

most interesting; and its feasibility is convincing. White clarifies his position against formalized day care services, and provides a description of what he firmly believes is the most desirable way to influence the lives of children for the better – an education-for-parenthood program.

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**The Gallup Organization Inc.**  
**GEOGRAPHY: AN INTERNATIONAL GALLUP SURVEY.**  
**SURVEY OF FINDINGS.**  
**Princeton, NJ: The Gallup Organization Inc., 1988.**  
**118 pp.**

Perhaps the first thing to note, in reviewing this book, is that 1988 was the centenary of the founding of the **National Geographic Society (NGS)**, and that this interest in and concern for geography to the benefit of the American citizen is of long standing. The founding of the Society came a mere four years after that of the **Royal Scottish Geographical Society**, also in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It was the era of Manifest Destiny, rapid colonial expansions, explorations, and increasingly accurate cartography, all of which were paralleled by increasing literacy, as nations expanded their school systems, and the cost-cutting of the publishing industry in a manner which both used and enhanced geography. "Geographical literacy" was one of several "in" literacies associated with education and the social consciousness of the latter half of that century.

The extent to which geography was understood, as opposed to being popular and entertaining or surprising in those late 1800s and early 1900s, will however remain a moot point. And it is here that the difference lies between the founding of an institution, both as a matter of interest and education, and the difficulty of a subsequent examination of the status of that initial interest by that particular institution. The NGS has overcome this problem by putting the survey nationally and internationally into the hands of professional survey companies. Now to the content(s) of the Survey itself.

*Geography: An International Gallup Survey* assesses the extent of the basic geographic literacy among adults 18 years and over in the United States as well as in eight "companion countries." The study also explores both the degree to which Americans think that knowledge of geography is important and their level of awareness of geography's influence on a variety

of events, large and small, far away and close to home. Such was the aim of the exercise, and it has been faithfully adhered to throughout.

Within the context of the United States, the "...extent of geographic literacy... is contrasted to the adult population of the United States 40 years ago." The other eight countries, all surveyed along with the United States, within a three-week period, 25 April – 12 May, 1988, were the neighbouring countries of Mexico and Canada, plus six industrialized nations: Japan, France, West Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Italy. In-depth personal interviews were carried out in all nine countries to a total of 10,000 respondents. In order to set the tone prior to questioning the respondents on geography, an evaluation was made of how these people rated the importance, usefulness, and necessity of geography against other skills and disciplines. Taking only the percentages from absolutely necessary (AN) and important (I), geography as compared to others was rated:

Subject/skill	AN%	I%
Mathematics	83	15
Computer skills	64	27
Science	38	54
Geography	37	53
History	36	55
Foreign language	20	48

It was, therefore, within this context that actual questioning began. (The percentages do not add up to 100%, probably because some respondents indicated more than one subject/skill as "absolutely necessary" or "important.")

Headed "What Americans know (and don't know) about geography," the questioning took three forms:

*Multiple choice:* Similar to that found in school examinations, included the correct answer, but excluded "all the above" and "none of the above."

*Open-ended country identification:* Not only was a question asked but also the respondent was given a card "with the names of 64 countries on it grouped in regions." Here it was conceded that the facilitation of coding may have had a by-product, a small reminder to the respondent. However, a respondent with no idea of the answer could not guess accurately enough and frequently enough to skew the raw data.

*Map identification:* This involved both actual continent and country maps as well as one fictitious country for testing map-reading.

A brief review of questions, answers, and the survey of findings would probably be both excessively lengthy and misleading. Even though the study is lengthy, this Gallup Survey should serve as mandatory reading and study for certain professionals in teaching and in higher education: (1) principals and teachers in elementary and secondary schools, (2) heads of geography departments in high schools and colleges, (3) senior civil servants and departments/ministries of education, and (4) members of faculties of education in social sciences (geography, history, economics [not social studies, i.e., psychology and sociology]), in elementary and secondary teacher education and teacher training.

Almost needless to say, the conclusions of the survey include reasons for a greater emphasis on geography. Out of 775 interviews, the following reasons and the percentage of respondents giving those reasons are:

Learn about the world	30%
Understand current events/world affairs	28%
Learn about other countries/people/cultures	27%
Map skills/global perspectives	15%
Learn more about the United States	10%
Travel	7%
Other	5%
Don't know	4%

What solutions are offered? Again, almost inevitably (hence the mandatory list of readers), **schools** were considered to be the major vehicle for improvements in knowledge and skill (77% of those polled). There was also a small group (194) described as being composed of those who knew "a great deal" about local public schools who stated that "not enough emphasis" was given to the following subjects: geography (65%), foreign languages (58%), history (57%), mathematics (51%), computer skills (46%), science (45%).

One does not skim through or dip into this survey. Be prepared to read it in depth, over a period of time, and return to it frequently, remembering that this is a **survey** not a **solution**. Neither is this a problem for study only by Americans; nor is it one which will go away in time or by being simply ignored. There is no substitute for geography.

*The Gazette* (Montreal), on May 3, 1989, carried the following headline on the editorial page "Children as ignorant as freshmen." It was explained that the "children" in the title are 11-year-olds in Great Britain, the "Freshmen" are United States college students, and the problem is lack of geographical knowledge. Before the various parties or sides commence cheering or jeering, note should be taken of curriculum differences in the two countries. For example, this reviewer was in Scotland in March, 1988, where it was observed that the later-childhood curriculum in the elementary school is no longer the national and international and global geography of his school days. Currently, Social Sciences, an amalgam of geography, history, and nature study allied to maths and mapping skills, is taught and practised predominantly as a combination of Local and Community Studies with Outdoor Education. The latter can consist of anything from the half-day field trip locally to a full-week camp in some different locale. One, therefore, has to be careful in what one is comparing. As one of my colleagues, a historian, commented recently, "It's easy, too easy, to demonstrate what people don't know!"

With that in mind, read a necessary, timely, and largely objective, extended survey which has the added advantages of having a wide geographical distribution, involving a brief period of time, and including a viable, international sample population drawn from both genders, different age groups, various cultures, and a range of economic and cultural as well as linguistic settings.

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