

CP/RA'S POLICY ON RESEARCH

YES VIRGINIA, THERE IS A RESEARCH POLICY!

AT THE 1990 Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Parks / Recreation

BY SUSAN MARKHAM



Association, eight new national policies were ratified by the Association's membership. One of these policies deals with research. As is the case with all CP/RA policies, it was developed through discussion, review and observation. The discussions were with colleagues who are both researchers and practitioners. The review was of past motions of CP/RA, of the journals of CP/RA, the World Leisure and Recreation Association and the National Recreation and Park Association, and of papers produced in the proceedings of the Canadian Congresses on Leisure Research. The observations contained in the policy are those of its author who has been both a researcher and a practitioner and at times has been stranded in the middle. The policy was reviewed by the Provincial Park and Recreation Associations and comments generated by that process were used to produce subsequent drafts.

BACKGROUND TO THE POLICY

Everyone working in recreation is involved in research. The scope and sophistication of research activities may vary substantially between individuals and agencies, but research activities are present, nonetheless. For the purposes of this policy statement, research was divided into the following categories:

1) Basic Research, which is original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge with the primary purpose of contributing to the conceptual development of science; and

2) Applied Research, which is original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge, with the primary purpose of applying such knowledge to the solu-

tion of practical or technical problems.

Research is necessary for the growth of our understanding of the motives for participation in recreation, the benefits and costs of recreation, the impact of various models of service provision and a myriad of other research questions. However, while there is support given to the encouragement of research to advance knowledge, and to the provision of funds for such research, more emphasis must be given to the understanding of research, followed by the dissemination of the results of that research in ways that are useful to those involved in the delivery of recreation services.

Past discussions and policy exercises of CP/RA have recognized the desirability of research endeavours and have noted two issues: first, the lack of a co-ordinating mechanism to monitor and distribute leisure/recreation research information; and second, the lack of proper training for individuals in the field on the most appropriate instruments or techniques to use. It was noted by one group reviewing this policy that the instruments and techniques exist, but that knowledge of their use is not well known. The policy recognizes that these two issues are still relevant ones and proceeds by including them as part of the base for policy development.

Much recreation research literature abounds with rhetoric about the importance of research. On occasion, articles are produced which promote the need for researchers and practitioners to cooperate. These articles are few and far between; *Recreation Canada's* contribu-

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tions in the past 15 years were in 1977 (Vol 35 #6) by a researcher, Tim Burton, and 1978 (Vol 36 #3) by a practitioner, Tom Riley, with a mention in 1987 (Vol 35 #3) by Jack Wright as he discussed universities and the recreation profession. However, not only are the calls for co-operation few in number, little has been said or done to promote and implement co-operation and understanding between these two groups. Some progress toward co-operation can be assumed when it is noted that the Editorial Committee of *Recreation Canada* frequently includes members who may be labelled as researchers, and when, on occasion, there are articles reporting on the results of research in recreation. However, it must be noted that this is certainly not a solely Canadian "problem" as the same issues are raised by NRPA and noted in meetings of the WLRA.

CP/RA views its role as that of a facilitator, enabler and developer of recreation services in Canada. In this role, it can support and foster co-operation, innovation and creativity in the encouragement, funding and dissemination of recreation research. This role does not require that CP/RA do research, except, of course, as part of its own information management database. Rather, this role requires that it recognize the full spectrum of practitioner involvement in research, from being generators of research ideas, to being the subjects of research, to being users of research findings, and act as a link between the researchers and the users of findings.

THE POLICY

Statements of Principle

CP/RA believes that:

- a) Research is essential to understanding the role of recreation to the individual and to society and the role of the parts of the recreation delivery system.
- b) Good, sound research work in both pure and applied research is essential to the development of quality recreation opportunities.
- c) Funding agencies, both public and private, should be encouraged to recognize recreation research as legitimate and necessary research.
- d) Funding agencies and agencies which are part of the delivery system should be encouraged to support both basic and applied recreation research.
- e) Practitioners should be kept up to date with the research being carried out.
- f) Accessibility to research results must be developed.
- g) Research work and dissemination of results must support the principles of equity, meaning that research shall neither be based on, nor draw conclusions from, biases founded on race, ethnicity, age, gender or disability.
- h) Cooperation must be fostered between recreation researchers and recreation practitioners.

Policy Statements

CP/RA will undertake the following:

- a) Support researchers in their efforts to have recre-

ation/leisure research established as a legitimate category of research eligible for grants by funding agencies, such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

- b) Support recreation organizations in the provinces and territories in their efforts to ensure that federal and provincial government recreation agencies continue to recognize the importance and necessity of recreation/leisure research and funding.
- c) Convene discussions with the Board of the Canadian Association for Leisure Studies (CALS) to define the respective roles of each organization and potential co-operative efforts in encouraging and disseminating research.
- d) Support efforts by CALS to develop a strong national organization for leisure research.
- e) Support efforts by members of CP/RA to include educational activities focussing on research at events sponsored by CP/RA.
- f) Encourage presentations and articles promoting researcher/practitioner cooperation.
- g) Encourage researchers to present their findings at events or in publications sponsored by CP/RA.
- h) Support efforts to establish a national data base and/or network of centers of recreation information and research.
- i) Encourage members to engage in both training about research and research activities as part of their professional development - in particular, as part of the activities which can be funded by the Boothman Bursary.

WHAT NEXT?

The contents of this issue of *Recreation Canada* are an example of what CP/RA is doing to implement this policy. At the 1991 CP/RA Conference in Regina, a Research Symposium was held in conjunction with the Conference. Selections from the keynote address and from the papers presented at the conference are included in this issue. Accompanying these papers are contributions about research carried out by private consultants, by government agencies and researchers in other institutions. This is a beginning. Those of us who do and use research must continue to be advocates not only for good research that contributes to our understanding of the role of recreation, but also for accessibility to research results and for cooperation between researchers and practitioners. The policy must not just be a document that we passed at an AGM, it must come alive and stimulate both research and the dissemination of its results.

The Author

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