

## Introduction

- Geography has a long-standing interest in business and the economy
  - von Thünen (1826), Weber (1929), Christaller (1933)
  - Such academic research has provided insights of practical value related to business location and the development of regional economies
  - However, as the connection between geography and business has grown, the relationship has also become more complex

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- A variety of developments have occurred in geography's approach to business topics
  - The key development that is the focus of this paper is the emergence of an explicitly applied branch focused on business needs
  - Traditionally termed business geography, recently re-positioned as locational intelligence (the field identifier we will use here)

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- What is "locational intelligence"?
  - In Thrall's classic statement, the locational intelligence field "integrates geographic analysis, reasoning, and technology in support of improved business decisions" (Thrall, 2002)
  - A logical follow-up question: is this emphasis distinctive in comparison with activity across urban/economic geography more broadly?

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- Thrall (2002) also addresses this comparison
  - "The focus on improving the decisions made by business differentiates [Locational Intelligence] from the traditional descriptive or explanatory objective of Urban/Economic Geography" (Thrall, 2002; emphasis added)
  - This "business decision" focus forms the foundation for the remainder of this paper

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## Study Motivation

- Locational Intelligence is a small but important branch of urban/economic geography that deserves more attention
  - In terms of overall approach, it should be noted that Locational Intelligence shares much with the Applied Geography community that seeks to bridge the academia/practitioner gap
  - Locational Intelligence researchers and practitioners have been meeting at the Applied Geography Conference since its inception in 1978

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### Study Motivation

- As a small group (limited time/resources), it makes sense for the Locational Intelligence community to *evaluate what we've been doing*
  - On what topics are we focusing our research?
  - Are we shifting emphasis over time?
  - As a field, are we responding to needs across the business spectrum?
  - Are new and important themes making their way into our agendas?

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### Study Motivation

- We need evidence so we can evaluate our progress and compare our historical emphases (research and teaching) with real-world business needs
  - It is this need for evidence that this paper directly addresses

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### Dataset Used

- This study is based on a single data source: papers published annually by the *Applied Geography Conferences* from 1978 to 2012
  - This source has associated issues and limitations
  - Montz and Tobin (2007), in an earlier overall profile of AGC papers, provide an excellent summary of issues and limitations with the use of AGC papers as a data source
  - Nonetheless, the *Papers of the AGC* provides a good reflection of the changing themes addressed by applied geographers over the past 35 years

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### Analysis Overview

- Basic approach:
  - Review all papers published by the AGC from 1978 to 2012 (a 35-year period)
  - Identify and extract the papers that directly contribute to decision-making for any of a wide range of business types and activities
  - Summarize these papers by year of publication and business type to uncover trends and focus topics within locational intelligence research

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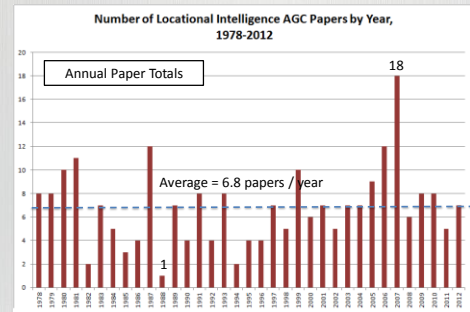
#### Business Types Used

Agriculture
Business & Economic Development
Education
Energy & Utilities
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate (FIRE)
Health
Manufacturing, Assembly
Retail
Tourism & Recreation
Transportation
General/Miscellaneous

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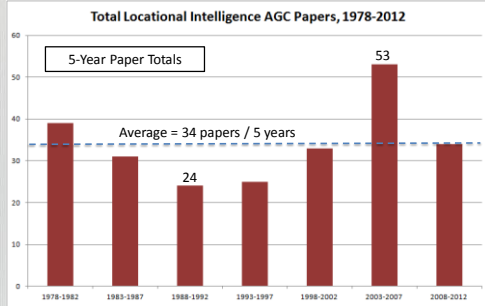
### Findings



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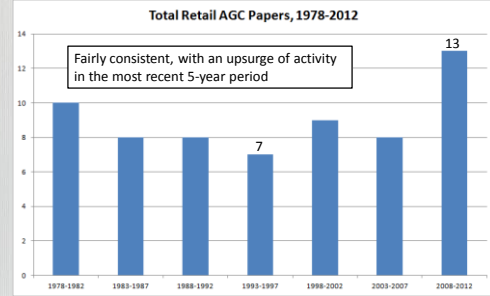
Findings



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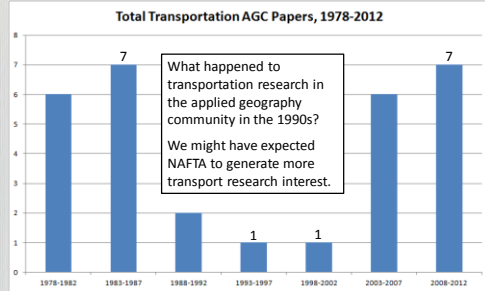
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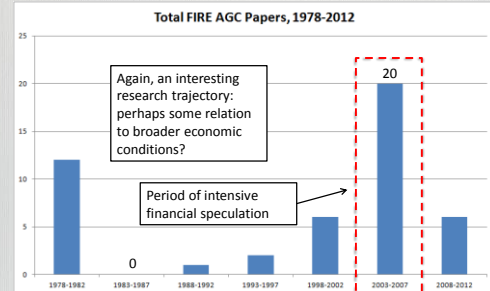
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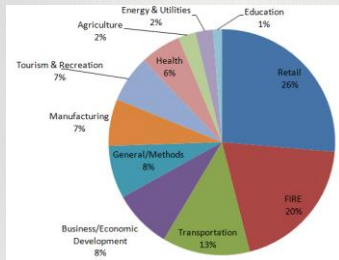


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Findings

Locational Intelligence Papers by Subject Area



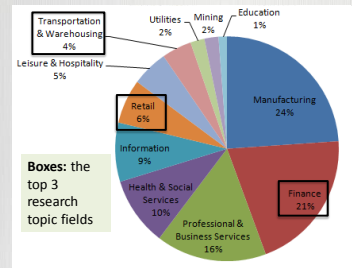
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Findings

A Basis for Comparison: US Dollar Value Output by Industry, 2010

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012  
[http://www.bls.gov/empl/ep\\_table\\_201.htm](http://www.bls.gov/empl/ep_table_201.htm)



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## Conclusion

- The locational intelligence research community has created a diverse literature over the past 35 years
  - This literature has targeted some high-profile topic areas
  - However, opportunities for research remain, including in sectors such as *manufacturing*, *business services*, and *healthcare*

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## Conclusion

- It should be noted that some real, applied opportunities do exist in these industries
  - For example, *Buxton Company* of Fort Worth has dedicated an entire branch of its market analysis and location consulting practice to working with the health sector
  - Locational intelligence researchers need to consider and respond to the full range of research and educational opportunities that exist today

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## Conclusion

- One last thought: consistency should be another factor addressed by the field
  - This study's analysis of trends indicates that research activity has varied dramatically over the years in some industries (transportation, FIRE)
  - For business to see academic researchers as real partners, we need to provide a continuous stream of targeted results relevant to individual industries

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