



President's Report

Dale Larsen, CPRP

"Well done is better than well said."

Benjamin Franklin



I'm reminded of the wisdom of this historical reference by Mr. Franklin every day. Each and every day of the year, the parks and recreation service profession churns out quality programs, benefits the environment, promotes individual wellness, enhances community awareness and

provides for creative expression. One of the foundations of the Academy is to "promote a broader public understanding of the importance of parks and recreation to the public good." As members of the Academy we are supposedly the "living and breathing" testimony of this worthy foundation. Modest in numbers, Academy members, comprised of both educators and practitioners, should be setting the example for the parks and recreation profession. Are we true to this challenge? Here are two recent examples.

Last month, the City of Phoenix successfully passed a five year bond election in the amount of \$875 million. Among the seven propositions listed on the ballot was Prop 4, \$120.5 million – "Increasing Recreational Opportunities with New Parks and Open Spaces." About three months ago, early voter polling indicated that this proposition was lagging behind the others, including public safety, streets, arts and library and storm sewers. Our officials were bewildered. Previous bond elections and citizen referendums always showed parks among the service leaders. While the ballot language could not be changed, I was given the opportunity to put together a comprehensive public presentation that

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would show the benefits of parks in a more positive light. Why?

Well, the pundits were concerned that likely voters (seniors and soccer mom types) were not particularly responsive to the generic terms – recreation, new parks and open spaces as identified on the official ballot. They needed language and promotional pieces that would grab people's attention. So borrowing heavily from Academy research, we threw everything at the ballot measure: kid's wellness, fitness, historic preservation, new play areas for grandchildren, a cleaner environment, safe facilities, inclusion, agency partnerships, the aging of adults (particularly baby boomers), increased economic values, etc. The outcome: a resounding majority of nearly 65% voter support. Considering that public safety "limped" in with 70% and that the majority of no votes were related to tax issues, I was especially pleased with the results.

During this same time period, the Academy's resident historian and personal mentor – Charlie Hartsoe, announced the development of a new publication in reference to the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the National Recreation Association (the other NRA). The editor duties, led by Dr. Hartsoe, are shared with several long-time

Academy contributing members. Reviewing the draft on behalf of the Academy brought great memories and pride. The history of the Academy and the public awareness campaign of parks and recreation are directly attributed to the history of the NRA. As I developed our local bond issue response, the legacy of Joseph Prendergast, Henry Curtis, Joseph Lee, Dorothy Enderis, Laurance Rockefeller, Luther Gulick, Jane Addams, and many others involved over the NRA's history, heavily influenced the development of my response.

Perhaps it was coincidental or just lucky timing, but I am more convinced than ever, that the Academy is the nation's driving force behind the successful research and application of parks and recreation service. I encourage our board members and committees to aggressively contribute to the promotion of our "public good."



AAPRA Involvement in NRPA Forum Research Task Force

Karla A. Henderson

Background

The NRPA Research Committee, later called the NRPA Forum Research Task Force (FRTF), was appointed in fall 2003 by NRPA President Jim Donahue in consultation with Trustee Phil Rea, SPRE President Mike Blazey, and AAPRA President Peter Witt. The charge to the committee initially was to explore ways that NRPA might provide research information to its members and the general public regarding the empirical benefits of parks and recreation (P & R) and science based information about best practices. (Note: P & R is used broadly to denote all branches of NRPA). The committee initially defined its goals as:

- 1) Bringing individuals together representing the branches within NRPA, NRPA BOT, and partners such as the Academies of Leisure Science and Park and Recreation Administrators to examine how to make research best available to practitioners,
- 2) To develop a multi-year plan to determine what research information is needed and how to provide it,
- 3) To develop a mechanism (NRPA website) for making research available to members and nonmembers,
- 4) To identify research information that already exists and make this research available through the website, and
- 5) To solicit "interpretive pieces" to integrate and synthesize existing scientific evidence about P & R that would be useful to members and nonmembers.

Committee members included: Karla Henderson (Chair), Bob Rossman, Candy Ashton-Schaffer, Nelson Cooper, Jim Donahue, Janice Prochaska, Jean Helburg, Kathleen Perales, Michael Blazey, Peter Witt, Sharon Hubler, Vern Hartenburg, Veda Ward, and ex-officio members Lori Daniel, Doug Vaira, Cheryl Sadowski, John Thorner, and Gary Fenton. Individuals who were involved at some point during the past 18 months were ex-officio members Van Anderson and Rich Dolesh and former committee members John Hultsman and Gary Ellis.

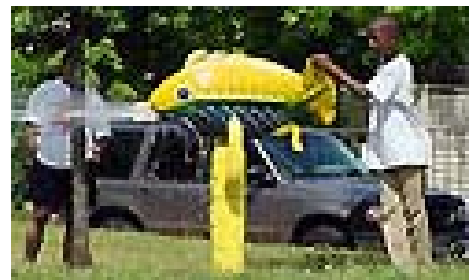


Washington State Convention Center in Seattle

Based on the examination and exploration of the research issues of importance to NRPA members (with a focus on practitioners) by FRTF, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The role of NRPA pertaining to research is in the beginning stages of description. In recent years, research information has been articulated through several vehicles such as the Leisure Research Symposium, “Research Update” in the *Parks & Recreation* magazine, and the Research Roundtable. Although these avenues have made research more visible within the organization, the association has not specifically articulated its role relative to research for the future.
- Information about the value of recreation is important to both members and community advocates. Although member services are important, citizens who know and understand the value of recreation may provide the best support to NRPA members and P & R agencies. Therefore, in making research available, some focus needs to exist on the advocacy role of NRPA (e.g., making information available beyond NRPA members).
- A good deal of research currently exists about various issues of importance to NRPA members and nonmembers. The information, however, is not easily accessible both in terms of general availability as well as “translation” for practitioners. Most practitioners do not read research journals. Thus, a good deal of new research may not need to be initiated until what information that currently exists is put into a form useable to practitioners.
- Although individual research studies are useful, the best way to provide information about the most current research for and about P & R may be in integrated pieces that provide a synthesis across research studies about a particular topic. This information should be clearly documented with reference to “valid and reliable science” that is systematically used to generate implications for advocacy and practice.

- Many sources of information that may be of use to P & R professionals may come from other disciplines, but this information needs to more easily accessible and usable in the way it is presented.
- Assessing the areas of needed research was a daunting task. FRTF found it difficult to get individuals who would be most likely to use the information (e.g., practitioners) to provide feedback. In addition, members of the committee felt limited in their ability to generate a plethora of ideas. Thus, the information in the Appendix is our best synthesis to date of what the FRTF believes is important.
- Encouraging researchers to do more research that would be of direct benefit to P & R is difficult to do without a clear explication of the needs, without outlets for this research both in terms of scientific and popular journals, and without funding sources.



Pratt Park in Seattle

Recommendations

Based on the 18 months of study undertaken by FRTF, the following recommendations are offered:

- 1) The NRPA Board of Trustees and NRPA staff should articulate clearly the role of research within the organization. A difference seems to exist between how staff views information as useful to practitioners compared to the role that “scientific studies” play within the organization. These two notions do not need to be seen as separate in many cases. Trustees and staff should draft a statement about the role of research as part of the knowledge base within NRPA.

- 2) NRPA staff should continue to develop the NRPA cybrary as the “knowledge center” for P & R in the U.S. The initial focus should be on providing as much information as possible about the “proven” scientific benefits or values of P & R and then branch into empirical research that may better inform best practices. A mechanism must be developed to enable nonmembers and potentially international visitors access to information that will inform them as the general public and as citizen advocates.
- 3) Many organizations (see Resources listed in the Appendix) have websites that would be beneficial for NRPA members. In addition, other sites may want to link with NRPA. Efforts should be undertaken to establish these reciprocal links as many other organizations can offer relevant and useful assistance.
- 4) Using the broad areas and some of the sub areas identified in the Appendix, NRPA should coordinate an effort to put together “fact sheets” or “review sheets” that summarize research in a particular P & R area. These fact sheets should be relatively short and clear but with documented scientific research identified with every “fact” presented. (Note: Doug Vaira has good templates from other organizations such as the American Planning Association and Funders’ Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities). The university community should be asked to assist with these efforts especially if small honorariums are made available for specific assignments.

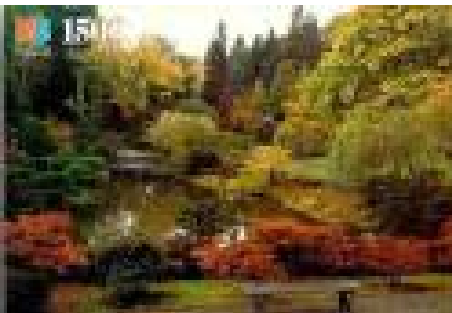


South lobby of Washington State Convention Center

- 5) The priority order for developing the fact sheets may not be as important as initially commissioning at least one fact sheet in each of the 9 areas identified. After these sheets are completed, further sub areas can be identified for future review. Areas where P & R research is missing should become more evident through this process.
- 6) The fact sheets should make use of current research related specifically to P & R as well as information that may come from other disciplines (e.g., public health, city and regional planning, political science) that can inform the benefits and practices related to issues important to NRPA members and nonmembers. The fact sheets should differ in style from what is now produced in the *Parks and Recreation* “Research Update” column. One possibility, as used by the American Planning Association, is to format a “three level” sheet with bulleted statements, the explanation of those statements, and the scientific references that back up the statements. An individual using these sheets could use as much or as little as he or she wished.
- 7) The fact sheets should be solicited from individuals (e.g. faculty, graduate students, and consultants) who have an expertise in the areas where research information is needed. Individuals should be compensated (e.g. given an honorarium) by NRPA for the completion of useable, timely fact sheets. Individuals in the academic community should also review these fact sheets for reliability and provide suggestions for improving information content and readability.
- 8) The fact sheets should be updated on a regular basis (e.g., every three years) so the information is current and pertinent.
- 9) Although the “interpretation” of existing research may be best to address first, NRPA may want to consider how funding might be made available in the future for new research to be undertaken to address some of the “missing” P & R research.

- 10) NRPA should have a space on its website where individuals can record the research they are currently pursuing. In the same way, the needs for research as researchers as well as practitioners and citizens uncover them could also be listed. This space should be dynamic as research interests and needs evolve.
- 11) A plan should be put into place to get ongoing feedback from NRPA members and nonmembers concerning the usefulness of the fact sheets and what new fact sheets should be undertaken. NRPA may want to consider appointing a Research Advisory Board who could assist in a variety of ways.
- 12) The FRTF should be disbanded and a new working task force (e.g., Research Strategies Task Force) appointed through the Forum Professional and Research Committee with the express purpose of determining the strategies for articulating the role of research within NRPA and to oversee the selection of topics for and commissioning of the initial fact sheets.
- 13) NRPA must determine the resources that will be needed to fully integrate research into the fabric of the organization. These resources might include technical assistance staff, funding for the coordination of fact sheet writing, a research advisory committee, and perhaps gaining access to data bases that would be useful for the organization.

This report has been presented to the NRPA Forum and we are awaiting further direction for future action.



Japanese Garden, Seattle

Task Force on Positioning Our Profession with Decision-makers

Barry Weiss

Parks and Recreation departments across the country continue to face crucial funding issues with some departments facing severe budget cuts or even dissolution. Throughout the country professionals

are saying we need a comprehensive strategy to position ourselves with decision makers to secure resources to provide needed services to our communities.

Our task force took on this assignment. Strategies are being developed with four areas worthy of development being explored.

1. Identify “communities in need” (i.e. - being dissolved) and provide intervention and support;
2. Conduct regional summits aimed at external audiences to influence the relevance of Parks and Recreation. Mayors, city managers and other external leaders were discussed;
3. Develop a tool kit for Park and Recreation professionals; and
4. Develop industry standards in a variety of areas, best practices and enhanced documented outcomes.

Currently, we are in discussion with three communities across the county to offer intervention and support. We will develop a consistent methodology to document our efforts and successes. A consistent methodology will also keep us focused on our ultimate goal of positioning our profession with decision makers

If you would like to be part of this important effort please contact Barry Weiss at (650) 802-4286 or bweiss@cityofsancarlos.org.

Call for 2006 Legend Nominations

Vern Hartenburg

The Academy Legends Program videotapes distinguished administrators and educators who have made outstanding contributions to the field of parks and recreation. Additional nominations of candidates may be submitted. By May 12, 2006, submit name, title, and a brief statement of nomination of any individual(s) you wish for the Legends Committee to consider for 2006 videotaping. Submit nominations to:
Vern J. Hartenburg, Legends Chair
Email: vjh@clevelandmetroparks.com
Fax: (216) 635-3232
Telephone: (216) 635-3295.

Citizen Involvement Task Force

Dianne Hoover

The Academy's Citizen Involvement Task Force is moving forward. This year's members include Linda Kotowski and Dianne Hoover as co-chairs; Jim Donahue, Chris Dropinski, and Mark McHenry round out the membership.

Our conference call on March 10 delineated some assignments, and outlined our year's work program. Our goals include:

1. Gather additional examples and complete compilation of best practices in citizen involvement.
2. Prepare these examples in one common format.
3. Develop a web page for making the examples available to other members.
4. Prepare articles for the Academy newsletter, and other NRPA publications.
5. Post examples on webpage, and develop a process for others to add examples on the web page.

The Citizen Involvement Task Force is still interested in receiving examples of best practices from more Academy members. Many agencies rely on citizen involvement, have achieved great things with citizens, and we want to hear about them. The task force is requesting examples in the following categories:

- Programming
- Facility Development
- Public Process
- Financial Support
- Advocacy
- General volunteerism/volunteers

If you have a story to tell about successful citizen involvement in your area, we want to hear about it. Please contact one of the committee members listed above and we can assist in getting your message to other members.

Program Committee Report

Ray Ochromowicz

As the Academy's representative to the NRPA Congress Program Committee, I am submitting a status report on our committee work. My committee goals are simple.

1. To generate a minimum of 20 program proposals for consideration at the Seattle Congress.
 - Status: Goal Achieved – 28 program submittals were received from Academy members.
2. To have selected by the NRPA Program Committee a minimum of 10 programs submitted by Academy members (up 4 from last year)
 - Status: As best as I can ascertain 6 Academy program submittals were selected by the NRPA Program Committee.

3. To involve a minimum of 25 Academy members submitters, session chairs or presenters.
 - Status: Goal Achieved – at least 30 Academy members are involved as session chair people or speakers. Moe may be identified as the Congress nears.

It's been an interesting year. The NRPA Program Committee met in Seattle this past February. It's a wonderful culturally rich city. In the past, each special interest section and affiliate was allocated so many program slots. That was not the case this year. Instead, the committee leadership used six broad based categories to classify session topics. It didn't matter what affiliate or section generated the programs. Whereas in the past the Academy was automatically slated a minimum of six program slots, this year it was guaranteed only one. Nonetheless, at least 6 sessions submitted by Academy members were accepted. (There may have been more but not all Academy members had submitted copies of their information to me for tracking.) In addition, approximately 30 Academy members are involved in the educational sessions as either session chairman or speakers. (Again, at the February Program Committee meeting not all speakers for all sessions were identified. Therefore, more Academy member participation may come to light.)

Thanks to all Academy members who submitted program proposals and who will be presenting at this years Congress!

Cornelius Amory Pugsley Award

David O. Laidlaw (1920-) received the local level Pugsley Medal in 1983. He was born and raised in Tecumseh, Michigan. He graduated from Tecumseh High School in 1937 and except for his military service, stayed in Michigan throughout his working

career. Laidlaw recalled, "I decided when I was 14 or 15 that park management was my thing. I was in

Boy Scouts and a guide at Fort Mackinac. I wanted to be a National Park Service ranger." Thus, he attended Michigan State University where he earned a BS degree in park and municipal forestry in 1941.

From 1941 to 1946, Laidlaw was a platoon leader in the US Army and a glider pilot in the Air Force. He rose to the rank of major and in 1945 he graduated from the US Army's Command and General Staff School. His experiences of moving around to different posts in the military convinced Laidlaw that a National Parks Service Career which would have required frequent relocation was not for him. "I really wasn't interested in a service that moved you every two years."



When he returned from the Pacific Theater in the fall of 1946, Laidlaw enrolled in a master of public administration program at the University of Michigan. A political science class required a paper and Laidlaw wrote his about a fledgling agency founded in 1940 by a few dreamers who planned to build a series of parks connected by parkways along the Clinton and Huron rivers. (Subsequently, the parkways idea was dropped because of the high cost of highway construction. Laidlaw noted, "There was recognition that a parkway wasn't recreation, and the interstate freeways made that idea outdated.") There were many county park agencies and a few examples around the county that grew into two county agencies, but nothing like the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority (HCMA) which was created from the beginning as a five county agency. Laidlaw visited with the founders of HCMA while writing his paper so it became the obvious place for him to go to meet the six-month internship requirement of the degree program. Thus, in the fall of 1947, Laidlaw became an administrative assistant with HCMA. He completed the degree in 1948, and remained at HCMA for the whole of his career.

Laidlaw began his tenure with the HCMA before the agency's first park was opened. When the 4,300 acre Kensington Metropark was opened in 1948 he was appointed operations supervisor, and in 1950 became the park's superintendent. He remained in that position until 1968 during which time it became one of the finest recreation areas in the country. The park was formed on partially natural, partially artificial, Kent Lake, and Laidlaw got to shape the undeveloped tract into a park that drew as many people on a single day as the area's legendary Tiger Stadium in nearby Detroit. During his tenure at Kensington, the golf course, toboggan runs, nature center, boat rental service, fishing pier, boat launch ramps, swimming beaches and nature trails were added, making it a premier park facility. Thus, by 1963 on a single Sunday, the park hosted 52,000 visitors. His leadership ability to "blaze a trail" in the parks and recreation field which characterized his career was exemplified by the growth and development of this park which he nurtured during that era.

In 1968, Laidlaw became deputy director of HCMA and a year later he was appointed director. During his 16 years as director, the HCMA park acreage increased from 10,000 acres to 21,000 acres and four new parks were created. At the end of his tenure, there were 13 parks in the system almost all of them were over 1,000 acres. Laidlaw was a student of parks' history as a park professional and he often pointed out the timelessness of parks.

"Basically, metroparks don't change their function dramatically. They're a collection of resources. For example, we have pictures of Belle Isle taken 100 years ago. People went there to walk, ride, canoe, and fish. Today the activities are the same. It's basic. And it's going to be the same 100 years from now. Oh, they may fly there with a jet backpack. But people want to get back to nature, to touch the ground and feel it and smell it."

The operating funds of HCMA were based on a quarter-mill property tax (25 cents per \$1,000 assessed valuation). The system's expansion outgrew its ability to rely on these funds to operate it, so out of necessity, HCMA were one of the agencies who, in the 1970s pioneered self-generated

revenues to fund a major proportion of the agency's operating budget. Laidlaw initiated park entrance charges and looked for revenues from food service, boat rentals, golf courses and wave pools.

Laidlaw's leadership skills were evident in his involvement in numerous professional organizations. He was president of four organizations: Michigan Forestry and Park Association, the American Park and Recreation Society, the National Recreation and Park Association, and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration.

One of the long time commissioners of HCMA stated: "Laidlaw was a conscientious, highly respected leader in the field, renowned for his integrity. He was well liked and respected by all and handled complicated park issues with ease, with employees and visitors alike. He was very efficient and did a fantastic job administering the authority during its busiest growth period...He recognized the need and the urgency of preserving open spaces, through parks, for future generations. He left a legacy of the finest park facilities in the state, if not the nation."

Call to Professional Service

The NRPA/AALR Council on Accreditation needs candidates to serve as visitors in review of professional preparation programs at colleges and universities. Visitor training will be available at the NRPA congress in Seattle.

More information will follow in the next Academy Bulletin. However, both academicians and professional practitioners are needed to serve as visitors.

