



Information and documentation in the Olympic Games

Sue Halbwirth, Kristine Toohey

Series University Lectures | 6



Centre d'Estudis Olímpics
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

This work has been published as part of the educational project promoted by the Olympic Studies Centre (CEO-UAB), *University Lectures on the Olympics*, within the framework of the International Chair in Olympism (IOC-UAB). The project aims to provide online access to texts covering the main subjects related to the written by international experts and aimed at university students and lecturers.

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To cite this work, you can use the reference:

Halbwirth, Sue; Toohey, Kristine (2010): *Information and documentation in the Olympic Games: university lectures on the Olympics* [online article]. Barcelona : Centre d'Estudis Olímpics (UAB). International Chair in Olympism (IOC-UAB). [Date of consulted: dd/mm/yy]
<http://ceo.uab.cat/pdf/halbwirth_eng.pdf>

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ISBN: 978-84-693-6184-9

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1. Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs)

1.1 Overview

Discussion of the organisation of a major sporting event such as an Olympic Games is most usually conducted in terms of its logistics, marketing, accreditation, sport technology, field of play, transport, accommodation and other functional activities. However, the success of these functions is substantially grounded in the acquisition, production and dissemination of information. These core processes can often be overlooked as a key driver, resulting in the lack of co-ordination and integration of information within organisations.

In terms of the Olympic Movement, information flows internally within an organising committee and externally to stakeholders. Information producers include the OCOG, the IOC, host city governments, international sporting federations, national Olympic committees, broadcasters and media, Olympic historians, researchers, partners and sponsors just to name a few.

Just as there are a myriad of participants in the information flow, the information of the Olympic Games itself has many manifestations, each with its own characteristics and challenges for effective information management. Some of this information is transient and shared with only a small group, for example, email. Some information is produced in formal documents, both in hard and electronic copy, for continual review and/or revision by many stakeholders, for example venue operating plans and a legal contract. Yet other information is intended for wide dissemination, for example ticket marketing materials on a public web site, while other information, such as security planning, is managed through closed electronic systems.

The process of documenting of Olympic information is crucial to ensure that information is recorded and managed for ongoing reference and to assist the effective sharing of information. It is the documents that provide the record of planning and outcomes. Just as information requires management and co-ordination so do the processes of documentation.

Every time a Winter and Summer Games are awarded there is a new Organising Committee for the Olympic Games formed to manage and stage the event. Each OCOG grows from a very

small number of staff when it is created, to one of several thousand in about seven years and then rapidly dissolves. Toffler (1990) called organisations, such as OCOGs, that grow then shrink, 'pulsating organisations'. Hanlon and Jago (2000:96) described their main organisational characteristics as:

- 'flexible
- flat, with a horizontal emphasis in terms of differentiation
- highly formalised
- decentralised, particularly during the peak stage of the event
- having teams of people in functional units: managers, operators and external support personnel
- innovative within a complex environment
- regularly transforming the internal structure
- needing to satisfy personnel.'

Despite the difficulties in organising an Olympic Games, until the 2000 Sydney Games, there was little information and documentation passed formally from each OCOG to the next. This meant that, when an OCOG dissolved, valuable information, knowledge and experience disappeared. Also, Host Cities aimed to stage 'the best Games ever' and usually sought to be doing so on their own merits, so, at times they haven't always actively sought information from earlier OCOGs.

1.2 Generation of information by OCOGs

Despite the facts that past OCOGs had not passed on their knowledge in a systematic manner, they have probably been the major creators of Olympic Movement information and documentation. From the initiation of the host city's Bid process until the end of their Olympic Games, the organising committees generate enormous amounts of information and documentation. Primarily, this information consists of archival material (administrative documents, technical and impact reports, magazines, memorabilia, audio-visual material, photographs, maps, and also electronic material such as copies of the web site, Intranet systems, etc.) (Cerezuela and Moreno, 2001).

These records should be a core intellectual component of the legacy that each Olympic Games leaves to its host community. Until the last Olympiad the IOC was not officially involved in the collection, maintenance and preservation of an OCOG's archives. Consequently, the locations of some OCOG's archives are unknown to the IOC (see Table 1). Now, the situation is improving. The Host City Contract for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games includes a requirement for the Beijing Organizing Committee to actively develop an archives plan. However, there is still no mention in relation to the preservation of the archives of the Games in the *Olympic Charter*.

Table 1 – Status of OCOG archives

Games Archives still in existence		Status of Archives unknown
Summer Games		
Athens 1896	Melbourne 1956	Paris 1900
Saint Louis 1904	Tokyo 1964	Paris 1924
London 1908	Munich 1972	Rome 1960
Stockholm 1912	Montreal 1976	Mexico 1968
Antwerp 1920	Los Angeles 1984	Moscow 1980
Amsterdam 1928	Seoul 1988	
Los Angeles 1932	Barcelona 1992	
Berlin 1936	Atlanta 1996	
London 1948	Sydney 2000	
Helsinki 1952		
Winter Games		
Lake Placid 1932		Chamonix 1924
Garmisch-Partenkirchen 1936		Saint-Moritz 1928
Oslo 1952		Saint-Moritz 1948
Squaw Valley 1960		Cortina d'Ampezzo 1956
Innsbruck 1964		Grenoble 1968
Sapporo 1972		Sarajevo 1984
Innsbruck 1976		Albertville 1992
Lake Placid 1980		
Calgary 1988		

Source: *Olympic Studies International Directory*.

1.3. Example of an OCOG's management of information and documentation: SOCOG

When SOCOG was established in 1993 it already possessed a well-established corporate library and records management system, which had been transferred from the Sydney Olympic Bid Limited (SOBL). From this foundation SOCOG developed an information management strategy that encompassed:

1. An organisation wide document and information management system;
2. A system for the codification of terminology;
3. An integrated library, records management and archives system.

With the growth of SOCOG as an organisation came the challenge to effectively manage the accompanying exponential growth in electronic information and documents being created. In a major step forward for an OCOG, an organisation-wide information system was implemented. This assisted in the creation and sharing of documents was of major importance to SOCOG and its stakeholders. On June 30 1998, the internal Sydney 2000 Games Information System (called 'Athena', in honour of the Greek goddess of wisdom and knowledge) went live. Designed to complement the organisation's existing records management system and processes. It was:

- integrated into SOCOG's existing desktop environment;
- able to grow with the organisation;
- more than merely a text management tool, but allowed for development of complex workflow;
- able to provide links to other internal electronic information via a corporate portal.

The system provided a shared environment for the creation and dissemination of information and knowledge and also promoted the sharing and linking of existing data. The concept was a 'one stop information shop', not just for retrieval of information, but also for authoring and creating information.

The Sydney 2000 Games Information System offered Sydney 2000 staff immediate electronic access to consistent, current and approved corporate, operational and public information. Additionally, it provided a public information infrastructure for the SOCOG call centre and other external stakeholders. As of September 2000 the system held approximately 38 000 documents and had developed from merely a 'warehouse' of information to a corporate portal, with links to other planning databases, a repository of knowledge and a knowledge dissemination tool (Halbwirth and Toohey, 2001).

During Games time the Sydney 2000 Games Information System provided the public information infrastructure to manage the massive flow of SOCOG's public communications. After the Games the system and its information and knowledge store and archive have become a valuable resource and legacy. The public information component, which once provided the information infrastructure for the call centre and stakeholders, was extracted and converted to HTML format. This content was integrated with other Sydney 2000 information and is available as a legacy web site of archival material at Gamesinfo.com.

While the Sydney 2000 Games Information System managed the key operational and corporate information, the complexity of language and terminology within the OCOG was managed by a complementary system that organised and codified SOCOG's information. The SOCOG Games Code System identified, defined, standardised and codified mission critical terminology that needed to be synchronised across various Olympic organisations, to ensure that all staff and computer applications were consistent when referring to the same; things, places, people and activities. Examples of the information that was coded included: countries, flags, venues, sports, disciplines and events.

The IOC and other Olympic Movement organisations set some of the codes, while other codes, such as those for the venues, were unique to the 2000 Olympic Games. The objectives of the Code System included:

- synchronising key terminology across the organisation
- minimising the impact of information change on operations
- Contributing toward information sharing between Programs.

The Codes System continued to grow with SOCOG. By Games time it held approximately 30 000 terms.

These largely technology focussed systems were supplemented by more 'traditional' information services which provided SOCOG with a research and library service, management of paper based records and, by the end of SOCOG, an archive of information and documentation.

From its inception SOCOG had library and research staff who provided a comprehensive corporate library service, including information retrieval to support planning and decision-

making. The topics for research were many and varied reaching across the 90 plus functional areas of SOCOG. Some examples were: the composition of the gases in past Olympic torches; a list of Australian animals which may be suitable for mascots; technology of palm identification; and background information on Australian Olympians.

During its peak operating period from June 1997 until June 2000, the SOCOG corporate library maintained a collection of approximately 10,000 items and responded to an average of 45 research requests, 180 reference enquiries and 75 online searches per week. Included in the collection were monographs, serials, videotapes and a photographic image library of 58,000 images (in a variety of formats).

Official SOCOG documents and records, in hard copy format were managed via a centralised record management system and processes, and the implementation of an archives administration plan. Records were defined as recorded information, created or received by SOCOG, which documented actions or authorised decisions, actions or delegations. By the end of the Games the records management database included references to 125,000 records with 10,000 archive boxes of records, and associated information in the form of publications, packed and listed to form the SOCOG archive.

2. Information and documentation: the International Olympic Committee

2.1 Olympic Games Knowledge Services

As discussed in section 1, each OCOG produces a vast amount of information and documentation that, until 2000, had been largely 'lost' to the IOC and the Olympic Movement.

To overcome this, a commercial agreement was signed between the IOC and SOCOG in 1999 that formalised the sale of SOCOG's explicit and tacit knowledge to the IOC. This material was then disseminated to the OCOGs of the Salt Lake City and Athens Games. This program was known as the Transfer of Know How (TOK).

The TOK involved both written and oral delivery of intellectual property from relevant SOCOG managers in 90 plus individual guides. The first written material was collected in January 2000, with interviews conducted over the first half of 2000. The final stage in the TOK process was a debrief of the Sydney Games by its senior managers, held in Athens during November 2000.

The knowledge provided by the Sydney TOK program will form the basis of a generic Olympic management guide that will evolve following each successive Games.

Olympic Games Knowledge Services (OGKS), headed up by the former Secretary-General of the Australian Olympic Committee, Craig McLatchey, has been formed to continue to manage the information and knowledge generated by the Sydney Olympics and future Games. OGKS will continue this program of information and knowledge capture to enhance the knowledge environment of future OCOGs, Bid cities and other event organisations.

OGKS is jointly owned by the IOC and Monash Ed (owned by Monash University, Cambridge Consulting Services and Equiset). The need for such a company to continue to develop and manage Olympic planning information was crucial. According to Magnay (2001), while 'the IOC had previously paid SOCOG \$A5 million for its files, 2004 Athens organisers and 2006 Torino organisers had found little of it applicable to their situation. However, the new joint venture will address this problem by tailoring the programs to each city. "This transfer of knowledge is part of IOC policy to be more pro-active in key strategy areas," IOC director-general Mr Francois Carrard said.'

In February 2002, in Salt Lake City, OGKS played an integral part in the briefing of cities and NOCs interested in bidding for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. OGKS, in collaboration with IOC staff, 'engaged Olympic experts to make presentations to the cities on various themes critical to developing a proper bid and distributed a 152-page information book, with accompanying CD-ROM, that will serve as the base document for the 2010 applicant process. The CD-ROM includes video clips and pictures to help explain the various aspects of staging the Games' (IOC, 2002).

OGKS will continue to work with the IOC for all following Games applicant bid processes. In addition to compiling a database of information it will also identify and accredit Games experts and engage them to pass on tacit knowledge developed through their Games experience’.

2.2 The Olympic Studies Centre (OSC)

The IOC operates the Olympic Studies Centre (OSC). Located in the Olympic Museum, understandably it is one of the world's best-resourced and largest repositories for visual and sound documentation and information relating to the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games. The IOC OSC has seven subdivisions:

- Historical Archives (850 linear metres of written documents)
- Images & Sound (17 500 hours of film footage)
- Photo Library (410 000 documents)
- The Library (18 000 monograph titles and 250 current periodicals)
- Documentation
- External relations
- Education Service

Its Historical Archives traces the history of the Olympic Movement since its formation in 1894. It aims ‘to preserve the memory of the Olympic Movement and to co-ordinate and promote research, teaching and publications connected with Olympism’. Its collections are related to the history of the Olympic Movement, the IOC and its members, the organisation of the Games of the Olympiad and the Olympic Winter Games and the evolution of the Olympic Programme. It includes the collections of past IOC Presidents, including: Pierre de Coubertin, Demetrius Vikelas, Count Henri de Baillet-Latour, Sigrid Edström, Avery Brundage, Lord Killanin and El Marquès de Samaranch. Official correspondence and publications of the various OCOGs and NOC are also documented and preserved, as well as reports from IOC Sessions, Executive Boards and other IOC working groups. IOC correspondence with the International Federations and National Olympic Committees (NOCs). Significantly, there are strict embargoes on some of these documents, in many cases up to 30 years.

2.3 The Olympic Television Archive Bureau (OTAB)

As distinct from the OSC, the Olympic Television Archive Bureau (OTAB) has a collection of field of play footage. The IOC established OTAB in 1995 in order to manage and successfully market its extensive Olympic Games Archive, provide Olympic footage clips and administer all related licensing procedures.

Its archive now contains over 20,000 hours of film, television and newsreel material. Earliest footage dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. Additional material is added regularly to the Archive through the IOC's Acquisitions Programme, in co-operation with the Olympic Museum in Lusanne. OTAB is managed for the IOC by sports production and archive specialists Trans World International (TWI).

3. Olympic information and documentation beyond the Olympic Movement

3.1. Introduction

Olympic scholarship, and consequently the information and documentation produced on the topic, by individuals and organisations that are not part of the Olympic Family, is prolific and growing.

When most people talk about the Olympic Games they usually refer to the performances of the athletes. Clearly they are more than that. Even the mass media coverage does not confine itself to the athletic performances. cursory scanning of sport and Olympic Games related journals reveals a plethora of topics ranging from legal aspects to history to philatelic aspects among a host of topics.

In 2000, an Olympic year, there were 835 articles indexed by *Sportdiscus* with the subject headings 'Olympic Games' or 'Olympics'. According to *Global Books in Print* there were 552 books published on the Olympic Games in 2000.

These figures understate the real numbers because aspects of the Olympic Games will often appear in books that are more general in content. For example, in Bruce Kidd's *The struggle for Canadian sport* (1996) while there are references to the Olympic Games on at least 20 pages, this is not a larger enough percentage of content to be assigned a subject heading in the cataloguing-in-publication (CIP) data; not all journal articles are comprehensively indexed; and the Olympic Games are dealt with in conferences that are not devoted specifically to the Olympic Games. Also many foreign language publications are not captured by SIRC (Sport Information Resource Centre), which produces *Sportdiscus* (Warning, Toohey and Ching, 2001).

Another example regarding the extent of the interesting Olympic information and documentation can be obtained by examining the international register of Olympic authors in the *Olympic Studies International Directory*. The register includes more than 800 institutions and authors undertaking research, academic activities or having documentation on the Olympics. Like the above, this listing doesn't capture all those who are investigating the subject.

For scholars who are interested in the Olympic Games as a field of inquiry, the growing number of collections has been welcomed. According to Wilson (1998) 'As people in universities and sport governing bodies have gained a greater appreciation of the significance of the Olympic Movement as a historical and cultural phenomenon, there has been a greater willingness to fund the development of Olympic libraries, archives and documentation centers.'

3.2 Olympic Studies Centres

Apart from the IOC OSC there are a number of 'independent' OSCs. They have a large role in disseminating Olympic information and documentation. According to personal correspondence from the IOC, 'until now there are no specific requirements officially established to determine which centres can be considered as OSC. Some criteria that could be considered are: to be attached to a university, to ensure some courses on Olympism, to carry out research, to publish works on Olympism and to have a documentation service.' (Puig, N., 2001)

Currently there is no official register of Olympic Studies Centres world wide, but the IOC has an 'informal' list of 19 organisations that consider themselves OSCs and satisfy some or all of the criteria. The OSCs at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the University of Western Ontario and the University of New South Wales are generally recognised as fulfilling these criteria. There are also other academic and Olympic institutions interested in research and diffusion of Olympism, for example the Studies and Research Centre on Sport and Olympism of the University of Franche-Comté (France)

Probably the most prolific 'independent' Olympic Studies Centre is located at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Established in 1989, lists the following as its aims:

- collaborate with the International Olympic Movement and with the various national and international sports organisations in academic, scientific and cultural dissemination fields.
- carry out research into Olympism and sport, particularly in the fields of humanities and social sciences.
- organise university courses for professionals and postgraduate students in Olympism and sport.
- compile documentation and make it available to students, visitors and specialists through an information and documentation service.
- promote international academic activities and co-ordination of university centres.
- facilitate - by means of symposia, conferences and publications - the scientific and social dissemination of studies carried out.

Also included in their activities is the administration of five electronic mailing lists.

In Australia there has been an OSC at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) since 1996. Incorporated in its original mission statement is the aim to promote and co-ordinate scholarship, research and teaching within UNSW in areas of Olympic studies. It has a large collection of textual and visual documents and materials from the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games.

An OSC was established at the University of Western Ontario in 1989. Known as the International Centre for Olympic Studies, it has as its primary mission the generation and dissemination of academic scholarship, focused specifically upon the socio-cultural study of the Modern Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement. In order to fulfil its aims the Centre produces a journal: *Olympika* and hosts an International Symposium for Olympic Research in every Olympic year.

3.3 Other information and documentation sources

Obviously this section cannot cover all possible sources of Olympic related information and documentation, however it does include some outstanding examples.

The Los Angeles Amateur Athletic Foundation (AAFLA) possesses one of the world's largest collections of Olympic information. It contains a copy of every official report of the Olympic Games; bid documents; several thousand books and periodicals covering all aspects of the Olympic Games; ephemeral materials; the Avery Brundage Collection on microfilm; a large number of Olympic posters and related art; Olympic medals, and thousands of photographs. A distinguishing characteristic of the AAFLA's Olympic Collection is its preservation of historical Olympic information in digital form, available at no charge on the World Wide Web. According to Wilson (1998) The collection 'is by no means the largest Olympic Collection in the world, but there are a couple of things that taken in combination set it apart from other collections. First, unlike most, if not all Olympic organisations that sponsor collections, the foundation's library is genuinely committed to gathering information representing a wide range of viewpoints about the Olympic Movement. No one has to pass an ideological litmus test before gaining admittance to the collection. No book or article has ever been taken off the shelf or not purchased because it presented an unflattering portrait of the Olympic Movement or its leaders. This no-holds-barred approach to Olympic information is, in my opinion, perhaps the most commendable thing about the Olympic Collection in Los Angeles.

The amount of Olympic information and documentation available on the World Wide Web is increasing exponentially.

Broadly speaking, there are three main categories of information on the Internet concerning the Olympics: the Olympic Movement information, OCOG sites and general Olympic deposits. The NOC's presence on the web varies greatly. Some of the larger NOCs offer comprehensive information on the Olympic movement, while many of the smaller NOCs have no Internet presence.

According to Davis (1998), 'Olympic records are usually maintained by the International Sports Federations. The FISA web site, for example, lists the world best times for Olympic rowing events, while the IAAF web site offers a wealth of records and statistics on athletic times and distances.

Worth noting too is the Olympic Studies International Directory of Authors, Institutions and Information Services web site produced by the Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport in collaboration with the Olympic Museum and Studies Center in Lausanne. This directory lists researchers and organisations, world-wide, working in the 'Olympic' area...One of the most comprehensive bibliographies of the Olympics to date [is] located on the University of Technology web site, the page (over 50 pages actually) is up-to-date and offers details of over 1000 sources of Olympic information.

4. Conclusion

Of course, a paper such as this can only provide an overview of some of the information and documentation projects related to this integral aspect of the organisation of the world's most influential sporting event. There are myriad other aspects of 'Information and Documentation' in the Olympic Games that could also be studied to provide 'fundamental lessons in the Olympic Games'. What is important to realise is the fact that without Olympic information collection and documentation, our knowledge and understanding of the history and organisation of the Olympic Games would not be as encompassing as it is now. As new technologies develop they provide the opportunities for further systemisation of collection, storage, dissemination and understandings of Olympic information.

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IOC (2003): *Olympic Charter*. Lausana : International Olympic Committee. Available online:
http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_122.pdf

Related web sites

Amateur Athletic Federation of Los Angeles
<http://www.aafla.org/>

Centre d'Estudis Olímpics, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)
<http://olympicstudies.uab.es/>

Centre d'Etude et de Recherche sur le Sport et l'Olympisme (CERSO)
<http://www.aliencom.com/cerso/index.html>

Centre for Olympic Studies, University of New South Wales (UNSW)
<http://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/olympic/>

Gamesinfo.com
<http://www.gamesinfo.com.au>

International Centre for Olympic Studies (UWO)
<http://www.uwo.ca/olympic>

International Olympic Committee
<http://www.olympic.org/>

IOC Historical Archives
http://www.olympic.org/uk/passion/studies/archives/index_uk.asp

IOC Olympic Studies Centre
<http://www.olympic.org/studies>

IOC Olympic Studies Centre. Library
http://www.olympic.org/uk/passion/studies/library/index_uk.asp

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[Olympic Museum Lausanne](#)

<http://www.olympic.org/museum>

Olympic Studies International Directory

<http://olympicstudies.uab.es/directory>

Olympic Television Archive Bureau

www.otab.com/home/default/sps

Information and documentation in the Olympic Games

This paper seeks to discuss information and documentation in the Olympic Games from three perspectives. Firstly, the paper discusses the information environment of the event organisers, the Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs) and provides a case study of information and document management within the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG). The second section highlights the role of the parent organisation, the IOC (IOC) as a creator, recipient and collector of Olympic information. The final section of the paper deals with a cross-section of sources of Olympic related information and documentation compiled by organisations and institutions outside the Olympic Movement, for example, scholars, libraries and Olympic Studies Centres. Together these three sectors both within and external to the Olympic Movement provide a comprehensive body of knowledge about the Olympic Games.

Sue Halbwirth, Kristine Toohey
University of Technology, Sydney



Centre d'Estudis Olímpics
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Edifici N. 1a. planta
08193 Bellaterra (Barcelona)
Spain

Phone +34 93 581 1992
Fax +34 93 581 2139

<http://ceo.uab.cat>
ceioe@uab.cat