

An Olympic Mosaic

Multidisciplinary Research and Dissemination of Olympic Studies
CEO-UAB: 20 Years

Editors

Emilio Fernández Peña
Berta Cerezuela
Miquel Gómez Benosa
Chris Kennett
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Centre d'Estudis Olímpics
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona



Ajuntament de Barcelona

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Knowledge and the Barcelona Olympics: Preservation of and access to the memory of the Barcelona'92 Olympic Games through documentary sources

Berta Cerezuela

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1. Introduction

Sports events in general, and the Olympic Games in particular, are typified, among other aspects, for lasting a short time (Shone and Parry 2001), but they have an impact that can last for decades and be of vital importance for the organisers and host community. The organization of the Olympic Games can leave a community with new sports facilities and communication infrastructures, economic benefits and an increase in sporting activity, but it can also generate know-how among all those people and entities that have actively participated. Other event organisers can learn good practices from the organisation of the Games, and particularly future editions of the Olympic Games, and last but not least, the Games form a part of history and the subject of academic research.

The Organising Committees, the set of actors that take part in the organisation and running of the Games, are the main producers of Olympic documentation due to the prolific amount of information that is generated during the different phases of the event. Moreover, through becoming the object of university research, the Games generate a wide variety of academic documents. As a result of all this, there is a large amount of documentation of the typologies, formats and themes involved in any edition of the Olympic Games.

Throughout Olympic history there have been few examples of good practices in terms of the management and preservation of the aforementioned documents, and even fewer initiatives for global and coordinated access to the documentation generated on the Olympics. There are archives to be found in university libraries, research centres, national and municipal archives and museums and foundations that tend to work in isolation in relation to Olympic collections. Since the Sydney Olympics in 2000, and to coincide with the establishment of the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) knowledge management programme, improvements have been observed in the management of information, mainly in terms of the organization and monitoring of the Games.

In this chapter, we aim to contribute to considerations of the importance of the strategic management of information and knowledge about the Olympic Games as a sports event that is held in one city, but on a global and multidimensional scale, focusing particularly on the Barcelona'92 Olympic Games. We first analyse the Olympic Games from a documentary perspective and describe the typology of documents generated by the event. Then we contextualise the event in the framework of initiatives for knowledge management and the preservation of the Olympic memory promoted by the IOC. Finally, we describe the documentary collections generated on the Barcelona'92 Olympic Games and how these have been managed over the last 18 years.

2. Management of information at the Olympic Games

The Olympic Games are considered the major sports event par excellence, and as such, when it comes to planning their information and documentation strategy, there is a need to carefully consider temporality, organisational complexity and the need to attend to the general public. This information strategy is conditioned by the characteristics of the main actor in the organization of the Games, the Organising Committee: this is a temporary entity created with the single objective of organising the event and whose organisational complexity is in constant evolution (Cerezuela 2003).

Likewise, the organization of the Games goes through different phases (candidature, planning and organisation, execution and closure) and the strategy defined for the event has to foresee the information needs of the organisers and the agents external to the event (sponsors, media, general public), and design information systems in consideration of the specific needs for each phase. For an event that lasts 15 days, the process begins approximately 11 years before it is held, through the preparation and presentation of the candidature to the IOC. In the six years prior to the Games, from the moment the Games are awarded until the day of the opening ceremony, the planning and organisation phases take place. The 15 days when the event is held correspond to the implementation of the event, and after that comes the Games' closure, liquidation and impact analysis phase.

During the different phases of the event, the number of workers varies and there is an exponential increase in the phase immediately prior to the Games and during the celebration itself. In a similar fashion, the amount of information generated can reach very high levels over a very brief period of time. For example, in June 1999, a year before the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000, approximately 2,000 documents were put into the information system, while in June 2000 the number rose to around 5,000 (Rizakos 2001; Halbwirth 2001).

The Olympic Games generate a huge volume of information and documentation that can be classified into two main categories: information and documentation derived from the prolific amount of production by the Organising Committee and other institutions implied in the organization of the event, and the literature generated by independent research that is mainly undertaken for comparative purposes.

This information and documentation consists of archive material such as administrative documentation, technical and impact reports, journals, audiovisual material, photographs, maps, and electronic materials such as copies of the event's website, Intranet systems, result generation systems, public information systems, media information systems, etc.

In terms of the end-users and restrictions on the use of the information and documentation, we find information addressed exclusively at the organising body's staff, information addressed at collaborators or institutions involved in the organization of the event and information addressed at the general public.

Thematically, the information can include the following aspects: the candidature, the organization or management model, the economic impact and funding, changes to urban structures, infrastructures and installations required to host the event, the political framework associated with the organisation, the participation of the media, the technology used, the symbolism and the cultural events and aspects, the image and design, athletes, sports results, public participation, etc.

3. Olympic memory and knowledge transfer

The importance of the information and documentation generated by the Olympic Games can be analysed from two different perspectives: that used in the corporate management of the event and for creating systems for informing and attending to the general public, and that produced for use after the event has concluded. This text will be focusing on the latter of these perspectives.

The aforementioned information and documentation constitutes the main intellectual component of the legacy of the sports event for the community in general on the basis of three arguments. First, it capitalises on the knowledge that already exists in organisations, i.e. the know-how of the people involved in the organisation of the event. This know-how can be found in the event's archives and in other instruments related to the management of knowledge. Secondly, the Olympic Games are historic events that go down in the annals of the host city. The information and documentation generated by the event are highly valuable material to researchers. And thirdly, this information and documentation is of major value to the organisers of future editions of the Olympic Games and other similar sports events, as it means that the organising committees of future events do not have to start from scratch.

Despite the relevance of the proper management of this information and documentation during the different phases of the event and its conservation once it is over, Organising Committees have traditionally shown scant regard for the importance of managing information and archives. For example, a few years prior to the celebration of the Atlanta'96 Olympic Games, there was only one archivist working for the Organising Committee, and using limited resources (Cid 1995). Another example is the fact that we do not know what happened to the documentation generated by 22 editions of the Olympic Games.

In the last decade, the IOC has promoted two types of action whose objective is to guarantee the proper management of information and knowledge by Organising Committees. The first set of actions includes initiatives to ensure the proper management of the information and documentation generated during the different phases of the event, and the second type of programme is focused on the capture and transfer of knowledge about the organisation of the Games. The first group includes a series of guidelines and tools for document management that Organising Committees can apply, and provides for the obligation to maintain a documentary archive once the Games are over.

As Bianchi (2003) describes, Organising Committees receive guidelines for documentation management. As well as these measures aimed at management during the preparation and celebration phases of the event, since the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 the host city's contract includes clause 25, which establishes that "the OGOC must guarantee that, both in the period prior to and the period after the Games, archives related with the Games must be securely managed and maintained, and the IOC must have free access to these archives".

In addition to this clause, appendix L of the contract establishes that Organising Committees must provide the IOC with a minimum of documents for inclusion in its documentary archive at the Olympic Museum Lausanne and its Olympic Studies Centre, the "indisputable centres of Olympic knowledge" (Bianchi 2003, 357), whose mission is to preserve the memory of the Olympic movement. This collection must include three copies of all the objects related with the Games, six copies of all publications and one electronic format copy, one official film and photographs of all the competitions, which must be registered in the IOC's name.

As for the management of knowledge regarding the organization of the Olympic Games, at the Sydney Games in 2000 the IOC initiated the Transfer of Olympic Knowledge (TOK) programme. This programme came about as a result of Recommendation 16 of the 2000 Commission after identifying limitations on access to information and resources for monitoring and controlling preparations for the Games. The aim of this programme is to "provide assistance to future Organising Committees and offer them general information and examples of the practices required to be able to develop and implement the best solution for its environment" (Felli 2003, 125).

The TOK programme does not only refer to information and documentation, and therefore the archive resulting from the event. It also deals with the knowledge generated during the organization and celebration of the event, and how this knowledge should be organized and managed using computer instruments in order for them to be used thereafter for the organization of other events or by other Organising Committees. The TOK programme includes different sources for obtaining this knowledge: documentation, personal experiences and the offer of services.

TOK documentation mainly consists of guides and manuals that are periodically revised and explain the ways in which different Organising Committees have applied the requirements established by the IOC to different functional areas. These guides are complemented with more detailed information and documentation on some of the areas, such as an image database on Visual TOK operations. Once the Games are over, the Organising Committee is obliged to present the IOC with an official report that, in the most recent editions of the Games, follows a pre-established structure based on four key areas related with the candidature, organization, celebration and impact of the event. These guidelines respond to the demand from academics for sufficient information to be able to make comparative studies (Felli 2003). The information that is collected and produced by the programme is managed by the IOC via an extranet that is accessible by candidate cities and Organising Committees.

Organising Committees are provided with an international network of experts on the different functional areas of the organization of the Games to which they may refer should they need to, as well as a series of seminars and workshops. Likewise, they also participate in the Observer Programme that is organised during the Games, which enables them to obtain first hand information about the preparations and operations during the celebration of the event. Members of National Olympic Committees, international federations and experts that revise TOK guides also participate in this programme. Finally, one of the key items of the programme is the Games debriefing, a three or four day session that is organised during the months after the event has ended and at which the Organising Committee makes its evaluation and establishes recommendations for the Organising Committees of subsequent Games.

To support the management of the programme, in February 2002 the Olympic Games Knowledge Services (OGKS) company was founded, which, on the basis of the information obtained from the TOK programme, offers customised services to the Organising Committees and other event organisers.

These measures and programmes have been applied since the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Consequently, the management of and access to sources regarding previous editions of the Olympic Games are still areas that require analysis and reflection, as are documentary initiatives to promote their dissemination.

4. Sources of knowledge on Barcelona'92

The Barcelona'92 Olympic Games set new standards for highlighting the importance of managing the documentation generated during the period when the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, COOB'92, was active, and for conserving this information once the event was over and the committee was dissolved, and also identifying and publishing sources for research into the event.

4.1. The documentation generated by COOB'92

As Cid (1995) describes, the Documentation Department was created in 1988 as part of the committee's structure. The unit was allocated a dual objective: providing documentary support to the committee's activities and collecting, organising and maintaining custody over the archives in order to facilitate the production of the official report and for it to be used later on by researchers, other host cities, etc.

Prior to the celebration of the Games, the COOB'92 and Barcelona Holding Olímpic, SA (HOLSA), the holding of companies responsible for urban planning and Games infrastructures, negotiated with Barcelona City Council on the management and conservation of the textual, graphic and photographic documentation that was generated directly by the committee's activity, and it was established that these would be deposited in the Barcelona Municipal Archive once the Games were over. The Barcelona Municipal Archive is a public entity that conserves, apart from documentation generated by the City Council, institutional archives resulting from the hosting of major events in the city, such as the Universal Exposition of 1888 and the International Exposition of 1929.

Another of the actions that was carried out by COOB'92 was the creation of an institution associated with the legacy of the Games. So, in February 1993, the Barcelona Olympic Foundation (FBO) was founded, an institution whose aims included the dissemination of the reality of the Barcelona Olympic Games and the custody and management of the documentation generated by COOB'92. It should be noted that, since 2007, the FBO has managed the Barcelona Olympic and Sports museum, a cultural institution dedicated to the promotion of the Olympic and sporting movement that offers the ideal framework for the development and promotion of activities associated with the Olympic memory.

As for the archive generated by COOB'92 and HOLSA, back in 1993 the first documentation was transferred to the Municipal Archive to be processed and conserved, and the FBO maintained an audiovisual archive and some of the textual documentation that was considered to be that which would be consulted most often. Finally, in March 2007, the definitive process of transfer of the documentary archives was completed.

The archives consist of more than 7,100 box-dossiers of documentation. They include administrative documentation and maps from COOB'92 and HOLSA, and more than 200,000 photographs that cover everything from the candidature process to the dissolution of the committee. The textual documentation was deposited in the administrative Municipal Archive, and the photographic archives in the Photographic Archive of the Historical Archive of the City of Barcelona.²⁶ All of the archives are freely accessible. Anybody may view them, in accordance with current legislation and municipal regulations, as long as they present a request beforehand in writing.

The FBO continues to be the deposit for a bibliographic archive of approximately 1,000 documents that were published by the Organising Committee and other institutions related with the Barcelona'92 Games. The archives are indexed and can be accessed by making a request beforehand.

The Autonomous University of Barcelona, through the Olympic Studies Centre (CEO-UAB), also has a documentary archive of approximately 1,500 works published by the Organising Committee, including technical reports, brochures and magazines, and also administrative documentation. These archives were catalogued as part of the Collective Catalogue of Catalan Universities and can be accessed freely (<http://ccuc.cbuc.cat/>).

As for the audiovisual documentation arising from the organization and celebration of the Games, this includes material on the organization and broadcast of the sports events held over the Olympic fortnight. These archives are mainly deposited in two institutions: the FBO and the Catalan Broadcasting Corporation (CCRTV).

The body in charge of the production of the international signal for the Barcelona'92 Olympic Games was RTO'92 (Olympic Radio & Television), an autonomous body forming part of COOB'92. In the case of the Paralympic Games, this was the first edition of said Games to have its own signal, different to that of the Olympic Games proper, and produced by CCRTV.

These audiovisual archives include original materials produced by RTO'92, CCRTV and other broadcasters, as well as tapes produced by third parties about the Games. The collection on the organization of the Games includes more than 1,500 hours of institutional videos, promotional videos and documentaries (for example, the transformation of the city's urban infrastructure), television programmes and news bulletins, and the sponsors' advertisements, among others. The collection on sports events is made up of some 5,000 hours of Olympic Games events and 97 hours of Paralympic Games events. This content includes the opening and closing ceremonies, sports events, news and highlights (18 hours).

The Olympic Games audiovisual archives were deposited in the FBO, while the archives on the Paralympic Games form part of the video library conserved by TV3.

26. At the moment of writing, the photographic archive had not been transferred from the Barcelona Olympic Foundation to the Archive, as it first had to go through a digitalisation and indexing process.

4.2. Studies on Barcelona'92 produced by the academic world

It comes as no surprise that the Olympic Games, being a global sporting phenomenon that has a multidimensional impact on the host cities, should arouse the increasing interest of academic institutions, and there are more and more centres dedicated to the research of the phenomenon, and more university researchers and scholars that have focused their work on the study of the Olympic Games, which forms part of the field of international Olympic studies.

The development of these studies has evolved in recent editions of the Games. According to Moragas et al. (2005), the Seoul'88 Olympic Games set a new standard for the participation of universities, especially in the field of cultural and communication studies, and at Barcelona'92 this process was consolidated through the establishment of new research objectives, in particular in the field of the urban impact of the Games and the creation of a university study centre dedicated to the research and publication of this work, an experience that has been repeated at later editions of the Games.

The last two Olympic Games – Beijing 2008 and Vancouver 2010 – have signified a new development for the model for involving the academic world in the generation of knowledge about the event. Since 2003, the IOC has carried out, through the Organising Committees, studies of the global impact of the Olympic Games. In the case of Beijing 2008, this study was coordinated by the Humanistic Olympics Studies Center at Renmin University in China, and in the case of Vancouver 2010, by the University of British Columbia.

According to Moragas et al. (2005), the research done on any given edition of the Olympic Games is financed by RD&I calls and by commission of the Organising Committee itself, the IOC and research agencies in the host country. We should also mention the role played by researchers with a consolidated line of research into the edition of the Games, who are renowned for their contributions to later comparative studies.

As for the issues dealt with, in recent editions of the Games a tendency has been noted towards research related with sports management and, in particular, with the management and impact of the Games on a local, national and global scale from a multidisciplinary perspective. The main issues included in these studies are: the candidature process, environmental management and impact, economic management and impact, marketing and sponsorship strategies, legal issues, media planning and coverage, medical issues, the cultural and educational programme, sports results, security, technology, urban planning and impact, and sports facilities.

The results of these studies are published through the presentation of lectures and communications at congresses, specific monographs, and contributions to collective works in the form of chapters and articles in academic journals and magazines. Considering the limitations in terms of accessibility to scientific communication circuits, we should highlight the role played by libraries and specialised documentary centres in the systemization and dissemination of these works, which constitute high value knowledge capital about the event.

In the case of Barcelona'92, the documentation generated by the academic world on the Games includes everything from PhD theses to interviews with experts in the media, including impact analysis studies, study reports, book chapters, lectures at international congresses, and training sessions. This documentation has been compiled, ever since its creation, by the Information and Documentation Service at CEO-UAB, which offers a reference service and a research visit programme for international academics wishing to learn more about the Games. Since its creation, CEO-UAB has played a key role in the promotion and dissemination of studies on Barcelona'92, and has acted as an umbrella for researchers with an interest in producing studies of the Games.

4.3. The media coverage of the Games

Finally, a mention must be given to the documentation generated by the media on the Barcelona'92 Olympic Games. This documentation includes thousands of newspaper articles, news bulletins, special programmes, magazine articles and monographs published by the media around the world.

Although there are cycles with different amounts of media attention given to the Games, the archive covers the time from the moment that the city announced its intention to present itself as a candidate to host the Games until the present, because the different editions of the Games continue to be the focus of media attention, especially in order to offer comparative data.

This documentation, which in the phases prior to the organization and during the celebration of the event is of major interest to the Organising Committee, has later constituted a highly valuable documentary source for academics of the Olympic Games.

In the case of Barcelona'92, the FBO and CEO-UAB possess an archive of more than 50 linear metres of press dossiers that cover everything from the candidature phase through to the dissolution of the Organising Committee.

5. Conclusions

As commented by Moragas, Moreno and Kennett (2003), these events require tangible and intangible elements that help to create a memory. The information and documentation generated on each edition of the Olympic Games, and which form what we call 'the sources of knowledge on the Games', constitute one of these elements. These archives – understood to be the set of documentation resulting from the organization of the event and that was generated by research and analysis processes – have to be considered one of the main components of the legacy of the Games for the community that hosts them, one of the intangible elements of the legacy that act as a driving force for the development of a long-term legacy of the Olympic Games (Moragas, Kennett and Puig 2003, 492). In short, foreseeing and planning the legacy of the Games maximises the benefits obtained by future host cities, the IOC and the history of the Olympic Movement itself.

As for the measures adopted by the IOC in relation to the management of documentation during the organization of the event, and its subsequent conservation, these were considered by Bianchi to be "a first step towards raising awareness of the importance of implementing a professional system for the management of documents and their transfer to an institution that will take care of them and facilitate long-term access to them" (Bianchi 2003, 357), and the same author states that the strategic management of information and knowledge plays a key role in the preservation of and access to the Olympic memory, and its historical legacy.

Despite the importance of these measures as a first step, they still have a limited impact, as they only mention the need to preserve and guarantee access by the committee itself, without including guaranteed access by other collectives such as historians or other managers that are external to the Olympic Movement, other than the access that they get through libraries and museums, and neither is there any reference to the documentation generated for the edition of the Olympic Games in question outside of the area of the Organising Committee.

The cities chosen by the Olympic Movement as Olympic cities must be made aware of the role they have when it comes to preserving and publishing a part of the heritage of Olympic knowledge, of which the documentary legacy is testimony. In my opinion, it constitutes a living part of the memory of the Olympic Games and an element of the heritage of the Olympic Movement and the city itself. It is therefore necessary to guarantee its preservation and for society to be able to access it.

Therefore, in 2010 the FBO and CEO-UAB have set up a collaboration programme to improve coordinated management and access to the archives on Barcelona as an Olympic city, and on the Barcelona'92 Olympic Games in particular.

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