



Bridgeton Library



Mitchell Library

THE GAMES FROM GLASGOW

In the August edition of INCITE, librarian Kirsten McCormick reported on her tour of Australia investigating ideas for collecting content for the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games. In July Edgar Crook returned the visit, travelling to Glasgow to see how their libraries and archives were collecting and promoting the Games, the Commonwealth organisation and sport and, in the process, raising library profiles.

Unfortunately for us, at this year's games England managed to usurp Australia, but we have taken part in every Commonwealth (formerly British Empire) Games since they began in 1911. Australia hosted the Games in 1938, 1962, 1982, 2006 and is also the most successful team – being unbeaten in the medal tally for the previous five Games. The last time the Games were held in Australia was in Melbourne in 2006. The city put on a range of activities and festivities.

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

The major exhibition in Glasgow during the Games was hosted at the Mitchell Library. Entitled Scotland and the Commonwealth: 400 Years in the Making, the exhibition ran before, during and after the Games. At the Mitchell, I was fortunate to meet again with Kirsten McCormick and was very impressed at the scale and breadth of their collecting, and the range of activities undertaken by the library, which included housing a Games media centre.

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 Archives houses the Commonwealth Games Scotland Archive. This is an extensive collection with the earliest documents dating from 1931. The collection mainly

contains holdings related to Scotland's previously held Games (1970 and 1986). On my visit, I was shown a range of materials relating to Australia by the University Archivist Karl Magee.

The Archives was also represented in the centre of Glasgow, with highlights from its collection on display as part of a celebration of Scotland and its sporting heritage within the Scotland House exhibition. Glasgow University Library also held its own small exhibition focusing on Commonwealth sports people.

Bridgeton Olympia is an iconic former theatre in the East End of Glasgow that is now home to both a public library and to the gym and administration centre for Boxing Scotland. It is a shame that while Australian public libraries are very often co-located with other services, it is very seldom done with sporting centres, which has great possibilities and benefits for communities.

It was good to see how libraries and archives had fully enmeshed themselves into the Games and the surrounding cultural festival. Many thousands of people from the United Kingdom and across the Commonwealth came to Glasgow for the event. I think, like me, many will go back home with a greater appreciation of how libraries can enhance and support any large event. Hopefully there will be some useful ideas and lessons for when Queensland's Gold Coast hosts the next Games in 2018.

Incidentally, at the 2014 Games Tim Driesen, a Records Manager at the Australian Sports Commission, achieved a creditable fifth place in the hammer throw – which just goes to prove how truly versatile information professionals are.

EDGAR CROOK

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If you want to see more about our activities and celebrations back in 2006, visit Australia's web archive PANDORA at: pandora.nla.gov.au/col/8800.