

## Setting the Scene for the WLJ Special Edition on Leisure Management

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**Abstract**

This article sets the scene for the range of issues that could be addressed in the *WLJ* special edition on leisure management. The management and delivery of leisure programs and services is the foundation of community leisure. Leisure management textbooks provide guidelines and direction for leisure program delivery but there is limited research about how leisure programs and services are delivered and evaluated. This paper provides a summary of a range of considerations about leisure management and community leisure programs and services. After decades of leisure services delivery, there is still a need for public leisure managers to provide a rationale for why they deliver services. Five legitimations based on health, socialisation, economic impact, community development and national identity provide a further consideration for what needs to be better understood about leisure management.

**Key Words**

Leisure management, recreation management, community leisure programs

**Purpose**

This article is designed to set the scene for the range of issues that we would like to address in the World Leisure Journal (*WLJ*) special edition on Leisure Management. The overall aim of the edition is to provide insights and innovations about the latest trends being used in the management of community leisure services, whether government, non-profit or commercial enterprises, to address the challenge of delivering better programs, services and facilities while working within the constraints of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (i.e. shrinking budgets, increased risk management issues, gender and diversity, the demand for transparency). The mission of World Leisure Organization (WLO) is “leisure, when properly conceived, is a central force for enhancing the human condition” (World Leisure Organisation, 2009). If we use this as a guide, then both the capacity for recreation, sport, tourism, and events to improve quality of life as well as how they do so should be explored and documented. The *WLJ* special edition in Leisure Management is seeking articles that will explain how the WLO mission is being achieved.

**Leisure Management**

The use of the term leisure management in the *WLJ* Special Edition is a specific decision to adopt a term that is inclusive of a range of recreation, sport, tourism and events management

issues. While this issue is focused on 'Leisure Management' we want to ensure that we don't turn away potential authors who are working in or conducting research on a wide variety of management issues regardless of whether they are framing their work as leisure, recreation, tourism, community sport or events. From on-line conversations happening in the United States, it would appear that the term leisure is used most often by academics but rarely by practitioners (Academy of Leisure Sciences Listserve, ALSNET). Recreation may be more relevant for some of the public authorities that administer the range of leisure services because leisure is seen as too soft / discretionary whereas recreation may have a more positive image (ALSNET, 2015). The opposite may or may not be true in other parts of the world. For instance, Parks and Leisure Australia is one of the main professional associations in Australia. As this is an international journal we are hopeful of exploring many viewpoints.

Some the recent sport management books have included the term leisure because of its capacity to include sport, leisure, health, tourism and events (Weed, 2014). It is the use of the term leisure that provides the opportunity to be inclusive. Recreation often captures the essence of what leisure management is about but even then the ideas of leisure are used to capture the breadth of what needs to be considered. Shivers and Halper (2012), whose book is titled *Strategic Recreation Management*, acknowledge it is about leisure in the sense that the profession has a role to educate people about the worthy use of leisure and to provide "the spaces, places, personnel and opportunities for participation in safe, enjoyable, beneficial and satisfying activities" (p. 3).

One of the key elements of leisure management is the mixed economy of leisure where services are provided by government, non-profit organisations, commercial groups and the household (Veal, Darcy & Lynch, 2013). This mixed economy often requires organisations from the three sectors (not including the household) to collaborate to deliver services at a local, state, national and international level. Although the mixed economy of leisure exists, much of what is encompassed by leisure management resides in the public sector. It is public sector management with the policy implications of governments and political ideologies that will impact on the nature of how leisure services are delivered. It is this interplay of the mixed economy of leisure with a strong base in public management that gives much of leisure management its character. In Australia it was Bloomfield's (1974) report that set the foundation for the development of recreation at a national level. Government plays an integral role in the delivery of leisure services so we are hopeful that articles will be provided

which explore the nexus of the mixed economy of leisure or will reinforce the crucial role of public management in the delivery of leisure services.

Looking at the earliest textbook we could locate, *The Organization and Administration of Playgrounds and Recreation* (1938) by Jay B. Nash, and comparing it to newer management textbooks (Hjlete & Shivers, 1978; Kraus & Curtis, 2000; Edginton et.al., 2008; Hurd, Barcelona & Meldrum, 2008; Shivers & Halper, 2012; Weed, 2014) we can see a shift in the types of topics being addressed. The Nash book includes chapters about the objectives of play and recreation, organising a recreation department, programs for specific age groups as well as seasons and a variety of facility type chapters (i.e. community centres, swimming pools and playgrounds). When Edginton (1997) reviewed the literature relating to the management of park and recreation organisations he indicated that it emerged early in the 1900's. The early literature focused on topics such as "leadership, organisation and finance" (Edginton, 1997, p. 30). The more recent publication by Edginton, Hudson, Lankford and Larson (2015) updates this focus to include community planning, accountability, building partnerships, appreciating diversity in the community and the workplace. The nature of what needs to be considered by leisure managers is certainly expanding. George Torkildsen's *Leisure and Recreation Management* (1983) was a popular text in the UK, Australia and around the world as a guide for the management of leisure and recreation services. The first edition of this book focused on the planning, delivery, management and control of leisure and recreation services (Torkildsen, 1983). By the sixth edition of his book the focus had expanded to include more applied management information about quality and performance management, financial considerations, legal requirements and the role of enterprise (Taylor, 2011). The two examples from Torkildsen and Edginton, et al. (2015) provide an indication of the breadth of topics that warrant attention in the leisure management field. There is an assumption that most of recreation management will function in the public sector (Shivers & Halper, 2012) but there is acknowledgement that they need to step beyond the public sector to be "an entrepreneur who operates in a public sector environment" (Howard & Crompton, 1980, p. 1). These topics illustrate the breadth of information with which the leisure manager must be familiar. In many other industries, they would hire specially trained people to cover each of those functions. While contemporary organisations are beginning to do so with specific responsibilities, in many cases it still all rests on the leisure manager.

### **Community leisure programs, services and facilities**

Nash (1938) suggested that the role of the recreation executive is one who “assigns responsibility, gives direction, smooths out differences, removes obstacles, all preliminary to putting into effect policies and actually getting things done” (p.186). This call for papers is seeking research and applications of leisure management practices that focus on community / non-profit / government leisure services. One of the challenges of delivering leisure services in this setting is the juggling of commercial outcomes with community service expectations. Can leisure managers achieve the balance of these competing goals? Much of the current research in leisure focuses on the commercial sector rather than the community/non-profit/government. A review of leisure research provides some helpful insights about what has been reported.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the focus was contemporary management practices and how they could/should be applied in the ~~leisure-recreation~~ industry. More recently, there has been a shift towards concentrating on specific aspects of management. For example:

- Economics, marketing and the use of marketing tools (Bright, 2000; Crompton, 2015; Novatorov & Crompton, 2001; Hodgkinson, Hughes and Hughes, 2012; Hu and Davis, 2010; Kyle & Mowen, 2005; Kyle et. al., 2006; Reis, Thompson-Carr & Lovelock, 2012);
- Community infrastructure (McShane, 2006);
- Fees (Crompton, 2010; More, 1999; Winter, Palucki & Burkhardt, 1999);
- Quality control (Tawsw & Keogh, 1998);
- Benchmarking and the use of performance measurement (Liang, 2005; Zimmermann, 2003; Zimmermann & Stevens, 2006);
- Outsourcing (Ravenscroft, 1998; Jang, 2006; Edgington & Jiang, 2000; Yough, 2000);
- Scheduling of facilities and fields (Morris, 1998);
- The use of partnerships to provide programs and services as well as partnerships designed with the intention of improving health outcomes (Leichty et.al., 2014; Payne et.al., 2013; Sheehan, 2015; Tower, Jago & Deery, 2006; Tower, Jago & Deery, 2010; Tower, McDonald & Stewart, 2014);
- Professionalism and competencies needed for success in the recreation industry as well as the role of an administrator (Auld, 1996; Hurd & McLean, 2004; Hurd, 2005; Knapp & McLean, 2003; McNamee, Sheridan & Buswell, 2001a; McNamee,

Sheridan & Buswell, 2001b; Patterson & Gough, 2003; Zimmermann, Dupree & Hodges, 2014; Zimmermann & Payne, 2012; Zimmermann & Allen, 2009);

- Human resource management was a focus in a special edition of the *Journal Park and Recreation Administration* In May 2015, The Journal of Park and Recreation Administration editors of the had a special edition focused on Human Resource Management where the editors bemoaned the lack of research currently being done in this area (Mulvaney and Hurd, 2015);
- Evaluation and research related to camps, camping and service for specific population groups has been made by The American Camp Association has been making great strides in evaluation and research related to camps, camping and serving specific population groups (i.e. Browne, Jameson & Bialeschki, 2015; Gillard, Buzuvis & Bialeschki, 2014);
- African policies and strategies There is at least one interesting article out of Africa on policies and strategies for providing recreation services (Mogajane, et.al., 2014);
- The impact of events on both natural resources and local economies (Manning, 2014; Newsome, Lacroix and Pickering, 2011; Trendafilova and Waller, 2011);
- The concept of shared spaces to benefit communities (Young et.al., 2014); and
- The idea of extraordinary experiences (Jeffries & Lepp, 2012).

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A review of recent leisure journals demonstrates the need for more publications in the area of leisure management. Edginton, Bandhidi, Jalloh, Dieser, Xiafei and Yub (2014) reported that the *World Leisure Journal* has focused on leisure management / programming for 7.3% of journal topics between 2000 and 2012. Weed (2014) did not provide such a detailed analysis but his review of recent volumes of three key sport management journals identified that the *Journal of Sport Management (JSM)* focused on North American professional sport and related matters such as stadium naming rights; the *European Sport Management Quarterly (ESMQ)* included sport tourism, lifestyle sports, events and sport participation; and *Sport Management Review* provides a balance between the professional sport of *JSM* and the wider focus of *ESMQ*. This type of detailed analysis is not available from other leisure related journals so a review of six key leisure journals was conducted by inspecting the tables of contents of a recent volume of the journals. Table 1 provides a summary of the journal and number of titles that relate to leisure management articles. Initially, the titles in each issue were reviewed. If the title indicated the potential for a focus on leisure management issues

then the abstract was reviewed. Articles that had a leisure management focus mentioned in the abstract were included in this tally. The three journals with the greatest focus on leisure management in the past two years are the *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, due primarily to the issue focused on human resource management, the *Journal of Leisure Research* followed by *Leisure Sciences*. It is worth noting that the nature of these articles had limited focus on community / non-profit and government services with the exception of parks related research.

Table 1. Leisure journal's leisure management articles

<b>Journal</b>	<b>Year / Volume</b>	<b>Number of leisure management related articles</b>	<b>% of LM articles</b>
<b>Annals of Leisure Research</b>	2014 / 174	2	8%
	2015 / 18	3	14%
<b>Journal of Leisure Research</b>	2014 / 46	11	28%
	2015 / 47	0	0%
<b>Journal of Park and Recreation Administration</b>	2014 / 32	2	7%
	2015 / 33	8	30%
<b>Leisure Sciences</b>	2014 / 36	4	14%
	2015 / 37	0	0%
<b>Leisure Studies</b>	2014 / 33	1	3%
	2015 / 34	2	6%
<b>World Leisure Journal</b>	2014 / 56	3	18%
	2015 / 57	0	0%

Often it is a focus on leisure programs, services and facilities designed to support local participation that provide the substance of community leisure but there is limited research that documents the nature of how these types of programs, services and facilities are delivered and managed. Leisure management is ~~the fa fundamental~~ foundation required to deliver local leisure services but this analysis shows that a more concentrated effort is warranted via the *WLJ* special edition on leisure management.

### **Legitimacy of public authorities involved in leisure services**

One final point to consider, is the argument posed by some that recreation and sport services and programs should not be provided by the public sector. They would argue that such services are a private good rather than either a public or merit good. Weed (2014) and Chalip (2014) identify five legitimations for why public authorities are involved in sport and leisure services. These legitimations provide additional considerations that could/should be addressed in the special edition:

1. Health – Sport and recreation are fundamental contributors to physical activity but there is little that seems to be progressing to the public health agenda. There is some evidence to suggest that some local government local authorities are not even willing to have their leisure services in the public health conversation. A key to remember is that leisure management will contribute to public health but it is in the community participation sector. It is not about sport business & spectators!
2. Salubrious socialisation – Building self-esteem, promoting moral development and teaching life skills are often attributed to sport and leisure services (Chalip, 2014). How well are leisure programs and services producing these outcomes? Are we producing research to demonstrate the value of community leisure programs achieving these key social outcomes?
3. Economic development – This tends to be mostly focused on the wonky economic impact of professional sport but there is evidence that community leisure is contributing to the local community by creating jobs, and serving the needs of local residents. Tower, McDonald and Stewart (2014) demonstrated that local aquatic and recreation centres were economically significant in their local communities by employing local residents and using local businesses while they served the needs of mostly local residents and schools. We need more about these situations documented.
4. Community development – How well are we documenting the capacity for community leisure services to contribute to social capital? Forsell (2014) explained how local recreation and sport clubs are producing social capital but other community settings are only producing neutral levels of social capital (Tower, McDonald & Stewart, 2014). More about community leisure programs' capacity to develop communities is needed.
5. National identity – We see the success of gold medals, community pride and national identity (Chalip, 2014) but there is little that documents the impact of community leisure on a national identity. Initiatives such as Bhutan's gross happiness index (Ura, Alkire, Zangmo, Wangdi, (2012) and Canada's index of wellbeing



~~(Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2014) have been in place for some time B~~but we know little about how the ~~se policy and research initiatives impact on -countries with the highest levels of physical activity use that participation as well as healthy lifestyles to build~~ national identity ~~and pride~~. Further, is there a correlation between community pride and national identity and positive community leisure programs?

### **Call for papers**

This article has raised a number of issues that warrant further research and discussion to enhance our understanding of how leisure management enhances community's quality of life. Papers may cover a broad range of topics and perspectives and include scholarly and empirical contributions from an international range of authors and contexts. Empirical research (both qualitative and quantitative), systematic reviews, scholarly descriptions, brief reports, and book reviews are invited.

Appropriate topics for this issue include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Conceptual and theoretical issues relating to the roles and aims of leisure management;
- Practical issues relating to leisure management and its implementation in different populations, contexts, and settings;
- Local, regional, and global trends and developments, and their impact on leisure management;
- Perceptions of and attitudes towards leisure management;
- Leisure management in relation to different patterns of leisure behaviour and consumption;
- Models, programs, curricula, and operational frameworks of leisure management education and their implications for individuals, communities, and societies;
- Approaches and strategies for leisure management;
- Training and preparation of leisure management professionals; and
- Policy and advocacy issues pertaining to leisure management.

Details about the submission of abstracts (due 1 April 2016) and final papers (due 10 July, 2016) are provided in *WLJ* and at the WLO website – [www.worldleisure.com](http://www.worldleisure.com)

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