Dedication

We dedicate this book to the ones who have mentored us in administrative problem solving:

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the efforts of several individuals who contributed to the development of this textbook. Without their support, insight, and professional competence, this updated edition would not have been possible.

• The leisure services practitioners and recreation and park board members who participated in focus groups to help us gather examples of current issues and practices: Jeff Boles, Beth Brunelle, Steven Colt, Andrea Dutcher, Jennifer Glaab, William Hurley, Janice Johnson, Joanie Groome, Leslie Leonard, John McNearney, Patrick Mercer, Todd Miner, Tom Murray, Frank Towner, and Nancy Zahler.

• The many practitioners and students who provided ideas and scenarios for the case studies. We particularly thank Krystal Kauffman, our student worker, who assisted in editing the case studies.

• Jean Greenwood, who wrote Chapter 8 on Conflict Resolution and Mediation Techniques. Her expertise in social justice, conflict mediation, and community building adds a new dimension to this textbook not previously included.

• Betty Powell and Nancy Zahler who reviewed drafts of portions of the manuscript and provided us with invaluable feedback.

• Steven Siconolfi, Dean of the School of Health Sciences and Human Performance at Ithaca College, who provided grant support to sponsor the focus groups and hire consultants to review or contribute to the manuscript.

• Lana Morse and Courtney Theriault for their administrative assistance in preparing the manuscript.

• Joseph J. Bannon, Sr., M. Douglas Sanders, Janet Wahlfeldt, and the staff at Sagamore Publishing for their expertise in preparing this textbook.

• New York State Recreation and Park Society for their assistance in securing copyright permissions.

• And to our families for their endless support and encouragement: Sue, Tom, Anna, Cynny, and Katie.
FOREWORD

In 1972 I completed the first edition of Problem Solving in Recreation and Parks. The motivation for writing this book was a result of my association with Charles K. Brightbill as a student and my experiences as a practitioner in the field of parks and recreation. Charles Brightbill felt that all students studying to become practitioners in our field should be exposed to situations that they would one day confront. The idea of developing "real-life" case studies and a process to solve everyday problems was born. In the last 33 years there have been three editions printed and over 40,000 books used by students and practitioners throughout the U.S. and abroad. For the past two years, a number of professors urged me to update and revise the text. After giving this much thought I decided that it was time that new ideas and fresh thought be brought to the problem-solving process. The new authors who will now carry on the writing of the text are Dr. Margaret Arnold and Dr. Linda Heyne of Ithaca College, and Dr. James Busser of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Each one of these individuals brings a unique background to the task. They all possess practical experience in the field and have the intellectual training and capacity to continue this important work. I am personally delighted they have agreed to do it.

The Fourth edition has been derived from the authors' diverse experiences in dealing wisely with a wide variety of problems in the field. As stated by the authors, this book's purpose is to provide guidelines to park and recreation personnel in developing a systematic and creative approach to problems and vital issues facing our profession. In this fourth edition, the authors bridge a serious gap by providing a basic process through which individuals can learn specific knowledge and functional skills of human relations. The authors' process of problem solving is an innovative approach; it helps people to deal effectively with conflicting social value systems and decision preferences by recreation personnel involved in all types of recreation and park systems. The book should be useful to recreation educators in carrying out their responsibilities for preparing the next generation for effective service in recreation and parks. The need for this book is apparent, because few recreation curricula include courses in problem solving. It is true that many texts dealing with recreation describe policies and procedures that have proved successful and effective, but they do not deal with obstacles that have been met or the manner in which they have been overcome. Clarification and discussion of these matters seem the appropriate responsibility of the professor and the instructor, both in colleges and universities and in the service training programs. In this forth edition, the authors have made a unique contribution to park and recreation administrative theory and practice. Its content provides many insights and will provoke reactions and discussion. Most important, it presents a practical approach to meeting the functional needs of students, teachers, and park and recreation practitioners. It is hoped that this edition will prove more useful and relevant for students both in the classroom and in the field.

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The fourth edition of *Problem Solving: Tools and Techniques for the Administrator* retains one author from the previous edition, James Busser, and introduces two new authors, Margaret L. Arnold and Linda A. Heyne. In this edition, we attempt to integrate practical with academic approaches to problem solving, offering both the theoretical and pragmatic viewpoints, combining these wherever possible. As a result, this book should be useful not only for teaching students in leisure studies how to handle hypothetical problems systematically, but also as an update and refresher for practitioners and board members who are involved with actual problems in agencies and organizations. Thus, the concepts and ideas presented in this book should increase one's problem-solving ability and offer a systematic multi-idea approach to problem solving.

In this edition, greater attention is given to organizational culture and problem-solving approaches and techniques than in previous editions. Additionally, the problem-solving model has been expanded. Not only have all chapters been substantially revised, the majority of the case studies are new and reorganized into five themes: Human Relations, Marketing and Publicity, Planning and Policy Development, Liability and Risk Management, and Financial Management. These case studies represent a wide array of more current problems, since the issues facing leisure, recreation, and park professionals change as rapidly as the times. All cases are drawn from actual situations collected from students and practitioners in the field, as well as news stories that have appeared in newspapers and on the world wide web. The case studies are related to leisure, recreation, and park services, however, it is important to note that they can easily be modified for use by other human service organizations. Finally, each of the five themes concludes with a list of helpful websites for further inquiry.

As mentioned in earlier editions of this textbook, there is no need for this book to be confined to classroom use only. It can be readily used in staff development programs for in-service trainings, by recreation and park boards, or by a wide variety of social and educational institutions. We are grateful that several leisure, recreation, and park professionals, as well as recreation and park board members, participated in focus groups to help us strengthen the content of this textbook. We trust you will find this edition to be more useful and relevant as we continue to solve problems in leisure, recreation, and park services.

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*A problem cannot be solved by the same consciousness that created it.*

Albert Einstein
2 Problem Solving
CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM SOLVING:
A PROFESSIONAL NEED

During the winter of 2003, several professionals who are involved with leisure, recreation, and park services participated in lengthy focus groups to discuss issues and trends surrounding the profession. While many issues were discussed at great length, the most common issues confronting our profession (in no particular order) were identified as follows:

- Funding constraints (e.g., expected to do more with less)
- Managing personnel and staffing concerns (e.g., low wages, high turnover)
- Educating the public about the value of leisure, recreation, and park services
- Volunteerism (e.g., lack of training, overburdened by job expectations)
- Civil Service employees (e.g., political climate)
- Working with boards
- Connecting with legislators and politicians
- Monitoring and documenting programs and services
- Programming for youth, merging youth services
- Technology issues (e.g., computer training, updating technology)

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

The participants in the focus groups then were asked to identify trends they had observed during the past 10 years in leisure, recreation, and park services. The following trends were identified (again, in no particular order):

- Increased accessibility (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act, greater public awareness of people with disabilities, increase in inclusion)
- Increased mental health concerns of participants (e.g., particularly among children and youth)
- Increase in incidence of attention deficit disorder and individuals requiring medication
- Increased diversity (e.g., customers, employees, programming)
- Increased violence and the need for security
- Technological advances
- Emphasis on outcome assessments (i.e., increased by the need for greater accountability to the public)
- Increased sense of entitlement to leisure and recreation (i.e., expectations and standards are now higher for agencies)
- More human resource issues (e.g., job sharing, childcare issues, domestic partnership benefits)
Problem Solving

- Online networks (e.g., advocacy, sharing best practices)
- Increased risk management and liability concerns, and rising insurance costs
- Increased entrepreneurialism (e.g., emphasis on marketing and public relations)
- Increased outsourcing (e.g., paying outside contractors to provide programs and services, collaboration with other organizations)
- Increased life expectancy of baby boomers (e.g., are we planning adequately for this segment of the population?)
- More reliance on volunteers

Based upon these findings, overlapping issues and trends include accountability, technology, and volunteers. This is no surprise. As professionals we are being held more accountable than ever before, primarily due to budget constraints and the society’s increased sense of entitlement to leisure services. Technology is constantly changing the way we do things (e.g., registering participants, the provision of online courses) and keeping current with new software programs requires time, money, and a great deal of patience. Finally, the use of volunteers in recreation, leisure, and park services is very instrumental in the survival of recreation programs and departments. Particularly as we are required to “do more with less” in these financially troubling times, the need for trained and competent volunteers is paramount to the success of our field.

Interestingly, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recently announced the “Vision 2010” plan—a strategic plan for the future of the profession. NRPA’s mission statement is “to advance parks, recreation, and environmental conservation efforts that enhance the quality of life for all people” (Mission Statement, 2001). To carry out this mission, NRPA affirms the following goals:

1. To promote public awareness and support of park and recreation services and environmental and natural resource management;
2. To develop and promote public policy for parks and recreation;
3. To enhance citizen and professional development; and
4. To promote the development and dissemination of the body of knowledge.

Vision 2010 sets forth a clear course of action for NRPA and its members over the next decade. The six strategies appear below:

1. Develop the public’s awareness of the importance of parks and recreation programs to the enrichment of America’s human and natural resources;
2. Create a membership of citizen/board members and professionals prepared to articulate NRPA’s mission, advocate on behalf of the Association and its mission and promote quality programs and services;
3. Build partnerships to advance NRPA’s mission;

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Leaders are visionaries with a poorly developed sense of fear and no concept of the odds against them. They make the impossible happen.

Robert Jarvik
4. Create a citizen and professional membership reflective of America’s diverse population;
5. Assure NRPA’s financial ability to carry out its mission, vision and goals; and
6. Maintain an organizational structure sensitive to changing membership needs.

Based upon NRPA’s strategic plan and vision and the feedback from the focus groups, the trends, issues, and strategies confronting the field of leisure, recreation, and park services are vast. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the future is not some unknown entity over which we have little control, but a prospect we can do much to create, envision, or attempt to accomplish, as individuals or as part of a group. Even though the world may seem out of control in these troubled times, we should not forget that each of us helps to create the future through our awareness or ignorance, convictions or apathy, passivity or actions.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, many recreation professionals began to question our role in the world. According to Williams, Dustin, and McKenny (2004), “Many of us wondered if there could be any real meaning in the work we do in the wake of a terror that ripped apart the security we once felt” (p. 12). But for those of us in the profession, we know we have a vital role in society. Leisure helps us define who we are and makes life livable. Zuefle (2004) stated, “And when we’re honest with ourselves as a society, and we should be every once in a while, we must admit that we desperately need what it has to offer: recreation, play, rest, contemplation and the possibility of wholeness” (p. 14). In order to positively influence our society of leisure, recreation, and park services, we must plan strategies that adhere to “Vision 2010” so we can respond as a profession.

New and creative ideas will be necessary to solve the issues facing us in the 2000s. If leisure, recreation, and park services professionals do not begin to work at systematically addressing the problems confronting the field, when we review our progress in the year 2010, for example, we may still face many of the same problems.

A Look Toward Problem Solving

As the exterior world becomes more complex, and at times bewildering, it is crucial that our imagination becomes richer, more flexible, and courageous. Remember, the future is not a fearsome unknown toward which we are hopelessly heading. It will be a composite of much that we decide to do now. A strong sense of curiosity, coupled with a well-developed ability to question, is vital to creativity (Pollack, 1999).

Many people can think more creatively if shown how to draw more effectively on their imaginations and trust their abilities to do so. Most adults were naturally quite imaginative as children, but as people grow older, they tend to grow inhibited as well. Because of various cultural pressures, including compulsory and formal education, they are too often taught to distrust the products of their own
minds. Creative people tend to ask a lot of questions, and the simple question, “Suppose we did this...?,” lies behind many great achievements (Pollack, 1999).

Problem solving is the ability to formulate new answers. Bransford and Stein (1993) use the acronym IDEAL to describe the process of problem solving:

I—Identify the problem
D—Define and represent the problem visually
E—Explore possible strategies to solve the problem
A—Act on the chosen strategy
L—Look back and evaluate the outcomes

There is much we can do to wean people from the habit of thinking as others do, to encourage creativity, and to support the outcome of such efforts. It is through departure from more traditional methods of teaching and learning that people’s imaginations can be freed. Only when students, for example, truly feel that their ideas will be valued, will they become more creative thinkers. New ideas are limited only by the boundaries of individual skill, imagination, and the ability to grasp the complexity of information.

There is a real need for problem solving to address the issues confronting the profession as well as the concerns facing the leisure, recreation, and park professional. The beginning of this chapter identified issues, trends, and strategies of concerns to our field. The next chapter will introduce the use of the case study method in problem solving. The dilemma for leisure, recreation, and park professionals is to analyze and resolve problem situations. Therefore, the concepts and ideas in this textbook are designed to meet the following ends:

1. Increase problem solving ability;
2. Offer a systematic, multi-idea approach to problem solving; and
3. Improve individual, group, and organizational performance through more effective problem solving skills.

**Bibliography**


**An idealist is one who, on noticing that a rose smells better than a cabbage, concludes that it will also make better soup.**

H.L. Mencken