

Geography week attempts to remove student ignorance

By Ingrid Petersen
Emerald Reporter

According to a recent study, 25 percent of students surveyed in Dallas, Texas, did not know that Mexico shares a southern border with the United States.

Eliminating such geographical ignorance is the purpose of Oregon's first Geography Awareness Week, which began Monday and continues through Friday.

"What we are trying to do is to make people more aware of the geography in a world that is increasingly diverse," said Alvin Urquhart, a University geography professor who organized a series of lectures that are free to the public in celebration of the week. Urquhart claims geography has slipped from Americans' awareness.

"There are no teachers of geography in elementary schools. Geography has steadily

slipped from a subject by itself to something included in social studies," Urquhart said.

The study of geography in secondary schools is a bit better, according to Urquhart. Within the last few years, social science teachers of secondary education have been required to take at least six hours of geography. Elementary teachers, however, are not required to do so, he added.

Although geography is taught less often than history, it is no

less important, Urquhart said.

"One concerns the arrangement of things in time and the other concerns the arrangement of things on the surface of the earth," he said.

Lectures given by University geography professors will be featured each day this week on various aspects of the world's geography, he said.

The events thus far in the week have included lectures entitled "Past and Future Environmental Changes:

Geography of Distant Times," by Patricia McDowell and "Uzbekistan, Soviet Central Asia: Geography of Distant Places," by Ron Wixman.

"Cultural Conflict in Belgium: Geography in Search of the Present," by Alexander Murphy, is tonight's lecture, which will take place at 8 p.m. in Room 207 of Chapman Hall.

"Murphy's lecture is very timely. Over a week and a half ago, the government of Belgium fell over the very issues he is talking about," Urquhart said.

Carl Johannessen will speak on "Diffusion of Crop Plants in South Asia: Geography in Search of the Past," at 4 p.m. on Thursday in Room 108 of Condon Hall, and Urquhart will conclude the week's events with a talk on "Eugene-Springfield: Geography in Search of Home," Friday at 8 p.m. in Room 204, Condon Hall.

In conjunction with National Geography Awareness Week, the University Map Library will be reopening today. The Map Library, which Urquhart claims to be among the best in the nation, recently was remodeled and expanded.

During the library's open house from 4-6 p.m. today, Stanley Hagen, British Columbia's minister of advanced education and job training, will present a gift of 13,000 maps on the province of British Columbia to the library.

"This library happens to be one of the three or four best libraries in the country," Urquhart said. "It is an extraordinary thing the University has."

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