

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

May 8, 2002

Bill Schlotter

UCSB GEOGRAPHER ELECTED TO NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Michael Goodchild, a professor of geography at UC Santa Barbara since 1988 and a pioneer in computer-based geographical information systems, has been elected to the nation's most prestigious scientific organization, the National Academy of Sciences.

Goodchild was one of 72 new members elected by NAS members on April 30.

He is the 21st active UCSB faculty member now included in the 1,907-member organization.

Election into the Academy is considered one of the highest honors an American scientist or engineer can achieve.

"I am both pleased and honored," Goodchild said.

He was also surprised and a bit nostalgic:

"It makes you think about how you got to where you are and about who your mentors were."

UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang said: "I am extremely excited and proud that another one of our distinguished colleagues has been recognized with this extraordinary honor. Being elected to this most prestigious academy is a

magnificent achievement, one that shows the high regard in which Professor Goodchild is held by his peers in the scientific community."

The road to Goodchild's current influential place in science -- executive committee chair for the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (NCGIA) at UCSB, associate director of the Alexandria Digital Library Project, director of NCGIA's Center for Spatially Integrated Social Sciences -- began in 1967 when he left Cambridge University in his native England with a Bachelor's Degree in physics and began graduate work at McMaster University in Canada in geography.

Goodchild remembers eagerly telling one of his physics professors of his exciting news, only to be dismissed with the comment that his decision was "curious."

Curious or not, it set him on his path.

And after spending the ensuing summer scouting for caves in western Canada with McMaster geography professors and students, Goodchild -- then an avid spelunker -- knew his decision was correct.

After earning a Ph.D. in geography, he quickly moved to the forefront in the emerging field of geographic information system technology.

He came to UCSB in 1988 as part of the university's successful effort to become home to the NCGIA.

"What I do has a lot to do with computerized maps and geographic computer systems," Goodchild said.

"I've been doing this for 30 years or so.

I think this academy selection recognizes that I was one of the people who got involved in this very early on and has seen it spread across the sciences."

In addition to his NCGIA duties, Goodchild serves on the editorial boards of 10 journal and book series.

His current research focuses on geographic information science and spatial analysis.

Editors note: Goodchild can be reached at good@geog.ucsb.edu.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.