

## Founding of the Journal of Leisure Research

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It's hard to believe that 40 years have passed since the founding of JLR. This short article's purpose is to share some of the "trials and tribulations" that were addressed to get the JLR approved and launched as a publication of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

NRPA was officially formed in New York City on August 13, 1965 following 26 years of efforts to unify the park and recreation field. The founders were the following organizations: American Institute of Park Executives, American Recreation Society, National Conference on State Parks and the National Recreation Association. On October 9, 1966, the NRPA Board of Governors received petitions for branches and recommended that the Society of Park and Recreation Educators (SPRE) be accepted as a branch. The reason for this short historical note is the fact that the campaign to develop a research journal became one the major priorities of SPRE in its formative years. (Lutzin, 1969)

In 1966, I joined the NRPA staff as its first Director of Research. I was completing my doctoral studies at New York University under the supervision of Professors Edith Ball and Milt Gabrielson, with mentoring by one of the great pioneers in leisure studies—Jay B. Nash. One of my responsibilities included serving as Executive Director of the Society of Park and Recreation Educators (SPRE).

Under the presidency of Professor Heeb, SPRE formed a Research Committee chaired by Professor Niepoth. The Research Committee in its Annual Report and Recommendations on November 28, 1967 stated that a research journal was needed and recommended that SPRE's Board of Directors petition the Board of Directors of NRPA to "authorize the Research Committee to proceed immediately with the development, publication and distribution of a research journal" (SPRE Minutes, December 1, 1967). Responding to strong leadership by SPRE Presidents Deppe (1968) and Sessoms (1969), NRPA approved the publication of a research journal with the first issue to be released in the winter of 1969.

The SPRE Forum (1968) focused on the research journal in its May issue. It solicited input from researchers and educators for the journal's name. More traditional titles proposed were "Journal of Recreation Research", "Research in Recreation" and "Recreation Research Quarterly". Two broader titles were proposed: "Journal of Leisure Sciences" and "Journal of Leisure Research". The SPRE Forum also solicited feedback on the journal's scope and content, evaluation criteria, editorial policies and personnel (i.e., Editorial Advisory Board, Editor and Consulting Editors). It was noted that guidelines from related journals were being reviewed as policies for the new journal

were being developed. The SPRE Forum also invited the submission of articles for the inaugural issue. Subsequently, the title of *Journal of Leisure Research* (JLR) was selected and I was appointed editor as part of my role as Director of Research for NRPA.

As Editor, I appointed the following Associate Editors: Brian Barber, Neil Cheek, Walt Hopkins, Jack Knetsch, Leslie Reid and Betty van der Smissen. The editorial team worked diligently to produce, Volume 1, Number 1 which was formally published in the winter of 1969. The first issue contained four articles, five research notes and four book reviews. JLR was guided by a 25 member Editorial Advisory Committee consisting of 15 academic community representatives and 10 leaders from government agencies, associations and the private sector.

The first issue included a statement by Sal J. Presioso, NRPA's Executive Vice President entitled "A New Venture". He stated that: "The purposes of this journal are to define in multi-disciplinary terms the challenges of leisure facing us today and in the future, to stimulate appropriate solutions for these challenges through scientific investigation, to disseminate these research findings and to describe the practical application and testing of research results... The journal is also designed to serve as a bridge between the social and natural sciences related to leisure, to provide a sounding board for the inter-disciplinary exchanges of research and to sharpen the focus of investigations." But to be comprehensive, stated Presioso, "the journal cannot concentrate entirely on the challenges ... of parks, recreation and conservation alone. It must also take care to evaluate the cause and effect of the multitude of social, economic, political, cultural and scientific forces which influence leisure behavior patterns within our evolving society" (*Journal of Leisure Research*, 1969)

But the early days of JLR were difficult times, particularly due to conflicts between the practice mind set of some NRPA members and the research interests of the scholarly community represented by SPRE. To address this concern, we included comments by key NRPA and SPRE leaders in the first issue. Here are several:

"...it will fill a void in recreation literature that has existed so long." Gordon Taylor, Department of Tourism and Recreation, Manitoba, Canada

"My feeling is if the NRPA is to publish a research journal, it should be directed to the research audience and not to the interested Layman." S. Ross Tocher, Department of Forestry, the University of Michigan.

"The new research journal is another hallmark in the forward progress of our profession..." Joseph P. Davidson, Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation, City of Yonkers, New York

"I look upon this research quarterly as a real pioneering effort that will have a tremendous influence on research generally. I am most anxious that it not reflect unfavorably on our organization or our field when it is compared to other well established publications. If the journal exists on high quality research papers, it will almost inevitably attract material which is now periphery to such field as sociology, forestry, and soil science, as well as provide an outlet to research which now has difficulty in finding a home in established journals in other fields" Arthur Wilcox, Professor of Outdoor Recreation, Colorado State University.

Although the editorial team had hoped to gain support from the broad spectrum of NRPA members, a lively debate within NRPA's management focused on the extent to which the journal should interpret research and practical applications as contrasted with contributing to theory and the body of knowledge. SPRE responded by arguing for a more scientific journal but also began to consider ways to interpret and apply research through other types of communication channels.

The editorial team also had difficulty in gaining support for a scientific journal format. The initial cover design based upon Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, as illustrated in Figure 1, was rejected by the NRPA Executive Vice President. With the publication deadline fast approaching, a one hour collaboration between the Editor and the graphic artist produced the "Rorschach" ink blot oriented design, illustrated in Figure 2, which prevailed for 39 volumes until the design was changed recently.

FIGURE 1.  
LEONARDO DA VINCI, VITRUVIAN MAN

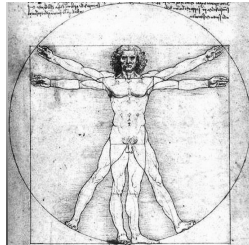
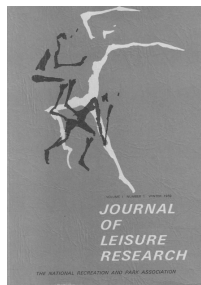


FIGURE 2.  
JLR DESIGN, VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1



Another issue focused on whether the JLR should be distributed to the entire NRPA membership. It was decided that all members should receive a copy as a membership benefit, but this policy in the early years elicited criticism from some members who wanted JLR to focus more on research applications and professional practices.

It was also necessary to evolve the review process into a double blind procedure as one of the means to assure academic integrity of the JLR. SPRE leaders from the scholarly community suggested that the editorship should be transferred from NRPA to a

university and that a double blind review process be initiated. In late 1968 I accepted a position as Director of Research for the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation and Dance which included serving as the Editor in Chief of their Research Quarterly. This new position did not allow me to continue as editor but I continued my relationship with JLR by serving on its Editorial Advisory Board for a number of years. The responsibility as JLR editor was assumed by Carlton Van Doren at Texas A&M University to complete Volume 1 and 2 which in effect transferred the editorial role from NRPA to a university academic.

Professor Rabel Burdge of the sociology department at the University of Kentucky in Lexington became the editor effective with Volume 3. Many of the academic standards and review process instituted during Burdge's editorship are still in place today. In my communications with Professor Burdge, he made the following observations about the early history of leisure research.

"The 70's were a difficult and contentious time for faculty in park and recreation departments. Universities were implementing cross-campus standards for promotion and tenure with a heavy emphasis on referred journal publications. Department conflicts emerged between the pedagogical approach of park and recreation education and the rigors of scientific based experimental, survey and comparative leisure research (Burdge, 1985). The social science faculty within park and recreation departments at the universities of Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Clemson and Texas A&M were outspoken about the need for a research outlet over which they—and not NRPA—had control. Their initial thrust was to start the North American Leisure Studies Association. The launching of the Leisure Research Symposium in 1978 by Lynn Barnett (Morris) and Michael Wade at the NRPA conference was a help, but faculty and graduate students complained about the high cost of registration and the trade convention atmosphere. The proposed Leisure Studies Association never happened but an aftermath was the founding of *Leisure Sciences*, by Carlton Van Doren (of Texas A&M) and me. The first issues of *Leisure Sciences* were filled by papers from the Leisure Research Symposium. The *Journal of Travel Research* was started in the late 70s, modeled after the *Journal of Leisure Research*. In 1982 Joe Bannon started and edited the *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, ironically, also filled by papers from the Leisure Research Symposium. Sensing a need for even more outlets for leisure and recreation research, Donald R. Field (then Chief Social Scientist for the National Park Service) started the Symposium on Society and Natural Resource Management in 1986 at Oregon State University. Two years later, Field and Burdge co-founded the journal *Society and Natural Resources*. Even today, 22 years later, many of the papers read at the Symposium dealt with leisure, recreation and tourism related topics. As an offshoot of the Symposium, the journal *Human Dimensions of Wildlife* was started in the late 90's. So as I look back to the late 60s when JLR was founded, I say..."Look what you guys started ... a research tradition that stumbled at first but now gets stronger with each passing decade!"

Also, in addition to the journals noted by Professor Burdge, several high quality international journals in the tourism field emerged—*Annals of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Management* and *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.

Today, JLR continues to make an impact on the scholarly community. Thanks to the support of the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences of Texas A&M University, JLR's subscription price is quite reasonable compared with other refereed journals making it more accessible to the academic and professional community—particularly students on tight budgets.

JLR's succession of editors, associate editors, reviewers and advisory board members are to be congratulated for instituting and maintaining high academic standards for the JLR. I have every confidence that the JLR's important scholarly legacy will continue in the decades ahead.

### References

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