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UCSB Geography Professor Receives Prestigious Award

Michael F. Goodchild, a professor of geography at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has been awarded the prestigious Prix Vautrin Lud. The international award recognizes a scientist who has significantly advanced the field of geography.

The award is named for the 16th-century French mapmaker who in 1507 -- exactly 500 years ago -- was the first to label the New World as "America." It was recently presented to Goodchild at the annual International Festival of Geography in St-Dié-des-Vosges, where Vautrin Lud was born.

"I am extremely proud that Professor Michael Goodchild has been honored with this extraordinary prize," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "His internationally renowned research is held in the highest academic regard and reflects the stature of our Department of Geography, and our campus."

Said Goodchild: "The Prix Vautrin Lud is the closest thing the discipline of geography has to a Nobel Prize with an international jury of prominent geographers and a list of past recipients that includes the world's most famous geographers. I'm very honored to be in their company, and to see this recognition for UCSB's scholarship."

A native of England, Goodchild earned a Ph.D. in geography in 1969 at McMaster University in Canada. Soon after, he began his research in the emerging field of geographic information science, a name he coined to describe the new discipline. He

came to UCSB in 1988 to develop and head the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (NCGIA). His research interests include geographic information systems (GIS) and their use in creating and sharing knowledge about Earth.

"Recently, I've become interested in Web sites such as Wikimapia, Flickr, and OpenStreetMap that are enabling people to create their own geographic information," Goodchild said. "I'm interested in why people are motivated to do this, and the nature and quality of the information they produce.

Since joining the faculty at UCSB, Goodchild has served as chair of NCGIA's executive committee, director of the NCGIA Center for Spatially Integrated Social Science, and chair of the Department of Geography. He has also served as associate director of the Alexandria Digital Library Project headquartered at UCSB. This multifaceted research project provides access to the collections of geographically referenced materials in the Davidson Library's Map & Imagery Lab.

An internationally respected pioneer in computer-based geographical information systems, Goodchild is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society of Canada. He also has received the Founder's Medal of Britain's Royal Geographical Society and an Award of Distinction for Exceptional Scholarly Contribution to Cartography from the Canadian Cartographic Association.

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.