

# About the BGN

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) is an interagency body that develops the principles, policies, and procedures for geographic names used by the Federal Government. In addition, it standardizes and approves geographic names of domestic, foreign, Antarctic, and undersea features for Federal use.

To fulfill its mission, the BGN coordinates with State, local, and Tribal governments, and with international authorities, and works conjointly with the Secretary of the Interior, who approves BGN policies and decisions.

The BGN consists of members and staff. Members of the Domestic Names Committee and the Foreign Names Committee develop policy and vote on geographic names. The BGN is also supported by two advisory committees covering undersea feature names as well as Antarctic names. BGN members represent the following Federal departments and agencies:

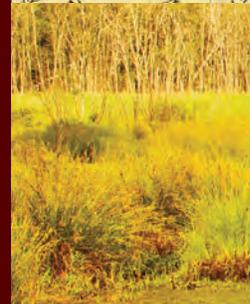
- Department of Agriculture (Domestic Names)
- Department of Commerce (Domestic and Foreign Names)
- Department of Defense (Domestic and Foreign Names)
- Department of Homeland Security (Domestic Names)
- Department of the Interior (Domestic Names)
- Department of State (Foreign Names)
- Central Intelligence Agency (Foreign Names)
- Government Publishing Office (Domestic Names)
- Library of Congress (Domestic and Foreign Names)
- Postal Service (Domestic Names)

BGN staff research geographic names, maintain the databases of official geographic names records and decisions, make recommendations to the BGN, and interact with the public. The U.S. Geological Survey provides staff support for domestic and Antarctic names, while the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency provides staff support for foreign and undersea feature names.



## Traditions and Transitions

*Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names*



September 18, 2015

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. • Mumford Room • Library of Congress





# Welcome

Greetings and welcome to the 125th anniversary celebration of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN). Today, we have two special events, a symposium and open house, to celebrate the traditions and the transitions of the BGN as well as its dedicated service to the Nation.

The BGN is the authority for geographic names used by the U.S. Federal Government. Its members represent Federal departments and agencies, and they standardize names for geographic features in the United States and around the world.

President Benjamin Harrison established the BGN on September 4, 1890, to resolve conflicts in geographic names. President Theodore Roosevelt expanded the BGN's authority in 1906, to include all issues related to names and Congress reestablished the BGN in its current form in 1947 under Public Law 80-242.

The initial motivations for the BGN – addressing geographic name conflicts, reducing duplication of effort among agencies, and facilitating the clear and unambiguous communication of geographic information – remain as critical today as the day the Board was conceived.

The BGN is not a static organization, but one that is constantly evolving and adapting. Changes in American society during the past 125 years are reflected in the BGN's principles and policies. Advancements in technology for collecting, managing, and disseminating information are reflected in the BGN's modernized systems.

On behalf of the members and staff of the BGN, I am pleased to share this anniversary event with you, as we reflect on our history and look to the future.



Douglas R. Caldwell  
Chair, U.S. Board on Geographic Names

# Schedule of Events



9:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

## Symposium

Mumford Room, LM 649 (6th floor)

3:30 to 5:00 p.m.

## Open House

Geography and Map Room, LM B01 (basement)

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9:00 a.m.	<b>Opening Remarks</b> Mr. Douglas Caldwell, Chair, BGN
9:05 a.m.	<b>Welcome</b> Library of Congress
9:15 a.m.	<b>Welcome</b> Department of the Interior
9:25 a.m.	<b>Keynote:</b> <b>Geographic Names: Roles, Rhetoric, and Resistance</b>  Dr. Mark Monmonier, Distinguished Professor of Geography (Syracuse University)
10:05 a.m.	<b>Geographic Names Authorities, Standardization, and International Cooperation</b>  Ms. Helen Kerfoot, Former Chair, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), Emeritus Scientist, Natural Resources Canada
10:35 a.m.	Break
10:50 a.m.	<b>The Origin(s) of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names</b>  Capt. Albert E. "Skip" Théberge, NOAA Corps (Ret.), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Central Library
11:25 a.m.	<b>Evolution of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names</b>  Ms. Sandra Shaw, Former Chair of the BGN and Foreign Names Committee

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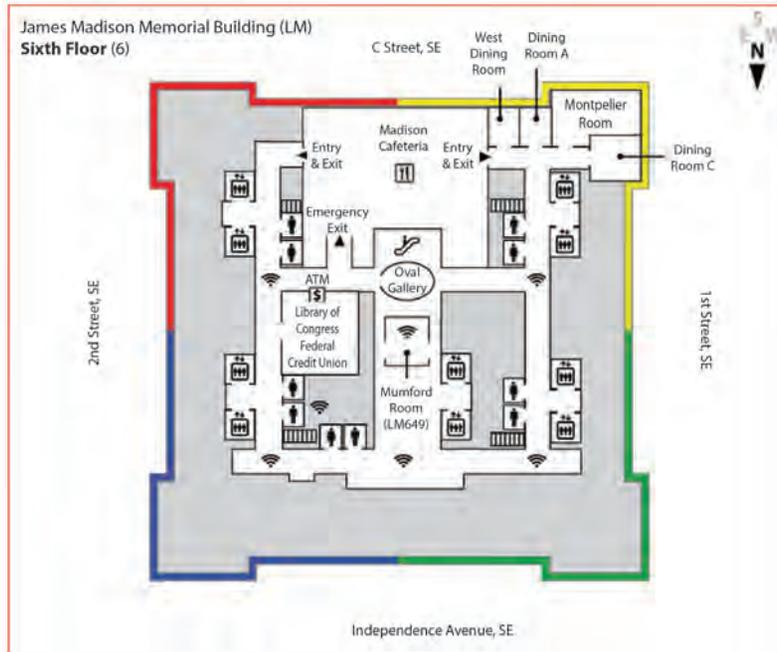


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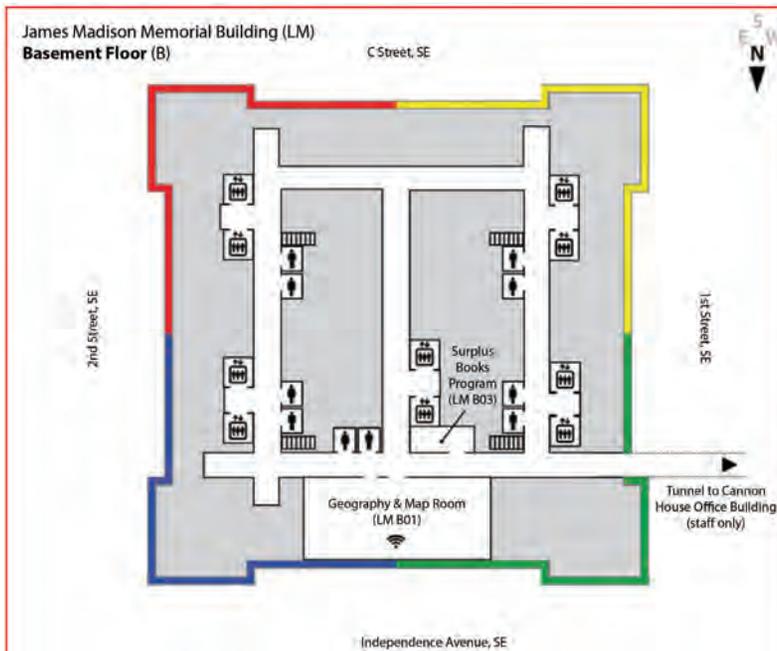
12:00 p.m.	<b>Introduction</b> of Former BGN Leaders, Current Members, and Staff
1:30 p.m.	<b>The Influence of Technology on the Use of and Access to Geographic Names</b>  Dr. Luis Bermudez, Executive Director of the Open Geospatial Consortium's Compliance and e-Learning Program
2:05 p.m.	<b>Authoritative Names and Crowd Sourcing: What's the Connection?</b>  Mr. David Stage, Former Florida State GIS Coordinator
2:40 p.m.	<b>The U.S. Board on Geographic Names and the National Geographic Society: 125 Years of Disseminating Place Names</b>  Mr. Juan José Valdés, The Geographer, Director of Editorial and Cartographic Research, National Geographic Society
3:15 p.m.	Break
3:30 to 5:00 p.m.	<b>Open House: Power of Names</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit the exhibit at the entrance to the Library of Congress Geography and Map Division</li> <li>• Explore historic geographic name records on special display at the Reading Room</li> <li>• Mingle with toponymists</li> </ul>

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## Location of Symposium and Cafeteria for lunch and breaks



## Location of Exhibit and Open House



# Speaker Biographies

**Dr. Mark Monmonier** is the Distinguished Professor of Geography at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, where his research focuses on environmental cartography and the history of cartography. He has been editor of *The American Cartographer* and president of the American Cartographic Association, and has published numerous papers on map design, automated map analysis, cartographic generalization, statistical graphics, and mass communications.

Dr. Monmonier is author of 19 books, including *How to Lie with Maps*; *From Squaw Tit to Whorehouse Meadow: How Maps Name, Claim, and Inflammate*; *Lake Effect: Tales of Large Lakes, Arctic Winds, and Recurrent Snows*; and *Adventures in Academic Cartography: A Memoir*, and is editor of *Cartography in the Twentieth Century* (Volume 6 of the *History of Cartography*), released earlier this year. He has served on advisory panels for the National Research Council and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Dr. Monmonier was awarded the American Geographical Society O.M. Miller Medal in 2001, the Pennsylvania State University Charles L. Hosler Alumni Scholar Medal in 2007, and the German Cartographic Society's Mercator Medal in 2009.

**Ms. Helen Kerfoot** is an Emeritus Scientist with Natural Resources in Ottawa, Canada, who served as Chair of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) from 2002 to 2012. Ms. Kerfoot was a school teacher, and a geomorphologist in Arctic Canada, before joining the mapping program at Natural Resources Canada.

From 1987 to 1998, Ms. Kerfoot was head of the Secretariat for Canada's national geographical names authority, being responsible for the launch of the national toponymic database on the Internet, a geographical names website, and publications on Canadian toponymy. As UNGEGN Chair, Ms. Kerfoot promoted the significance of geographical names standardization for national

spatial data infrastructures and for preservation of cultural heritage. Her leadership spurred the creation of the UNGEGN website, the publication of manuals and journals, the development of a world names database, and securing UN support for UNGEGN training courses, with emphasis on efforts in Africa.

Ms. Kerfoot has been a Governor of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, President of the Canadian Society for the Study of Names, Chair of the Ontario Geographic Names Board, contributor to various journals, presenter at international meetings, and recipient of several awards.

### **Capt. Albert E. “Skip” Théberge**

was a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Corps officer for 27 years, retiring in 1995. During his tenure in the NOAA Corps, he worked across 27 states and all U.S. territories in various capacities, including Commanding Officer of two NOAA survey vessels, Geodetic Field Party Chief, Hydrographic Field Party Chief, and Program Manager

of two major mapping projects. He also served as historian of the Coast and Geodetic Survey.

After retiring from active duty, he joined the NOAA Central Library where he has been Chief of Reference for many years. He served on the NOAA science team that helped design the Smithsonian’s Sant Ocean Hall, spearheaded NOAA’s 200th Anniversary celebration, and has written over 75 articles on the history of the Coast and Geodetic Survey and ocean sciences. In addition, he served on the BGN’s Advisory Committee for Undersea Features for 12 years.

### **Ms. Sandra Shaw**

was the Department of State’s Member to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (1977-1988), which she chaired from 1985 to 1987. She was Vice-Chairman (1983-85), as well as Chairman of the Foreign Names Committee (1979-1988). From 1982 to 1988, Ms. Shaw was a Member of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

Ms. Shaw began government service as a cartographer at

the CIA. During her 31-year Federal career she served in State as Deputy Executive Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research; Chief of Cartography in the Office of The Geographer; and State’s Resident Representative to the Defense Intelligence College. As Chief of Cartography, she supervised all the cartographic products of the Department. She oversaw cartographic support for the Arab-Israeli Peace Treaty (1979); the Taba Arbitration between Israel and Egypt (1988); the preparation of the United States’ submissions in the Gulf of Maine Case at the International Court of Justice (1984); and assisted the negotiation of the 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea Convention and the US-USSR maritime boundary in the Bering Sea (1990).

Among her awards, upon her retirement in 1994, Ms. Shaw received the National Intelligence Medal of Achievement from the Director of Central Intelligence.

### **Dr. Luis Bermudez**

is responsible for the strategy, development and management of the Compliance and e-Learning program at the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC), the world leader organization focused on geospatial standards. Dr. Bermudez has more than 20 years of experience in the information and technology industry including geospatial, sensor web, semantic web and legal information. Within OGC, he also serves as system architect in OGC Testbeds, leads OGC educational activities worldwide and supports activities related to earth sciences, health and the semantic web. He is Adjunct Professor in the GIS Master’s Program at the University of Maryland.

Before OGC, he was the Technical Manager at Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) and Technical Lead of the Marine Metadata Interoperability project at Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI). In both positions, he advanced technologies to support sharing and improvement of numerical

models and the integration of ocean observing systems around the world.

### Mr. David Stage

was a private consultant from 2001 to 2012, specializing in information management and the institutional and technical infrastructure issues related to geographic information. His work focused on conducting needs assessments and the collection of geographic data and eventually concentrating on the collection and sharing of cadastral data. He was the Eastern Cadastral Coordinator for the FGDC Subcommittee for Cadastral Data from 2002 to 2011.

His projects and publications cover a wide variety of subjects that include best practices for state parcel management programs; the acquisition of parcel data for wildland fire and hurricanes; best practices for the collection, management and sharing of authoritative data between Federal, State, local governments and the private sector; the use of land parcel data to address the mortgage crisis; and the collection of geographic names for the BGN as well as strategies for instituting formal methods

for relating names to their geographic footprints.

Now retired, Mr. Stage was the State GIS Coordinator for Florida from 1990 to 2001, and the Florida Governor's Liaison for the 2000 Census. His responsibilities in Florida were directed towards initiating cooperative efforts between agencies and different levels of government.

### Mr. Juan José Valdés

is The Geographer and Director of Editorial and Cartographic Research at the National Geographic Society. He guides and assists the Map Policy Committee in setting border representations, disputed territories, and naming conventions for National Geographic. As Director of Editorial and Cartographic Research, he is responsible for ensuring the accuracy and consistency of its maps and map products.

Now approaching 40 years of service, he has worked in one capacity or another on every type of map produced by the Society, including map supplements, globes, page maps, dynamic mapping platforms, and five editions of National Geographic's renowned *Atlas of the World*.

# Open House

## *Power of Names*

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names in 125 Years  
Geography and Map Division, Room LM B01  
3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

To commemorate the 125th anniversary of the BGN, the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress has prepared an exhibit on geographic names arranged in three themes.

### Early Geographic Names

Names on early historical maps reflect the geographic understanding of contemporary mapmakers and provide insight on the cultural context of the time.

Artifacts in this theme illustrate: geographic names collected by Ptolemy, a second-century geographer of Alexandria, Egypt; the first cartographic instance of the name *America*; names on early maps of America; and the 1791 *American Gazetteer* by Jedidiah Morse, considered the "Father of American Geography".

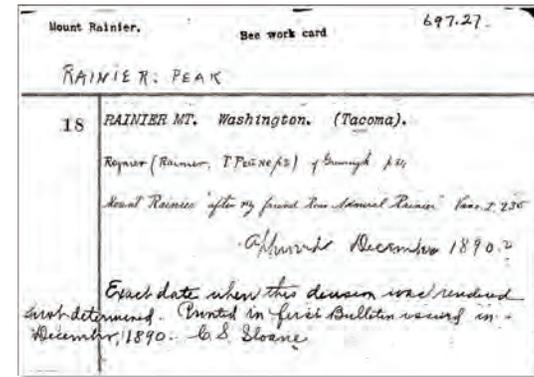
### Traditions and Practices of the BGN

Established in 1890, the BGN approves and standardizes geographic names for the Federal Government. In the nineteenth century, with the expansion of maritime and commercial activities, growth of interest in western lands and Alaska, and an increasingly global outlook, inconsistencies among names, spellings, and applications were a serious problem for the Federal Government. By continuing to ensure uniform usage of geographic names, the BGN reduces duplication of effort among Federal departments and agencies.



Portolan Chart of the Mediterranean Region from 1559

Exhibit items in this theme relate to key points in the history of the BGN and include: a copy of the Executive Order establishing the BGN; examples of BGN original records; historical printed gazetteers of the BGN; and maps showing name changes influenced by the BGN.



One of the earliest BGN documents – a decision card for Mount Rainier, Washington from 1890

### Power of Names

A linguistic function of a geographic name that lies beyond its practical use as a locational reference is to convey a host of psychological, historical, and cultural associations in the minds of people who use the name.

Naming or advocating the use of a certain name often signifies a sense of possession or dominion over the named place. In this way, names – an entirely intangible construct of language – may exert great and continuing power. This power extends to fictional as well as actual geographic names.

Collected items in this theme include: maps that display the transfer to America of the English geographic name Bradford; maps that show geographic names in politically disputed areas; studies of the use of geographic names in fictional literature; and maps that show connections between geographic names and wine.

# In Memoriam



**Dr. Richard Randall**

*Former Executive Secretary of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names*

Dr. Richard R. Randall, former Executive Secretary of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) passed away on March 14, 2015 in Washington, DC.

Born in 1925, Dr. Randall received an A.B. (1948), and M.A. (1949), in Geography from The George Washington University and a Ph.D. (1955) in Geography from Clark University. Randall studied geography at the University of Graz (Austria) in 1953-54, as a Fulbright scholar.

Randall worked for the Central Intelligence Agency from 1955 to 1961, first specializing in editorial work in its Geography Division and later as an Eastern-European specialist. After he became the Washington representative for Rand McNally and Company in 1961, he designed the first series of maps showing the world's oceans and water bodies for inclusion in the *Cosmopolitan Atlas* in 1969.

From 1973 until his retirement in 1993, he held office as Geographer for the Defense Mapping Agency (now the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency) and served as the Executive Secretary of the BGN. He remained an active member of the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping, the American Geographical Society, the Association of American Geographers, the Cosmos Club, and the Explorers Club.

In 2001, Scarecrow Press published Dr. Randall's book *Place Names: How They Define the World and More*. Drawing on his life experience, he explored how place names influence many aspects of people's lives and shape the way they view the world around them. He demonstrated how place names have become essential components of our everyday vocabulary, and how they are important elements of music and literature. He explored the political importance of place names in military and diplomatic matters and described various

# Acknowledgements

## **Program and Special Communications Committee**

Meredith Westington (NOAA), Chair

Marcus Allsup (NGA), Douglas Caldwell (USACE), Jon Campbell (USGS), Laurie Campbell (USFS), Leo Dillon (Department of State), Ralph Ehrenberg (LOC), Brenda-Anne "B.C." Forrest (GPO), Michael Fournier (Census), Tony Gilbert (GPO), Betsy Kanalley (USFS), Jacqueline Nolan (LOC), Matt O'Donnell (USGS), Jennifer Runyon (USGS), Trent Palmer (NGA), and Lou Yost (USGS)

Anniversary logo – Chris Everett

Program design – Cindy Moore

Posters – Susan Jarmolowski

## **Venue and Special Exhibit (Library of Congress)**

Ralph Ehrenberg, Jacqueline Nolan, Hannah Stahl, and members of the Geography and Map Division staff

## **Agency Sponsors**

The Library of Congress, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of State, and U.S. Forest Service

## **BGN Members and Staff**

For their dedication and commitment to standardizing geographic names for the Federal Government

## **Attendees**

A very special "thank you" for attending today and for your continued interest in and support of the BGN.