

Key link in Olympics 2000 effort

While internal information demands remain the main focus in Information Systems, there has been tremendous public interest in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

From the time that Sydney won the bid on 23 September 1993 until 1 January 1994, the organisation has had over 9 000 written enquiries regarding information, suggestions, employment and corporate interest.



Promoting better ties: Sydney 2000 Olympics bid chief Rod McGeoch, on left, and Danish IOC member Niels Holst with Information Systems manager Melissa Petherbridge

Telephone enquiries are even more staggering and all this is just the beginning. Atlanta gets over 2 000 employment enquiries a week and its staff nearly doubles every six months.

General information is handled by the Organising Committee's public relations department. More general (non-research) information requests such as ticketing and accommodation will be addressed by several means. An Olympic Hotline has been established to provide brief information sheets by fax and public information/merchandise centres will be set up at Darling Harbour and Sydney Olympic Park at Homebush Bay. Media requests and information are serviced by the Organising Committee's communications department.

Research requests largely fall within two categories — technical and non-technical. In most cases, non-technical enquiries from university and school students are directed to three main research information centres: the National Sport Information Centre at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra, which has been our sponsoring library since 1991;

Sydney City Public Library and the NSW State Library. Each of these libraries has publications and research materials from the Organising Committee. On a nationwide level, each State Olympic Council and the National Library also serve as public information centres. The NSW Tourism Library is acting as the national centre for tourism-related information on the Olympic Games.

Technical research enquiries usually are handled by appointment at the library. These appointments are prioritised with first preference given to architectural firms that have a contract for an Olympic venue. Next comes government departments with responsibility for aspects of infrastructure or Games management such as transport and customs, and corporations or organisations integrally involved with the Games, such as museums and organisations involved with the cultural program.

About 80 per cent of the collections are technical and focus on various aspects of Olympic venues including architecture, broadcasting and technical specifications.

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These include structural aspects, media requirements, such as cameras and lighting, international sports federation technical requirements and International Olympic Committee regulations. The collections focus on the organisation and management of the Olympic Games, rather than on sport. Information Systems is a trendy title but it is significant and fortunate that Organising Committee staff still choose to affectionately call this department 'the library'.

They have learned that a modern library is a marvellously complex operation, the workings of which they don't want or need to understand. They do know that they receive a high degree of service and support that enables them to do their work much more effectively.

The total information systems approach puts this very special library in the unusual position of being able to further the image and role of our profession nationally and internationally. Thanks to the far-sighted executive director of planning and design, David Churches, a professionally-managed library was considered an essential ele-

Facts and figures

The main role of Information Systems at the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games is to provide centralised information services for the Organising Committee administrative staff, including the organisation and distribution of all sources of information within the Committee, regardless of format.

The Information Systems collections consist of documents (internal information), library (public and research information), videos and photography.

We know from our research on past Organising Committees that by the year 2000 these collections will comprise at least 100 000 document titles, 30 000 library items, 5 000 videos/films and 250 000 photos/slides. There are 4 000 document titles, 3 500 library items, 500 videos and 5 000 photos, centrally controlled through database management (simultaneously searchable parallel databases).

At the time of past Games, information systems has had between 50 (Montreal 1976) and 20 (Barcelona 1992) staff members, with volunteers supplementing those numbers. By the time of the 2000 Games, Committee administrative personnel will be at least 1 500.

ment of the Sydney 2000 Bid. Never before has a library been given such a central role in the task of winning the Olympic Games. Never before has a library been part of the foundation of the Olympic Organising Committee. With the Information Systems department's combination of top-level support and extremely high-profile exposure, not to mention hundreds of

eminent visitors, the Australian library community now has a unique opportunity for six years in the limelight.

Let's use it to promote the profession and skills, which are without doubt one of the most crucially important for the new millennium.

For more information, call Manager Information Systems, Melissa Petherbridge on (02) 931 2000. ■

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