

# AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

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## **American Geographical Society to Award Honorary Fellowships at Fall Symposium**

*Description: The Honorary Fellowship, awarded by the American Geographical Society (AGS), is one of several prestigious honors given by the Society, and are bestowed on individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of geography. Mr. Jesse Ausubel, Director for the Program for the Human Environment at Rockefeller University, Dr. D. James Baker, Director of the Global Carbon Measurement Program of the William J. Clinton Foundation, and Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, will receive the honor on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November during the AGS Fall Symposium, Geography 2050: Exploring our Future in an Urbanized World, to be held at Columbia University.*

[New York City, NY] — [October 17, 2016] – The American Geographical Society (AGS) announced today that Dr. Roberta Balstad and Ms. Barbara Ryan have been selected to receive the American Geographical Society Honorary Fellowship. The certificates of honor will be presented on November 18, 2016 during the Society's annual Fall Symposium to be held at Columbia University. For more information on the Symposium, please refer to [www.geography2050.org](http://www.geography2050.org).

The Honorary Fellowships are bestowed on individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of geography. At the time of the founding of the Society in 1851, a provision was made for a category of Honorary Fellows, and, until the first medal was awarded in 1896, this was the only honor the institution could bestow. Many of the Honorary Fellows are some of the most recognized names in geographical and exploration history.

Dr. Roberta Balstad has completed two terms as Chair of the UCAR Board of Trustees. She is currently serving as Chair of the UCAR Committee on Advocacy for the Scientific Community (UASC), a Special Research Scientist at Columbia University and Senior Fellow of the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN). Prior to her position as Chair, she was the founding Editor-in-Chief of *Weather, Climate and Society*, a journal of the American Meteorological Society from 2008 to 2013. Dr. Balstad has published on diverse topics as the role of social sciences in understanding global environmental change, information technology and scientific research, science policy, and remote sensing applications and policy.

Ms. Barbara Ryan is the Secretariat Director of the intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO) in Geneva Switzerland. Under Ryan's leadership, millions of satellite images and other Earth observation data have been made available to the general public at no charge. This open-sourced sharing of data has allowed scientists, planners and policy makers to make better-informed decisions on problems that transcend political boundaries. Her work addresses critical issues in agriculture, biodiversity, climate change, disaster planning, energy, health and water. In 1974, Ryan joined the United States Geological Survey (USGS). She is an expert in groundwater contamination and was selected as staff assistant to the Department of the Interior's top official for water and science. As an associate director for geography at the USGS, she was responsible for the agency's remote sensing, geography and civilian mapping programmes, including the Landsat satellites. Lastly, Ryan was recently awarded an honorary doctorate of science degree from SUNY Cortland.

"For decades, both Dr. Balstad and Ms. Ryan have been stellar leaders in the fields of geography, sustainability, and remote sensing, as well as serving as keen students and stewards of the complexities of the human condition. Dr. Balstad has spent her life as a leader within the academy, bringing geospatial technologies and remote sensing data to the fore in pioneering research endeavors

that have had profound impacts in the real world,” said Dr. Christopher Tucker, Chair of AGS and Founder of the MapStory Foundation. “Ms. Ryan has been a stalwart public servant who has helped craft the government and inter-governmental institutions that are charged with the production of many of the key geospatial and remote sensing datasets and analytical techniques on which the sustainability community relies. The Society could not be more proud to have them both joining our ranks as Honorary AGS Fellows, and we look forward to their engagement and collaboration in the years to come,” added Dr. Tucker.

Established in 1851, the American Geographical Society (AGS) is the oldest professional geographical/geospatial organization in the United States. It is recognized worldwide as a pioneer in geographical research and education in geography for over 165 years. AGS is a 21st century learning society dedicated to the advancement of geographic thinking, understanding, and knowledge across business, government, academe, the social sector, and education. The goal of AGS is to enhance the nation’s geographic literacy so as to engender sound public policy, national security, and human well-being worldwide. AGS is the only organization focused on bringing together academics, business people, those who influence public policy (including leaders in local, state and federal government, not-for-profit organizations and the media), and the general public for the express purpose of furthering the understanding of the role of geography in our lives. AGS provides leadership to frame the national discussion of the growing importance of geography and geospatial tools. The Society maintains its headquarters in New York City.



*Dr. Roberta Balstad*



*Dr. Barbara Ryan*

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