

Australia... punching above its Olympics and sport information weight



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Some twenty years ago I gave a paper at the 7th Congress of the International Association for Sport Information in Snagov, the location of the Romanian Sports Institute outside Bucharest. The paper traced the real limitations of access to sport information in Australia and New Zealand at a time when other countries, such as The Netherlands, West and East Germany and Cuba, were investing heavily in sport information centres. I noted that the first official record of concern was in the 1975 Report of the Australian Sports Institute Study Group:

If Australian sport is to be developed effectively, it is essential that decision makers have access to up-to-date knowledge about sport. This applies to government ministers, sports scientists, facility designers, equipment manufacturers, coaches, and the individual interested in obtaining authentic directions about an exercise program.

1975 was not, given the events of 11 November of that year, the best year to be launching reports of national need. Witness the fate of the Horton Report on public libraries. However in 1980 a three year trial of an Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra commenced. The Institute had no mandate for involvement in sport information provision for the whole nation, despite ongoing concerns about the issue.

Of the need, there was no doubt. Research I undertook in 1979 to underpin a proposal for an Australian Sport Information Resource Centre (AUSIRC) found that 230 sport organisations supported a national response to their information and documentation needs.

Further impetus for the concept was provided by the first national conference on information for sport and recreation held in November 1980 by the Footscray Institute of Technology Library with federal funding support. The keynote speaker was Gilles Chiasson from the Canadian Sport Information Resource Centre, producer of Sport the then embryonic international database for sport information.

At about the same time the Confederation of Australian Sport presented to the federal government a master plan for Australian sport which specified the need for a sports information centre to be accessible to all national and state sporting bodies.

So what happened?

Initially, not much. A seminal move was the establishment by the Footscray Institute of Technology Library of the Australian Clearing House for Publications in Sport, Recreation and Tourism (ACHPIRST) as a national database and to supply Australian sport data to the international database in Canada. The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) Information Centre

was established in 1982 but only to provide services to AIS. However following the merger with the Australian Sports Commission in 1987 the Centre broadened its role.

The National Sport Information Centre now takes a significant national and international leadership role in the provision of sport information, and as the focus for co-operation with the 500 000 record Sport database, of which Ausport on Austrom is a subset. Among other NISC initiatives is the sport information portal <http://www.ausport.gov.au> and its efforts to ensure all Australian Olympic national sporting organisations have a web presence. Through its dynamic foundation director, Nerida Clarke, Australia's reputation in the international sport information arena has been greatly enhanced. She has been president of the International Association for Sport Information for several years, and the vice-president for Oceania is Jill Haynes, the current director of the NSIC. The AIS Centre is not alone in responding to the need for timely and accurate information in sport. The equivalent of the AIS Centre exists in some states and over thirty libraries throughout Australia have substantial holdings and staff expertise in sport information. AUSPIN (The Australian Sport Information Network) fosters co-operation between many of them in developing national strategies for the collection of dissemination of sport information. And as every teacher-librarian and public librarian knows, one of the most heavily used sections in school and public libraries are the 796s.

The Olympics and Paralympics

It was recognised early that access to, dissemination of, and preparation of information and records on the Sydney Games was important. SOCOG's Research and Information Program has established several firsts in the history of Olympic organising committees, including its establishment so early in the process. This enabled it to play a substantial role in assisting Bid staff to prepare the case for Sydney 2000. Other firsts are:

- the integration of library, information, research and records management functions;
- the establishment of SOLN, the Sydney Olympic Library Network, as a self-help support group for agencies such as State libraries and Sydney-based Olympic venue local authorities with particular requirements for Olympic information;
- a recreational and information library for athletes and officials at the Olympic Village;
- a research and information service for over 800 journalists using the Main Press Centre;

- the creation of two major knowledge management tools, Games Code and Athena, the latter of which facilitates SOCOG's infopoint touchscreen terminals available at locations such as Westfield shopping centres and the Olympic Call Centre on 136363; and
- a proactive position on archiving the Games, and records retention and disposal schedules.

In addition to SOCOG's Murray Rose Research Library a number of other Australian libraries are heavily involved in collecting and improving access to materials on the Olympics and Paralympics. These include the National Sports Information Centre in Canberra. It is ensuring that the Olympic 2000 Games will have all of its literature indexed, from the bidding process through to past Games — another first for Australia, and a legacy for it.

The National Library of Australia also has a Sydney 2000 Olympics Project which formally commenced in September 1997 and which has already archived relevant sites. In NSW, the State Library is building a comprehensive collection of materials on the 2000 games, a priority since the bidding process began. Another library holding substantial documents and memorabilia, particularly on the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, is the Melbourne Cricket Club Library at the MCG. Also heavily involved in information provision dur-

ing and after the Games will be the University of NSW's Centre for Olympic Studies, which provides a library and reference service.

The Sydney Games will clearly be, even more than the Atlanta Games, the internet games. There is an array of web-sites available, the most significant of which have been described and linked by the University of South Australia Library at <http://www.library.unisa.edu.au/vl/olympic/olymwelc.htm>.

Australia has a strong Olympic reputation and has participated in every modern Olympic Games, since the first in 1896. Its reputation in sports information is more recent, and has paralleled the outstanding sporting achievement of Australians in the last twenty years — no coincidence. Australia, to use a kind of sporting analogy, truly punches above its international sporting weight — so, too, in the sports information arena.

The Olympics and Paralympics are ultimately about the performances of athletes, but behind those performances and the gaining and organisation of such events, timely and accurate information is absolutely critical — whether it is accessed by coaches, support staff, organisers or the individual athletes themselves. The Olympics and Paralympics will do Australia proud. Let's also celebrate our national and international sport information achievements — and the librarians and others who have made them happen. ■

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Australian
Library and
Information
Association

ALIA Annual General Meeting

The 12th Annual General Meeting of the Australian Library and Information Association will be held at 5:30pm on Wednesday 25 October 2000 at the National Convention Centre, Canberra.

AGENDA

- 1 Notice of convening meeting
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Minutes of the 1999 AGM
- 4 Presentation of the 1999 *Annual report and balance sheet*, and income and expenditure account
- 5 Presentation of supplementary balance sheet and supplementary income and expenditure account to 30 September 2000
- 6 Appointment of auditors
- 7 Reports
- 8 General business
- 8 Motions:
no motions were received

Note: A follow-up session on recommendations from the National Policy Congress will be held following the AGM. All NPC representatives are invited to attend and observers are welcome.

RULES OF MEETING

1. Motions for discussion at the AGM are to be forwarded in writing to the ALIA executive director, ALIA, PO Box E441, Kingston ACT 2604 by **18 August 2000**. Motions should be signed by the movers either individually or on behalf of a division of the Association. All such motions received will be published in the AGM agenda notice in the September issue of *inCite* and on ALIANet.
2. All motions to be put to the AGM must appear in this published agenda.
3. The only items that may be raised under general business are those of an informal nature, or those that are within the scope of the business already laid down. Motions of a substantial nature relating to items not covered in the notice of the meeting will not be allowed.
4. If any item of urgency arises which is not within the business of the meeting, the chairperson has the power to accept it without notice or rule that due notice must be given.
5. All motions additional to those on the printed agenda and in accordance with rule 4, and amendments, shall be in writing, signed by the movers (forms will be provided), and delivered to the chair.
6. When addressing the chair, the person desiring recognition will properly identify themselves, giving his or her name and affiliation. Only ALIA members may speak.
7. Debate shall be limited to three minutes for each speaker, no speaker may have the floor twice on the same question until all who wish to speak have spoken.
8. Proxies. To be valid, proxies must be in the form set out in the *Constitution* — item 8.2 and be in the hands of the ALIA executive director, ALIA, PO Box E441, Kingston ACT 2604, e-mail address: enquiry@alia.org.au, by **5pm on 22 October 2000**. Proxy forms must not specify how the holder of the proxy is to vote on specific areas. A form is available on ALIANet at <http://www.alia.org.au/membership/meetings/agm/2000.proxy.html>
9. By general consent, if there be no objection, or by a two-thirds vote, any rule governing the debate may be suspended.
10. The chairperson's rulings on procedural matters may not be debated. The reference for rules and their interpretation by the parliamentarian will be Joske's *The law and procedure at meetings in Australia*, 8th ed, 1994. A parliamentarian will be appointed to advise the chairperson on procedures and to assist in determining the results of a poll of members present if necessary.

<http://www.alia.org.au/membership/meetings/agm/2000.agenda.html>