Greetings from the Chair

Craig Cooper, Idaho National Laboratory

This has been an eventful year. The world has been mired in economic problems, the Middle East is trapped in a cycle of conflict, and the U.S. has seen a Presidential election that is notable for the candidates’ commitment to dodge the issues. In science, we’ve seen the State of North Carolina attempt to prevent coastal communities from incorporating climate change adaptation into long-term planning; and had a prominent Georgia Congressman refer to evolution, embryology, and the Big Bang theory as a “lies straight from the pit of hell”. Rep. Paul Broun is not alone. Consider the 70,000 square foot Creation Museum in Petersburg, KY; which has hosted well over one million visitors with exhibits that defy scientific learning and display dinosaurs walking among humans in the Garden of Eden. Their website advertises a College Expo, and an “Answers for Teachers” course that provides Bible-based training in Creation apologetics.

Geoscientists understandably become upset with this type of “religious fabrication”, and many of us would be pleased to learn that our economic troubles have also depressed attendance at the Creation Museum. However, we should also remain cognizant of the powerful ability of religious faith to provide people with emotional sustenance during troubling times. Scientific arguments that try to refute the existence of a divine entity can serve to alienate people from science, thereby making it more difficult to put science to work serving society.
Greetings from the Chair (con’t)

Religious faith helps people deal with uncertainty. Understanding religious faith can help scientists communicate uncertainty to a skeptical public.

Communicating uncertainty to the public is one of the underlying themes of the G&S Division’s contributions to the 2012 GSA Annual Meeting. Sessions T79 and T83 focus on uncertainty in Earth and climate science, and managing culture clashes when using geology to inform public policy. Our Distinguished Lecturer, Dr. Mohamed El-Ashry, will also touch on uncertainty in his presentation of *Energy and Global Sustainability*. Co-hosted technical sessions that include issues such as hydraulic fracturing, natural hazard characterization, forensic geochemistry, sea level rise, and coastal hazards also touch on the issue of communicating uncertainty. This year, while learning new science and interacting with our colleagues at GSA, think about both the human and technical aspects of uncertainty. Can a greater understanding of religion and the vast uncertainty in what the Bible actually says help us to more effectively communicate with the public, and encourage people to make better decisions? Can a more “humanistic” approach to teaching and communicating science help us to overcome the age-old conflicts between science and religion? Religious institutions such as the Lutheran Church are taking a hard look at how new scientific learning impacts the foundations of their faith. Perhaps it is time for geoscientists to also consider how a deeper understanding of theology can help us to work with people to more effectively put science to work helping solve the world’s many enduring problems.

As a final note, I would also like to say that it has been an honor and a pleasure to serve as G&S Division Chair this year. I have learned a lot, and believe that the Division is making excellent progress. Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication. Be well, travel safely, and may life greet you with the finest blessings of the Irish:

*May you always walk in sunshine.*
*May you never want for more.*
*May Irish angels rest their wings right beside your door.*

DIVISION FINANCIAL REPORT REVEALS A SUCCESSFUL YEAR

**Jon Goodwin**
*Illinois State Geological Survey*
*G&S Division Secretary-Treasurer*

The financial report for the first quarter of FY 2013, prepared by GSA’s accounting office, shows that the Division currently has almost $6,000 in unrestricted net assets.

Our total revenue from dues so far this year (current + deferred dues) is almost $1137. This amount is $56 less than the amount we had received by the end of the first quarter of FY 2012. We expect that dues revenues will rise substantially during the second quarter when most members pay their dues to renew their membership in GSA and the Division. Nevertheless, for several years our total dues revenues have not been sufficient to pay the expenses we have incurred. We may need to consider increasing the annual dues from $8 per year to $10.
We certainly hope that members of the Division will continue to contribute to the GSA Foundation to support current activities of the Division. We need to build up a substantial nest-egg that can support the expenses related to our Distinguished Lecture series. To attract noted figures from outside the field of geology it will be necessary to pay their travel and lodging expenses and, in many instances, a significant honorarium. Our current assets and dues revenue make it almost impossible to make such expenditures.

According to GSA’s annual report of the 10-year histories of membership in all the Divisions, the Geology and Society Division’s membership fell from 360 in 2011 to 307 in 2012, a 15 percent decline. Several divisions experienced a decrease in membership as large as ours, but a few others grew substantially. Overall for GSA, the number of people who maintain membership in one or more divisions has remained nearly constant at just under 13,000 for several years.

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Our net assets include $4050 in unrestricted contributions to the GSA Foundation to support the activities of the Division that the management board asked to be transferred to the Division’s operating account near the end of FY 2012. Those additional assets will help tremendously when we begin paying the substantial costs for running our events at the annual meeting. The food served at the annual post-lecture/pre-business meeting reception on Tuesday evening, as always, will be our largest expense, probably slightly in excess of $2,000. There will also be the expense of a total of $600 in cash awards to the winners of the 2011 Best Student Paper competition. Those winners are announced elsewhere in the newsletter and they will receive their awards at the beginning of the annual meeting of the membership on Tuesday evening in Charlotte.

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Saturday, 3 November, UNC-Charlotte Center City, 320 E. 9th Street, Room 602
Take this GSA Short Course to learn how to better communicate your science with your neighbor, the media, and policymakers. This interactive workshop will address message development, identifying opportunities for engaging the public, and practice with public presentations.

Networking with Policy Fellows Reception. (Refreshments provided)
Sunday, 4 Nov. 5:30-7:00 PM, Westin, Independence Room. Come meet Congressional Science Fellows and discuss their experience working at the interface between science and policy and network with others interested in policy at this informal reception.

Ad Hoc Rocks and Hops, the GSA GeoSocioPolicy Soiree
Sunday, 4 Nov. 7:00 PM, Brixx: 225 E 6th Street. The members of the Geology and Society Division and Geology and Public Policy Committee encourage you to drop by, have some food and hops, and engage in collegial discussions of geology, philosophy, policy, and all the things that make us passionate about geology and earth science.

Geology & Society (G&S) Division Management Board Meeting
Monday, 5 Nov. 11:45 AM – 1:30 PM, Westin, Stonewall Boardroom
Interested G&S Division members are invited to attend the Division Management Board meeting.

Geology and Society Distinguished Lecture: Energy and Global Sustainability

Mohamed El-Ashry, Senior Fellow, UN Foundation and Former CEO & Chairman, Global Environment Facility (GEF) Tuesday, 6 Nov. 5:45-6:45 PM, CCC 208B

The main driver of sustainable development is sustainable energy. There is broad consensus that the current path of global energy development is not sustainable. The world's energy needs continue to grow and will be almost 60% higher in 2030 than they are now and CO2 emissions will increase at about the same rate. We are already facing global climate disruptions, rising sea levels, acidifying oceans, large-scale societal dislocations, and collapsing ecosystems. A transition to energy systems driven by clean, renewable sources, with natural gas as a "bridge" fuel, would pave the way towards global sustainability and a more secure future.

Dr. El-Ashry will examine energy and sustainability linkages and investigate the idea that "there is no development without energy and no sustainable development without sustainable energy.”

G&S Division Awards and Geoscience Haiku reception with food and beverages. All are welcome!
Tuesday, 6 Nov. 6:45 PM – 8:45 PM, CCC 208B. All GSA members are invited to join members of G&S Division for a reception to celebrate the winners of our Student Awards and Geology Haiku competitions followed by a brief business meeting.

Election Night Returns Viewing Event
Tuesday, 6 Nov. 7:30 PM, BlackFinn American Saloon: 210 East Trade Street
Watch the election results roll in with other geoscientists and discuss their implications.

**Lunchtime Lecture #4: What Do the Election Results Mean for Science?**

Wednesday, 7 Nov. 12:15-1:15 PM; CCC

This distinguished panel will examine how the election results will shape federal funding for geoscience research, environmental and energy policy, minerals, and more.

**Stop by the Geology & Public Policy Committee and Geology & Society Division Exhibition Booths** to learn more about these events, policy activities, and how you can help implement GSA Position Statements on such topics as climate change, natural hazards, water resources, and teaching evolution.

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**NABG MEETING, SEPTEMBER 5-8, 2012 ARLINGTON VA**

*M.J. Suiter, Geology and Society Division*

On September 5-8, 2012, the annual conference of the National Association of Black Geoscientists (NABG, formerly NABGG) was held in Arlington, Virginia. NABG is a professional organization established in June of 1981 by a group of black geoscientists in the Houston/Dallas area. The 2012 conference theme was “Focus on Environmental Change.”

NABG conferences typically have a strong focus on strengthening the “pipeline” of support for African-American (and other URM) geology students. Student research presentations, oral and poster, are a significant element of the conference agenda. The research presentations this year were quite good, with a broad technical range, from geochemistry and geophysics to carbonate sequestration and volumetric visualization. Conference attendance (~100+) included academic, government, and industry professionals, academic faculty, oil and gas industry professionals, geoscience students (50+) and professionals. A special activity hosted by NABG again this year was a conversation on “Women of Color in the Geosciences.” The session was well-received by participants. The event explored the issues that pose barriers and challenges for women of color in STEM. Another workshop-format discussion was on access to “Graduate and Post-doc” programs.

The meeting closed with a field trip at the Matte Gorge and Great Falls of the Potomac (with rocks of Precambrian and Cambrian age). The trip was led by Dr. Charles Brown, conference chair and a hydrology professor at George Washington University who is a former USGS staffer.

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**WRITING FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

*Robert Titus*

*Hartwick College, Oneonta NY 13820*

What was intended as a onetime submission to this newsletter will, starting now, turn into a regular column for the foreseeable future. The purpose is simple: I am promoting the notion that we geologists should write regular newspaper and magazine columns about our science. The purpose is, of course, to educate the general reading public about geology, as it applies to their locale. But, equally important, I am advocating that such column writing should integrate our science
into the everyday workings of our communities.

I have been writing columns for Catskill region magazines and newspapers for more than 20 years. Currently I produce about 70 columns each year; weekly for one newspaper chain, monthly for another newspaper, and quarterly for a Catskills area magazine. At the same time I do at least a dozen public appearances each year, these consisting of PowerPoint presentations and geology walks. A lot of work? No, a lot of fun! I meet people and make friends throughout the Catskills and Hudson Valley. I would like it very much if some of you joined in where you live. It’s a grass roots effort and it is, potentially, a very valuable endeavor for our science and for science itself (Google “Titus-geology”).

But, you can’t just start writing. There’s a lot of preparation needed before you even give it a try. The first and most obvious question is “what do I write about?” There are many answers to that question, but it is mostly a matter of writing about the geology that you know about and the geology that you pass by every day. Recently I gave a talk to a well drillers association about the floods of Hurricane Irene. That was in the town of Windham, here in the Catskills. Coming home I drove past a stretch of the Batavia Kill Valley that had been a glacial lake. The road passed by an exposure of the lake beds on the banks of the kill. I took a picture and had the makings of a column. I headed north, following a location called Mitchell Hollow. A glacier had, long ago, descended that valley and left at least five moraines. I found a good exposure, shot another photo and had another column. Soon, I noticed bedrock exposures along the highway at the northern end of Mitchell Hollow. These had been polished and striated by the same glacier. I go another photo and bagged another column.

I think that you can see the process. I had gone for a scenic autumn ride in the Catskills and came home with the makings of three weeks of newspaper columns. All were about the ice age history of my region, something that generates a lot of interest among my readers. The key was to always have my camera with me. Whenever I see something good I pull over and take a picture. Doesn’t sound like so much work, does it?

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NEW GEOLOGY AND SOCIETY DIVISION SECOND VICE-CHAIR ELECTED

Christopher P. Carlson, of the US Forest Service, was elected as Second Vice-Chair for the GSA Division of Geology and Society.

Chris Carlson has been serving as the National Groundwater Program Leader for the Forest Service since June 2005. As the first incumbent in this position, his focus has been on program development: establishing national policy, fostering awareness of the groundwater resource across the agency, and developing technical resources and providing technical assistance and training on groundwater issues to the agency nationwide. In addition, Chris has led the effort to finalize and implement the agency’s National Best Management Practices Program to help maintain and improve water quality in association with activities on National Forests and Grasslands. Chris has also served as acting Assistant Director for
SOME SAMPLE HAIKU FROM DIVISION MEMBERS

The Division of Geology and Society is requesting haiku submissions from G&S Division members and GSA membership at large. The purpose of the haiku should be to capture the essence of what it means to use geoscience to serve society. It can be about anything from discovery of our world, to teaching, to whatever our members think the phrase "Geology Serving Society" means.

At the Annual Meeting in Charlotte, stop by the Division booth and submit your own haiku. The contest winner will have their haiku put on a Division T-shirt. We look forward to your deeply poetic and meaningful submissions in Charlotte.

Winners will be announced at our Division reception on Tuesday, 6 Nov. 6:45 PM – 8:45 PM, CCC 208B.

Some intrepid geo-poets have already submitted their haiku:

Society served
The Geology revealed
Wisdom rewarded - John Mason

Earth forces within
Discover, disseminate
Victory for all – Dave Wunsch

Critical questions
How do geologists help?
Informed decisions – Jeff Rubin

Uninformed debate
Climate change, hazards, fracking
We must engage - duh! – Jeff Rubin

The public’s questions
Geologists must engage
Who else if not us? – Jeff Rubin

Beach combed by young kids
Vigilant for foreign jewels
Wonders never cease – Syd Brown

Water, wind, and sea
Flowing, blowing, sand and rocks
Nature’s sculpting tools – Syd Brown

Field day in the sun
Bruntons glint with secrets held
Cipher truth below – Syd Brown

Hillside homes reveal
Human folly seeking view
Home sweet home, indeed – Syd Brown

Earth Scientists serve
Society gets better
We are the good ones – R. Laurence Davis