A WORKING CONTEXT FOR INTERPRETATION OF TALLGRASS PRAIRIE REMNANTS

A Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Landscape Architecture.

by

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ABSTRACT

The practicum is a case study on tallgrass prairie vegetation which compares a computer-aided approach to interpretation with a manual approach.

Seventy-eight criteria useful in interpreting tallgrass prairie were identified for four user groups: the native people, the immigrants, ecologists, and environmental engineers. These resource-based criteria were structured to reveal an individual plant's relationship to levels within the tallgrass prairie ecosystem. A computer program (SHARRA) was written to allow a user to manipulate data stored in a file based on species at the Living Prairie Museum, Winnipeg, Canada. The program replicates operations normally undertaken manually -- listing the plant inventory, displaying a chart matching plant species against information in records, sorting information for any combinations of performance standards (the criteria) and listing complying plants, and displaying plant records a user specifies by genus.

The program was used to address problems, on the same site, which had already been solved using manually constructed charts. The time and effort for both methods were compared and from a comparison of the results it became clear that the computer-aided approach greatly extended and complemented the abilities of an interpreter. The implications of such an alternative method of managing information revealed tremendous potential for development of packages of information on ecosystems

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(cassettes or discs) and/or as an extended library of programs and plant files. There were no apparent high costs involved and the system lends itself to development, in small incremental stages, by universities or government agencies. The major benefits in establishing an alternative approach are the considerable savings of time and money in preparing environmental impact assessments, and the ease of interpretation in understanding, using and managing tallgrass prairie.

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PART 1 INTRODUCTION

Sharra talked about the properties and virtues of the roots for which they dug, the leaves for which they climbed only the healthiest of trees, or equally elusive herbs that lived obscurely where other bushes had thorns to scratch...She was also acquainted with the thick bush leaves, which made a more fragrant and comfortable bedding than springier fronds... They cut the tufts from the grass for the therapeutic seeds that grew along each stem. The larger branches were laid aside and tied in bundles to be bound together for a raft... The heart of the grass plant, just above the root ball, was its most important part. This was dried and pounded into a powder that was the best medicine known for reducing fever.

> 'Sometimes I'd like to go north just to see all the differences, but then again,' and Sharra shrugged, 'this is where I [live]. I haven't seen half enough of it yet to begin to appreciate all its complexity.'

> > -- From Anne McCaffrey's Dragondrums

1.1 The General Problem

Interpretation of information is a part of the thought process for anyone concerned with understanding, using, or managing plant species.

Most information on the attributes of plants is stored in written form for a multitude of narrowly defined working contexts -- plants as food, ornaments, medicine, building materials etc. -- so that a view of a plant's overall merits and its place in nature is obscured. Yet when it comes to interpreting man's impact on the environment this is precisely the sort of overview that is required.

The <u>manual procedure</u> involved in collecting and reworking significant information is time-consuming and very tedious. Plant or plant community <u>uses</u> are recorded, as are the essential <u>relationships</u> between a plant community's composition and structure, and form determinants such as the availability of soil moisture. Information provided by specialists or taken from books is collected and transferred to a hand-drawn chart (a matrix) where plant species can be matched against performance standards (criteria). An office concerned with preparing an environmental impact assessment will rework the information to: prepare a plant inventory; explore the workings of the system and overall merits of the plant species; make predictions comparing the impact of alternative proposals for a "best land use". This information is stored as the accumulated experience of individuals and in libraries of related books and charts. With limited money and time, this manner of storing and managing information for interpretation is a very real source of concern, because every time the same working context is encountered a large part of the manual procedure often has to be repeated. It takes a great deal of time to provide <u>quantified</u> answers on the behaviour and merits of the plant community as a whole.

The <u>ecosystem</u>, a contextual framework that links all the components of the environment (Mineral/Vegetable/Animal/ Man), is increasingly adopted by planners as a "resource unit" because problems encountered in interpretation usually affect all the components. Energy and information are synonymous. The <u>vegetation</u> of an ecosystem can be regarded as nature's store of information -- an evolved response to problems posed by environmental constraints and interacting organisms (Fig. 1.1).



(based on an ecological "model"--- jenny's law- soil = (cl, p, r,o, t) = vegetation)

The vegetation of a natural ecosystem (boreal forest, tundra, tallgrass prairie etc.) is recognisable as characteristic of the system and is frequently used as an "environmental benchmark". It provides a base-line study against which the health of a disrupted ecosystem can be measured. It would be very convenient if information on plant species were stored according to nature's context, as well as within specialist classification systems. Although the ecosystem is important in regional planning, when specific questions are asked concerning plant attributes or predictable patterns of change, there are seldom specific answers immediately available. This is partly due to the complexity of natural ecosystems but is also due to the shortcomings of a traditional methodology which does not manage available information efficiently.

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1.2 The Study

The premise on which this practicum was initiated is that it should be possible to combine the attributes of a computer (speed and accuracy in storing, retrieving and manipulating data) with the abilities of a person (skills of perception/ interpretation) so that the thought process leading up to the interpretation of information on plant species and communities is made more efficient and less time-consuming. The practicum takes the form of a case study on the tallgrass prairie ecosystem, using the computer as an aid to interpretation, and addresses two specific problems:

¹H.Jenny, <u>Factors of Soil Formation</u> (New york:McGraw Hill, 1941)

- Selection of those criteria that will most frequently be of use. The majority of criteria have to be applicable to most of the plant species if the management of information is to be efficient.
- 2) The second problem is to replicate with the machine those operations that are normally time-consuming and inefficient when storing, selecting and sorting of information on plant material is done manually.

It is important that criteria be derived from a working context for interpretation of a definable entity such as an ecosystem. Where working context and criteria are separated, large amounts of unrelated data are processed, but the procedure gives a very small return for the computer time involved. An unfortunate and inaccurate conclusion might then be that the computer is at fault and is of limited use as an aid to interpretation. In fact, the fault would lie with a plant record which, because it is not clearly applicable to a specific problem, is certain to have an excess of redundant information and be deficient in some key specific criteria.

1.3 Study Objectives

Objectives can be summarized as follows:

 a) Establish a systems context for storing information in plant records so that it has some clear meaning applicable to solving interpretative problems.

- b) Compile a file on tallgrass prairie species that is large enough to be of some practical value in testing the computer-aided approach to interpretation.
- c) Write an interactive program which replicates operations normally undertaken manually in storing, selecting, listing and sorting information on plants.
- d) Test the applicability of a computer-aided approach to interpretation by undertaking several exercises in problem solving. The time and effort involved using the machine is compared with the manual procedure for the same problems, on the same site.
- e) Draw conclusions from the comparison regarding the feasibility of such an approach and comment on future developments.

PART 2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Context and Criteria

Perception of possible use for plant species depends on the user's context for interpretation. There is documentation on several user groups: the native people, immigrants to the region (from both Western European and late Plains Indian cultures), ecologists and environmental engineers. Interpretations relevant to these users provide four related storylines (Appendix 1), but more important, they provide justification for a choice of criteria which "mesh" to provide the required overview of multiple plant uses and relationships.

Plant species are seen to relate to four levels (Physical, Plant, Animal and Man), as part of one whole system (Fig. 2.1).

The plant record reflects criteria that are important in revealing <u>how</u> to identify species, <u>when</u> and <u>where</u> they are available, and <u>what</u> uses they have for man and wildlife. Other criteria relating to form determinants reveal <u>why</u> the tallgrass prairie is structured the way it is and how it responds to change. There is a total of 78 criteria in the plant record. Lists of plants complying with any one of these would be immensely useful to an interpreter, but the real significance of the record is that the given criteria are those which can most frequently be combined to explore and interpret more complex relationships, e.g. between habitat and plant community composition.

Combinations of 10 or more criteria are unlikely to



yield results. Only one of the performance standards relating to plant type, height, origin and family is likely to be chosen. If the user selects, for example, TREE as a performance specification, other criteria under PLANT TYPE become redundant. Were the record derived for a global context, the number of redundant criteria would be high when a specific problem is addressed. Using an ecosystem as a working context for interpretation ensures that the number of redundent criteria is kept to a minimum. The checklist offers permutations on 71 criteria, <u>all</u> of which have an application specific to interpreting tallgrass prairie.

2.2 The St. James Prairie: Focus for the Study

There are about 2000 species² spread throughout the entire range of tallgrass prairie in North America (400,000 sq. miles). The inventory of plants used for this case study is based on those which occur at the Living Prairie Museum, Winnipeg, Canada (Fig. 2.2).



THE MID CONTINENT TRAIRIE

Tallgrass Prawie

Fig. 2.2 Location of the St. James Prairie

Plant resources on the site include native woodland species (Oak/Aspen) and introduced species. Some of the introduced species occur within the tallgrass prairie, but the more obvious introductions are the alien species planted around a one-time homestead site (as windbreaks or vegetable gardens). All 169 of the species located on the site are included in the plant file, along with 17 plants associated with tallgrass prairie elsewhere in Manitoba, to give a total of 186 species. The records containing the 78 criteria are presented in Appendix 2, along with the sources of information for individual criteria. This information was compiled over a period of six months for the St. James Plant Resources (Fig. 2.3).

2 David F.Costello,<u>The Prairie World</u> (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1975.)



Fig. 2.3 St. James Prairie plant resources

The species of the St. James Prairie site³ were chosen as the focus for this study because they have been subject to interpretation by students of ecology and landscape architecture in the past. By comparing the manual procedure involved in past attempts at solving interpretative problems with a computer-aided approach, it should be possible to arrive at some firm conclusions regarding the benefits of using the machine.

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Department of Parks and Recreation (Winnipeg), Living Prairie Museum Plant Check List 1980.

The site's 39.2 acres were once leased for hay but have never been ploughed.⁴ In 1968 the International Biological Program recommended that the area be conserved, since it was said to represent the best example of tallgrass prairie in Manitoba. Since then an interpretative centre has been opened which is visited by about 12,000 people per year. The St. James site was chosen as a focus for the study in the hope that the final program and files may find practical application in monitoring the health of the plant resources so that the carrying capacity of the site can be determined.

2.3 Comparing Methods in Managing Information

As part of the normal coursework, students were asked to select up to 30 species and locate them on a plan for the interpretative centre. Selection of species was in response to two given problems:

- Which species would you select for a herbal garden?
- 2) Which species would you use to establish tallgrass prairie on a berm which surrounds the partially underground interpretative centre?

Knowing little about the composition or structure of tallgrass prairie the initial selection of plants was made at random. As further reading identified criteria specific to prairie species it became a question of luck as to how many of the randomly chosen species matched with desirable criteria. A maximum of about 14 criteria were identified and plant lists were constantly changed as it became obvious that plant species and performance standards did not match. At the end of a twoweek period no one was satisfied that their plant selection was entirely appropriate. Very few of the 115 tallgrass species had been screened as to their suitability. At the end of the exercise students had a short checklist of proven criteria and a better understanding of how plant selection could be made to fit with processes in nature. The problems in managing the information were such that they could fully appreciate why many people advocate the use of native plant material but few actually use it.

Writing a program that replicates all the procedural steps undertaken manually as part of the process of selecting plant material will provide the required interpretative aid. The user starts the process of plant selection with a given checklist (78 criteria) and a comprehensive file on 186 species, so there should be a considerable amount of time saved because the initial process of information gathering is complete. The speed with which the machine reworks information should lead to further savings -- how much remains to be seen.

PART 3 SHARRA - AN INTERACTIVE COMPUTER PROGRAM

3.1 Objectives for the Program

The program is intended to replicate three operations that normally are carried out manually:

a) Provide a plant inventory -- a list of all the plant species on record (botanical and common name) -- and display plant names matched against the information on criteria that is in the file so that the user has a chart of species matched against criteria that normally would be a hand-drawn matrix.

b) Locate and display a formatted record for a plant, specified by the user according to its genus (e.g. <u>Psoralea</u>). This procedure is like referring to a book except that the machine does the searching.

c) Allow the user to select any combination of performance standards from a large checklist of proven criteria and have the machine match them against the stored records, list and total the plants that comply (e.g. OPEN PRAIRIE/AT ST JAMES/NATIVE HERBAL MEDICINE). This replicates the visual sorting that is made of plants in a manually constructed matrix. The sub-programs that carry out these operations appear in the appendix with the main program. They are named LIST1, SORT1 and SORT2 respectively.

3.2 The Structure of the Program

The program has three levels which are shown in the flowchart (Fig. 3.1). On Level 1 the mainline program (SHARRA) explains that the user will be working with information on ecosystems and offers two options -- tallgrass prairie (TALLP) and marshlands (MARSH). Only the case study, tallgrass prairie, is operational. The marshlands option, which returns a "no file available" message, is included to show that Level 2 can be expanded to include other working contexts, e.g. boreal forest, the city, local nursery stock, an arbortum, a herbarium, field crops, forestry -- in short, any situation where people work with information on plant material and can define criteria pertinent to the problems they encounter. Names of species and plant records are automatically read into the computer's memory only for the context chosen, otherwise they remain stored on tape. The subprogram on Level 2 (TALLP) offers three operational procedures, on Level 3, which meet the program objectives previously outlined. LIST1 produces a plant inventory and a chart that displays plant names and records. Other programs could easily be written to generate formatted charts giving flowering sequence, colour of flower, or whichever of the 78 criteria are desired. SORTI displays a specified plant record once the user gives its genus. The genus can easily be read from the list of names (botanical and common) which the machine provides. Common names vary too much from place to place to use them for specification of a record. SORT2 matches performance specifications chosen from a displayed checklest against records, lists and counts the complying plants.



Fig. 3.1 A Flowchart of the programs

Choosing any one of the 78 criteria will give a plant list, but more important, any combination of criteria will give a list. Information retrieved by the other subprograms is available in books -- lists of tallgrass prairie species, edible plants, June flowering species etc. -- the computer simply retrieves information more effectively than is possible by memory. The SORT2 program gives new information in that it is an extension of our memory capabilities <u>and</u> our ability to synthesize information. It is immensely useful in <u>exploring</u> <u>relationships</u>. One thing the user should remember is that he/she is specifying <u>performance criteria</u>, e.g. by specifying NATIVE, GRASS and FORB he/she gets <u>not</u> a list of native grasses and forbs but a list of plants that are native <u>and</u> grasses <u>and</u> forbs.

With further refinement the operational procedures (LIST1, SORT1,SORT2) could be shared by all the "context" programs (TALLP, MARSH).

PART 4 SHARRA IN USE (APPLICATION)

4.1 Testing SHARRA as an Aid to Interpretation

SHARRA is used to address the exercises in problem solving identified earlier.

The programs were run separately on cards at the University of Manitoba's student terminal. The lineprinter at the terminal is faster than those affordable to a small office. Were the program used elsewhere, the time taken to produce lists or display records could be increased by a factor of about 300. However, this is insignificant because what it means in practice is that instead of receiving the lists in 0.5 seconds it might take up to 2.5 minutes. Expensive hardware will not make any significant difference to the overall time saved by using the program, SHARRA, as an interpretative aid.

Just how much difference does the computer make? It took about 32 hours to select species for a herbal garden when the process was carried out manually sorting information stored in books. The easiest way to show the potential benefits in using SHARRA is to address similar, if slightly more complex, problems.

QUESTION: How significant are prairie species as native herbal cures and in western medicine? Which of the species identified are available from nurseries to establish a herbal garden?

Combi	ination of (Criteria	*	# of Species	% of Total
OPEN	PRAIRIE/AT	ST. JAMES		115	100.00
	H	"	/NATIVE HERBAL MEDICINE	51	44.35
	11	tt.	/WESTERN MEDICINE	14	12.17
	"	"	/NATIVE HERBAL MEDICINE, WESTERN MEDICINE	/ 10	8.17

The native people have a documented medicinal use for about 45% of the species, while western medicine has a use for only about 12%. If the interpretor takes only the species useful in both cultures and adds SEED AVAILABLE or PLANT AVAILABLE, he/she receives two alternative plant lists.

MEDICINAL PLANTS AVAILABLE AS SEED

Asclepias syriaca
Oenothera biennis
Polygala senega
Solidago rigida

Common Milkweed Evening Primrose Seneca Snakeroot Stiff Goldenrod

MEDICINAL PLANTS AVAILABLE AS PLANTS

Fragaria virginiana Oenothera biennis Polygala senega Rosa arkansana Solidago rigida Wild Strawberry Evening Primrose Seneca Snakeroot Low Prairie Rose Stiff Goldenrod

(The time taken to retrieve this information was about 1 minute, 5 seconds.)

Criteria are from the checklist of performance standards (SORT2) Data is from the files compiled for SHARRA (Appendix 2) Formatted output was as for Appendix 3, example 3. QUESTION: What choice of species would be appropriate and representative of tallgrass prairie on the berm which surrounds the partially underground interpretive center at St. James? (Assume the species would be selected from those on site.)

Grasses cover about 96% of the prairie. One way of approaching the problem is to select a grass/grasses to bind the soil and then select the forbs. The berm will range from dry to mesic soil moisture conditions and be in partial shade for a large part of the year because of the building's cast shadow.

	Combina	List of Species			
OPEN	PRAIRIE/I	BUNCH GR	ASS/AT ST NATI	.JAMES/ VE/DRY	Little Bluestem
	11	11	"	/DRY-MESIC	Junegrass Prairie Dropseed Needlegrass
	n	"	"	/MESIC	Nodding Ryegrass
OPEN PRAIRIE/FORB/AT ST.JAMES/ NATIVE/DRY 2					24 species
		31 species			
	**	H	FF 11	/MESIC	27 species

Allowance is made for shade by selecting habitats with similar partial shade conditions.

Combination of Criteria

OPEN PRAIRIE/FORB/AT ST JAMES/ NATIVE/WOOD EDGE/DRY

11

Three Flowered Avens Wild Bergamot

List of Species

/DRY-MESIC

Nodding Onion Wild Licorice Wild Bergamot Tall Quinquefoil

/MESIC

Nodding Onion Spreading Dogbane Smooth Aster Wild Morning Glory Wild Licorice Wild Bergamot Heart Leaved Alexanders

N.B. Spreading Dogbane and Wild Morning Glory are documented as occurring in prairie and wood edge. Since they are more often associated with woodland, I would choose to drop them from the list. In order that the soil be improved over time, plant selection should include some nitrogen-fixing species which are also good cover.

Combination of Criteria OPEN PRAIRIE/LEGUME/COVER PLANT

List of Species

Wild Peavine White Prairie Clover Purple Prairie Clover Indian Breadroot

The final selection of species would be of grasses (to be seeded), flowers (to be transplanted to their most fitting soil moisture location) and legumes (evenly distributed).

SLOPE CONDITION*

GRASSES

Andropogan scoparius	Little Bluestem
Koeleria cristata	Junegrass
Sporobolus heterolepis	Prairie Dropseed
Stipa spartea	Needlegrass
Elymus canadensis	Nodding Ryegrass

FORBS/FLOWERS

Allium cernuum	Nodding Onion	D,D-M
Aster laevis	Smooth Aster	М
Geum triflorum	Three Flowered Avens	D
<u>Glycyrrhiza lepidota</u>	Wild Licorice	D-M,M
Monarda fistulosa	Wild Bergamot	D,D-M
Potentilla arguta	Tall Quinquefoil	D-M
Zizia aptera	Heart Leaved Alexanders	М

LEGUMES

Lathyrus venosus	Wild Peavine		
Petalostemum candidum	White Prairie Clover		
Petalostemum purpureum	Purple Prairie Clover		
Psoralea esculenta	Indian Breadroot		

*D (Dry), D-M (Dry-mesic), M (Mesic)

(Total time to rework information into lists was about 2 minutes, 30 seconds.) It took 48 working hours to arrive at a plant list for the berm at St. James without the computer-aid. While the final proposals could usually be justified it was clear that the approach had not been comprehensive. Information scrutinized in the manual processing of data, and in trying to establish the context of the site, covered only 3% of the information currently available in the file (30 species x 14 criteria as against 186 species x 78 criteria). Because considerable time was given to a careful selection of combinable criteria that are problem-related, about 16% of plants on file can be listed by the machine for as many as five performance standards. But what about some more complex interpretative problems ?

QUESTION: Is there a pattern to the flowering sequence of native prairie species, at the St. James Prairie?

Combinat	cion of Criteria	-	<pre># of Species</pre>	% of Total	
NATIVE/OPEN	PRAIRIE/AT ST.	JAMES	5	106	100.00
	"	"	/APRIL	5	4.72
	11	**	/MAY	27	25.47
"	11	**	/JUNE	62	58.49
11	II .	18	/JULY	71	66.98
11	17		/AUGUST	63	59.43
**	11	17	/SEPTEMBER	31	29.25
11	Ħ		/OCTOBER	12	11.32

(The total time taken to get this information was approxmately 2 minutes -- about 1 min. 56 sec. to type in the criteria codes and 4 seconds for the lineprinter to supply all the lists.)





The pattern that emerges is almost symmetrical about the month of July and with the lists we can forecast which specific species will be in bloom for visits at different times of the year (Fig. 4.1).

QUESTION: Do the introduced alien species follow this pattern?

Combina	ation of Criter	ia		<pre># of Species</pre>	% of Total
ALIEN/OPEN	PRAIRIE/AT ST.	JAME	S	9	100.00
29	**	*1	/APRIL	0	0.00
"	"		/MAY	2	22.22
"	**	*1	/JUNE	9	100.00
11	ET	81	/JULY	8	88.89
n	11	**	/AUGUST	3	33.33
11	11	81	/SEPTEMBER	1	11.11
11	11	11	/OCTOBER	0	0.00


Fig. 4.2 Plant phenology (alien, tallgrass species)

Although the sample is not large, the fact that all the aliens bloom (and seed) earlier than the majority of native species may be one of the factors that gives them a competitive edge over native species. The alien species do not conform to the general pattern (Fig. 4.2).

QUESTION: Is the symmetrical pattern to plant flowering one that is visually evident, given that some species are numerous while others are rare?

Co	ombination of	Crite	ria	_	<pre># of Species</pre>	% of _Total
OPEN	PRAIRIE/AT S	ST. JAME	S/COVE	R	39	100.00
	11	n	"	/APRIL	1	2.56
	n	11	11	/MAY	12	30.77
	11	11	88	/JUNE	26	66.67
	"	11		/JULY	22	56.41
	N	*1	#1	/AUGUST	24	61.54
	"	##	11	/SEPTEMBER	11	28.21
	н	**	11	/OCTOBER	6	15.38



Fig. 4.2 Plant phenology (alien, tallgrass species)

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QUESTION: Is the symmetrical pattern to plant flowering one that is visually evident, given that some species are numerous while others are rare?

C	ombination of	of Criter	ia		<pre># of Species</pre>	% of Total
OPEN	PRAIRIE/AT	ST. JAMES	/COVE	R	39	100.00
	H	11	Ħ	/APRIL	l	2.56
	H	**	11	/MAY	12	30.77
	11	11	11	/JUNE	26	66.67
	11	11	H	/JULY	22	56.41
	11	*1	81	/AUGUST	24	61.54
		11	11	/SEPTEMBER	11	28.21
	88	**	**	/OCTOBER	6	15.38



Fig. 4.3 Plant phenology (good cover, tallgrass species)

Assuming that the species that make up 75% of the prairie's cover occur in roughly the same numbers, then it would appear that casual observation would not reveal a peak in July but the observer would be aware of about the same number of species flowering in June, July and August (Fig. 4.3).

QUESTION: If the casual observer has his attention focused on groups of flowering plants, is this likely to change his interpretation of a pattern?

Combination of Cr	# of Species	% of Total	
OPEN PRAIRIE/AT S FORMS AGGREGATES	T. JAMES/	17	100.00
н	/APRIL	0	0.00
n	/MAY	3	17.65
**	/JUNE	9	52.94
n	/JULY	9	52.94
п	/AUGUST	11	64.71
п	/SEPTEMBER	8	47.06
11	/OCTOBER	3	17.65





The pattern that would be seen would be one which peaked later in the year, in August. Even if the observer does not distinguish between varieties of species (e.g. the four varieties of rose or goldenrod) and saw them as one flower, the pattern does not change. There would still be a visible peak in August (Fig. 4.4).

The time taken in collecting all the information was 8-10 minutes. The accuracy of predictions on what would be seen can be improved by more detailed information on the numbers of individual plants, but even then results would only be generally applicable, as much depends on the colour and size of the flower.

As a general interpretation the results are accurate. They show the need for quantified information on plant behaviour as opposed to visual interpretations, which are deceptive.

The need for an overview has been stressed throughout the study. When specific questions have to be addressed on the merits and working of tallgrass prairie the quantified information that SHARRA provides could be of tremendous value. The following information represents a quantitative analysis of the file for the tallgrass species which are on the St. James site.

	Combi	nat	ion of Criteria	# of species	% of total
OPEN	PRAIRIE/AT	ST	JAMES	115	100.00
	"	11	/APRIL FLOWER	5	4.35
	11	11	/MAY FLOWER	29	25.22
	H	11	JUNE FLOWER	71	61.74
	11	"	/JULY FLOWER	79	68.70
	11	11	/AUGUST FLOWER	66	57.39
	tt	"	/SEPTEMBER FLOWER	32	27.83
	11	"	/OCTOBER FLOWER	12	10.43
	tt	11	/PERSISTENT (2 months +) 53	46.09
	11	11	/EARLY GROWTH	9	7.83
	11	11	/WINTER INTEREST	59	51.30
	t f	Ħ	/WET (soil moisture)	18	15.65
	11	11	/WET-MESIC	37	32.17
	11	Ħ	/MESIC	32	27.83
	, n	n	/DRY-MESIC	35	30.43
	u	H	/DRY	26	22.61
	**	*1	/INDICATOR SPECIES (soil moisture)	22	19.13

	Comb	<pre># of species</pre>	% of total		
OPEN	PRAIRIE/AT	ST. JAME	S/FORB or FLOWER	100	86.96
	11	"	/GRASS	15	13.04
	21	11	/BUNCH GRASS	6	5.22
	н	11	/BLUE or VIOLET FLOWER	29	25.22
	11	11	/GREEN or BROWN FLOWER	9	7.83
	н	H	/RED or PINK FLOWER	17	14.78
	11		/WHITE FLOWER	28	24.35
	н	"	/YELLOW FLOWER	31	26.96
	14	N	/SMALL (<9")	15	13.04
		"	/MEDIUM (<36")	71	61.74
		11	/LARGE (>36")	8	6.96
	"	17	/COVER PLANT	39	33.91
,		11	/FOLIAGE CONTRAST	9	7.83
	"	11	/SHOWY FALL COLOUR	8	6.96
	11	11	/defended	3	2.61
	"		/FIREPROOF	0	0.00
	11	"	/AROMATIC	12	10.43
	11	"	/FORMS AGGREGATES	17	14.78
	H	11	/ALIEN	9	7.83
	17	11	/NATIVE	106	92.17
	n	11	/COMPOSITE	32	27.83
	11	11	/legume	15	13.04
	n	11 ·	/WOODLAND (as well as prairie)	3	2.61
	11	11	/WOODEDGE	18	15.65

	Còmb	ination	of Criteria	<pre># of species</pre>	% of total
OPEN	PRAIRIE/AT	ST. JAME	S/DISTURBED AREA	22	19.13
	11	*1	/RARE or ENDANGERED	6	5.22
	11	11	/SEED AVAILABLE (from nurseries)	41	35.65
	11	**	/PLANT AVAILABLE (from nurseries)	33	28.70
	11	H .	/SEXUAL REPRODUCTION	61	53.04
	8	× 11	/VEGETATIVE REPRODUCTION	63	54.78
	11	"	/ANNUAL	3	2.61
	11	11	/DIOECIOUS	0	0.00
			/WIND DISPERSAL	20	17.39
		**	ANIMAL DISPERSAL	21	18.26
	TT	77	/BIRD DISPERSAL	5	4.35
	0	"	/FOOD FOR WILDLIFE	54	46.96
y	n .	11	/HOST SPECIES	5	4.35
	11	n	/SUSCEPTIBLE TO DROUGHT	12	10.43
	11	н	/PASTURE/CROP	32	27.83
	11	"	/INCREASER	7	6.09
	11	**	/DECREASER	14	12.17
	H	11	/INVADER/PIONEER	12	10.43
	II		/INDICATOR OF OVER- GRAZING	5	4.35
	"	11	/POISONOUS/AVOIDED (sheep, cattle)	15	13.04
		n	/VEGETABLE/POTHERB	14	12.17
	"	11	/POISONOUS/CAUTION (to man)	12	10.43

	Comb	ination	of Criteria	# of species	% of Total
OPEN	PRAIRIE/AT	ST. JAME	S/EDIBLE PARTS	56	48.70
	II .	"	/EATEN RAW	26	22.61
		"	/TEA/COFFEE SUBSTITUTE	31	26.96
	11	"	/USEFUL	22	19.13
	"	11	/CULTIVAR	25	21.74
	11	"	/WEAVING/SEWING	3	2.61
	"	11	/DYE MATERIAL	23	20.00
	11	**	/NATIVE HERBAL MEDICINE	51	43.48
		38	/WESTERN MEDICINE	14	12.17
	91	11	/DIURETIC/LAXATIVE	9	7.83
	n	н	/EMETIC	4	3.48
	"	11	/TONIC/VITAMIN SOURCE	19	16.52
	н	11	/SLIDE AVAILABLE (Private collection)	30	26.09

The assessment reveals that the plant community as a whole has a tremendous number of uses which are worthy of further research. It should be possible to place some economic value on these multiple uses to build a case for the conservation of prairie.

PART 5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The Value of SHARRA

SHARRA does <u>not</u> make decisions and therefore does not substitute for the skills of an interpreter. The programmed computer does what a machine does best -- those tasks that are tedious and repetitious to the human mind -- and does them quickly and efficiently. The quantitative information, on the virtues and attributes of plants, which SHARRA can provide is of great value because it reveals meaning in the landscape. When data regarding flowering sequence was quantified it revealed patterns that could not be identified in a visual interpretation of plant community behaviour.

Arguments for conservation of plant communities often hinge on a perception of their economic worth, for example as pasture. Visual and ecological criteria simply do not carry the same weight as quantified economic arguments do. The overview which SHARRA can provide on plant use facilitates an economic argument by revealing potential qualities that are not obvious. Information on the quantitative analysis, representing months of work, was reworked in 14 minutes to reveal, for example, that for tallgrass species on file

- 47% are noteworthy as food for wildlife

- 27% are tea/coffee substitutes

- 20% are dye material

- 43% have a documented use in native herbal medicine. Couple this qualitative information with quantitative measurement of plant cover and there is a basis for a much broader interpretation of the economic worth of the plant community. The multiplicity of uses that apply to individual species indicates that the potential overall worth of the community cannot be accurately represented in a measure of its worth as pasture.

Cause-effect relationships, in plant records, provide information useful in interpreting change. It is possible to predict the plant community's response

- a) over time,
- b) to different soil-moisture conditions, including drought,
- c) to changes in habitat,
- d) under the influence of grazing.

Choosing species for the berm at St. James was an example of anticipating the plant community's response to a changed environment so as to arrive at a fitting plant list.

SHARRA very quickly becomes a part of the background as the user discovers the ease with which information can be retrieved or reworked. The information in the files has already been structured so that it is amenable to reworking. Lists of species become the focus of the interpreter's attention. The result of this is that the user gets caught up in exploring relationships, devoting more time to the problem and less to the process of sorting information. Since the criteria offer a number of alternative routes to the solution of a problem, alternative solutions are more likely to be produced. It took only 10

seconds to get a list of herbal, prairie species that were available as plants as an alternative to those available as seed. The manual procedure for plant selection was so cumbersome that no alternatives were produced and the information which was the basis for decisions was not checked. Crosschecking information in the machine is easily done by viewing the plant/criteria chart or the individual plant record. These operations take no more than 60 seconds.

The results from a comparison of the two methodologies are quite staggering. Take the simplest of problems, the selection of a species for a herbal garden. In the manual method of collecting and sorting data, information (30 species x 2 criteria, prairie and herbal) represents about 6.5% of the relevant information now stored on file. The procedure took 32 hours. The machine checked out 100% of the species on file for a slightly more complex problem (186 species x 5 criteria) and took 65 seconds to provide all the required results. As the problems become more difficult the advantages of the machine become more apparent to the user. The manual procedure for selecting berm species required 48 hours compared with 150 seconds by machine.

The accuracy of the results depends on the accuracy of the information in the file. Because the data on file is so accessible it is <u>easy to check</u> and, if necessary, change. Over time the quality of stored data may be improved. For the present program the information on a punched card file would have to be changed, but future development could incorporate

an editing program into the system. Updating of the punched cards is more likely to happen than updating of information stored in a library of books or a card-index file because use of the machine is more rewarding.

One other advantage of the machine is that by adding or dropping individual criteria, one at a time, from the selection offered in the checklist, the user can see from the lists of species which criteria most limit the selection of species. In choosing species for the berm, the lists of plants dropped from an average of 27 species to an average of 3 when WOOD EDGE was added. The user could conclude that the number of species occupying both prairie and wood edge was limited, review, and if desired revise the selection of criteria. This type of instant feedback helps develop the interpreter's feel for the problem, complementing and improving the thought process.

 In summary, the advantages of using the computer are:
 The user can devote more time to the problem and less to the mundane and tedious process of sorting information.

- 2) The process of collecting and analysing data is foreshortened. The existing files represent about 6 months of work which does not have to be repeated. Collecting and filing information took about half of this time. The other half went into identifying useful criteria.
- 3) The machine provides quantified information which is likely to improve in quality over time because of ease of checking. The file can readily be updated and corrected.

4) The machine-aided procedure complements and improves the interpreter's thought process by making it easy to crosscheck information, speculate on alternatives, and develop a "feel" for the problem. It also includes a checklist of of proven criteria.

5.2 Application to Interpretation

Everyone who <u>repeatedly</u> faces problems in understanding, using or managing tallgrass prairie has a potential application for the existing program and its associated files. Practical applications for interpretation include:

 Planners requiring an "environmental benchmark" for a region that has naturally recurring tallgrass prairie,

2) Organisations concerned with interpretation of ecosystems and their management, e.g. Parks Canada, who use the plant community as resource material to explain the workings of nature,

3) Landscape architects and planners concerned with retaining naturally recurring segments of a regional landscape which require a minimum of energy expended on management and which give an area its own unique identity,

 Educational establishments, universities and high schools,

5) Various special interest groups, concerned with a single use, would undoubtedly find the program of use, but only

occasionally:

- farmers managing prairie as rangeland,
- wildlife managers conserving prairie as a means of conserving related wildlife,
- researchers into uses for plant species,
 - e.g. as medicine.

5.3 Implications for Interpretation

The implications for interpretation are tremendously important and exciting. What the study shows, without question, is that a change in methodology can have a tremendous impact on our ability to better manage and interpret information on the environment. Future studies, following a similar approach, could expand on the plant inventory for other ecosystems or clearly definable working contexts. Imagine the benefits of having structured information that is readily accessible and easily stored, perhaps as cassettes or discs. They would be invaluable in providing quick but specific answers on the consequences of proposed development. This is especially true for the fragile environments of northern Canada. At a time when the costs of environmental impact assessments are seen as prohibitive, computer-aids provide an alternative means of addressing the general problem of interpretation. Nothing in the study suggests that the costs of developing this alternative approach would be high. Expensive hardware is not necessary. The total memory requirements of the program (45,000 bytes approximately) show that, with some

The University of Manitoba UBRARIES modification, it could be handled by a minicomputer of modest cost, about \$3,000.00 (1981). The estimated cost for 1/2 a man year, developing the program was \$7,000.00. Were it developed by retailers of software, easily affordable packages of programs could be produced. The possible cost could be below \$50.00 for a disc that fits with existing hardware (e.g. Apple).

An alternative to developing a series of discs or cassettes would be to build on the existing program structure. A larger institution, such as a university, could offer a range of programs and a data bank of files on a time-sharing basis. Programs would still be individually tailoured for specific ecosystems (Aspen Parkland, Coniferous Forest, Boreal Forest, Tundra etc.) or definable working contexts (Land Reclamation, Nurseries, Botanical Gardens etc.). Each program with its associated file would constitute what Edward T. Hall (1976) refers to as "high context integrative systems of thought".

5.4 Potential Development

In the future, other levels could be added to the existing structure. As well as presenting information derived from the plant resource, levels could be developed which would address interpretative problems from the point of view of wildlife. There is also considerable scope for developing more procedural programs to make more use of files; for example, a question-answer test on the merits of plant species with the computer keeping track of the user's score.

The front-end developmental work has been completed through this study and reveals tremendous potential for the future. What is needed now is the contribution of those specialists who could further refine a machine-aided approach to interpretation. A computer data expert, for example, could reduce the present memory requirements for the files considerably.

The problem of development is primarily an organisational one, since there are no obvious associated high costs involved. Because the program can be developed in small, incremental stages, it might be a task that a university or government agency would want to undertake. In a university setting departmental coursework could be usefully channelled towards development of the program system. Students of computer programming could develop operational procedures, while students frequently concerned with collecting information on plant species could define problems and working contexts and provide plant files. The benefit to students would be the stimulus they receive from being a part of a project that has very obvious applications to real life problems.

5.5 Recommendations

Recommendations are concerned with the potential opportunity for further development of the study, as discrete "packages of thought" for commercial sale or as a library resource. Potential sources of funding and/or labour should be made aware of the study's existence and potential. Feasibility studies

for both alternatives might be initiated by contacting retailers of software for minicomputers, environmentally concerned organisations (e.g. The Sierra Club), and educational establishments which may be interested in development of an alternative methodology for interpretation.

5.6 General Conclusions on the Study

Two specific problems were addressed in the study. The first was that of selecting appropriate criteria for a plant file which would be of value in interpretation. The first and second study objectives relate to this problem.

By choosing an ecosystem as the context for the storage of information, the boundaries of the problem of interpretation were immediately narrowed to a recognisable and manageable entity that is of interest to a range of user groups. The plant record becomes more than an arbitrary collection of pieces of unrelated information. It is structured according to a plant's relationship with other orders and so establishes connections -- patterns in nature -- which is what the interpreter most wants to identify. By reviewing <u>alternative</u> outlooks, information on plant species was identified that provides a general overview which is <u>resource</u>based, not derived from one cultural standpoint.

The second objective, once having established appropriate criteria, was to compile a file large enough to be of some <u>prac-</u> <u>tical value</u> in testing a computer-aided approach to interpretation. The file on plant species (Appendix 2) is comprehensive, covering all of the Living Prairie Museum's plant resources, including

tallgrass prairie. The site was the subject of past study, when a manual method of managing information was used. Selecting the site's plant inventory as a basis for the file established the basis for testing alternative methodologies. The procedure in solving the same interpretative problems for the same site could legitimately be compared.

The second specific problem of the study was to replicate manual operations and test the machine-aided procedure for managing information against the manual approach. The third, fourth and fifth study objectives relate to this problem.

The study's third objective was to write programs replicating the manual operations (Appendix 3). LISTI provides an inventory and plant/criteria chart. SORTI allows the user to specify a plant name (genus) and see its record displayed, and SORT2 lets the user specify any combination of performance standards, from a checklist, and receive a list of complying plants (Appendix 3).

Testing the applicability of a computer-aided approach was the fourth objective. Results, manual and machine-aided, were compared for similar problems. More complex problems on interpreting plant phenology and preparing a quantitative analysis of the tallgrass prairie community were also addressed. The comparison of results was absolutely conclusive, showing not only that the machine is significantly faster, but also that its inbuilt procedure is more comprehensive in checking available data. The interpreter's skill in identifying problems and proposing solutions was not hampered by the use of the machine.

The process behind problem solving was actually enhanced, with more time being given over to the problem and preparation of solutions, and less time being spent on mundane procedures involved in reworking information.

The fifth, and last, objective of the study was to draw some conclusions from the comparison of methods regarding the feasibility of a computer-aided approach to interpretation and to comment on future developments. The study's implications are tremendously exciting. There are no apparent reasons why the benefits of a computer-aided approach cannot be realized. Hardware costs are low and affordable, even to a small office. Software costs are also minimal. A conclusion that can be drawn from the study is that it is entirely feasible that cassettes, discs or tape libraries offering information on ecosystems can be made available in the near future. The most likely developers of such an alternative methodology are seen to be universities, government agencies, or retailers of existing computer software. The approach used in this study to establishing relevant data for files could be a model for future development of aids to interpretation of other ecosystems.

How efficient the aids are is not simply a question of how good a program is. The critical issue lies in <u>how well the</u> <u>problem can be defined and the context understood</u>, and that is not generally the contribution of a programmer. Those people presently involved in solving environmental problems can, and should, contribute their expertise towards the development of better computer aids. Computer technology cannot make us better

interpreters of information, but it can enhance the thought process by making information processing much less timeconsuming and tedious. A computer-aided approach to interpretation is highly feasible, highly desirable, and inevitable.

APPENDIX 1 THE EXTENT, IMAGE & USE OF TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

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1.1 A Native View

Tallgrass prairie used to extend from southern Manitoba to central Texas, cover 400,000 square miles, and support 80 species of mammals, 300 species of birds and thousands of kinds of insects and other animal life.¹ It was a part of the Mid-Continental Prairie which extended from Pennsylvania and Ohio to the Rocky Mountains and from southern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico -- the most extensive natural vegetation type on the North-American Continent. This Mid-Continental Prairie had many geographic variations and flourished under different climates. Its botanical components varied from place to place as did the indigenous wildlife, but it was characterised by the dominance of grasses and their relationship to the larger mammals -- bison, pronghorn antelope, deer and elk -- which influenced the appearance of vast landscapes by their grazing effects on the vegetation.

The principal grassland types are often identified according to their dominant grasses: tallgrass prairie, mixed-grass prairie and short-grass prairie (Fig. 1.1). The tallgrass predominated where rainfall was 35" or more annually but also extended along the bottomlands of streams and rivers into drier areas such as southern Manitoba (20" rainfall annually). Big Bluestem communities (<u>Andropogon gerardi</u>), the dominant tallgrass, occurred in the broad lowland valleys of the Red River, the Missouri, the Platte and the Arkansas. Slough or Cordgrass (<u>Beckmannia syzigachne</u>), a component of tallgrass prairie, occurred in the seasonally flooded areas,

fires, whereas Bluestem communities, because of their many protected rhizomes in the top 4" of topsoil, are quick to recover and so establish a competitive advantage over other species.

The prairie, lying at the south and southwest (of Minnesota), and reaching into the Red River Valley as far north as Lake Winnipeg, was (in 1880) abundant with tallgrasses and bore a great variety of flowers, including asters (Aster spp.), goldenrods (Solidago spp.), Blazing Stars (Liatris spp.), prairie clover (Petalostemum spp.), roses (Rosa spp.), lilies (Lilium spp.), phlox (Phlox spp.) and fringed gentian (Gentiana crinita).

(Costello,<u>The Prairie World</u>,p52) The original extent to true or tallgrass prairie in Manitoba is shown in Figure 1.2.



Fig. 1.2

The original extent of Manitoba's tallgrass prairie

The natural state of the prairie found by the first Europeans was influenced by the native people, who had come to the New World via the Bering land bridge about 20,000 years ago. For some 10,000 years or more they lived under various forms of simple interacting cultures which had a major role in the evolution of the tallgrass prairie community because of their use of fire in managing grassland areas and for hunting. Any scars on the land made by drought, flood, wind erosion, overgrazing by wildlife, set fires, and the extremes of heat or cold in summer and winter, made temporary wounds on the face of a vegetative system that was large enough and resilient enough to heal itself.

Archaeological diggings reveal that <u>the majority</u> of Indian cultures on the prairie were semi-agricultural with field crops of maize, corn and squash. A Hidatsa village on the Knife River of North Dakota had, for example, a population estimated at 2500, living 20 to each earth dwelling. They grew crops in the floodplains of rivers and foraged from uncultivated plants that they classified as "vegetables," as well as trading crops for meat which the neighbouring hunting culture of the Dakota Sioux had in excess. These Indians sometimes lived lives of violence, insecurity and physical hardship but not of poverty since the bison and antelope were always available. Bison were estimated to number about 60 million, located primarily on the mixed prairie, while antelope were estimated at about 40 million.

The native people had a very general verbal model with

which they explained their surroundings, whether boreal forest or tallgrass prairie. Vegetation was seen as a part of a system which incorporated not just the plant life but all of their surroundings (THE FOUR ORDERS: Physical, Plant, Animal, Human). They saw life in its visible, material forms as something brief and transient and assumed that the qualities of personality that they recognised in themselves were common to all other things in the world. Every rock, plant, animal or man was regarded as an individual spirit with certain intrinsic powers or character traits. These powers, they believed, were constantly recycled to maintain a unity with and a balance within the material world. This was an idea as allprevailing within Indian cultures as is our notion of progress.

All the parts of the system were seen as being on the one level.

Any distinction between humans and animals -- particularly any notion that one is in some way superior to the other -- is blurred as a consequence of their belief that humans may be reincarnated in animal form.

Although they saw a cyclic exchange of **powers in the world** around them they regarded this as a short-term illusion, with the real world being the spirit world. They apparently did not feel the need to define the source of these powers but assumed that nature had always existed and that any source of powers was so remote and mysterious that it was better to communicate or worship through the spirits as intermediaries. Their main concern, during at least 350 years of documented forced migration, was maintenance of a balance with nature and survival as a central issue (Fig. 1.3).



Fig. 1.3 A native view; the four orders

What information defined a working context for a Native People whose prime concern was that of survival? An Ojibwa interpretation provides some answers:

There are FOUR ORDERS in creation. First is the PHYSICAL world; second, the PLANT world; third the ANIMAL; last the HUMAN world. All four parts are so intertwined that they make up life and our whole existence. With less than the four orders, lifeand being are incomplete and unintelligible. No one portion is self-sufficient or complete, rather each derives its meaning from and fulfills its function and purpose within the context of the whole creation. . . . While there is a natural predilection and instinct for conformity to the great laws of balance in the world of plants and animals, mankind is not so endowed by nature. . . . Before he can abide by the law, mankind must understand the framework of the ordinances. In this way, man will honour the order as was intended by Kitche Manitou (The Great Spirit or Mystery). (Johnston, Ojibway Heritage, p21)

In this holistic view, each of the orders was gifted with a spirit and certain powers (Fig. 1.4):

COMPONENTS

Rock/Earth

Physical

Animals

ORDER

Plant

THE FOUR ORDERS 'A Whole Existence" Water Fire/Sun Wind Flowers Grasses Trees Vegetables Two leggeds

Four leggeds Wingeds Swimmers

Character

Human Soul "Cheejauk" Spirit Soul-spirit

Personality Dream -Heart or Feeling A Life Principle

Growth/Healing Purity/Renewal Light/Heat Music/Life

POWERS

Spirit of Life/ Growth/Healing/ Beauty/Harmony/ and Order

Character traits Curiosity, Courage, etc.

The ability to Conscious Thought

Fig. 1.4 Orders, spirits and powers

All of nature was personalized and had significant powers. When the "plant beings" were created they were of four categories: FLOWERS, GRASSES, TREES and VEGETABLES (both wild and cultivated edible species). The significant categories of information to the Native People were those that revealed the interaction of plant beings with the other orders as part of a holistic concept. In an 1850 history of the Ojibwa, G. Copway describes the verbal traditions of his people regarding plant material:

There is not a flower that buds, however small, that is not for some wise purpose.

There is not a blade of grass, however insignificant, that the Indian does not require.

Learning this, and acting in accordance with these truths, will work out your own good, and will please the Great Spirit.

(Copway, The Traditional History of the OJIBWAY NATION, p175) What, then, were the uses associated with plants and their relationship to the four orders?

THE PLANT AND THE PHYSICAL ORDER

In the Physical Order -- the rhythms and cycles of the Sun, Stars, Earth and Moon -- the plant beings and their flowering were indicators of TIME of the year in a <u>cyclic</u> system. The Dakota Sioux referred to time in terms of the phases of the moon and seasonal events:

JANUARY	MOON	OF FROST IN THE TEPEE
FEBRUARY	MOON	OF THE DARK RED CALVES
MARCH	MOON	OF THE SNOWBLIND
APRIL	MOON	OF THE RED GRASS APPEARING
MAY	MOON	WHEN THE PONIES SHED
JUNE	MOON	OF MAKING FAT
JULY	MOON	WHEN CHERRIES ARE RIPE
AUGUST	MOON	WHEN CHERRIES TURN BLACK
SEPTEMBER	MOON	WHEN THE PLUMS ARE SCARLET
OCTOBER	MOON	OF THE CHANGING SEASON
NOVEMBER	MOON	OF THE FALLING LEAVES
DECEMBER	MOON	OF THE POPPING TREES

Sequences of growth, flowering and fruiting were attributed to the action of the SUN and EARTH, two of the most important components in the Physical Order. The availability of plants as "vegetables" meant that food gatherers were interested in the plant's SEASONAL ATTRIBUTES: edible flowers that were PERSISTENT (Yarrow, <u>Achillea millefolium</u>), i.e. in flower for more than two months of the year; EARLY GROWTH plants (Milkweed, <u>Asclepias ovalifolia</u>) because they often had roots that would be the first fresh vegetables of the year

and were also most nutritious in early Spring; and those species that were of WINTER INTEREST (Smooth Rose, <u>Rosa</u> blanda as sources of dry berries.



PERSISTENT/YARROW



EARLY GROWTH/MILKWEED



WINTER INTEREST/SMOOTH ROSE



ROSE HIPS

THE PLANT WITHIN THE PLANT ORDER

Plants were seen to have VISUAL ATTRIBUTES important in their identification. "Nations" or genera were identified as sharing similar characteristics, e.g. of flower or leaf shape, but on a more general level PLANT TYPE (FLOWER, GRASS, TREE, VEGETABLE), COLOUR OF FLOWER, PLANT SIZE and FOLIAGE were important criteria for identification. Foliage contrasting with green, usually silvery/grey species, stands out from the overall framework of the grasses which visually often remain as a backcloth. A SHOWY FALL COLOUR (Trembling Aspen, <u>Populus</u> tremuloides) was interpreted in legend as a gift from the sun.





SHOWY FALL COLOUR/TREMBLING ASPEN

One of the useful NON-VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS was whether the plant was DEFENDED, i.e. possessing thorns, prickles or a skin irritant. They had many uses: In medicine (Common Nettle, Urtica dioica) to restore feeling

to numb areas with poor circulation.

In sewing and weaving (Long-spined Hawthorn, <u>Crataegus succu</u>lenta) with thorns that were used as sewing needles.

In warfare (Poison Ivy, <u>Rhus radicans</u>) which was thrown on fires upwind of enemy camps so that the irritant-carrying ash drifted into the camp.





DEFENDED/HAWTHORN

FIREPROOF plants (American Hazelnut, <u>Corylus americana</u>), i.e. those that burn only in intense burns, were important controlling edges to managed areas, such as campsites or hunting areas. AROMATIC species, pleasant in themselves, were valued as fumigants hung in tepees or used in sweat lodges, and were used to scent clothes and/or as perfumes. Some were repellants (e.g. Daisy Fleabane, Erigeron strigosus, to repel fleas, or White Clover, Melilotus alba, to repel moths).



AROMATIC/DAISY FLEABANE

Each "plant being" was known to prefer a specific HABITAT and contribute towards its sense of place.

Each valley or any other earth form--a meadow, a bay, a grove, a hill--possesses a mood which reflects the state of being of that place. Whatever the mood, happy, peaceful, turbulent, or melancholy, it is the tone of that soul-spirit. As proof, destroy or alter or remove a portion of the plant beings, and the mood and tone of that valley will not be what it was before.

(Johnston, Ojibway Heritage, p43) For the native people, the terms PRAIRIE and WOODLAND would be of limited use. The language of the Dakota Sioux, for example, was capable of being much more explicit. Their words for woodland also convey an idea as to how dense it is and how the trees are distributed.
AVAILABILITY of seed was important not only because they were eaten but also because some were sown close to camps. There is good reason to suppose that the diversity of some prairie species is a result of their having been selectively bred. Observation of plants and animals did much to explain the patterning of the prairie. The manner of DISPERSAL of seed contributed to the pattern. Caches of seed or nuts that animals buried might grow to be clumps of grasses or stands of oak trees. Three potential means of dispersal were by WIND (False Dandelion, Agoseris glauca), ANIMAL (Wild Licorice, Glycyrrhiza lepidota -- called "little jealous woman" by the Sioux because of its adhering burrs) or by BIRD (Wood Rose, Rosa woodsii, which cannot germinate naturally until it has passed through a bird's digestive tract). If there were VEGETATIVE REPRODUCTION then the repeated occurrence of the plant was predictable for future foraging.





WIND DISPERSAL/FALSE DANDELION ANIMAL DISPERSAL/WILD LICORICE

THE PLANT AND THE ANIMAL ORDER

Much was learned from observation of animals. Sick animals would search out species with curative powers. One legend tells of a frog using Jewel Weed, <u>Impatiens spp</u>., as a cure for poison ivy. Hungry animals would reveal edible plants, though not all plants eaten by animals are edible by man. The woodpecker is supposed to have discovered the secret of maple sap as a source of nutrition.

Some species have a particular WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION with merit as FOOD (Silverweed, <u>Potentilla anserina</u> -- a favourite of geese) or as a HOST SPECIES (Milkweed, <u>Asclepias</u> syriaca -- host for the monarch butterfly).



HOST SPECIES/MILKWEED

Of particular significance was the prairie's value as PASTURE, and not just because of the grasses (Buffalo Grass, <u>Buchloe dactyloides</u>, as a major part of the bison's diet). Other species healed bare areas (Common Sunflower, <u>Helianthus</u> annus) and/or fixed nitrogen in the soil (American Vetch,

Vicia americana).



PASTURE/CROP/SUNFLOWER



PASTURE/AMERICAN VETCH

(There were plants singled out as CROPS, <u>Helianthus annus</u>, which yielded edible seed as well as oil used for the hair.)

Certain species were POISONOUS or AVOIDED by domesticated stock -- Locoweed (<u>Oxytropis splendens</u>), affecting horses and cattle, and Goldenrods (<u>Solidago spp</u>.), being poisonous to sheep. Observation of cattle would also show that they browse on trees and shrubs, though the native people could not know that they are a source of many vital minerals not available elsewhere.



POISONOUS/AVOIDED/GOLDENRODS



THE PLANT AND THE HUMAN ORDER

It is in the Human Order that the "vital link" is clearly seen. Whereas we have many middlemen for growing, collecting, distributing and selling plant material as medicines and food, an Indian's knowledge of these attributes was first-hand. He could not fail to see the use of tallgrass prairie. Charlotte Erichsen-Brown has done a wonderful job of documenting first-hand accounts of plant uses and she reminds us of an agricultural heritage that is not often portrayed as a part of the Indians' use of prairie. She refers here to the Ojibwa who farmed in Ontario's southern forests and moved onto the prairie as hunters of bison in the mid-1700's, but the same could be said of the Mandan, Hidatsa or Arikara of North Dakota, who farmed on the prairie. They had

. . . a sophisticated agriculture and a net-work of trade routes. They had brought corn to its northern limit of development by carrying north with them the seeds of frost resistant plants. They had planted the good edible nut trees near their fields for easy harvest, again bringing some of these trees to their northern limits by choosing the nuts from late budding trees for planting. They spread the native apples. . . . There is some question as to whether they knew how to graft as well. They soaked their corn seed in a decoction of plants before sowing it to protect it from slugs and birds. They sprouted their pumpkin seeds in their houses, near their fires, ready to plant out as soon as danger of frost had passed. They semi-cultivated the raspberry (Rubus spp.), two kinds of strawberry (Fragaria spp.), grapes (Vitis spp.), juneberries (Amelanchier spp.), milkweeds (Asclepias spp.) and the citron or May apple (Pyrus spp.) for its delicious yellow fruit. . . . They burned the climax forests around them to make clearings of sixty acres or more in which to plant their corn and to encourage growth of those plants they semi-cultivated for medicine, fiber and food. (Erichsen-Brown, Use of Plants, pvii)



CULTIVAR/RASPBERRY



CULTIVAR/STRAWBERRY

Plants as FOOD (Prairie Turnip, <u>Psoralea esculenta</u>) or giving a beverage were readily available from within the uncultivated plant community 8 -- plants as VEGETABLE OR POTHERB (Fireweed, <u>Epilobium augustifolium</u>), those with EDIBLE PARTS (Canada Thistle, <u>Cirsium arvense</u>), those that can be EATEN RAW (Wild Bergamot, <u>Monarda fistulosa</u>), those that are TEA/ COFFEE SUBSTITUTES (Pineappleweed, Chamomile, <u>Matricaria</u> <u>matricarioides</u>) and, of course, some that were avoided, being POISONOUS TO MAN. (Horsetails, <u>Equisetum spp</u>., are said to be poisonous to Whites but not to Indians. Baneberry, <u>Actaea</u> <u>rubra</u>, is poisonous to both.) Some species are dangerous if taken in large amounts (e.g. the milkweeds), therefore they were used with caution.







VEGETABLE/POTHERB/FIREWEED

Other uses to man are many. Under the category heading of USEFUL we should consider species that are:

- Cooking Utensils (Manitoba Maple, <u>Acer negundo</u>, for dishes and spoons with no wood taste)
- Weapons (Saskatoon, Amelanchier alnifolia, for arrow shafts)
- Games/toys (Grasses, folded and tied as children's dolls)
- Scents/soaps (Tall Meadowrue, <u>Thalictrum dasycarpum</u>, seeds carried as perfume and used in washing)
- Oils (Sunflower, Helianthus annus, for hair oil)
- Gums/glues (Milkweed, Asclepias syriaca, for chewing gum)
- Brushes (Needlegrass, Stipa spartea, grass stems in a bundle)
- Cladding for dwellings (Birch Bark, <u>Betula papyrifera</u>, sewn together with spruce roots and used in tepees)
- Prayer offerings (Asters, Aster laevis, burned or smoked)
- Storage utensils (Birch Bark, used for containers)
- Smoking material (Dogwood, Cornus stolonifera, for inner bark)

- Bait for wildlife (New England Aster, <u>Aster novae-angliae</u>, smoked in pipe to attract game)
- Absorbents (Wood Moss, <u>Dicranum bonjeanii</u>, is mildly antiseptic and used as diapers or to dress wounds)
- Needles/lances/hooks (Hawthorn, <u>Crataegus succulenta</u>, as hooks to catch birds)
- Torches (Bullrushes, <u>Scirpus spp</u>., after pith has been saturated with animal fat)
- Structural supports (Aspen, <u>Populus tremuloides</u>, for tepee poles)
- Insulation (Northern Bedstraw, <u>Galium septentrionale</u>, bales used in winter tepee)
- Charms (Dogbane, Apocynum androsaemifolium, root chewed to counteract evil charms)
- Cordage/fiber (Canada Thistle, <u>Cirsium arvense</u>, for fishing line).

Some plants also have merit because they are used in WEAVING/SEWING of baskets, mats etc. (Burdock, <u>Arctium minus</u>, used for fiber), or to give coloured DYES (Trembling Aspen leaves give a yellow dye).

In using plants as MEDICINE, there is great potential merit in looking at native herbal cures, which were at least comparable with herbal medicine as it was practiced in Europe at the time of contact with the native culture.⁹ There are numerous accounts of documented cures and many of our modern day medicines had their origin as native remedies. Salicin contained in Aspirin was discovered in the inner bark of

willow, which was chewed to cure a headache. The potential for further research in this direction is phenomenal. Frances Densmore categorized the medicinal uses to which the people of the White Earth reserve, Minnesota, put plant material,¹⁰

(Fig. 1.5):

HEADINGS FOR MEDICINAL USE.

NERVOUS SYSTEM CONVUISIONS HEADACHE CRAZINESS CIRCULATORY SYSTEM HEART TROUBLE IN THE BLOOD RESPIRATORY SYSTEM COLDS COUGH LUNG TROUBLE HEMORRHAGE FROM LUNGS DIGESTIVE SYSTEM SORE MOUTH TOOTHACHE SORE THROAT INDIGESTION PAIN IN STOMACH CRAMPS DYSENTRY PHYSIC (USE OF) EMETICS (USE OF) WORMS CHOLERA INFANTUM

URINARY SYSTEM KIDNEY TROUBLE STOFPAGE OF URINE GRAVEL SKIN INFLAMATION BOILS SORES ERUPTIONS WARTS HAIR RESTORER WOUNDS INCISED INTERNAL SNAKE BITE

FOR SNAKE REFEILENT BRUIDES BURNO ULCERS FEVERS SCROFULA NOSE BLEED HE-MORRHAGES WOMEN"S FRAILTY MENSTRUATION CHILDBIRTH CONTRACEPTIVE SORE EYES CATARACT STY EAR TROUBLE RHEUMATISM SPRAINS BATHS TONICS AND STIMULANTS ENEMAS BILIOUSNESS DIABETES FRACTURE SWELLING DISINFECTANT HORSE TONICS

Fig. 1.5 Medicinal uses for plant material

Some prairie plant material is a part of WESTERN MEDI-CINE and its herbal tradition (Yarrow, <u>Achillea millefolium</u>). Three categories can be included in the plant record to illustrate this future potential. They are those which are DIURETIC or LAXATIVE (Seneca Snakeroot, <u>Polygala</u> senega), EMETIC (Nodding Trillium, <u>Trillium cernuum</u>), taken to induce vomiting, and those that have special merit as TONICS or VITA-MIN SOURCES (Prairie Rose, <u>Rosa arkansana</u>, which has 15 times more vitamin C than orange juice).

There is a chance that native herbal practices were influenced by a European source, since the Vikings occupied villages on what is now Newfoundland from 1004 A.D. to 1404 A.D. Native herbal medicine may be a branch of a continuing tradition that is known to extend back 60,000 years to Neanderthal Man.

From this review of native uses of tallgrass prairie and its closely associated oak/aspen woodlands, certain categories of information emerge as significant criteria (Fig. 1.6).

The main reason we see things differently from the native people may be because we rely heavily on the classification of things as objects, not as individual spirits." Plants to us are shade tolerant, native, evergreen, crops, weeds etc. The native outlook was to see things as subjects which were essential to his well-being. Since only knowledge that could be stored in the mind could be passed on, there were practical limits to the number of mental lists that could be stored. Our literary heritage has enabled us to establish labels/classifications as a way of concentrating our energies and enquiring into the nature of the world, but it is now a less personal world -- a world of objects. This outlook is well illustrated in a study by Frances Densmore. She as an anthropologist had to collect information on the use of plants and assign it to headings such as their use as medicine, as charms, in art or as food. However, that was not the way her informants recalled the information; they brought individual species and identified their use. She states:



There are also some Indian names for plants that reveal relationships.¹² Goldenrods (<u>Solidago spp</u>.) are called by the Dakota Sioux "Lumpy Stem," which is thought to be a reference to the insect galls that frequently occur in the plant since it is a host species. The same plant illustrates how Indian tribes were attuned to the seasons by floral events. The Omaha planted their corn when the plum trees blossomed; they returned from the summer buffalo hunt to harvest their corn when the goldenrods bloomed.



GOLDENRODS - "LUMPY STEM"



Our plant names have become labels for identification. Potential usage and sometimes even identifying characteristics are made more obscure with more reliance being placed on taxonometric keys (Fig. 1.7). Folk taxonomies communicate more about plants for a general context.

Here we have our dilemma. At the moment our classification systems tend to store information on plants under headings that make sense only within narrowly defined contexts so that a holistic view of the merits of plant material is

obscured. As Hall puts it:

Where do we go for the overview? Who is putting things together? Who are the experts in the high <u>context integrative systems</u>? Who knows how to make the type of observations necessary to build integrative systems of thought that will tell us where we stand?

What we may need is a blend between western thought and that of the native people, for a working context that is derived from nature.

NATIVE NAME	A'djidamo'wano
MEANING	"Squirrel tail" (Specific appearance of the leaf.)
COMMON NAME	Yarrow
MEANING	From Old English "Gearwe," meaning "The Healing
	Plant." (Specific reference to its use as a herbal
	medicine.)
PROPER NAME	Achillea millefolium
MEANING	Resembling Yarrow or Milfoil and bearing a thousand
	leaves. (General description.)
NATIVE NAME	Mûckodé cigagá wûnj
MEANING	"Prairie skunk plant" (Specific reference to its
	smell.)
COMMON NAME	Wild Onion
MEANING	From Anglo-Norman "Union" meaning "Pearl, unique
	in size and quantity." (Specific appearance of the
	bulb.)
PROPER NAME	Allium stellatum
MEANING	Garlik-like with star-shaped flowers. (General
	appearance when in flower.)

Fig. 1.7 A changing context for nomenclature

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The Cayler Prairie Botanical Reserve, Iowa.

The story of the impact of Europeans on tallgrass prairie is largely the story of a developing technological capability at a time when short term goals of survival were paramount and/or the ramifications of its use were not immediately clear. The black soil was a store of potential energy, an untapped resource, and prairie use was seen as being either use of the vegetation for grazing or use of the soil as cropland. When the technology did not exist that would allow the sod to be easily broken, only small areas were cultivated by the pioneers as vegetable and/or herbal gardens, from which some introduced species (e.g. Asparagus, Asparagus officinalis) escaped to become another component of tallgrass prairie. The wirelike mesh of roots close to the surface and the extent of the rooting systems, which can for individual species be 35 feet deep, initially made grazing a more feasible option than growing crops. Domestic cattle replaced the large mammals, but now the land was grazed intensively and, if poorly

managed, had no time to recover from overgrazing. When wire fencing was introduced (after 1874) it became economically feasible to fence off larger and larger areas, as this was much cheaper than the foregoing practice of constructing wooden fences or planting hedges of prickly plant material (e.g. the Osage orange hedges of Illinois). Range land thus conflicted with the migratory movement of the large mammals, which were seen to be competing for grazing areas. The subsequent need to move large herds of Longhorn cattle to shipping points on the rapidly developing railroads was seen as a reason to extirpate other species (e.g. prairie dogs) that competed for forage and, by burrowing, created hazards for travellers on horseback.

Needless to say, the removal of one species impacted on entire food chains so that balances within animal communities were altered. For example, the black-footed ferret's range decreased as its main source of food, the prairie dog, was reduced in numbers. The larger predators (the wolf, prairie grizzly bear, coyote, fox, red-tailed hawk etc.) were exterminated where possible. The relationship between these animals and tallgrass prairie vegetation was initially obscure. As the natural predators for relatively harmless species were removed, their numbers increased to the point where they constituted a threat, such as the 1880 infestation of locusts in the Red River Valley, Minnesota. Entire vegetative systems were reshaped.¹ The impact of deer browsing in the woodland areas increased greatly, as the wolf was removed, so that

their favoured plant foods were virtually removed. Starvation among deer became the factor which maintained a balance in population. By removing the burrowing animals associated with tallgrass prairie (e.g. gophers), the means whereby the topsoil was turned over and aerated was removed. Disturbed areas where the prairie annuals survive and initiate recolonization were reduced, thereby reducing species diversity and the ability of the plant community to self-heal. Removal of wildlife also meant removal of the source of organic wastes and its means of distribution and recycling into the rich black soil. By 1830 bison herds east of the Mississippi had been destroyed and the systematic reduction of the remaining north and south Plains herds had begun. By 1900 there were 300 wild bison remaining. The Pronghorn Antelope was also nearly destroyed. In 1800 they had numbered about 30-40 million; by 1875 their numbers had decreased to 15,000.

The destruction of the prairie ecosystem and its vegetation was hastened by improvements in farming technology: the introduction of the steel plow (1837); sulky plowing (about 1877) when the plowman rode on his plough; the introduction of extensive drainage systems; the arrival of steam tractors; and, today, the application of intensive farming techniques that sometimes kill off the micro-organisms in the soil. The tallgrass prairie was almost totally destroyed before there was any serious attempt to understand what it was or how it came to be.²

George Catlin, the artist, recommended in 1842 that

the entire plains area be set aside in southern Canada for the use of the Plains Indians in maintaining their hunting lifestyle.³ In 1850 G. Copway, the Christian Chief of the Ojibwa, tried to convince the U.S. President that he should set aside what now approximates to the State of Iowa as a reserve (Fig. 1.8). Both proposals were seen as being wasteful of good farmland and potentially dangerous since they would bring together large numbers of dispossessed Indians. At the time the issue was how best to deal with the native people. Very few people saw the retention of tallgrass prairie as a partial solution to the problem because the predominant cultural view was that the native people had little use for the land.



Fig. 1.8 Early proposals for reserves

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Problems were dealt with as they occurred, as separate issues:

How to manage the native people? How to manage the wildlife? How to manage the vegetation? How to manage the soil?

The view of the world that the immigrants had was deficient in recognising relationships.⁴ There was an assumed linear hierarchy in a "Chain of Being," but relationships between the FOUR LEVELS OF BEING were poorly defined and most scientific enquiry was directed towards understanding one of the levels in isolation, e.g. the vegetation. Both a religious outlook and a scientific/evolutionary outlook promoted this view so that even the native people in the untypical late plains cultures adopted the European notion of a hierarchy of levels (Fig. 1.9).





Fig. 1.9 Four levels of being

Biological records of the Prairie as the Europeans found it and recorded by early travellers (Narvarez and Cabenza de Vaca in 1528-36, De Soto in 1539-42, Coronada in 1540-42, La Verendrye and sons in 1742, and Lewis and Clark in 1804-1805) were generally poor because scientific knowledge was still in its infancy and the plants encountered were of undocumented families. The first complete accounts came from André Michaux, J. M. Peck (1834) and H. L. Ellsworth (1837). Most of the early botanists saw only the striking appearance of the prairie and ignored the Indian concept of the prairie as a supplier of food, clothing, medicine and shelter. Fortunately there were some noteworthy exceptions, e.g. Father Eugene Buechel's collection of plants as used on the Rosebud reserve (South Dakota) around 1920.

The idea of separate, self-contained levels of being promoted scientific thought of a specialist nature. Most of the criteria (flower type, leaf shape etc.) that were important to the dominant horticultural view were concerned with identification, classification and manipulation of often unfamiliar plant species. These criteria are important but because they were not derived in trying to solve a systemsrelated problem, they are not particularly useful for such a working context.

When survival is seen as a contest waged against nature, technological development (Science for Manipulation -- as in horticulture) is promoted as a necessary cultural extension of our powers. When survival is seen as a question

of co-operation with nature, development of a <u>symbiotic</u> <u>relationship</u>, then Wisdom (Science for Understanding) is of paramount importance. The balance between the two shifts constantly. It is an ecological view that is more pertinent to <u>understanding relationships</u> between what the native people had defined as "the four orders."

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1.3 An Ecological View

When ecologists turned their attention to the tallgrass prairie ecosystem, they established criteria relating to processes which supplement the native viewpoint. They are often the result of studying managerial problems, e.g. the consequences of drought or grazing.¹

THE PLANT AND THE PHYSICAL ORDER

Flowering time can be plotted against monthly intervals that, in Manitoba, run from April to October. Examples of species that typify the sequence are:

APRIL (Prairie Crocus, <u>Anemone patens</u>) MAY (Thimbleweed, <u>Anemone canadensis</u>) JUNE (White Prairie Clover, <u>Petalostemum candidum</u>) JULY (Clasping Leaved Dogbane, <u>Apocynum sibiricum</u>) AUGUST (Many Flowered Aster, <u>Aster pansus</u>) SEPTEMBER (Smooth Aster, <u>Aster Laevis</u>) OCTOBER (Stiff Goldenrod, Solidago rigida)



APRIL/PRAIRIE CROCUS



JUNE/WHITE PRAIRIE CLOVER





JULY/CLASPING LEAVED DOGBANE OCTOBER/STIFF GOLDENROD With observation of plant phenology, some relationships emerge. Flowering sequences and plant height appear to be related, with the smaller prairie species blooming early in the season and the larger species later. The changing seasons also appear to be characterized by different colours of flowers, with the single most mentioned relationship being the late predominance of yellow flowering species.

The process of lignification means that some species persist through the winter months as skeletal forms or DRY forms (Culver's Root, <u>Veronicastrum virginicum</u>), which are attractive in both their natural setting and as indoor arrangements.²



WINTER INTEREST/DRY FORM/CULVER'S ROOT

EARLY GROWTH, important to food-foragers, might also be important to the plant, giving it a competitive advantage over other species.

Probably the most important relationship is between the occurrence of plant species and the relative availability of soil moisture. Changes have been monitored in community composition over a period of seven years of drought. Mostly because of the type and depth of root systems, it is possible to anticipate which species are likely to thrive in soil conditions that range from wet to dry.³ "Wet" implies a surplus of moisture; runoff from adjacent areas, e.g. at the bottom of gradients. "Dry" implies a net loss of moisture; runoff to other areas, e.g. at the ridges of gradients. A 4" difference in adjacent areas can change the plant material. This relationship is so pronounced for some species that they are referred to as "INDICATOR SPECIES." Some examples follow for forbs and grasses that occur at the St. James Prairie (Fig. 1.10).

Soil Moisture Regime



DRY DRY/MESIC MESIC WET/MESIC WET

DRY DRY/MESIC MESIC WET/MESIC WET FORBS

Indicator

Aster ptarmicoides Anemone cylindrica Solidago missouriensis Fragaria virginiana Aster novae-angliae

GRASSES

Andropogon scoparius Koeleria cristata

Panicum leibergii

Fig. 1.10 Indicator species (soil moisture)



MESIC/LOW GOLDENROD



WET/NEW ENGLAND ASTER

The flatness of the St. James site makes such relationships difficult to interpret, since there are not obvious gradients. More extreme slope conditions would make this relationship clearer. A pattern may well exist relating to soil moisture but having more to do with the depth to bedrock than the small gradients.

THE PLANT WITHIN THE PLANT ORDER

A useful category for PLANT TYPE is BUNCH GRASS (Little Bluestem, <u>Andropogon scoparius</u>), i.e. grasses having a root system adapted to dry conditions with roots near the surface that bind and stabilize the topsoil (Fig. 1.11).

SHRUBS (Wolfwillow, Silverberry, <u>Eleagnus commutata</u>) can be grouped with the category TREES, since our main concern is the prairie species. Where they occur represents a point of transition between true prairie and woodland.

Within the VISUAL ATTRIBUTES, HEIGHT is taken to be SMALL (<9"), MEDIUM (<36") and LARGE (>36"), which was a



MESIC/LOW GOLDENROD



WET/NEW ENGLAND ASTER

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A useful category for PLANT TYPE is BUNCH GRASS (Little Bluestem, <u>Andropogon scoparius</u>), i.e. grasses having a root system adapted to dry conditions with roots near the surface that bind and stabilize the topsoil (Fig. 1.11).

SHRUBS (Wolfwillow, Silverberry, <u>Eleagnus commutata</u>) can be grouped with the category TREES, since our main concern is the prairie species. Where they occur represents a point of transition between true prairie and woodland.

Within the VISUAL ATTRIBUTES, HEIGHT is taken to be SMALL (<9"), MEDIUM (<36") and LARGE (>36"), which was a



Characteristic development of the tops and roots of four bunch grasses as they occur in several upland communities. From left to right they are needlegrass (Stipa spartea), Junegrass (Koeleria cristata), little bluestem (Andropogon scoparius), and prairie dropseed (Sporobolus heterolepis). Note that the tops are only about half as high as the roots are deep.

Fig. 1.11 Bunch grasses

fairly arbitrary decision, but one that may be of use in checking any relationship to flowering time.

If a plant is one of the relatively few that make up 75% of the prairie's cover, it is a COVER PLANT (Canada Everlasting, <u>Antennaria neglecta</u>). When it occurs in groups or "drifts" of one species it is said it AGGREGATES (Pasture Sage, <u>Artemisia frigida</u>).

There are estimated to be in excess of 2,000 species in tallgrass prairie, throughout its entire range. Those at St. James, 169 in total, will be the basis for the file.

Two categories that are controversial but of interest deal with the known origin of species.⁴ ALIEN (Dame's Rocket, <u>Hesperis matronalis</u>) refers to plants "not accepted as constituents of the Manitoba flora." They are introduced. NATIVE (Silverleaf Psoralea, <u>Psoralea argophylla</u>) species are those believed to have had their origins partly or solely in Manitoba.



ALIEN/DAME'S ROCKET



NATIVE/SILVERLEAF PSORALEA

There is no clear understanding of what constitutes an alien or a native, with the issue becoming increasingly confused for those species that are introduced but reproduce and spread naturally. Some of these "alien weeds" may serve some useful purpose in today's tallgrass prairie though they were not present 100 years ago. NEONATIVE might be a better label, although others argue that because some of the species are aggressive they are a threat and unwanted. Some disrupt the order within tallgrass prairie, occupying niches of native species and outcompeting them, so that diversity of species is reduced and the system with fewer potential responses is made less stable. It appears to be a question of time as to whether an individual species can be shown to contribute to the system. Even "native" is a term of limited use because the context for determining a plant's origins can be geographically much larger than its range within the geographic region. The situation is rather confused because most references to origins do not state the context. That a species is native to tallgrass prairie does not necessarily make it a good choice for a specific site. To maintain the genotype of a site's species it is recommended that seed come from within a three kilometer radius. Kentucky Bluegrass (Poa pratensis) is believed by some to be a native of tallgrass prairie, but not by everyone. It does not do well at St. James because it requires more moisture than is annually available (20") in the northern and transitional edges of the tallgrass prairie biome. While research into the use of plant files and

computer aids is necessary, it should by now be clear that they are not a substitute for knowing local plant material as individuals.

Although the native people identified the genera of plants, it was only later that plant FAMILIES could be identified -- largely because the scale of perception was larger. Three groups emerge as being of particular importance: the GRASSES, COMPOSITES and LEGUMES. Plant cover occurs in predictable percentages for a healthy community (Fig. 1.12).

Species		Big bluestem Type: 155 sq.m. % Comp. (č. Freq.	
Little bluestem		2.0	19
Big bluestem	. 7	78.0	100
Kentucky bluegrass .	•	8.8	88
Needlegrass		1.9	31
Prairie dropseed		.1	ĩ
Indian grass		1.9	37
Side-oats grama		.1	7
Small panic grasses		•3	28
Juncgrass	•	.1	10
Nodding wild-rye	•	.1	12
Switchgrass		1.7	22
Sloughgrass	•	•4	12
Forbs		3.6	74

Fig. 1.12 Species composition and frequency

ESTIMATE OF PLANT COVER

FOR TALLGRASS PRAIRIE...

Within the general areas of "prairie" and "woodland" it is of use to identify other areas. Vegetation patterns are the material representation of the parts of a Dynamic energy system that changes constantly, in response to changes in some key factors. In the prairie community this can be competition for light between seeds and bulbs, tubers etc. when the depth of litter is critical, or later it can be competition for soil moisture in a plant community that has different depths and

types of root systems. The roots are stratified so that the plant community can survive, sometimes at the expense of individuals, in a co-operative system that is more efficient in utilizing soil moisture than the sum of the parts would suggest, because of its meshing roots and stratification. In a severe drought individual species are lost but the prairie cover is maintained.

Within the associated oak/aspen woodland, flowering and leafing sequences for stratified layers (tree, shrub, herbaceous) evolved through competition for light. Species in the herbaceous layer may flower earlier in the year before being shaded out by the tree canopy. The WOOD EDGE is of interest because in competing for light at the edge, it has come to be characterised by a particular association of species. They form a dense edge, which is a windbreak that influences the microclimate within the woodland. It is generally warmer and more humid. It is more stable without the extremes of heat and cold that plants endure on the open prairie. The wood edge is also the ecotone or area of transition where changes in the relative areas of prairie and woodland can be monitored. The wood edge may be advancing or in recession. This WOOD EDGE/TRANSITION is especially important to wildlife, providing them with good cover and a diverse supply of food.

The area of most rapid transition is within the tallgrass prairie as a DISTURBED AREA. In the past this may have been a buffalo wallow, a salt lick, a burrow or a holmstead

site but today it is more likely to be a worn vehicular or pedestrian trail. They may be characterised, while recovering, by a predominance of grasses, such as little bluestem, which have their growing points protected below ground level and recover quickly. The native annuals, e.g. Sunflowers, are adapted to quickly seed and recolonize such areas.



DISTURBED AREA/SUNFLOWERS

However, such areas may also be the point of entry for the more aggressive alien species (e.g. Dandelion, <u>Taraxacum</u> <u>officinale</u>) which evolved in Eurasian cultivated fields and are geared to establish extremely quickly and to persist.

Monitoring and quantification of endangered plant communities, such as tallgrass prairie, reveals that some species are now RARE (Yellow Ladyslipper, <u>Cypripedium calceolus</u>), or are becoming ENDANGERED (Prairie Lily, Lilium philadelphicum). Prairie species are increasingly AVAILABLE from nurseries and seed farms. When the genotype is not an issue, e.g. home landscapes, they may be of use either AS A SEED (Wild Bergamot, <u>Monarda fistulosa</u>) and/or AS A PLANT (Purple Prairie Clover, Petalostemum purpureum).



RARE/YELLOW LADYSLIPPER



ENDANGERED/PRAIRY LILY

The reproductive method can be used to predict the future appearance of an area. If the preferred manner is SEXUAL the characteristics and location of offspring are diverse and unpredictable. VEGETATIVE REPRODUCTION, from rhizomes, tubers etc. is more predictable. Many species have both alternatives.

The vast majority of prairie species are perennials, some with a lifetime of about thirty years, but as we have seen, it is the ANNUAL (Pasture Sage, <u>Artemisia frigida</u>) that has a key role within the community as the initiator of the healing process.
To ensure the survival of a species and its flowering it may be advisable to check whether it is DIOECIOUS (Canada Thistle, <u>Cirsium arvense</u>), i.e. if there are separate male and female plants.

THE PLANT AND THE ANIMAL ORDER

Studies on wildlife are a good source for data on a plant's value as FOOD, but they are not easy to interpret.⁶ A plant may have value as a high percentage of one animal's diet or it may have value as a low percentage of the diet for a great many animals. The category as it is used in the records is intended to identify those species that are mentioned in reading material on wildlife requirements.

Although much has been done to understand changes in ecosystems under natural conditions, e.g. identification of species SUSCEPTIBLE TO DROUGHT (Tufted Vetch, <u>Vicia cracca</u>), some of the most useful research relates to the impact and management problems of man-the-farmer. Grazing may cause a species to proliferate if it is an "INCREASER" (Black-eyed Susan, <u>Rudbeckia serotina</u>), or die out if it is a "DECREASER" (Dwarf False Indigo, <u>Amorpha nana</u>). We have seen some that are POISONOUS to animals, but others are simply AVOIDED, perhaps because they taste bitter or are DEFENDED. One such species is Foxtail Grass (Hordeum jubatum), which causes mouth sores in cattle that, if infected, can cause death. Certain species are INDICATORS OF OVERGRAZING (Canada Everlasting, <u>Antennaria neglecta</u>) where they visually dominate. They may be those left untouched or they may be the INVADER/ PIONEER species that first colonize the DISTURBED AREA.



INCREASER/BLACK EYED SUSAN



INVADER/PIONEER/YELLOW GOATSBEARD

In reading the landscape of a grazed area both Weaver and Watts suggest that cattle, like bison, may graze into a prevailing wind, so that one side of a pasture might appear more heavily grazed. Bison/cattle will also have preferred routes to and from water bodies and separate sleeping areas, less heavily grazed. It was often the pathways for large scale migration that were first used by explorers and later the settlers of the prairies.

THE PLANT AND THE HUMAN ORDER

Apart from a brief period when the immigrant Europeans as a minority group learned willingly the ways of the native people as a prerequisite for survival, the majority cultural response has been to ignore the native flora. Settlers used introduced species for windbreaks (Pea Tree, <u>Caragana arbores-</u> <u>cens</u>), garden vegetables (Asparagus, <u>Asparagus officinalis</u>) and later to decorate their surroundings. They used styles and techniques reminiscent of their native homelands. This is an alternative attitude towards the selection of plant material that has a heavy horticultural bias and still has its advocates.⁷ Some species now have a CULTIVAR AVAILABLE (Longheaded Coneflower, <u>Ratibida columnifera</u>). Some are viable as CROPS (Jerusalem Artichoke, Helianthus tuberosus).



CULTIVAR AVAILABLE/ LONG-HEADED CONEFLOWER



CROP/JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE

Many of the native species became, in time, part of western medicine⁸ (Chokecherry, <u>Prunus virginiana</u> -- as a cold remedy).

A combination of criteria (native and ecological) can be seen as a useful checklist and a starting point for future studies. The criteria chosen are those which arise from the context of a specific site. They represent what the vegetation has to offer as it interacts with the four orders or the interdependent levels of being. The record represents, I hope, what Edward T. Hall would regard as "a high context integrative system of thought."

There are numerous other categories which could be added to the plant record, but those given which arise from an ecological viewpoint are the minimum required to understand tallgrass prairie vegetation as something which relates to all levels of being (Fig. 1.13).

Probably one of the most important emerging lines of thought this century has been the conceptual "flip-over" that lets us look not at the orders or levels of being in the World, but at the <u>exchange of energy</u> between the parts, a concept expressed in Dansereau's Model of Reality as the Ecosystem ⁹ (Fig. 1.14).

An ecosystem merges the idea of exchanged energies (central to a native model) and levels of being (central to an immigrant model). Levels represent stores of more complex and concentrated energy but the degree of interdependency negates any idea of a hierarchical structure. That an organism is more complex does not make it more important to the health of the system. The most important component is actually the plant level because it is the only PRODUCER in the system,







whereas all other levels are CONSUMERS. Such a model is useful for a general interpretation of a specific site but it is not going to provide us with a meaningful quantitative model because the specifics of individual organism behaviour (Worm, Rose, Bison, Man) are not accurately represented within generalised object classifications (Carnivore, Herbivore, Decomposer). Showing control or investments (stores of energy) as entities separated from mineral/animal/plant/man decomposer levels only serves to confuse or obscure relationships, since controls and energy storage originate within these levels and may bypass intermediate levels. Systems analysis shares these problems but is different in that it can address itself specifically to quantifying energy exchange and is derived from a vocabulary of symbols -- building blocks for models which can be made specific or general, depending on the nature of the problem and the quality of information available.

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1.4 A Systems View

The purpose of this section is to produce a quantified general model of tallgrass prairie, as an energy system, so that relationships between the parts of a healthy ecosystem can be appreciated. The model shows the importance of processorientated thinking in the management of native plant communities by showing how key "forcing factors" influence the physical appearance and composition of the plant community. The general model is then compared to the system which exists at the St. James Prairie, Winnipeg and to its area of maintained lawn, so that the energy expended by man on management/ maintenance can be compared.

Symbols. The symbols used are those adopted by Odum (1976).

ways.



Energy source from outside accompanied by causal forces.



Heat sink, the draining out of degraded energy after its use in work.



Energy storage tank delivers energy flow to path-



Energy interaction, where two kinds of energy are required to produce high-quality energy flow.



Producer unit converts and concentrates solar energy; it is self-maintaining. Details may be shown inside.

Consumer unit uses high-quality energy and is self-maintaining. Details may be shown inside.

A General Model

Energy flow units are $\text{Kcal.m}^{-2}.\text{yr}^{-1}$, with assumptions based, where possible, on data from studies on the ungrazed Osage tallgrass prairie, Oklahoma (growing season 272 days, annual precipitation 78.5 cm). Unless otherwise stated, all references in brackets are from IBP19 -- <u>Grasslands, Systems</u> <u>Analysis and Man²</u>.

From Sunlight to Plant Biomass.....

Solar radiation available to the plant community is 1.49 x 10^{6} Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹. This is converted by photosynthesis into total plant biomass (Pt) at an efficiency of 0.44% (Sims and Singh, 1971). For other tallgrass sites the efficiency was 1.2%, with 55% (Dalman and Kucera, 1965) of the total 6584.6 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹, ie. 3621.53 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹ for belowground biomass (Pb).

Stores of Plant Biomass.....

Biomass aboveground and live (Ba) has 110 g(dry wt).m⁻² of Carbon. Biomass belowground, live and dead (Bb) 78 g(dry wt).m⁻². of Carbon and Biomass of Litter (Bl) 325 g(dry wt).m⁻² of Carbon. This in terms of stores of energy is:

Ba as 880 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹, Bb as 624 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹, and Bl as 2600 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹.

(Carbon is about half the plant's dry weight and 1 g dry weight of plant material gives 4 Kcal of energy, when burned in a bomb calorimeter.)

Standing Dead accumulates at 339 $g.m^{-2}.yr^{-1}$ giving a flow of 1356 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹, while the rate of accumulation of

litter is 292.33 g.m⁻².yr⁻¹, the equivalent of 1169 Kcal.m⁻². yr^{-1} .

For the PRODUCER SYSTEM (Fig. 1.15) we have the following stores of energy and exchanges of energy:



Fig. 1.15 The producer system

Two Food Chains.....

The producer system supports two simplified food chains, above and below ground --

a) the herbivore, carnivore, man chain

and b) the decomposer, microbacteria chain. These CONSUMER SYSTEMS are self-maintaining and perpetuate a balance within the overall system by controlling flows of energy and recycling minerals and nutrients. The overall pattern is seen as a balance of numbers between trophic levels that represent storage of energy in increasingly complex forms (Elton's Pyramid) and/or a balance in turnover rate, with work done by many small organisms with short lifetimes supporting





Concepts of productivity expressed in the form of pyramids. GP, green plants; H, herbivores; C1, primary carnivores; C2, secondary carnivores; C3, tertiary carnivores. (After Clarke, 1954.)

Fig. 1.16 Trophic structure

Although the trophic structure is modelled as being pyramidical the pattern breaks down with increasing yields being taken by man and closer scrutiny reveals natural fluctuations over time, particularly above ground. The system is dynamic and constantly shifts in response to external factors such as changes in the seasons and internal factors such as fluctuations in population numbers for organisms (Fig. 1.17).



Fig. 1.17 Trophic level fluctuations

Plant biomass production rates are related to forcing factors such as the seasonal distribution of rainfall (Fig. 1.18).



Examples of the annual cycle of key abiotic driving variables in North American grasslands based on data from US/IBP grassland biome study sites and nearby locations.

Fig. 1.18 Rainfall and plant production

The situation is made more complex by delaying loops and storages within the system. A large number of variables influence the soil's ability to store and release ground water, e.g. the influence of plant uptake, soil porosity, the rate of evaporation and the contribution of surface runoff from or to adjacent areas. What is clear is that while the flows of energy may be harder to quantify, a system with more options regarding the routes that energy might take is more stable.³

From Plant Biomass to Soil Community.....

The rate of conversion of parent material to soil is governed by the rate at which the decomposers can rework supplies of root biomass, litter and waste products (feces and urine). Availability of soil moisture is also a factor. Turnover in root biomass (0-50 cm) was measured as 0.36 g.m⁻². day⁻¹ for the Osage prairie (I.B.P. report 19, pp. 156-157) and as 25% per year for tallgrass prairie in general (Dalman and Kucera, 1965). This gives a rate of decomposition (Pc) of between 156 and 525.6 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹. The total depth of topsoil is assumed to be 120 cm (4 feet) and the time since last glaciation about 10,000 years, which gives an accumulation rate for topsoil of 0.12 mm.yr⁻¹. There is some data for the uptake of Nitrogen and Minerals and an approximate order of importance:

1	Nitrogen (partly from the Legumes)	5	Potassium	
2	Carbon (turnover rate of l.6 yrs.)	6	Calcium/Magnesium	(in litter)
3	Phosphorous	7	Silicon	
4	Sulphur	8	Iron/Aluminum	

An estimate of Nitrogen (N) and Mineral (M) uptake by biomass aboveground is 28 g.m⁻².yr⁻¹ and for biomass belowground is $65 \text{ g.m}^{-2}.\text{yr}^{-1}$, giving a total of 93 g.m⁻².yr⁻¹ (I.B.P. report 19, p. 726). The amount of water uptake is undetermined. What is known is that the efficiency of water use (Available water/Total plant biomass) is highest for grasslands with intermediate rainfall. Tallgrass prairie does not use available water as efficiently as mixed-grass prairie (Fig. 1.19).



Fig. 1.19 The belowground food chain

While most plant species exhibit a preference for certain soil moisture conditions, some <u>Indicator species</u> have a very close relationship. Management of the water regime can shape the appearance of the prairie according to predictable patterns. (Fig. 1.20).

WET/INDICATOR

<u>Aster novae-angliae</u>
Thalictrum dasycarpum
Veronicastrum virginicum

New England Aster Tall Meadowrue Culver's Root

WET-MESIC/INDICATOR

Fragaria virginiana Galium septentrionale Heuchera richardsonii Lathyrus venosus intonsus Panicum leibergii Rudbeckia serotina Wild Strawberry Northern Bedstraw Alumroot Wild Peavine Panicgrass Black Eyed Susan

MESIC/INDICATOR

<u>Aster laevis</u> Convolvulus sepium

<u>Solidago missouriensis</u> Viola pedatifida

DRY-MESIC/INDICATOR

Anemone cylindrica Koeleria cristata Petalostemum candidum Physalis virginiana Potentilla arguta Sporobolus heterolepis Stipa spartea Viola pedatifida Smooth Aster Wild Morning Glory, Devil's Guts Low Goldenrod Birdfoot Violet

Thimbleweed Junegrass White Prairie Clover Virginia Groundcherry Tall Quinquefoil Prairie Dropseed Needlegrass, Porcupinegrass Birdfoot Violet

DRY/INDICATOR

Andropogon scoparius Aster ptarmicoides Bouteloua curtipendula Petalostemum purpureum Little Bluestem Upland White Aster Side Oats Grama Purple Prairie Clover

Fig. 1.20 Indicator species for soil moisture

From Plant Biomass to Man.....

The Osage prairie has no large herbivores. Studies completed relate to small herbivore systems. In general there is a correlation between the total biomass of phytophagous animals feeding on grassland vegetation and its biomass (Ellis and French, 1973; Zlotin, 1975). Species diversity depends also on the number of plant species present (about 200) and the composition of plant cover -- 95.4% Grasses, 3.6% Forbs (Weaver, North American Prairie, 1954).

On ungrazed prairie there is a great diversity of animal species in the small herbivore system (grasshoppers, voles, mice etc.). They have a measured dry weight of 42.3 mg.m⁻² (I.B.P. report 19, p. 205), 0.17 Kcal.m⁻². Invertebrate predators occur at 17.3 mg(dry wt).m⁻², 0.07 Kcal.m⁻², and are 21.9% of the total invertebrate population (I.B.P. report 19, p. 542). Herbivorous invertebrates total 0.32 Kcal.m⁻² (Fig. 1.21).



Fig. 1.21 Biomass for small herbivores and invertebrates

Moderate grazing would increase Pa by approximately 50% (Pearson, 1965; Rawes and Welch, 1966; Andrzejewska, 1974; Wielgoleski, 1975). Were there large herbivores an estimate of average grazing would be 13-20% of Pa (Petrusewiez and Grodinski, 1975) with a maximum exploitation rate of 30-45% (Wegent and Evans, 1967). Assuming 13% Pa becomes 4444.5 Kcal. m^{-2} .yr and 577.8 Kcal.m⁻² would go to the large grazers. Production rate for litter and standing dead would be increased to 3866.7 Kcal.m⁻².yr from the 2525 Kcal.m⁻².yr on ungrazed prairie. The system is made more efficient in investing in the soil because of the moderate grazing of free ranging herbivores. Assessing the impact of grazing on the make-up of the plant community is difficult. With no limits to the range of large grazers, bison appear to take species in approximately the same percentages as they occur as cover for the prairie. If the range is limited more intense grazing promotes the dominance of grasses and the dying out of forbs. If the range is ungrazed then the percentage of forbs/flowers in the community increases.

Assuming a 10% efficiency for the conversion of plant energy to storage in large herbivore biomass since animals are generally 5-20% efficient (Southwick <u>Ecology and Quality of</u> <u>our Environment</u>, p. 208) gives a production rate (Ph) of $57.8 \text{ Kcal.m}^{-2}.\text{yr}^{-1}$ for large herbivores. Large predators (Prairie wolf, grizzly, coyote etc.) would have a production rate (Pp) of 5.8 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹ (Fig. 1.22).



Fig. 1.22 The aboveground food chain

The several species of large herbivores associated with tallgrass prairie were able to co-exist because they were not competing for the same plant resources (Fig. 1.23).



Fig. 1.23 Large herbivores and food resources

Man's role in the system was minimal. He required 2500 Kcal.day⁻¹ to survive (Odum, 1976) which he acquired by hunting and by foraging from many vegetative systems. The controls for managing the system are mostly built-in and are the consequence of an evolved symbiotic relationship between the parts of the system. One exception is the occurrence of fire. It may be that the natural frequency of fires as they occur from lightning strikes does not account for the number of fires necessary to keep an area as tallgrass prairie. The native people may have had a key role in establishing tallgrass prairie since they used fire for hunting and to manage the prairie with light burns about every 1-4 years. How often one specific area has to be burned over is difficult to say. What fire does is remove the build-up of standing dead and litter, which with increasing depth makes the germination of seeds increasingly difficult. Fire sets back the process of succession while at the same time releasing stores of minerals and nutrients to the soil. The soil protects the regrowth source of most prairie species (perennials) while destroying shrubs/trees which grow yearly from points of growth aboveground. Prairie was increasing because it can regenerate after fire, while the associated woodlands were receding.

Another control is the effect of burrowing animals in aerating the soil at the same time as the large grazers were compacting the soil. Both actions change the amount of storage space for soil moisture which in turn impacts on the entire system.

The model that emerges of tallgrass prairie shows clearly that no part of the system exists in isolation. There are stores of energy in different forms, but a hierarchy, if it exists, is only in terms of the quality/concentration of stored energy. The vital links that emerge, routes for energy transfer, are as important as the parts. Understanding the role of the forcing factors and working with information on plant preferences enables us to manage the system in accordance with anticipated responses, and our significant criteria are largely to do with measured responses to change in the forcing factors. Different habitats correspond to different amounts of AVAILABLE SUNLIGHT (OPEN PRAIRIE, WOOD EDGE/ TRANSITION, WOODLAND) to AVAILABLE WATER (DRY, DRY-MESIC, MESIC, WET-MESIC, WET and SUSCEPTIBLE TO DROUGHT) and to FIRE (FIREPROOF). We also see man's place in the scheme of things and so are better able to interpret his vital link with nature.

Knowing the pattern to energy transfer reveals that the natural system not only required minimal energy expenditure by man, but incorporated other components (the grazers) to do the work of management, which, in turn, were sources of energy sustaining man. With the model (Fig. 1.24) we can now explore grazing as an alternative, natural form of management for this plant community.



Fig. 1.24 A systems model for tallgrass prairie

Energy expended on management of the St. James Prairie





THE ST JAMES PRAIRIE

Energy expended by man is still minimal though it now includes substituting planned burns for natural fires and maintaining areas of lawn. The open prairie has about 1/10th of its area burned over every year but the advancing woodland remains unburned and continues to encroach on the prairie. The energy expended on maintenance of lawns and mown pathways is spent on making a mono-culture of grass grow (fertilizer, watering etc.) and on keeping it from growing (mowing)!

A very approximate estimate of the energy expended on 20 m² of lawn in one year is 2500 Kcal for labour, 10,000 Kcal for fuel and 2,500 Kcal for fertilizers and pesticides (Fallarones Inst., <u>The Integral Urban House</u>, p. 428). When this is added to the energy represented by the removed grass clippings (85,000 Kcal) the total energy budget is 5,500 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹ (approximately $\frac{90.69 \text{ m}^{-2}.\text{yr}^{-1}}{\text{ m}}$). This is not excessive in terms of managing lawn where it is needed (\$138.00 per year

for St. James). Where it is not needed it represents an incredible waste of money/energy. Tallgrass prairie as an alternative requires a minimum of management -- the wages of two firemen (assume $$20,000 \text{ yr}^{-1}$) for one day every two years, burning an area of about 15,958 square meters -- about \$54.79 yr^{-1} total or \$0.0034 $m^{-2}.yr^{-1}$. This assumes that for 1981 one dollar is the equivalent of 8000 Kcal (Total energy consumption in Canada/GNP). There are situations where fire management of tallgrass prairie is not a feasible option but can this be so for all the maintained grasslands in parks, roadsides and hydro-rights-of-way? Fire, used to manage the open prairie at St. James, does not appear to be effective in reducing the numbers of woodland shrubs that are invading the area, possibly because there is not enough time between fires to let combustible material build up to the point that a burn will be intense enough to kill the shrubs. The loss of the herbivores has reduced the rate at which combustible material is produced, but the rate of burning is based on the frequency of past fires on grazed prairie. Perhaps it is possible to reintroduce grazing. Using the model (Fig. 1.25) we can test whether this is possible in theory even though it is not practical for the site as it exists. Energy quantity decreases as it moves through the system but its concentration and guality increases.

SUNLIGHT (3700 Kcal m⁻².day⁻¹ in 1350500.00 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹ in Manitoba) Photosynthesis (0.44% efficient) 5942.20 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹ TOTAL PLANT BIOMASS $2673.99 \text{ Kcal.m}^{-2}.\text{yr}^{-1}$ 45% ABOVEGROUND 4010.99 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹ BOOSTED 50% BY GRAZING 521.43 Kcal.m⁻².yr⁻¹ 13% TAKEN BY LARGE HERBIVORES CONVERTED TO ENERGY STORED AS 52.14 Kcal.m⁻².vr⁻¹ ANIMAL BIOMASS (10% efficiency) $10.43 \text{ g.m}^{-2}.\text{yr}^{-1}$ ANIMAL BIOMASS (assuming lg of animal biomass is the equivalent of 5 Kcal of stored energy) $1664.42 \text{ g.m}^{-2}.\text{yr}^{-1}$ ANIMAL BIOMASS ON WHOLE SITE (total area of 39.5 acres, 159,580 square meters)

This is the equivalent of three mature bison (500 Kg each). Fig. 1.25 A theoretical test for grazing

While the model indicates that grazing is theoretically possible it is well to remember that the assumptions behind the model were derived for a larger scale of perception and that the applicability of the model is reduced in trying to work at such a small scale. Its use is primarily as an interpretive aid. It does not show that grazing is feasible, but given conditions as they are believed to have existed, three bison possibly could be sustained by the amount of edible material produced in the site (<u>though not necessarily as a</u> <u>confined pasture</u>). It may well be that they would be sustained by the total production of aboveground plant biomass but that they would naturally graze over a much wider range.

Other changes to the system include the interception of surface water runoff from surrounding areas so that available ground water is reduced. Compaction of the mown pathways by visitors may also interrupt the flow of available ground water. The aboveground food chain is not evident as an interpretive resource except in terms of the small herbivores, e.g. grasshoppers and leafhoppers.



What exists now is only the relics of a once healthy ecosystem (Fig. 1.26).





REFERENCES TO RELATED READING ON

"A SYSTEMS VIEW"

- 1. Odum and Odum, Energy Basis for Man and Nature (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1976).
- 2. A. I. Breymeyer and G. M. Van Dyne (eds.), <u>IBP19--Grass-lands</u>, Systems Analysis and Man (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
- 3. Ramón Margalef, <u>Perspectives in Ecological Theory</u> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).
- Henry T. Lewis, "Indian Fires of Spring--Hunters and gatherers of the Canadian boreal forest shaped their habitat with fire," <u>Natural History</u> (January, 1980), pp. 76-80.

1.5 Summary

In looking at tallgrass prairie what emerges is a line of thought that represents a developing systems context, from very general cultural models to more site-specific ones that are derived from a specialized working-context (Fig. 1.27). (CREATION)



Fig. 1.27 A developing systems context

The native view identified the uniqueness of all beings and their role as a part of one whole system. An explanation of the exchange of powers/energies was central to their beliefs. The immigrant view lost sight of relationships but quantified information on the parts of the system. The ecological view combined the parts and the energy exchange but had no concise way of representing controls or investments of energy. But a systems view has developed a symbolic vocabulary that allows us to relate parts and processes -- and furthermore to <u>quantify</u> the processes.

One of our goals as designers/interpreters should be to explore and explain, not solely plant material, but the context of ecosystems as the tools of our trade -- to educate, to promote wisdom not technology as an end in itself. Understanding and participation, for the client/public, in the design process is just as important in achieving this end as is the example of an ecologically sound design solution. The solution will not be generally acceptable until the rationale behind it is clear.

This does not mean advocating the indiscriminate use of native plant material. Plant selection depends on what ends are to be achieved, the definition of a problem, but mostly an <u>understanding of context</u> and a measure of solutions against alternative solutions, <u>including those of nature</u>. Tallgrass prairie is not "natural" in the sense that one of the key factors in its evolution was man-made fire. Understanding our context requires an increased understanding of fields of study

such as ecology and energetics.

Ecology is the one science that possesses the ability to recapture the experience of PERSONALITY in nature. And it comes into its own as a profession at exactly the same time that an intense awareness of PERSONHOOD (an individual's right to self-discovery) enters our political life. We have begun to liberate the Earth from her false identity -- the mechanistic-reductionistic image which has made nature into an unfeeling manipulation -- just as we begin to fight our way free of the false identities which have made human beings the objects of social power. (Roszak, <u>Person</u>/ Plant, p. 58)

Is this not a call for a Model of Reality similar to that advocated by the native people and ecologists alike, with personality in nature and recognition of the uniqueness of the individual spirit in all levels of being? Is it accidental that such thought should emerge as we prepare to return to a steady-state economy, without the luxury of excess energy from fossil fuels? Is this an example of cultural pre-adaptation? Could it be that our thought originates in the larger system of things? Lovelock and Epton, environmental scientists, have developed in their GAIA (Mother Earth) HYPOTHESIS just such a proposition.

It appeared to us that the Earth's biosphere was able to control at least the temperature of the Earth's surface and the composition of the atmosphere...This led us to the formulation of the proposition that living matter, the air, the oceans, the land surfaces were parts of a giant system which was able to control temperature, the composition of the air and sea, the pH of the soil and so on, so as to be optimum for SURVIVAL OF THE BIOSPHERE. The system seemed to exhibit the behaviour of a single organism...One of the laws of system control is that, if a system is to maintain stability (balance), it must possess adequate variety of response...What is to be feared is that man-the-farmer and man-the-engineer are reducing the

total variety of response open to GAIA...Natural distribution of plants and animals is being changed, ecological systems destroyed, and whole species altered or deleted. (Roszak, Person/Plant, p. 39)

The saving of tallgrass prairie is of global concern, and hopefully some of the criteria significant to its survival -- and man's survival -- are represented in the plant record. The question is: Can we convince the public that damage has been done, and do we have time enough to reduce the extent of the damage? (Fig. 1.28)



Fig. 1.28 The once vast tallgrass prairie (extracted from National Geographic, January 1980).

APPENDIX 2 A FILE ON TALLGRASS PRAIRIE SPECIES

2.1 The File

Plants in the file are those that occur at the St. James Prairie. Native woodland species and introduced species for a one-time holmstead site are included, along with species that characterise the true or tallgrass prairie. Added to this list of 169 species are 17 plants associated with tallgrass prairie elsewhere in Manitoba, to give a total of 186 species. The records are presented in alphabetical order according to a plant's botanical name. Sources of information for individual criteria are listed in the appendix.

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2.2 Limitations of the File

If criteria are to be combined sensibly, the user has to have some idea of how much documentation was available for the different criteria

Only documented information is in the file but not all criteria are comprehensively covered. Criteria with poor or incomplete coverage are indicated below (Fig. 2.1).

Poor Coverage	Incomplete Coverage
REPRODUCTIVE METHOD	EARLY GROWTH
METHOD OF DISPERSAL	SOIL MOISTURE PREFERENCE
DIOECIOUS	INDICATOR SPECIES (Soil moisture)
	COVER PLANT
	FORMS AGGREGATES
	SEED AVAILABLE
	PLANT AVAILABLE
	HOST SPECIES

Fig. 2.1 Coverage of criteria

The quantitative assessment of tallgrass prairie species, at St. James, gives an indication of how comprehensive the file is (refer Section 4.1). The fact that the data is processed by computer does not make stored information more accurate, since it was subject to all the errors of omission and contradiction that are a normal part of compiling any such file.

2.3 Sources of Information

Specific sources of information are listed below.

- FLOWERING TIME/PERSISTENT Department of Parks and Recreation (Winnipeg), Living Prairie Museum Plant Check List.
- WINTER INTEREST Jane Embertson, Pods.
- SOIL MOISTURE CONDITIONS/INDICATOR SPECIES Wehr Nature Center, "Five Prairie Segments," <u>A Prairie</u> <u>Propagation Handbook</u>.

Primary sources for the above: John T. Curtis, The Vegetation of Wisconsin; J. E. Weaver, North American Prairie.

BUNCH GRASS

J. E. Weaver, Prairie Plants and Their Environment.

COLOUR OF FLOWER

Department of Parks and Recreation (Winnipeg), Living Prairie Museum Plant Check List.

PLANT HEIGHT

Manitoba Department of Agriculture, <u>Native Manitoba Plants</u> in Bog, Bush and Prairie.

COVER PLANT

Wehr Nature Center, "Prairie Plant History," Prairie Propagation Handbook.

FIREPROOF

Henry T. Lewis, "Indian Fires of Spring, <u>Natural History</u>, (January 1980).

AGGREGATES

J. E. Weaver, Prairie Plants and Their Environment.

- AT ST. JAMES Department of Parks and Recreation (Winnipeg), Living Prairie Museum Plant Check List.
- ALIEN/NEONATIVE/NATIVE/COMPOSITE/LEGUME H. J. Scoggan, Flora of Manitoba.
- HABITAT (OPEN PRAIRIE/WOODLAND/WOOD EDGE/DISTURBED AREA) Department of Parks and Recreation (Winnipeg), <u>Living</u> Prairie Museum Plant Check List.

J. E. Weaver, Prairie Plants and Their Environment.

SEED AVAILABLE/PLANT AVAILABLE

Catalogues from:

- The Windrift Prairie Shop
- The Potting Shed, P.O. Box 1168, Milwaukie, Wis.
- LaFayette Home Nursery Inc., LaFayette, Ill.
- Prairie Nursery, Rt. 1, Box 116, Westfield, Wis.
- Prairie Ridge Nursery, Overland Rd., Mt. Horeb, Wis.

An extensive listing of sources of native plant materials is available from: The Natural Vegetation Subcommittee, Plant Resources Division of the Soil Conservation Society of America, 7515 N.E. Alkeny Road, Alkeny, Iowa 50021.

FOOD FOR WILDLIFE

Martin, Zim, Nelson, American Wildlife and Plants.

SUSCEPTIBLE TO DROUGHT/PASTURE

J. E. Weaver, Prairie Plants and Their Environment.

Canadian Department of Agriculture, Publication 964, Ninety-Nine Range Forage Plants.

CROP

Dilwyn J. Rogers, Edible Medicinal Useful and Poisonous Wild Plants of the Northern Great Plains - South Dakota Region.

INCREASER/DECREASER

J. E. Weaver, Prairie Plants and Their Environment.

INDICATES OVERGRAZING

J. E. Weaver, Prairie Plants and Their Environment.

May Watts, Reading the Landscape of America.

OTHER USES TO MAN

Jackson and Prine, <u>Wild Plants of Central North America</u>. Nelson Coon, Using Wild and Wayside Plants.

Dilwyn J. Rogers, Edible Medicinal Useful and Poisonous Wild Plants of the Northern Great Plains - South Dakota Region.

Charlotte Ericksen-Brown, <u>Use of Plants - for the past</u> 500 years.

Frances Densmore, How Indians Use Wild Plants for Food, Medicine and Crafts.

APPENDIX 3 THE PROGRAM

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3.2 Examples of Formatted Output

The following examples are of printout from the three subprograms in SHARRA.

The first, from LIST1, is a listing of names (a plant inventory) and a display of the file. Data in the file relates to the four orders and runs from left to right (columns 1-78). A '1' indicates that a criterion is applicable to the record. A '0' indicates that a criterion is not applicable or that there was no information from the extensive search of literature which was undertaken in compiling the file.

The second example, from SORTL, is a display of a plant record for a species which the user specifies by typing in its genus (e.g. Psoralea).

The third example is from SORT2. Any combination of code numbers (column numbers) of criteria is typed in, after the checklist has been displayed to the user, and a list of complying species is printed out and totalled. BUTANICAL NAME

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3.2 Examples of Formatted Output

The following examples are of printout from the three subprograms in SHARRA.

The first, from LIST1, is a listing of names (a plant inventory) and a display of the file. Data in the file relates to the four orders and runs from left to right (columns 1-78). A 'l' indicates that a criterion is applicable to the record. A '0' indicates that a criterion is not applicable or that there was no information from the extensive search of literature which was undertaken in compiling the file.

The second example, from SORTL, is a display of a plant record for a species which the user specifies by typing in its genus (e.g. Psoralea).

The third example is from SORT2. Any combination of code numbers (column numbers) of criteria is typed in, after the checklist has been displayed to the user, and a list of complying species is printed out and totalled. BUTANICAL NAME

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