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Collecting to the Core-Youth Sports

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Wordle and Tagul have a function to keep words together as phrases by substituting a tilde (~) for the space between the words. A list of subject headings from checked-out items, formatted to be kept as phrases, would create a cloud that reveals their relative frequency. Or a list of author names from the MARC field 100, formatted as phrases and weighted by total circulations, could be turned into a tag cloud illuminating the most popular authors in the collection.

Conclusion. Tag clouds based on circulation data may be geeky, but they are also relatively quick and easy, fun, and informative. Like any statistical tool, they have limitations. As I noted when I did my first report on popular call numbers at NIST, circulation analysis only tells you something about the collection you already

have, and nothing about what you don't. It doesn't say anything about subjects people are looking for but can't find in your library. Therefore, the tools of traditional collection development must still be utilized, including looking at interlibrary loan requests, patron suggestions and book reviews, and, in academic libraries, reviewing the curriculum each year. 🌱

Endnotes

1. **Hassler, H. C.** (2005). *What Are Our Customers Reading? An Analysis of the Most Frequently Used Subjects of the NIST Research Library Book Collection Based on Circulation (NISTIR 7205)*. Gaithersburg, Md.: National Institute of Standards and Technology. Retrieved from: <http://www.nist.gov/nvl/upload/TopCallNumbers.pdf>.
2. **Levene, M.** (2010). *Introduction to Search Engines and Web Navigation* (2nd edition). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley. p. 386.

Collecting to the Core — Youth Sports



by **Mila Su** (Associate Librarian, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh; Sports and Recreation Editor, *Resources for College Libraries*) <sumc@plattsburgh.edu>

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Column Editor's Note: The "Collecting to the Core" column highlights monographic works that are essential to the academic library within a particular discipline, inspired by the *Resources for College Libraries* bibliography (online at <http://www.rclweb.net>). In each essay, subject specialists introduce and explain the classic titles and topics that continue to remain relevant to the undergraduate curriculum and library collection. Disciplinary trends may shift, but some classics never go out of style. — AD

Children have played games from the beginning of time. However, the increased industrialization and urbanization of the late-19th and early-20th-century United States contributed to significant change in children's play and physical activities. Since the early 1900s, there have been important shifts and growth in organized youth sports programs. This essay examines a selection of the seminal works covering youth sports from this time to the present. A good place to begin is *Lessons of the Locker Room*, wherein **Andrew Miracle** and **C. Roger Rees** provide a historic overview of the beginnings, evolution, and "myths" surrounding school sports.¹ The authors note the early and prevalent belief — imported from Britain — that linked physical activity to a sound moral character. At the same time that this concept of "Muscular Christianity" flowered, the rebirth of the **Olympics** in 1896 and the founding of the **Amateur Athletic Union (AAU)** in 1888 further influenced the reconceptualization of sports participation at scholastic, collegiate, and competitive levels.²

Competitive sports opportunities for young children emerged at the turn of the century. In 1903 the **Public Schools Athletic League** was established in New York City with programs that encouraged participation by boys of all abilities. By the 1920s, public schools were incorporating sports into the educational curriculum. The establishment of **Pop Warner Football** (1929) and **Little League** (1939) offered additional opportunities, but further illustrated that youth sports was moving toward an increasingly competitive model. Meanwhile, physical educators embraced a philosophical viewpoint that separated sports programs in schools from the "commercialization" of recreational and sports activities in the public sphere. **Jack Berryman's** essay "The Rise of Boys' Sports in the United States, 1900 to 1970" chronicles this evolution, noting: "The policy statements of the professional physical education and recreation groups, as well as other leading educators [including medical professionals] from the 1930s to the 1960s, illustrated their discouragement of highly competitive sports for children... warnings against too much competition for elementary school children flowed."³ **Berryman's** essay originally appeared in the first edition of *Children in Sport* (1978) and has been revised numerous times through its subsequent editions, the most recent being *Children and Youth in Sport: a Biopsychosocial Perspective* (2002). Though the title and editorial team has changed since initial publication, this influential anthology features critical discussions on the development of motor skills, anatomy, and physiology, as well as issues related to social and psychological health.

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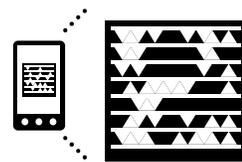
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The late 1960s and early 1970s brought significant changes to physical recreation and youth sports. To date, extracurricular sports focused mostly on boys' experiences. Competitive opportunities for girls were limited, except in select AAU sports and elite venues like the Olympics. While physical educators were increasingly embracing girls' sports activities, the passage of legislative amendment *Title IX* in 1972 represented a seismic political and cultural shift in equal opportunities for females, particularly in high school and college athletics. Other federal legislation affecting youth sports included the *Amateur Act* (1978), the *Civil Rights Act* (1964), and the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (1990).

While legislative measures were increasing access to sports for women, sports studies emerged as a nascent scholarly discipline. Early research focused on scientific areas — exercise physiology, sports medicine, and biomechanics — followed by expanding scholarship in sports psychology, sports history, and sociology of sports. Representing this last field, **Robert Griffin's** *Sports in the Lives of Children and Adolescents* explores the role of sports from a broad sociological perspective, including discussion of gender, as well as race, class, ethnicity, geography, and more.⁴ At the same time that sports studies was growing as an academic area, **Rainer Martens** contributed the groundbreaking 1978 anthology *Joy and Sadness in Children's Sports*.⁵ The articles include essays from popular magazines and conference presentations reflecting cultural norms. One of the most important documents in this work is the *Bill of Rights for Young Athletes*, written by **Martens** in collaboration with **Dr. Vern Seefeldt**. The document includes the rights to "participate in safe and healthy environments" and "to have fun in sports."⁶ The published bill of rights gained the endorsement of many educational, medical, and youth sports organizations and is still used today.

Both the growth of scholarly discourse and the rise in inclusive environments for athletes helped contribute to the creation of the **Institute for the Study of Youth Sports at Michigan State University**. Established in 1978 by the state legislature to survey the conditions of children's sports, this institute was the first to publish benefits and disadvantages of youth participation at all levels of sports. This seminal state report compiled information on ages of participants, gender of coaches, administrative philosophy on recreational programs, and the need to educate coaches and volunteers.⁷ Since then, other state, academic, and national organizations have been established as educational, training, research, or policy centers focusing solely on youth sports concerns. One of the most prominently known organizations is the **National Alliance for Youth Sports**. Founded by **Fred Engh** in 1981 and originally named the **National Youth Sports Coaches Association**, this nonprofit serves as an advocate for "improving the athletic programs of our nation's youth." **Engh** established a name for himself with the popular, often-cited publication of *Why Johnny Hates Sports*, in which he effectively discusses and documents the often negative adult involvement in youth sports settings.⁸ The book critiques coaching, parental participation, untrained program administrators, poor sportsmanship, and the media. **Engh** uses

the book as a platform to promote the necessity of better education and training for all the "players" involved with youth sports — coaches, administrators, athletes, and parents.

The shift towards more commercialization and for-profit youth sports organizations grew in the 1990s. The vacillating prioritization of school budgets and children's health resulted in the cutting and adding of physical education classes, recess, and intramurals inconstantly through the following decades. Budget and social concerns began to impact interscholastic sports, with many elementary and middle schools restructuring to allow playing opportunities for all participants. The divide between interscholastic and recreational youth sports programs widened as additional competitive options became available and program participation rates grew. During this time, increased opportunities for specialized sports camps, elite sports tournaments, and developmental sports teams for all ages became more common. Warnings from educators, academics, and medical professionals on this move toward specialization in youth sports were mostly ignored in large part because youth sports had grown into a profitable industry, with cities relying on sports complexes for economic growth and businesses banking on participation by offering more competitive (and expensive) options to ever younger players. For an excellent contemporary snapshot of the status of youth sports, **Regan McMahon's** *Revolution in the Bleachers* provides personal experiences, solid research, and interesting interviews.⁹ She documents organizations that are providing alternate models of playing experiences, participation opportunities for girls and boys, parental influences, and changes in social and family structures impacting youth sports. The work also delves into critical issues related to the elite club model, burnout, injuries, pay-to-participate programs, and coaches.

Problems in youth sports are definitely not limited to coaching, administrators, budgets, and growing commercialization. Sports programs are beset by the same issues that impact the general youth population, including sexual abuse; bullying; drug abuse — steroids, alcohol, human growth hormone; and eating disorders, including body dysmorphia. And these are only a sample. Other concerns include injuries, burnout, and overtraining. Safety for young athletes certainly includes proper equipment and playing space, but understanding children's biological and sociopsychological development is just as important. *The Young Athlete* provides a selection of articles from medical and academic experts on the young athlete's physical and mental development.¹⁰ The majority of research in this area appears in the journal literature, so this volume is a rare and central monograph covering the major developmental concerns relevant to children in sports from pre-pubescence through adolescence. In his book *Warrior Girls*, journalist **Michael Sokolove** focuses on ACL injuries in females while raising broader questions about educating coaches and trainers on gender-specific injuries, prevention training, sport specialization, and pressures on young female athletes.¹¹ **Sokolove** interviewed female athletes, parents, coaches, and medical professionals to document the impact of injuries to young female athletes. Another perspective on gender and sociological changes in youth sports is **Michael Messner's** *It's All for the Kids*, which explores "the role youth sports plays in the social organization of gender and other forms of inequity in an era of

social change."¹² **Messner**, an authority in sports sociology, provides an academic perspective on the relationship between gender roles and youth sports in this volume, which combines research, observation, and interviews with parents, young athletes, coaches, and administrators. For an international perspective on the topic, see **Paulo David's** *Human Rights in Youth Sport*, which provides an important global review of children's participation in sports.¹³

The resources identified here introduce readers to the critical issues affecting youth sports and are a sound place to start for both contemporary and historical research. Many of them are considered core to an academic library collection supporting sports studies or sports and recreation programs. There remain gaps in the monographic literature concerning issues such as: competitive opportunities for disabled youth, minority and economic aspects, and youth participation in alternative sports. However, in revisiting the *Bill of Rights for Young Athletes*, it became clear that the simple concepts declared in the document transcend time and remain as applicable today as when it was first published nearly 35 years ago. After all, when it comes to youth athletics and nurturing a lifetime of physical activity, isn't the right to "have fun in sports" what it's all about? 🍷

Endnotes

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 12. **Messner, Michael A.** *It's All for the Kids: Gender, Families, and Youth Sports*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009.*
 13. **David, Paulo.** *Human Rights in Youth Sport: A Critical Review of Children's Rights in Competitive Sport*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- *Editor's note: An asterisk (*) denotes a title selected for *Resources for College Libraries*.