CHAPTER 33

Recreation, Tourism, and Sport

Klaus J. Meyer-Arendt and Alan A. Lew

In North America, the subdisciplines of recreation geography, tourism geography, and sport geography (RTS) are alive and well. From their beginnings as serious research topics in the 1930s (cf. Mitchell and Smith 1989), the RTS subfields have gradually emerged as legitimate and significant areas of study within North American geography. Among the three subdisciplines, tourism geography has experienced the greatest growth in recent years, and in view of the role of tourism in the world economy, that growth trend is expected to continue.

This chapter presents an overview of research in recreation geography, tourism geography, and sport geography by North American geographers since 1988. Research conducted prior to that date was summarized in Mitchell and Smith's (1989) chapter in the first volume of Geography of America (Gaile and Willmott 1989), and readers are urged to consult that reference. An excellent summary of themes in RTS research from a global perspective is provided by Hall and Page (1999).

Definitions

According to a traditional, dualistic Western definition, all time can be divided into two categories: work and leisure. Leisure, or non-work time, is filled with various activities (or "non-activities") such as watching television, playing games, and socializing. Whereas the study of many leisure activities falls within the domains of psychology, physical education, and sociology, most leisure activities also lend themselves to geographic analysis. This is where the origins of RTS geography lie. Tourism and recreation activities exhibit distinct place, time, distance, and activity patterns. For example, tourism is typically more passive and entails more distant and extended travel than does most recreation. Sport is a form of recreation that includes both active participation and passive spectator activities.

Leisure studies is a broad and multidisciplinary research area that encompasses most of the RTS literature, and that has engendered its own body of literature that geographers have contributed to. However, the terms "leisure geography" or "geography of leisure" never came into common use among North American geographers. Mitchell and Smith (1989) noted that the term "recreation geography" was coined in 1954, and up through the 1970s it seemed best to reflect the predominant interests of North American geographers studying leisure activities. During this period, geographers focused on recreation resource inventories, spatial patterns of recreational area usage, recreation participation, recreation perception, recreation planning and management, and urban recreation. An emphasis on outdoor recreation research was part of a broader societal concern with recreational resources in the public domain. Hence, many of the studies focused on public-sector concerns such as management, carrying capacity, and the valuation of wilderness (Hall and Page 1999). Tourism emerged as an area of geographic research in
the 1960s and 1970s along with a growth in private-sector interests in travel patterns, tourist demands, economic impacts, and marketing. About this same time, researchers in the small but distinct sports geography arena sought their own identity, creating the trifold split in North American leisure geography and resulting in the "Recreation, Tourism, and Sport" name being applied to the newly formed specialty group within the Association of American Geographers (AAG) in 1974.

The RTS Specialty Group of the AAG

In 2000 there were about 280 RTS members, including many non-North American geographers, an increase of 40 per cent over twelve years. To encourage development of the RTS field, in 1988 the specialty group instituted the Roy Wolfe Award for RTS geographers with distinguished research and service records (Table 33.1). In 1997, a second award, the John Rooney Applied RTS Award, was created for meritorious contributions to applied RTS geography (Table 33.2). And since the early 1990s, the specialty group has held a student paper competition to encourage growth in RTS research among younger scholars (Table 33.3). The group organizes and sponsors many sessions at the annual Association of American Geographers meetings, and although the number of recreation and sport presentations have remained fairly stable since 1988, tourism presentations have increased significantly (Fig. 33.1).

In recent years, the RTS specialty group has collaborated with the International Geographical Union’s Study Group on the Geography of Sustainable Tourism in organizing paper sessions at the AAG annual meetings. North American RTS members have also been actively involved in other organizations, including holding two recent chair positions of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism (Richard Butler and Geoffrey Hall). Since 1996, RTS has had presence on the World Wide Web to promote group activities (cf. <www.geog.nau.edu/rtts/>, accessed 21 Sept 2001).

### Methods of Assessing Recent RTS Research

To summarize research on RTS topics both by North American geographers and about North American geography from 1988 to 2000, efforts were made to be consistent by replicating and expanding upon the methodology used in the previous assessment (Mitchell and Smith 1989). To build the bibliography, solicitations were sent out on the 150-member RTS e-mail listserve, and Current Geographical Publications, Books in Print, and the content of leading journals in the field were surveyed for entries starting in 1988. Several 1987 references that were not in Mitchell and Smith’s (1989) bibliography were also included in the final tabulation. RTS research published in monographs, book chapters, proceedings, and various forms of gray literature was,
Table 33.3 Recipients of RTS Student Research Paper Awards for papers presented at the annual Association of American Geographers meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Ali A. Abusalih</td>
<td>Mississippi State University</td>
<td>“Biloxi and Dockside Casino Gambling: Impacts on the Coastal Landscape”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Herman</td>
<td>San Diego State University</td>
<td>“Taming a Remote Wilderness: Recording and Evaluating Resource Conditions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Hawkins</td>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td>“Guides to Paradise: Tourist Images of Jamaica from Victorian Times to the Present”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jennifer R. Beltz</td>
<td>Northern Arizona University</td>
<td>“Ecotourism in Brazil”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Tou C. Chang</td>
<td>McGill University</td>
<td>“Singapore’s Little India: A Tourist Attraction as a Contested Landscape”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paul Mackun</td>
<td>SUNY at Buffalo</td>
<td>“Tourism in the Third Italy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jonathan Wessell</td>
<td>Western Michigan University</td>
<td>“Recreation Quality and Usage: A Comparative Study of Three West Michigan Rail-Trails”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Lisa De Chana</td>
<td>Southwest Texas State University</td>
<td>“Geographical Analysis of NHL Player Origins”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Margaret Pawlick</td>
<td>University of Western Ontario</td>
<td>“Ethical Considerations in Recreation Service Provision for Specific Populations”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Charles Brian Copp</td>
<td>Florida Atlantic University</td>
<td>“Small Business Networks in Slovakia’s Tourism Industry”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travis Wampler</td>
<td>Southwest Missouri State University</td>
<td>“Route 66: The Forgotten Modes of Transportation, Urbanity, and Culture in America”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately, excluded from the bibliographic search. Only those references with at least one resident North American (US or Canada) geographer were included.

The primary source of entries were the fifteen journals in which RTS academics are most likely to publish. Ten of these were reviewed by Mitchell and Smith (1989), including: Annals of Tourism Research; Annals of the Association of American Geographers; Canadian Geographer; Economic Geography; Geographical Review; Journal of Cultural Geography; Journal of Geography; Journal of Travel Research; Leisure Sciences; The Professional Geographer. New to this edition were Tourism Management, Focus (a non-refereed magazine published by the American Geographical Society), Journal of Travel Research (Tourism and Travel Research Association), the Yearbook of the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers, and Sport Place. Sport Place was founded by John F. Rooney (Oklahoma) in 1987 and was the first RTS-focused journal. Reflecting growing academic interest, the 1990s has witnessed an explosion in new tourism journals, including Tourism Geographies, founded in 1999 by Alan A. Lew (Northern Arizona). Although virtually all these new journals include geographers on their editorial boards and contain research articles by North American RTS geographers, they were too recent to include in this review.

Sport geography, the smallest of the RTS subdisciplines, is the least represented in the mainstream journal literature selected for this review. To remedy this situation, Thomas Runney (SUNY-Plattsburgh) was asked to update his thorough bibliography of sport geography (Runney 1995) so that North American references could be included for this chapter.

Once the references were assembled, they needed to be organized in a logical and systematic manner. This was no easy task, as Hall and Page (1999) discovered in their review of the “main approaches” to the geography of tourism and recreation. Despite some overlap, the following “themes and approaches” were identified for each of the RTS subdisciplines.

**Themes and Approaches in Geographic Research on Tourism**

**General Books and Articles**

Since 1988, there have been scores of books and general articles on the geography of tourism. Many books, both authored and edited, covered the entire field of tourism
geography, usually in an introductory manner (e.g. Hall and Page 1999; Hudman and Jackson 1998; Ringer 1998; Seaton et al. 1994; Williams 1998). Other books addressed specific themes, such as coastal tourism (Fabbri 1990), urban tourism (Murphy 1997), sustainable tourism (Hall and Lew 1998), and economic geography (Ioannides and Debbage 1998). In addition to books, a few journal articles reviewed the overall scope of tourism geography (cf. Mitchell 1994), while Smith and Godbey (1991) examined the linkages among leisure, recreation, and tourism. Links between tourism and economic geography were addressed by Ioannides (1995b), between tourism and international understanding by Mings (1988), and between ecology and tourism by Farrell and Runyan (1991). A focus on tourist attractions was provided by Lew (1994) and Wall (1997c). Methodological approaches were discussed by Hartmann (1988), Murphy and Carmichael (1991), and Smith (1989, 1994), among others.

Travel

The study of travel, or the movement of people over space, continues to be a significant research theme in tourism as well as recreation, and researchers employ a wide variety of methodologies. Approaches include the spatial analysis of travel patterns (Hudman and Davis 1994; Ioannides and Debbage 1997; Mings and McHugh 1992), economic impacts of travel (Roehl et al. 1993), application of descriptive frameworks and models (Loban 1997; Oppermann 1994, 1995b), travel planning (Fesenmaier and Johnson 1989), the role of welcome centers (Stewart et al. 1993), motivational aspects (Mansfield 1992b), risk assessment (Roehl and Fesenmaier 1992), industry contributions (Marti 1991; Van Doren 1993), pilgrimage tourism (Hudman and Jackson 1992), and descriptive approaches (Lanegran and St. Peter 1993; Zurick 1995a).

Historical Tourism

Historical tourism is important for understanding both a slice of the past and the evolutionary background of modern touristic phenomena, and several geographers have embraced this research approach. The theme of historical tourism in national parks and wilderness areas appeared in articles on railroads and national parks (Hall and Shultis 1991), Bar Harbor in Maine (Hornsby 1993), the Catskills (Johnson 1990), and romanticized wildnesses (Squire 1994b, 1995).

Perception

Perceptual studies in tourism geography are less common than they were in the 1970s and 1980s, though they still encompassed a wide variety of topics in the literature. Most of this research was devoted to perceptions of destinations (Allen 1988; Crang 1997; Lew 1992), although perceptions of tourism (Husbands 1989) and social impacts (Mansfield 1992a) were also addressed.

Environmental Aspects

Studies on the environmental aspects of tourism today often fall within the relatively new category of “ecotourism.” However, most studies of ecotourism focus upon the tourist and tourism development, rather than the physical environment as a physical geographer or an ecologist might understand the term. The environmental issues in tourism geography are very broad (well summarized by Mieczkowski 1995), and therefore the more policy-oriented ecotourism studies have been moved to the Planning and Management discussion, below. When this was done, the remaining books and articles more clearly emphasized the physical environment aspects of tourism (Savage 1993; Wilkinson 1992; Wong 1993). The impacts of environmental changes upon the pattern of tourism were addressed by Meyer-Arendt (1987, 1991) and Place (1988); while tourism and disaster planning was examined by Murphy and Bayley (1989).

Destination Studies

Tourism, by its nature, is place-specific, and therefore lends itself to geographical analysis. Not surprisingly, tourism geography research had emphasized destinations—both as specific sites and broader physical or political regions. Typically, such studies assess tourism development patterns or impacts within given areas, and many are descriptive rather than statistically or methodologically framed. This latter issue was a major criticism of tourism research in its early years, and while the situation has improved since then, a theoretical basis is still often lacking in these studies.

Examples of regional destination studies of North America included research on regional tourism variations across the entire US (Lollar and Van Doren 1991) and individual states and regions, such as Virginia (Andrews 1990), and the Northwest Territories (Hamley 1991). Physical regions were a focus in studies of places such as the Great Lakes (Chubb 1989), Vancouver Island...
(Murphy and Keller 1990), and the Colorado Rockies (Hartmann 1992). More dispersed territories, sharing culture more than physical cohesion, such as Western US Indian reservations (Browne and Nolan 1989; Lew 1996) and Route 66 (Mariolle 1996), have also been studied, though are less common. Other North American regional studies are more focused, such as the application of GIS to tourism in Wisconsin (Foust and Botts 1991), regional travel flows in New England (Hamilton-Jones 1991), and Pacific Northwest shopping districts (Lew 1988).


Specialized Tourism

Narrowly focused theme destinations have become an important part of the tourism landscape and tourism marketing; perhaps the fastest-growing segment of the industry today. Specialized tourism includes a broad range of industry segments such as cultural tourism, heritage tourism, resort tourism, retirement tourism, farm tourism, festival and event tourism, gourmet tourism, and casino gambling, among others.

Cultural tourism typically involves visits to ethnic culture groups, often indigenous and in their native environments, and many anthropologists and sociologists have focused their tourism research on this issue. Geographers have studied indigenous cultural tourism, often under the heading of “ecotourism,” and their research has included a book on tourism and indigenous peoples (Butler and Hinch 1996) and articles on native culture and tourism in Zambia (Husbands and Thompson 1990), on the Navajo Indian Reservation (Jett 1990), in Belize (King 1997; Steinberg 1994), and in the Canadian Arctic (Milne et al. 1995; Hinch 1998). Cultural tourism that is more broadly defined to incorporate dominant Western traditions include studies on Amish and Mennonite communities in Pennsylvania (Hovinen 1995; Wall and Oswald 1990), and religious tourism in Europe and elsewhere (Nolan and Nolan 1992; Rinschede 1992). This latter category overlaps with heritage tourism, which encompasses using cultural artefacts from the past to promote tourism. A few examples of heritage tourism research include studies of historic preservation in Singapore (Chang 1999), Ireland (Johnson 1996), and coastal Cape May, New Jersey (Stansfield 1990).

The study of resorts, particularly seaside resorts, is one of the oldest research thrusts in tourism geography. Popular themes have included resort evolution, resort morphology, typological analyses, and locational analyses. While some resort studies were more general in scope, such as Roehl and Van Doren’s (1990) survey of American resort hotels, most could easily be categorized under regional and place studies due to their more general and descriptive nature. Examples include studies of Revere Beach, Massachusetts (Berman 1989), resort typology studies of Britain (DeBres 1991) and the Dominican Republic (Meyer-Arendt et al. 1992), and impact studies of “Spring Break” students on Padre Island, Texas (Gerlach 1989), resorts in Tecomita, Mexico (Meyer-Arendt 1990b), and Disneyland Paris (d’Hauteserre 1999). Wall (1996a) and (Getz 1993), summarized conclusions from their extensive work on resort communities and tourism business districts, respectively. Others focused more specifically on the resort development cycle in such places as the Bahamas (Debbage 1990) and Cyprus (Ioannides 1992), while various types of resort morphology studies were done on the Gulf of Mexico (Meyer-Arendt 1990a), Hawaii’s Waikiki (Mitchell 1996), and American amusement parks (LaPolla 1988). Retirement tourism, resembling resorts in some ways, was discussed in articles on changing patterns of retirement counties (Griff and Wiseman 1990), the RV resort landscape (Mings and McCHugh 1989; Parsons 1992), and retirement resort cyclicity (Foster and Murphy 1991).

Farm tourism and rural tourism are increasing popular forms of specialized tourism, yet few geographers have conducted research in this arena. Exceptions include Opperman’s (1995a) study of German farm tourism and Weaver and Fennell’s (1997) profile of Saskatchewan vacation farms. Similarly festival and event tourism received limited geographic attention, exceptions being two books by Getz (1991, 1997) and articles
on historic houses and events (Janiskee 1996), history-themed festivals (Janiskee 1990), convention tourism (Zelinsky 1994), and the housing evictions caused by mega-events (Olds 1998).

_Casino gambling_ is another form of specialized tourism that has drawn significant interest since it has become legalized in many parts of the US in recent years. Two edited books, one covering North American trends (Meyer-Arendt and Hartmann 1998) and one covering Indian gaming and tourism (Lew and Van Otten 1998), offered well-informed overviews. Additional research articles on gaming included works on Connecticut’s Foxwood Casino (Carmichael et al. 1995; d’Hauteserre 1998), Nevada (Roehl 1995; Sommers and Lounsbury 1991), and Indian gaming in general (Winchell et al. 1997/8).

### Marketing and Economic Aspects of Tourism

Marketing is one of the largest areas of tourism research, but one to which geographers have contributed only a small portion of this literature (most significantly, Oppermann 1997 and Wall and Heath 1992). Geographers wrote much more on economic development aspects of tourism, several of which were cited under the general topic of tourism development, above. More narrowly focused economic works included studies of regional economic impacts (Gribb 1990; Jeffrey and Hubbard 1988), tourism employment (Cukier-Snow and Wall 1993), cross-border shopping (Timothy and Butler 1995), and tourism multipliers (Wall 1997b).

### Planning and Management

Much of the recent literature on tourism management and planning has centered on the concept of “sustainable tourism” (i.e. the application of sustainable development principles to tourism). From a business perspective, this has often been in the form of “ecotourism,” while non-governmental organizations have also been known to use the term “alternative tourism.” One major book on sustainable tourism with a significant North American emphasis has appeared (Hall and Lew 1998), while several articles have debated whether such forms of tourism are truly sustainable, or alternative, or ecologically friendly (e.g. Butler 1990, 1991a; Ross and Wall 1999). Despite this, these concepts have led to a greater concern for resource management and community-oriented planning (Boyd and Butler 1996; Farrell 1999). More narrowly focused planning articles included those on the destination life cycle and planning (Getz 1992), convention tourism planning (Getz et al. 1998), managing mountain tourism (Gill and Williams 1994; Price 1992), community-driven planning (Murphy 1995), tourism and urban regeneration (Owen 1990), and tourism planning in developing countries (Ioannides 1995a). Ecotourism literature was frequently destination-focused, such as articles on Thailand (Deardren 1991; Hvenegaard and Dearden 1998), Costa Rica (Place 1991), and Nepal (Zurick 1992). Because of their small size and vulnerability, islands have been major venues for tourism management research, including ecotourism. Significant contributions include books by Briguglio et al. (1996) and Conlin and Baum (1995), and articles on Caribbean islands (Albers 1991; Weaver 1993a; Wilkinson 1989) and the South Pacific (Zurick 1995b).

### Themes and Approaches in Geographic Research on Recreation

#### Leisure

Leisure studies, as discussed earlier in the chapter, is a broad field in which active and passive human use of “free,” non-work time is analyzed. Only a few geographers have been involved in this avenue of research, which is dominated by psychologists, sociologists, and kinesiologists. Among geographers, Ed Jackson of the University of Alberta, along with his colleagues and former students, has addressed various aspects of patterns of leisure participation (e.g. Jackson 1988, 1991, 1994; Jackson and Henderson 1995). Others have examined recreational boating usage (Richter 1992), recreation marketing (Peterson 1991), recreation travel (Kim and Pesenmaier 1990), leisure and the environment (Glyptis 1993), recreational preferences (Raitz and Dakhil 1989), behavioral modeling (Pesenmaier 1990), neighborhood community centers (Winder 1998), and climatic influences upon recreation (Konrad 1995). Outdoor recreation in Canada was the subject of a book by Wall (1989).

### Management and Impact Assessment

The dual themes of park management and impact assessment are rooted in some of the oldest geographic studies
of outdoor recreation, and remain important components of the subdiscipline today. Avoidance of potential user conflicts is a chief goal in many of these studies, though the range of research on recreation management issues is considerable. General literature was found to focus on topics such as US national park values (Lemons 1987), rivers (Wikle 1991), upland areas (Sidaway and Thompson 1991), and volunteers in recreation land management (Bristow 1998). More work, however, consisted of site-specific experiences and lessons, including recreation resource compatibility problems in Illinois (Bristow et al. 1995), and park management controversies in New Mexico (Harvey 1998) and at the Grand Canyon (Morehouse 1996). Impact assessments were mostly site-specific, such as estimating greyhound track attendance (Foust and Botts 1989), environmental impacts of recreation in California (Goodenough 1992) and at US national parks (Flint 1998), modeling wildlife boundaries in Canada’s Pacific Rim National Park (Dearden 1988), park protection from human settlements in Peru (K. Young 1993), and mountain environments (Kariel and Drapier 1992; Thorsell and Harrison 1992).

Resource Inventory and Valuation

Another long-term research thrust in recreation geography has been in the inventory and valuation of recreational resources. This research has focused both on the resources themselves and also the recreational user (i.e., the supply and demand of recreation). In terms of the inventory of supply, articles have appeared on the mapping of recreation resources (Clarke 1988), including the use of GIS in the Everglades National Park (Welch et al. 1995). Other articles have covered urban-area outdoor resources (McPherson 1992; Rogers and Rowntree 1988; Talarchek 1990), mountain park resources (Saremba and Gill 1991), and water recreation (Smardon 1988; Willis and Garrod 1991). Inventory and valuation studies based upon demand included studies of urban recreationists (Halseth and Rosenberg 1995; Mandel 1998; Strapp 1988), recreation expenditures and opportunity theory (Lieber et al. 1989), ethnicity and recreation behavior (Pfister 1993), and recreational access (Millward 1996).

Parks

Other than the management, impacts and resource inventory literature cited above, literature on parks has been mostly descriptive and historical in nature, and contributions by RTS specialty group geographers have been few. Focusing first on non-urban parks, historical studies reviewed included articles on Sequoia National Park (Dilsaver 1987) and US national parks in general (Johnson 1994; Sellars 1997). A small number of articles focused on physical geography, such as climate change impacts on the Nahanni National Park (Staple and Wall 1996). Examples of the many general overview articles included introductions to national parks in the southern US (Boorstein 1992), Latin American and Caribbean national parks (Frye 1990), Bruce National Park in Canada (Gorrie 1987), Egypt’s St Katherine National Park (Hobbs 1996), and the administrative structure of Canada’s national parks (Dearden 1993). Research on urban parks included articles on greenway park management (Little 1990), equity and park access issues (Talen 1997), a historical study of San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park (T. Young 1993), and the changing role of modern urban parks (Mitchell 1995; T. Young 1995).

Themes and Approaches in Geographic Research on Sport

General Sport Geography and Landscape

General sport geography references included books that provided an overview of the subdiscipline, as well as articles that were general or otherwise transcended the analysis of individual sports. Important books included those written by the prolific English sport geographer John Bale on broad aspects of sport geography from an introduction to sports geography and foreign athletes at American universities (Bale 1989, 1991) to sport landscape studies (Bale 1992, 1994, 1998). Other significant overview books were The Theater of Sport (Raitz 1995), and Atlas of American Sport (Rooney and Pillsbury 1992). General research articles included an overview of North American sports (Loud 1991), college athletic conferences (Abbott 1990), high-school sports (Ashley 1988), sports territory (Augustin 1997), sports and television (Clay 1988b), athletic participation (Goudge 1993), an analysis of the football field as a landscape feature (Clay 1988a), historical development of soccer (Bowden 1990), and a bibliography of sports geography (Rumney 1995).
Specific Sports

By far the greatest volume of literature in sport geography was dedicated to individual sports. In terms of the total number of articles reviewed, American football was the most researched sporting activity, followed in order by baseball, golf, and snow skiing. A sampling of topics discussed in the football articles include college recruiting (Ferrett and Ojala 1992; Schnell 1990), American football in Europe (Little 1990; Maguire 1990), regional differences in press coverage (Shelley and McConnell 1993) and radio broadcasting of college football (Roseman and Shelley 1988), and the impact of domed football stadiums (Zeller and Jurkovic 1989). Baseball articles covered topics such as geographic names in baseball nomenclature (Elliott 1988), meteorological impacts on the trajectory of hit baseballs (Kraft and Skeeter 1995) and climate impacts of the success of college and professional baseball teams (McConnell 1994; Skeeter 1988), as well as topics similar to those in football (McEachern and Russell 1992; Ojala and Gadwood 1989; Shelley and Shelley 1993).

Golf articles often described the current situation in specific places, such as Pennsylvania (Miller 1990). Other works, however, were more analytical, including research on golf supply and demand (Rooney 1989, 1993) and an analysis of golf course microenvironments (Stadler and Simone 1988). Snow skiing, the last of the four dominant topics of research, included articles on ski area development in Quebec (Archenault 1993) and the impact of global warming on ski areas (Brottan and Wall 1993; Lipski and McBoyle 1991). The literature review found a few articles on other topics, including fishing (Dargitz 1988; Wall 1988), ice hockey (Genest 1996), ice bowling (Griepentrog 1992), soccer (Handley et al. 1994), whitewater rafting (Mayfield and DeHart 1989), stock car racing (Pillsbury 1989), rowing (Rumney 1988), American cricket (Tooley 1988), motorcycle racing (Van Zuyk 1988), endurance sports (Wiggins and Soule 1993), paddlesports (Wiikle 1993), and bridge (Brown 1988). Surprisingly, only one article (Rooney 1990) touched upon the geography of basketball.

RTS Geography in the New Millennium

Recreation, tourism, and sport geography are each alive, well and growing in the first decade of the third millennium. The number of RTS specialty group members is at an all-time high, publications are numerous, new journals and books are burgeoning, and—for the first time in many decades—in 1999 the Association of American Geographers met at a resort conference facility (Hilton Hawaiian Village in Waikiki). Although the outlook for RTS geography seems rosy, there are certain trends that require elaboration.

Research in RTS Geography

In the US, RTS topics have traditionally been considered frivolous and not worthy of serious academic study, especially within the discipline of geography. This has been reflected in the paucity of geography departments that specifically advertise for RTS-trained academics—even when the position being filled was formerly held by an RTS scholar. This situation has been less true in Canada and elsewhere, which has resulted in some of the world’s leading RTS geographers being non-Americans. Because of the slow rate at which American geography has come to accept the rising role of recreation and tourism in contemporary society, many RTS geographers have allied themselves with non-geography colleagues in multidisciplinary centers of tourism and recreation research. Hall and Page (1999) noted a trend for tourism programs—and tourism geographers—to be housed in business schools where recognition of the applied value of tourism studies is apparently greater than in departments of geography. This situation has been similar for recreation geographers as departments of leisure studies, tourism studies, and recreation and parks have grown faster than RTS geography programs. (Salem State College, with one of the largest undergraduate geography programs in the US, in large part because of its tourism track, is a significant exception to this.) Because of the conservative nature of academic geography, it is anticipated that this trend toward employment in interdisciplinary tourism programs will continue into the near future.

One of the difficulties in RTS geography’s lack of status in academe is that much RTS research is applied in nature and is, therefore, less prominent in the discipline’s journals. RTS geographers often work as consultants to assist local communities, regional governments, and the private sector, reflecting the importance of leisure in contemporary American society. As such, RTS geographers have been less involved in the more theoretical debates that guide much of the literature in the leading geography journals (for exceptions see Britton 1991 and Squire 1994a). More active participation by RTS
geographers in these discussions would help to raise the subdiscipline's profile. RTS research could benefit by expanding its theoretical basis to include new ideas from closely aligned areas of economic and cultural geography where social theory and the geography of consumption offer considerable potential for informing RTS research.

For RTS geographers, the tensions between employment in geography and more applied leisure fields (including recreation, leisure studies, and hospitality and tourism) has also presented a challenge as to just where their research and publication "home" is situated. Because of the synthesis that geographers naturally bring to their work, RTS scholars tend easily to place their research within the literature of the larger bodies of tourism and leisure studies. For reasons cited above, they have tended to avoid publishing within the mainstream geography journals, and as a result have often fallen away from the major disciplinary debates and writings within geography. This has further contributed to an isolation of the subdiscipline. The growth of RTS geography as a field of study, and probably more importantly as an economic activity, has resulted in more articles (especially on tourism topics) appearing in leading North American geography journals in the 1990s. We expect that this presence will continue to grow in the coming years, though RTS geographers will also need to make conscious efforts to reach out and embrace their own discipline.

Teaching RTS Geography

The Guide to Programs in Geography in the United States and Canada (2000–1 edition, Association of American Geographers) listed "Recreation/Tourism" program specialties in sixty-two US and Canadian departments of geography (25% of the total). At the same time, Schwendeman's Directory of Collegiate Geography of the US (2000 edn., Eastern Kentucky University), listed thirty-four programs that taught a "travel/tourism" class in either 1998 or 1999 (up from eighteen two years earlier). While RTS appears to be a major teaching subject in geography, few departments actually employ geographers trained in RTS subdisciplines, and even fewer produce Ph.Ds specializing in RTS topics. This is especially true of larger universities than smaller, regional universities where responses to rapidly changing economic and social conditions demand greater flexibility.

Of the geography programs that claimed recreation/tourism as a program specialty, forty-four responded to a survey of RTS course offerings by Bristow and Carmichael (1999). The survey results (Table 33.4) indicated that the overall number of courses offered was quite small and were not offered on an annual basis. Canadian offerings were proportionally much greater than American offerings. In addition, the authors found a decline in recreation geography courses and an increase in tourism geography course offerings since the early 1970s, reflecting the non-replacement of retiring recreation geographers. Many of the recreation courses that were formerly offered in geography have been subsequently absorbed by expanding leisure and recreation studies programs.

One way that RTS geographers are making their presence better known in the teaching realm is by posting their courses on the World Wide Web (Bristow and Carmichael 1999). With the recent proliferation of distance-learning courses, the trend toward web-based teaching is sure to continue. The applied nature of RTS geography makes it particularly well suited to the Web, and more courses taking advantage of this new technology will likely increase the visibility and viability of the RTS subdisciplines.

Future Outlook

In the post-industrial world that has come to characterize North America, leisure, recreation, travel, and sporting activities have taken center stage in the lives of many, if not most, people. In particular, travel and exploration (arguably a form of tourism) form the basis of the geographer's fascination with places, and are often viewed as a shared characteristic among those who have heeded geography's calling. Today, tourism has become the world's largest industry, and the demand for academic and applied tourism research is greater than ever. Recreation and sport research, although not growing as fast, will none the less also remain important as demand for outdoor recreation continues to grow and tickets to popular sporting events continue to be scalped at high prices.
Recreation, tourism, and sport are multidisciplinary areas of study, and geographers have been at the forefront of research in these arenas. The ever-growing body of research in these fields is shifting, however, to multidisciplinary departments, multi-disciplinary journals, and the private sector (where applied research is more lucratively rewarded). Geographers will continue to play important roles, especially in tourism research, because so many of the themes and problems are inherently geographic. Many RTS geographers may shift their academic linkages to nongeography programs and interdisciplinary academic conferences, thus contributing to the centrifugal spin-off of the many subdisciplines of geography.

In North American, the RTS Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers is the leading organization bringing together professional RTS geographers and students. While the RTS Newsletter and the RTSNET-L e-mail listserv connects RTS members and affiliated colleagues, the annual meeting of the AAG continues to be the single most important venue for sharing research and ideas. A respectable number of Canadian RTS geographers also attend the AAG meetings, although GEPARETO (GEOgraphy of PARKs, Recreation and TOurism) provides a much smaller venue for members of the Canadian Association of Geographers. In spite of centrifugal forces sending RTS geographers to multidisciplinary departments and multidisciplinary conventions, the AAG meetings will continue to play an important role in RTS geography.

Research on the geography of recreation, tourism, and sport historically has been fragmented rather than integrative. It has also been less descriptive than conceptual, or even applied. The trends of the 1990s indicate that more rigorous methodologies and integrative approaches are being employed, holding promise for higher standards in future RTS geography research. Mitchell and Smith (1989) identified eighteen research agenda needs for RTS geography, most of which are as relevant today as they were a decade ago. Key areas that we see as most important to the future development of RTS geography in the coming decade include:

1. RTS geography needs to be better integrated into the mainstream of North American geographic literature by incorporating recent developments in cultural and economic geography theory and method into RTS research, and publishing research in more general geography journals. This may occur naturally as RTS issues increasingly become central to North American life, economy, and environment.

2. The applicability of RTS geography to major contemporary issues could be better demonstrated. These include environmental and cultural resource management, environmental justice, elderly and handicap access, urban and regional development, and other key areas where geography has traditionally played a leading role. The relatively few RTS geographers have already made significant contributions, but much more can and should be done.

3. The three subfields of recreation, tourism, and sport should be better integrated with each other and with the broader topic of leisure geography, so that each may better benefit from theoretical and methodological advances made by the others. Despite cohabitation within the AAG's RTS specialty group, more could be done to foster cross-fertilization of ideas and research. The three subdisciplines, as well as the broader discipline of geography, would all benefit from the synergy that further collaboration would engender.

Acknowledgements

Assistance provided by Rob Bristow, Barbara Carmichael, Lisle Mitchell, Wes Roehl, and Tom Rumney is greatly appreciated.

References

General


Tourism


Sport


