

Libraries in Disseminating Precise Information on Major Sporting Events

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Submitted: 21 November, 2014

Revised: 2 December, 2014

Accepted: 8 December, 2014

Abstract

The number and size of major international sporting events continues to grow. This paper describes the role, impact and responsibilities for libraries in the production, promotion and collection of large-scale multi-sport events. It uses as examples of three Commonwealth Games (held in 2006/2010/2014) and discusses the lessons to be learned for libraries.

Keywords: Major sporting events, Large-scale sporting events, Libraries, Commonwealth Games, Collection development, Librarians, Sport

Introduction

Sport is one of the few cultural pastimes that is practiced by every society in the world. The popularity of amateur and professional sport continues to grow worldwide and this is evidenced by the growth of major sporting events. There are now over 100 major international single or multi-sport events in the world, including World Cups (Football, Cricket, Rugby, etc.) and Asian, Commonwealth and Olympic Games.

Most major cities can now expect to hold a major sporting event at some point in the future – some cities may even host them repeatedly. When a city or a nation hosts a major sporting

event, it is a great undertaking that will utilise many aspects of a state's apparatus. Libraries should increasingly have a role in these events in relation to their promotion and administration. They also have an important role in collecting and preserving the heritage and legacy of these events.

Commonwealth Games

The Commonwealth Games is a large-scale multi-sport event that brings together athletes from all of the 53 member states of the Commonwealth of Nations. The first Commonwealth Games were held in 1930, since then the Games have been conducted every four years. The first Commonwealth Paraplegic Games

were held alongside the Commonwealth Games in 1962. From 2002, the events for able bodied athletes and athletes with a disability were joined into the one Games, thus making the Commonwealth Games the first fully inclusive international multi-sport event.

Commonwealth (as well as Olympic) Games now require host cities and nations to also provide a major cultural programme alongside its sport offerings. The cultural programmes of Commonwealth Games are expected to align with the Commonwealth Charter (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009) and to promote the shared history, tradition and values of its members.

2006

The 2006 Commonwealth Games were held in Melbourne, Australia. The city, including its State and public libraries, put on a wide range of exhibitions, activities and festivities.

Two million people attended the Games cultural events, which was nearly equal to the number who attended the sporting events (2.1 million) (Insight Economics, 2006). Cultural events at the State Library of Victoria were based on the themes of the Commonwealth and sport, these activities included the announcement of the winner of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize by his Royal Highness Prince Edward and a talk given by Lord Coe on the future of sport.

The collecting of all aspects of the cultural and sporting events was also managed by the State Library of Victoria, who engaged widely with the local community to ensure that they gathered as much material as possible (State Library of Victoria, 2006).

The collection of the event spans the entire range of materials including; archival documents, ephemera and realia. Online resources were also extensively archived within PANDORA: Australia's web archive at: <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/col/8800>.

2010

The 2010 Commonwealth Games were held in Delhi, India. The city and tourism industry put on a wide range of exhibitions, activities and festivities to celebrate the culture of India.

The main library concerned with supporting the Games cultural activities was the Delhi Public Library – which is also India's largest public library.

The Library sought to showcase the history and heritage of Delhi to visitors during the Commonwealth Games. As the Library's Director Dr Anjana Chattopadhyay, said:

“The library is a part of the history of Delhi that is why we are preparing for the event. So, people will come here and get to know the real history of the city (Gitika, 2010)”.

Some of the activities held by the Delhi Public Library included:

- Display of newspaper archives in an exhibition entitled: The Newseum
- Photography exhibition entitled: DPL through the lens-photographs of DPL then & now
- Hosting a sports quiz for young people.

2014

The 2014 Commonwealth Games was held in Glasgow, Scotland.

Glasgow hosted an arts festival to go alongside the Games, called *Culture 2014*. This festival featured every art form and celebrated Scottish culture but also the different cultures and traditions of the other members of the Commonwealth.

All Glasgow public libraries hosted displays and served as information points for the Games. Many also held their own events and exhibitions.

The major exhibition in Glasgow during the Games was hosted at the Mitchell Library

and entitled: *Scotland and the Commonwealth: 400 Years in the making*.

The Mitchell Library also hosted a Games media centre (where athletes could be interviewed post performance) and a Commonwealth young journalists' conference with attendees from many member nations.

Glasgow Women's Library hosted a dedicated Commonwealth Women's Writers event as well as a range of other activities that mainly looked at the sometimes dark history of the British Empire.

The University of Stirling Library : Archives & Special Collections (which houses the Commonwealth Games Scotland Archive) was busy collecting and preserving documents. Additionally, during the Games, materials from their collection were on display in central Glasgow and were accompanied by a series of talks about the history of sport in Scotland.

Glasgow University Library held an exhibition on their premises focusing on Commonwealth sports people. The main government cultural administrative body in Glasgow, called Glasgow Life, manages cultural activities as well as Glasgow Libraries. Having a unified body managing the cultural events as well as being responsible for collecting them assisted in the task of collecting and preserving, as there were no considerations of ownership and competing priorities to overcome.

The planning of the Games legacy collection was undertaken well in advance of the Games, with a Collection Plan (Mitchell Library, 2014) being created and endorsed by library managers. This enabled staff and resources to be dedicated to priority collecting targets.

Within the Collection Plan, Glasgow Libraries sought to collect in the following categories of material:

- Printed books
- Official records

- Electronic publications (archived through UK Web Archive <http://www.webarchive.org.uk>)
- Special collections (ephemera and realia)
- Ephemera – individuals (Glasgow libraries used a marketing campaign to seek donations of ephemera from the public)
- Ephemera – Community groups
- Local business Games marketing materials
- Pressure group materials
- Social media

The collection was successfully completed and is already providing value. Within the first year of the collection, exhibitions have already been staged using some of its contents.

Legacy

The justification for the expenditure by a city or country on a major sporting event (which can now cost in the billions of dollars) is in its ongoing legacy.

There is a large literature on the sporting, economic and social legacy emanating from major sporting events. Studies have found mixed legacy results (Elinor, 2012), with some cities and countries generating no lasting benefits and some considerable financial debts after hosting large-scale sporting events. Whether a major sporting event brings legacy benefits is dependent on a range of factors. But it is clear that to gain a legacy benefit from a major sporting event, the organisers need extensive planning, direction and community engagement. Concentrating solely on gaining an event for a host city or country and then staging it, will not in itself reap any long term benefits. It is instead planning for the long-term use and re-use of infrastructure and ongoing social improvements that are now considered vital requirements in creating successful sport events.

Libraries have a major role in the formation and preservation of a games legacy and in creating social capital.

Libraries should be a point of engagement between the community and sporting events organisers to assist the public to understand the benefits of a sporting event. Using a community trusted intermediary body to promote and explain what may be expensive and intrusive sporting event preparations.

Libraries can also support the interaction of the public with the actual event, as they did in Melbourne and Glasgow, by providing an ongoing repository for the public to submit their photographs and ephemera of the events.

A great increase in social capital and a pride in a host's community is developed through the successful hosting of an international event. But, after the event is over the organisers almost immediately dissolve and all their activities cease. Without libraries keeping the memory and spirit of the events alive, the community goodwill built up by the event is lost.

While libraries are rarely considered at the outset of a sporting events bidding process, they should be proactive in selling themselves to organisers, as the organisers are rarely aware of the benefits that libraries can bring to the event.

Historically, it appears that no major sporting host city seems to have planned or built a library as part of its event infrastructure preparation or legacy. This changed with Glasgow 2014 wherein the Olympia Building (Glasgow 2014 Limited. 2014) was redeveloped to house a public library as well as sporting facilities.

It is to be hoped that in some future major event that another new library will be included in a host cities infrastructure development plans.

After the completion of a major event, the organising body has to complete some form of final report of its activity that addresses its successes and failings. These reports are important tools that transfer knowledge and

lessons learnt from one sport event host to the next host. Unfortunately, these reports invariably do not include mention of the role of libraries (or other cultural bodies) in supporting the events.

Libraries should therefore consider compiling reports of their activity, including analysis of what worked and what didn't and provide this to the library or library system of the city that will be holding the event in future.

What to collect?

Sporting activity, like many of the performance arts, essentially entails a live experience. What can be collected directly from sport performances therefore is often just the recording of the event. The main sporting event is now essentially captured solely in film and photographs.

Outside of the actual sporting events, what is needed to be collected by libraries and archives is the accompanying cultural and public participatory materials.

It is also necessary to collect the administrative and organisational records of the whole process of the event from the initial bidding stage through to the closure of all legacy projects after the event.

The types of material to be collected would include:

- Ephemera (advertisements, tickets, posters, programmes, brochures, pamphlets, invitations, leaflets, fliers, letters, press releases, menus, banners)
- Realia (sporting uniforms, volunteer uniforms, event branded sporting kit, badges, pins, medals, ribbons)
- Realia (opening and closing ceremony costumes, props, floats etc.)
- Publications (event themed publications from any source)
- Corporate, legal and financial documents from the official event organising body

- National government, regional, state and local government documents
- Business content (commercial and advertising content created by sporting event sponsors and affiliates)
- Public documents (content created by individual members of the public, such as photographs and video)
- Broadcast content (preferably from the host official broadcast partner)
- Digital records (captures of websites, social media sites, photo and video sharing sites – where this is not a current practice, advice should be sought from the following organisations: <http://netpreserve.org>, <http://www.dpconline.org>, <https://www.archive-it.org>)

The expenditure and disruption to community life that hosting major sporting events can entail is something that libraries should also represent within their collections. The destruction of residences to make way for sporting facilities and transport links have caused major civil discord in a number of cities. While there are many sport museums in the world that collect elements of sport events they do not generally emphasise any negative aspects.

“Many sports museums, even at the elite level, eschew the controversial; they are reluctant to give the whole picture and deliberately omit things from history. World champions are presented without blemish, and world championships are presented without political context (Wray, 1998)”.

Libraries not being sport specific bodies can be more independent and truly represent how events were actually lived by the participants and the community at large.

For example, libraries creating collections for Melbourne 2006 and Glasgow 2014 both

preserved items representing negative events at the Games, as well as the publications of groups opposing the holding of the Games.

Sport is popular and historically exhibitions that are sport themed bring in many visitors. Sporting ephemera makes vibrant and colourful displays that attract users, and may attract new users that are less represented in traditional library demographics.

Research use of sporting collections and archives are not only confined to the sports fan. Sport has been used by government and social organisations as a medium to promote a range of social causes and changes. Sport which is widely seen as providing an equitable arena has also been used to foster integration and to bridge religious and racial divides. Given this importance sporting resources are used by a wide field of social researchers.

The other drivers to collect sporting resources are to support social goals. The social inclusion of people with a disability within sport through the Paralympic sporting movement is an area that requires collecting. Additionally, the promotion of sport, in particular to children, to combat obesity as well as a range of physical and mental health issues is another area where sports serve a wider social policy that libraries should reflect.

What libraries can do?

Glasgow in 2014 showed what can be done when libraries engage with sporting event organisers.

Some of the essential activities that it is suggested should be undertaken by a library system in a city that is holding a major sporting event, should be to:

Create relationships with sport event organisers at an early stage (preferably at the bid stage)

- ensure organisers have an understanding of what libraries can deliver to their benefit

- make opportunities happen by proactively developing and selling ideas for collaboration to organisers.

Become an official sporting event hub

- for example, a library could host a media centre, host an event and tourist information centre, be an event ticketing outlet, become an event volunteer coordination/training centre
- provide library and information services to athletes and coaches within the athlete village.

Leverage off the Games

- attract additional local visitor numbers by putting on complementary exhibitions, displays, and activities
- attract international visitors by creating exhibitions and events that relate to shared international interests.

Make a Collection Plan

- ensure event collections are planned and resources are allocated to the task
- collaborate with event organisers, government archives, media and broadcasters, any other interested party and with the public to ensure collections are comprehensive.

Where possible seek funding for construction of new libraries or the redevelopment of current libraries

- where there is a sporting event requiring infrastructure development, public libraries have benefited from this (for example, in London 2012, Glasgow 2014 and Sochi 2014).

Use the collection

- once you have built the collection use it! Display it, create a touring exhibition of it, invite academic scholarship of it, make a book of it.

Conclusion

Librarians, like sport administrators, need to plan for major sporting events, so that they are ready to reap the benefits that they can offer. Libraries can and should be at the forefront of any major civic enterprise, leveraging themselves and supporting their community.

Maintaining access to the record of sports' role in community life is also an important requirement for librarians. Creating and maintaining collections that show how people administered, participated in, and were spectators in, major sporting events is the surest way of ensuring that the legacy of those events is preserved.

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