RECREATION PROGRAMMING

Designing Leisure Experiences

Third Edition

J. Robert Rossman

Barbara Elwood Schlatter

For

Linda Rossman

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Tom Schlatter

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Preface

The first edition of this book was published over a decade ago. When it was first released, it included many innovative concepts, and a few risk takers adopted it. Since then, the book has been adopted for use at over 100 universities in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other countries. With this edition, Barbara Schlatter has joined the effort as a co-author, bringing new thoughts, additional perspectives, and innovations to the book.

The profession and its knowledge base have continued advancing. We have incorporated into this third edition the implications of the latest research in leisure behavior, as well as the latest professional practices. Recent research continues to point out the complexity of experiencing leisure. Thus, facilitating the experience remains equally complex. However, as we enter a new millennium we are assured that leisure remains a desired human experience. There is no doubt in our minds that people will continue to demand leisure services. Who supplies these services will shift to those suppliers who are able to deliver the types and formats of service desired. Thus, programming will continue to be an important, primary function in all leisure service agencies.

Acknowledgments

Students from the University of North Texas, Southern Illinois University, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Florida, Indiana University, the University of Nevada–Las Vegas, and Illinois State University have all provided valuable feedback about the book.

Practitioners and agency directors from around the country were generous in providing us with photographs of excellent programs. We received more photographs than we could use. The agencies providing photographs, and in some cases the photographers are cited with each photograph.

We also want to acknowledge the help provided by the staff at Sagamore Publishing. Joe Bannon, Sr., Publisher of Sagamore, has provided ongoing support for the book for over a decade and was instrumental in encouraging development of the original volume. Sue Outlaw, acquisitions editor; Doug Sanders, marketing specialist; and Janet Wahlfeldt, production editor; have all made significant contributions to producing this edition. We are grateful to each of them for their dedicated, professional work on this book.

J. Robert Rossman
Barbara Elwood Schlatter
Normal, IL
July 2000

Introduction

An outdoor recreation guide leads an anxious group of teenagers along the Allagash Wilderness Waterway in northern Maine as they paddle through Chase Rapids, an exciting section of Class II white water. In Baton Rouge, a swimming instructor shows patience as she helps a frustrated child learn the butterfly stroke. A therapeutic recreation specialist takes a group of children with physical disabilities to an accessible playground. Along the upper Delaware River, a guide double-checks the equipment list to make sure he has not forgotten anything for the beginning fly fishing workshop. Elsewhere, several counselors work back–stage to calm the participants as they nervously wait their turns to perform in the camp talent show.

Along the New Jersey seashore, a recreation worker rents out boogie boards and comfortable chairs to visitors. In a nursing home, an activity director leads Alzheimer's patients in a reminiscence program. At Cedar Point Theme Park, workers load seemingly endless lines of guests into and on to attractions. At an adult kickboxing class, the leader finishes the session with a set of relaxing cool-down exercises. Camp counselors care for and lead numerous children in activities at hundreds of residential camps operated by churches, youth agencies, and private owners. In health and fitness centers, workers lead aerobics, jazzercise, aquafitness, and other activities. At a local cinema, a recreation worker takes a ticket, seats a patron, and starts the day's feature film.

Recreation workers design and implement myriad different recreation services at hundreds of commercial and public agencies across the country. In local recreation and park departments around the country, recreation workers organize special events that celebrate the diverse backgrounds of their constituents. A therapeutic recreation specialist in a rehabilitation unit creates an individual program plan for a recovering stroke patient that will enable the patient to participate in a variety of recreation activities. A military recreation specialist in southern California plans a rock climbing outing for U.S. Marines at Joshua Tree National Park. A program director at a residential camp in Wisconsin adds the final touches to the summer's activity schedule.

Designing and delivering recreation and leisure services is programming. Programming is a major responsibility in all leisure service organizations: Edginton and Neal (1983) have empirically confirmed that producing quality programs was one of the most highly rated organizational goals of municipal park and recreation executives. LaPage (1983) has also suggested that "Providing the environment for a 'high-quality outdoor recreation experience' is a goal of most recreation resource managers—public and private" (p. 37). Programming, then, is regarded as a central concern of managers in all leisure service agencies, and is usually an identified part of a leisure service agency's mission.

Programming: The Focus of the Profession

Designing and delivering recreation and leisure services is the major function of the leisure service profession. Leisure experiences are the basic units of service that the leisure service profession provides. This engaged experience is the vehicle through which other outcomes are accomplished. It is *not* beyond fun and games in the sense of bypassing them, but *through* the contexts and interactions of fun and games. The context of leisure interaction facilitates unique access to leisure experiences, and this experience facilitates accomplishing additional desirable outcomes. Professional practice is based on the recreation and leisure discipline, which seeks to understand the antecedents to leisure, the phenomenology of experiencing leisure, and the results of participating in leisure. Programming is the reason the profession and leisure service organizations exist. Programmers, better than any other professional group, should understand the phenomena of leisure, how humans engage in and experience leisure, the results of this experience, and how to facilitate an individual's experience of leisure. Our professional responsibility is to manipulate environments to facilitate leisure experiences for patrons. Albert Tillman (1973, p. ix) characterized the centrality of programming to the profession when he declared, "Crown program. Long live the king!"

Over the past fifteen years, programmers' responsibilities have expanded greatly. They can include operating special events, contracting for services with external vendors, developing program services from a marketing approach, organizing leagues and tournaments, developing socially purposeful programs, and others. Additional developments are the infusion of computer technology into the management of program services and the need for inclusive services. During this time period, the National Recreation and Park Association undertook sponsorship of the Benefits *Are* Endless™ marketing campaign and also provided leadership for the development of Benefits-Based Programming (BBP). Today, programmers are involved in an increasingly complex set of delivery formats and techniques.

Most literature about programming has been published in books on the subject (Carpenter & Howe, 1985; DeGraaf, Jordan, & DeGraaf, 1999; Edginton, Hanson, Edginton, & Hudson, 1998; Farrell & Lundegren, 1991; Kraus, 1997; Russell, 1982; Tillman, 1973). Many of the programming practices recommended have not been logically derived from current knowledge about experiencing leisure. Consequently, practice has not been tied to theory, and techniques for successful programming have been somewhat nebulous. How programmers actually develop programs has not been documented, so programming techniques remain somewhat mysterious. Nonetheless, numerous techniques have been proposed for developing successful programs: planning, brainstorming, needs analysis, community surveys, evaluation, systems analysis, and marketing. All of these techniques can certainly be used in developing successful programs. But none addresses leisure program development directly,

comprehensively, and uniquely. They are all only piecemeal techniques that fail to provide the comprehensive insights into programming that are necessary to develop successful programs. We are convinced that information and techniques based on current information about experiencing leisure are needed to develop successful programs. Thus, the profession must reframe concepts about the role of programs and programming.

One of the difficulties in writing a programming book is drawing the boundaries around the various functions that are needed to manage leisure services and leisure service agencies. The delivery of good leisure services requires that all management functions be performed properly, including leadership, supervision, programming, and management of services, the agency, and facilities. In preparing this text, we have tried to restrict its content to the essential elements of programming, although there is indeed some unavoidable overlap into other functions.

In order to program, one must understand programming concepts, the theory of how recreation and leisure program services are developed, and how leisure is experienced. More explicit, theory-based information about programming has begun to appear in journals (Allen, Stevens, & Harwell, 1996; Cushman & D'Amours, 1989; Edginton & Rossman, 1988; Henderson & King, 1998; Tew, Havitz, & McCarville, 1999; Stewart, 1998; Witt & Crompton, 1996; Witt & Crompton, 1997). The programmer's knowledge base must enable him or her to operate on two levels. First, the programmer must manage the production and delivery of leisure services within a specific agency context. Second, the programmer must do this in a manner that facilitates the occurrence of leisure experiences at the behavioral level; that is, within interactions in social occasions.

In *Recreation Programming: Designing Leisure Experiences, Third Edition,* the programmer is taught to develop program services by learning both the theory and technique of recreation programming, including: (1) basic leisure theory that explains how leisure is experienced; (2) the generic structure of situated activity systems in which social interaction produces leisure experiences; and (3) procedures and techniques used by programmers to manage recreation programs. This newest edition of *Recreation Programming: Designing Leisure Experiences* includes two new chapters that cover the expanding continuum of program services that programmers are expected to develop. At one end of the continuum is the supports paradigm (Schalock, 1995), and at the other end is the marketing approach. The chapter entitled Benefits-Based Programming illustrates the application of the supports paradigm, which implements prescriptive programming with a socially purposeful end. This outcome-based approach focuses on meeting the needs of specific groups. The chapter on Developing Leisure Service Products discusses the other end of the continuum by expanding the conceptualization of the services that programmers produce so these may be marketed more effectively. We believe that the inclusion of these new chapters will address the needs of programmers who work in commercial, private, public, quasi-public, and therapeutic sectors.

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Contents

Part I: Foundations for Programming

This book is predicated on the notion that programmers facilitate individuals' engagements in leisure experiences. To accomplish this, programmers must understand how leisure is experienced in social occasions, how to design programs to facilitate leisure experiences, and how leisure service organizations manage the development of recreation program services.

In Part I, a foundation for successful programming is developed. In the first chapter of this part, Chapter One, basic concepts of programming and operational definitions of leisure behaviors are explained. Chapter Two contains a discussion of social science theory that explains leisure behavior. This is one of the more difficult chapters in the book, but understanding its content is necessary to guide the professional programmer's development and management actions throughout the steps of the Program Development Cycle. The material in Chapter Three flows from the discussion in Chapter Two. The generic structure of the situated activity systems in which leisure experiences occur is explained in this chapter. Chapter Four is new in this edition. It explains the basic theory and practice of the newly developed Benefits-Based Programming (BBP). Chapter Five is also new this edition. How leisure services may be packaged for distribution and sale are discussed. In Chapter Six, a method for developing goals and objectives that can organize and guide the development of leisure services in an organization is explained. At the end of this section is a fold-out sheet with the Program Development Cycle. Margin notes next to the diagram briefly explain the Cycle. A more complete explanation may be found on the supporting web site (www.recreationprogramming.com); however, each of the remaining chapters in the book explains the steps in the Cycle.

Reaching beyond your limits is part of the challenge and excitement of the Women's High Ropes Adventure.

Photo courtesy of Monmouth County Park System, Lincroft, New Jersey

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Basic Programming Concepts

The ultimate goal of programming is to facilitate leisure experiences for program patrons. Accomplishing this requires that the programmer learn the concepts that tie together experiencing leisure, the definition of a program, the act of programming, and the management activities that must be implemented in an agency to produce programs (Rossman & Edginton, 1989).

Programming Concepts Defined

A program is a designed opportunity for leisure experience to occur. Program is an elastic concept used to describe a variety of different operations, including activities, events, or services conducted by leisure service organizations. The term program can refer to a single activity, such as a bike ride or a class operated over several weeks. It can refer to a collection of activities, such as the cultural arts classes operated by an organization. It can refer to a single event, such as a softball skill workshop or a week-long festival. It can refer to the services offered by an agency, such as a drop-in auto hobby shop or a desk selling discount tickets to area events. It can also refer to the total set of operations offered by an agency, including all of its activities, events, and services. Any of these may be called a program.

This definition is broad and is intended to include more than typical programs organized with a face-to-face leader. The key point is the notion of design, in which the programmer conceptualizes a leisure experience and intervenes in some way to facilitate it for the patron. In some instances this intervention may be minimal, but in others it may be near total. The intervention may be through face-to-face leadership, a designed physical environment, or the regulation of leisure behavior through the development and enforcement of policies. Design always involves planned intervention, regardless of its type or magnitude.

Two assumptions in this definition need further explanation. First, the notion of design assumes that we know how leisure is construed and experienced by individuals (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997) and that we can intervene to facilitate its occurrence. Second, it assumes that we know the attributes of the leisure experience, that is, we know why individuals label some experiences as leisure but not others. The ability to program requires a thorough knowledge of

both the process of experiencing leisure and the outcomes that define the experience. This knowledge will be introduced in the appropriate sections throughout the book.

Leisure is not a set of identifiable activities, events, or services. The attributes that make them leisure experiences are not inherent in the activities, events, or services that are usually called leisure. Rather, leisure is construed by how a participant processes his or her experiences of a program and interprets what has occurred (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Kelly, 1987; Patterson, Watson, Williams, & Roggenbuck, 1999). Modern programming is also more than simply searching for the most popular activity that can be offered. Programmers must understand that leisure is a state of mind most likely experienced when participants enter freely-chosen programs that enable them to achieve realistic personal goals by consciously directing interaction in a social occasion. Samdahl (1988) said, "Leisure can be viewed as a distinctive pattern of perceiving and relating to ongoing interaction. That is to say, leisure is a particular definition of a situation" (p. 29). Thus, a program provides an opportunity for leisure to occur but cannot ensure that it does, since this ultimately depends on how a patron experiences the event and interprets his or her participation.

Programming is designing leisure opportunities by intervening in social interaction, that is/by manipulating and creating environments in a manner that maximizes the probability that those who enter them will have the leisure experiences they seek. Individuals achieve satisfaction from a leisure experience according to how they guide and interpret their participation in the leisure occasion. Because the programmer understands what patrons must experience to construe an experience as leisure and how this experience is produced through social interaction, a program that facilitates (i.e., increases) the probability of a leisure experience occurring can be designed. This is a key notion. The practice of all professions, including a leisure service provision, is predicated on information developed through the scientific method and then applied to practical problems. The use of data-based information increases the probability of the desired outcome occurring but does not guarantee it.

Planning for social interactions that will facilitate the leisure experience must be based on knowledge about experiencing leisure and how it is produced in social occasions. Kelly (1999) has suggested that all definitions of leisure presuppose that it occurs in an action context: "Something happens in directing attention, processing information, defining meaning, and producing the experience"(p. 136). He goes on to say, "The distinctive element of leisure action is that it is focused on the experience rather than external outcomes. It is engaged in primarily for the experience of the action" (p. 136). It is the responsibility of the programmer to design programs with participation processes that will facilitate participants' opportunities to engage in actions that will result in a leisure experience. Thus, how a program is operated is more important to facilitating a leisure experience than the specific activity itself.

Furthermore, modern programmers must understand that leisure is a multiphase experience (Stewart, 1999) and plan for total participation by including the three phases of human experience—anticipation, participation, and reflection (Busser, 1993; Little, 1993). Good programming, then, is designed intervention based on knowledge about social interaction and the social psychology of experiencing leisure.

Program development is the overall management process in which the programmer designs, manages, and delivers program services within the context of a specific agency. It includes understanding and developing an agency's mission, assessing needs, designing programs, delivering them, and evaluating them to document the benefits that have been provided as well as to determine their future. All programs are delivered by some type of organization. Therefore the programmer must learn to manage program services successfully within an organizational context. Successful program development results in programs that meet the needs of the agency, patrons, and the community. Programming is one key function in program development. The overall process of program development is diagramed in the Program Development Cycle (p. 95 in this volume). Now complete Exercise 1-1.

Exercise 1-1.
Comparing Programming Concepts

Compare the definitions of program, programming, and program development. How do the three concepts differ? What is the role of the programmer in each of them?

Definitions of Related Concepts

Concepts we use influence how we act. The linguistic labels attached to various forms of human behavior shape our attitudes and actions. The lack of precise definitions in the recreation and leisure field is often a cause of concern to new students. This area of study seems to expose its inadequacies at the outset, and new students immediately observe that the major concepts in the field lack precise definitions. In other fields of study, new students are simply given definitions of major concepts that suffice for the first few years of study and sometimes longer. But students of recreation and leisure are encouraged to formulate their own definitions for complex concepts such as play, leisure, recreation, games, and sport.

This book offers a set of concepts and ideas that can be used for successful design and delivery of program services, and this section defines the five major