Her earlier graduate work involves localized opposition to wind turbine installation in upstate New York, and discourse analysis of the risk tradeoff between nuclear energy and climate change in popular media after the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. Completing both her bachelor’s degree at King’s College London and subsequent graduate work in geography, Marissa combines a strong commitment to geography with a diverse

and multinational background. Her own national identities draw from living in the U.K., the U.S., and Croatia, where she spent part of her childhood and later her undergraduate research assessing regionalization and identity politics of Croatia’s European Union accession. Marissa also regularly teaches at the Singapore Institute of Management and enjoys frequent opportunities to travel and meet new people. She is committed to a career in academia to support more equitable and sustainable policies in energy justice issues.



**Sophia Layser Borgias** is a doctoral candidate in the School of Geography and Development at the University of Arizona. Working at the intersection of political ecology and legal geography, she uses a mix of qualitative and participatory methods to study the sociopolitical and legal dimensions of water issues. Her dissertation research examines how public, private, and tribal interests are weighed and reconciled in decision-making about large rural-to-urban water transfers. The emblematic case of the City of Los Angeles’ diversions of water from Owens Valley, California, since 1913 provides an opportunity to trace decision-making about water allocation and management through more than a century of social, regulatory, and environmental change. During this time, the interests and issues considered by decision-

makers have themselves changed amid drastic shifts in federal Native American policy, expanding public interest in environmental protection, and emerging coalitions of unlikely allies. In addition to shedding light on the shifting calculus involved in decisions about water transfers, this project will offer insight into how indigenous and rural actors are working to reshape the frameworks, values, and objectives underpinning those decisions.



**Nina Ebner** is a graduate student in geography at the University of British Columbia. Nina's scholarly interests lie at the intersection of feminist political economy, critical development, and border studies. She currently lives and does research on the U.S.–Mexico border, examining how recent restructuring pressures, ongoing regional economic development efforts, and shifting border politics redraw lines of economic inclusion and exclusion for border communities. Drawing on two years of ethnographic fieldwork, her project traces the varied geographies of work and reproduction that are both shaped by, and reproduce, the uneven social, political, and economic relations

that structure life in border spaces. Nina believes strongly in the importance of collaborative research and is involved with grassroots efforts to end migrant detention and to create more sustainable economic futures for border residents.



**Cristina Faiver-Serna** is a Chicana scholar, mother and doctoral candidate in geography at the University of Oregon. Her experience as a first-generation American and university student have greatly influenced her career pathway from Latinx studies undergraduate student to public health educator and activist to researcher of critical race geographies and environmental justice in Latinx communities. Cristina's interdisciplinary research on toxic particulate matter in Latinx communities in Southern California draws from and builds on her time working with promotoras de salud in some of the most

polluted areas of Los Angeles County most affected by the goods movement in the Southland. She deploys a critical materialist methodology that draws from Chicana and Latina feminist traditions, science and technology studies, critical race theory, and critical environmental justice frameworks. Cristina is co-founder and vice chair of the Latinx Geographies specialty group in the American Association of Geographers and is an inaugural member of the UO Geography Critical Race Lab led by Professor Laura Pulido.



**Jaclyn Guz** is a doctoral student in geography at Clark University. With her adviser, Dr. Dominik Kulakowski, Jackie studies feedbacks among climatically driven disturbance regimes and ecosystem services. Her SWG-supported research will evaluate the effect of climate change on postfire regeneration of lodgepole pine. The research will provide important insights into anticipating the conditions under which regeneration failure and consequent alternate stable states may occur. Jackie will present this research at the 2019 GEOINT Symposium and the 2020 American Association of Geography. Prior to arriving at Clark University, Jackie attended Texas A&M University and worked for the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Science Advisory Board Staff Office, and the Environmental Research Systems Institute.



**Gabi Kirk** is a doctoral student in geography, designated emphasis in feminist theory and research, at the University of California, Davis. Her research fields include political ecology, feminist geography, and geographies of colonialism and settler-colonialism. Her dissertation project examines how Palestinian farmers and sustainable development institutions in the northern West Bank use agro-ecological practices to challenge normative notions of indigeneity and sovereignty, focusing specifically on fair-trade olive and almond farming. She is generally interested in the militarized landscapes and infrastructures of settler-colonial societies. She also has a project examining the transnational circuits of racial capitalism through agricultural scientific expertise between California and Palestine-Israel, historically and today.



**Marie Louise Ryan** is a doctoral candidate in geography at Penn State University, where she uses feminist political ecology to examine social-ecological hierarchies of exclusion within resource management. Her dissertation research examines key questions at the intersection of agrarian studies and agrobiodiversity conservation. Specifically, she investigates how outmigration affects the intersecting dynamics of caste, ethnicity, labor relations, and land tenure status in traditional paddy and finger millet systems in the midhills of Nepal. Her project calls attention to the necessity of recognizing more marginal

farm managers such as landless and semilandless tenant farmers who play a vital role in agricultural land management. She uses rigorous qualitative methods to investigate complex, situated human-environment dynamics. She hopes to generate new knowledge regarding farming labor practices and socially differentiated subjectivities tied to culturally significant

agrobiodiversity. She received a master's degree in sustainable agriculture and a master's in community and regional planning at Iowa State University.



**Caroline Tracey** (UC-Berkeley geography) studies the U.S. Southwest and the places to which it is, and has long been, connected through ecology, economy, and human movement. Her dissertation project, sited in Mexico City and South Texas, uses a transnational feminist lens to examine humanitarian responses to migrant death at the border, which are hemispheric, political, and intimate. Originally from Colorado, Caroline holds a bachelor's degree in Russian literature, and before graduate school she held a Fulbright research fellowship to Kyrgyzstan and worked as a cattle ranch hand in New Mexico.



**Leonora Zoninsein** (UC-Berkeley geography) studies the way sensory experience and knowledge about it, specifically olfaction, is produced historically and through discrete political, geographical relations. Her doctoral research develops a material history of the perfume industry and traces the embodied, epistemological inheritance from perfumery in the production of synthetic chemistry. Her research is attentive to how sensory experience, often overlooked in geography, shapes industrial scientific practice and conditions bodies and environments in new ways.

Leonora was born in Rio de Janeiro and has a master's degree in water science, policy, and management from the Oxford University Centre for the Environment and a bachelor's in literary arts from Brown University. Her unique commitments to safeguarding water bodies and to reverential political accounting bring her to the articulation of her dissertation question, "How does a whale become a molecule?" Leonora lives in Berkeley, California, where she reads, teaches, and runs a small fragrance atelier as part of her material-olfaction research.

## 2019-2020 Pruitt Minority Fellowship Recipient



**Emily J. Diaz Vallejo** is a biogeographer pursuing her master’s degree at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Emily is native to Puerto Rico and has always been interested in the environment and tropical ecosystem. While working toward her bachelor’s degree at the University of Puerto Rico – Rio Piedras, she researched how fire and topography influenced belowground ecosystems in the tropics. Now, at Madison, she is studying how land use legacies affect plants, roots, and soil fungi through forest succession. Also, her research tries to understand how these biotic components can affect soil organic matter dynamics across different soil orders.

Emily is particularly interested in measuring the plasticity of root and fungal traits and their role in carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorus dynamics. Through evaluating soil biotic components across forest succession at different soil orders, she will be able to better understand how human disturbances across different environment can affect soil organic matter dynamics. Also, she will be able to provide empirical data that can be later used in global carbon models to have better estimates of carbon dynamics. Understanding biotic responses to forest recovery will potentially have implications for improving land management, ecosystem productivity, and our ability to predict feedbacks between tropical ecosystems and future disturbances. Her career goal is to become a researcher and professor to contribute to the knowledge of soil processes that can be later applied to environmental issues and projects in and outside the academy. As well, she plans to become a science educator to teach and mentor future students in the university but also create outreach activities to involve local communities and leaders of environmental programs in scientific research.

## 2019-2020 New York Fellowship Recipients



**Lauren Hudson** is a doctoral candidate in earth and environmental sciences at the City University of New York-Graduate Center under the advisement of Dr. Marianna Pavlovskaya. Her dissertation, “Defining ‘Movement Space’ in New York City’s Solidarity Economy,” is an ethnographic project about women who engage in collective forms of labor throughout the city. Using both interviews and sketch maps from participants, her research asks how in doing such work — which includes cooperative finance, community gardens, and food cooperatives — women are redrawing the boundaries of the city and creating a movement geography based on collective values.

In addition to graduate work, Lauren is a peer educator with the Cooperative Economics Alliance of New York, an organization that she and other collective members of SolidarityNYC, a solidarity economy advocacy organization, co-founded. She is also a lecturer with ThinkOlio, where she teaches subjects related to feminist urban geography. Before landing at CUNY, Lauren received her bachelor's degree from Sarah Lawrence College and began working in the cooperative space soon after as a Cooperative Finance Leader of America Fellow at the National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions.



**Rebecca Kukla** is completing her master's degree in geography at CUNY-Hunter College. She is also professor of philosophy and senior research scholar at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University, where she recently helped found a new program in disability studies and serves as editor-in-chief of the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*. She is hoping to develop the interface between geography and philosophy into a new subdiscipline. Her master's thesis examines what she calls "repurposed cities," which are cities built to support and enforce a social and political order that went defunct and whose residents must now find creative new ways of using

the spaces left behind. Her fieldwork consisted of an ethnographic study of how a series of such leftover spaces are reused and reshaped by new residents in Berlin and Johannesburg. Her other research projects and interests in geography include street art and its role in place-making, urban mobility and accessibility, squatting and occupation as forms of spatial agency, and questions around how maps are constructed as tools of knowledge representation and communication. Her third book, *City Living: How Urban Spaces and Urban Dwellers Make One Another*, will be completed in 2020 and is forthcoming from Oxford University Press. She is also a sanctioned competitor in powerlifting and boxing.

## Museum and Exhibits Report

The exhibit, “Women with Wings” by member Barbara Ganson ran from mid-October, 2019 to mid-July, 2020 at SWG Headquarters. The exhibit explored how women have played a vital role in the history of powered flight since aviation’s early years and told the stories of aviators, astronauts, and those in aerospace services through displays of historically significant photographs and original research. The exhibit intended to expand a visitor’s learning experience and make them more aware of the exciting and rewarding careers in the aerospace industry as there is a need for greater diversity and gender balance in the aerospace industry, and in STEM fields.



The stories included:

Aerial performer Ruth Bancroft Law who gave airplane rides along Florida’s beaches, beginning in 1913.

America's first licensed pilot, Harriet Quimby, and the 100th anniversary celebration of her 1912 flight across the English Channel.

Wing Walker Mabel Cody and the Mabel Cody Flying Circus, 1921-1924.

Elizabeth “Bessie” Coleman, first woman of color licensed pilot in the world who learned to fly in France.

Jacqueline Cochran, air racer, record setter, Director of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) during World War II, and the first woman in the world to break the sound barrier (1953).

SWG member Eileen “Lea” Pike Michaelov, librarian and former pilot who flew four engine bombers for the British Air Transport Auxiliary from the factory to the field during World War II.

Florida WASP Frances Rohrer Sargent (flight instructor), Ruth Shafer Fleisher (air traffic controller), Helen Wyatt Snapp (born in Washington DC) who once flew the famous Memphis Belle B-17.

Mary Gaffaney, world champion aerobatic pilot who broke into the industry in the 1970s and appeared in *Sports Illustrated*. She was also owner of the Kendall Flying school and established a commercial glider operation on land she purchased next to the Everglades National Park.

Lesser known-women who flew since the 1950s, including airline pilots, as well as those in aviation services, including flight attendants and mechanics.

Patty Wagstaff, air show performer, American national aerobatic champion, aerobatic instructor in St. Augustine.

Tina Peña, helicopter pilot, Coast Guard Wing Commander, New Orleans.

Julie Wang, First Chinese Woman to Fly Solo Around the World in a small airplane, and First Officer for Silver Airways.

And NASA's deputy director Janet Petro and astronauts.