EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of applied research is to solve immediate, real world problems. Applied research is a component of every discipline across the arts and sciences as reflected in a small sample of journal titles such as Journal of Applied Linguistics, Annals of Applied Biology, Journal of Applied Mathematics, Advances in Applied Sociology, Journal of Applied Physics, Applied Geography, and Journal of Applied Anthropology in Policy and Practice. However, it is my pleasure to introduce this special issue of Polymath, which features applied research across disciplines.

Geographer Genevieve Collins demonstrates how geographic hypermedia systems can be applied to create interactive film tourism maps for the purpose of attracting visitors to locations where films were made. Relying on readily available on-line resources, she developed a step-by-step process of web design that a city’s chamber of commerce or visitor center employee could use to develop an on-line hypermedia map. The author’s map of St. Louis, Missouri, features film titles, locations, scene descriptions, photographs from the films, and links to driving directions that can serve as a model interactive tourism map for other cities.

Biologists Travis Wood, Richard Essner, Jr., and Peter Minchin present the results of research conducted in a migratory bird sanctuary located fewer than fifteen miles from their university campus. They investigated the use of prescribed burning as a management strategy to improve vegetation communities and, in turn, the composition of native grassland bird species. Based on their research results, the authors were able to provide the sanctuary’s management with the implications of different prescribed burn strategies on grassland bird populations. This information can be used to plan for future prescribed burns with a clearer understanding of how the altered vegetation will impact various bird species.

Anthropologist Aminata Cairo discusses the process of conducting applied research and presents the initial results of the project. She worked closely with the leader of an African American drumming organization to identify a research agenda that would lead to a model for replicating the success of this youth group in other communities. In this first stage of the project, the author and her research assistants sought to uncover what worked in the organization and what incongruities existed. Through one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and field observations, the research team became an accepted part of the drumming organization’s events and shared their initial findings with the community. The author describes the challenges of balancing the demands of academic research with the need for community-based applied research.

Finally, Sandra Weissinger reviews a recently published book by sociologist Jennifer Hamer who utilized a wide range of qualitative methods to give voice to the personal ambitions and struggles of people left behind in an abandoned industrial city.

I welcome readers to learn more about how these diverse scholars, through their applied research, are making immediate contributions to the betterment of local communities.