



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 7 July 2023

Award recipients celebrate at geography's 'night of nights'

Last night, the 'world of geography' celebrated some of the discipline's best and brightest at the annual awards night of the Institute of Australian Geographers (IAG) conference. The awards night and prizes highlight the outstanding achievements of the past year and leads to the final day of the conference.

This week, more than 230 conference attendees have heard intriguing presentations including the impact of cane toads on the behaviour of other species in Australia, the impact of Artificial Intelligence and the role of geography, and how Indigenous communities and researchers co-created a 'seasonal calendar' in Kunbarlanja in West Arnhem Land.

Professor Jennifer Carter, President of the Institute of Australian Geographers said: "This year's event has brought together some of Australia's - and the world's - most talented professionals who fall under the diverse label of 'geographer'."

"This year's IAG award recipients embody the sentiment of the conference theme *Coexistence, Collaboration and Geography*. Through their work, they display the value of partnerships and collaboration. We celebrate their achievements, research and talents."

Three recipients were presented with the 2023 IAG Awards – Associate Professor Corrinne Sullivan, Dr Meg Sherval and Dr Souvik Lal Chakraborty.

The William Jonas Award

Recipient: Associate Professor Corrinne Sullivan, Western Sydney University

Award purpose: To recognise excellence in significant contributions made to Indigenous geographies, and/or excellence in significant contributions made to the discipline of geography by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander geographers.

Summary: A/Prof Sullivan is a Wiradjuri woman who has contributed ground-breaking geographic and Indigenous Studies scholarship on gender and sexual themes that have informed policy, practice, services and resources. She has received numerous awards and has been extensively published including the 2020 Wiley Award for best paper in Geographical Research. A/Prof Sullivan has the most cited paper over the last three years. Her work published elsewhere is in the top 10 cited papers for 2020. Current grants include an NHMRC grant and an ARC Linkage grant. She is on the Editorial Board of Geographical Research and Australian Geographer and is a Councillor of the Geographical Society of NSW.



A Fellowship of the Institute of Australian Geographers (FIAG)

Recipient: Dr Meg Sherval, University of Newcastle

Award purpose: To recognise sustained and significant contributions made to the discipline by IAG members in diverse fields.

Summary: Dr Meg Sherval has sustained and significantly developed geography and geographers at her university. She advocates for geography at her university, sits on numerous program committees, and has received teaching and student engagement awards. She has been awarded a prestigious St. Mary's College Women's Fellowship at Durham University (UK) and is the holder of an ARC grant. She has been a Councillor of the Geographical Society of New South Wales and the Institute of Australian Geographers and contributes to two study groups (as a convenor and co-convenor). Dr Sherval volunteered her expertise to NSW communities during the release of land use plans, resulting in the government's imposition of exclusion zones around Hunter Valley wine and horse breeding regions. She also has worked with Indigenous peoples to help protect sacred sites.

An Award for Dissertation Excellence

Recipient: Dr Souvik Lal Chakraborty, Monash University

Award purpose: To recognise an early career researcher at Honours, Masters, or PhD level. The award acknowledges the disciplinary contribution that the candidate has made to geography.

Summary: Dr Chakraborty's 2022 PhD dissertation examined the geographies of social movements and conflicts over resource management, particularly concerning Indigenous peoples. Both examiners passed the dissertation without further amendment or examination, and both noted his potential as a leading early career scholar in his field. One examiner noted that the dissertation was theoretically sophisticated and empirically rich due to lengthy fieldwork - leading to a "fine piece of scholarship". The other examiner commented on Dr Chakraborty's ability to challenge simplistic understandings - showing the ability to think critically and an exceptional grasp of the scholarship. The supervisor noted the significant contribution to the discipline of geography - particularly spatial strategies and processes and their influences on social movements - and speaking and publication requests had arisen.

IAG President Professor Jennifer Carter will encourage all IAG Award recipients to make submissions to *Geographical Research*, so their contributions can inspire readers around the world.

Three awards were also presented on behalf of the editorial team at *Geographical Research*, publisher Wiley and the IAG. The recipients were notified that their work has been published in *Geographical Research* moments before the ceremony and that certificates and financial prizes would follow.

IAG Councillor and Journal Editor, Professor Elaine Stratford, said: "We are constantly impressed by the submissions to the Journal, so the panel had a tough time picking the recipients."



2022 Wiley Prizes for publications in the *Geographical Research Journal*

Most highly esteemed

Recipients: Amelia Hine, Robyn Mayes, Bree Hurst

Paper title: The finch in the coal mine: Interrogating the environmental politics of extinction narratives

Summary: The black-throated finch is an endangered species whose highest quality remaining habitat directly overlaps with the site of the controversial Adani Carmichael coal mine in Central Queensland, Australia. The image of this finch has been widely used by anti-Adani protest groups as a powerful symbol for the destructive nature of greenfield coal mining. Drawing on extinction studies literature, the authors problematise the use of the black-throated finch as a symbol of imminent extinction, highlighting how activists have constructed a fixed finch on-the-brink ontology that narrows possible futures for the species.

Read the article: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1745-5871.12560>

Highly esteemed

Recipients: Yan Tan and Xuchun Liu

Paper title: Measuring diaspora populations and their socio-economic profiles: Australia's Chinese diaspora

Summary: Data on diasporas are incomplete, inaccurate, and beset by definitional fluidity as the concept itself evolves. Despite their significant role in homeland development, members of a diaspora population are typically passed over in origin countries' censuses, and policies and planning rely instead on statistics generated in destination countries. The authors called for nuanced understandings of the populations and data so that policymakers and agencies in the countries of origin could work toward more targeted diaspora engagement practices.

Read the article: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1745-5871.12557>

Highly esteemed

Recipients: Maartje Roelofsen and Richard Carter-White

Paper title: Virtual reality as a spatial prompt in geography learning and teaching

Summary: The authors examined the claim that virtual reality (VR) holds significant potential for pedagogical applications in geography, with reference to results from a research-teaching project and a VR field trip to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Findings were that VR technology may work as a (dis)inhibitor and provided users with a sense of social and temporal freedom to explore sites but in combination with a new set of spatial and perceptual constraints. The authors argue that learning with and through VR technology only became possible via active bodily adaptations and renewed understandings of bodily capacities and their inequalities.

Read the article: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1745-5871.12551>



All award recipients present at the conference were heartily congratulated by their peers as they assembled for photographs.

“We welcome the opportunity to work with the recipients to celebrate their achievements across other IAG communication channels – we want to share their knowledge with aspiring and current geographers and the broader community,” said Jennifer.

The annual Institute of Australian Geographers conference ran from 4 – 7 July 2023 at Curtin University’s Bentley campus in Perth, Western Australia. The conference brought together more than 230 experts in geography from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Europe, England, Asia, South Africa and the USA.

The event was co-hosted by Curtin University and the University of Western Australia in partnership with the Institute of Australian Geographers.

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