

“Sports archives in France: public policies in the 2020s”

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Introduction

I want to begin this presentation by thanking the team that has organized this second International Seminar on Sports Archives in Girona and Fina Solà Gasset for the invitation.

I would like to point out that I’m speaking from the position of a documentalist and archivist. At the French Ministry of Culture, in the Inter-Ministry Archive Service (French Archives Administration), I am working on sports archives in France. I wrote a thematic research guide on the FranceArchives website (<https://francearchives.fr>), the French equivalent of PARES. This guide was created in collaboration with the History Committee from the French Ministries of Youth and Sport.

A growing interest in sports in France

The French level: the Paris 2024 Olympic Games

It should be noted that there is a growing interest in sports, its heritage and its archives in France, in the framework of preparing for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. An administrative delegation has been created within the Ministry of Culture, in connection with an inter-ministerial division. The Ministry of Culture delegation is preparing a Cultural Olympiad, with programs that begin in 2020 and will continue to be developed through 2024. In this context, cultural institutions like archives, museums and libraries are designing projects to gather documents and objects, for the conservation and dissemination of sports heritage, particularly through exhibitions.

The European level: a European cultural itinerary on sports heritage

The French Ministry of Culture is also working on the creation of a cultural itinerary promoted by the European Council, on sport heritage, for 2022.

The international level: the “Olympic spirit”, intangible cultural heritage

Additionally, in October 2019, France inscribed the “Olympic spirit” on the French list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. But what is the “Olympic spirit”? It is a set of values: peace, friendship, solidarity, tolerance, and respect in building a better society with less violence. The social and political dimension of sports is very prominent in France, as in “city politics”, for example. The inscription on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage puts an emphasis on the practices and their transmission in spreading a live heritage, with the help of athletes and sports federations. France’s goal is to have the inscription on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2022, with Greece, Luxemburg, Senegal and Jordan. To prepare for this integration onto the UNESCO list, there will be a need for documents and archives on sports, the Olympic Games, and of course, the Paralympic Games.

Some milestones in the recent history of sports archives in France

Nonetheless, the interest in sports archives is not something new. There is a concern for saving them. In fact, when a sports association closes or when an athlete passes away, there’s a risk that the archives get lost or destroyed.

In 1971, a mission of the French National Archives was created at the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

In 2006, the program “MéMos, Sports Memories”, at the National Olympic Academy, was dedicated to collecting, conserving, classifying and diffusing these memories, as well as raising awareness about them. The challenge was collecting the private archives that belonged to the athletes, sports associations, clubs and federations to be used in public archives, provincial archives and the French National Archives.

In 2006, another important thing happened: they created the National Sports Archives Center at the National Archives of the World of Work, in Roubaix, northern France.

In 2018, the Ministry of Sports wanted to create a new dynamic in the policy of raising awareness about archives among those involved in sports. For example, there was a student workshop held at the National Archives with presentations about sports so that researchers could find out about new collections they could explore.

Also, in 2018, a thematic research guide on sport archives was created at FranceArchives (<https://francearchives.fr/fr/article/82857280>). This website was developed by the French Inter-ministry Archive Service with 65 participants (National Archives, town archives, provincial archives...). It provides access to 47,000 descriptive tools and digitized documents. The goal of this guide is to disseminate sports archives from the 19th century until now, with access to descriptive tools and digitized documents. It provides information on the policies regarding the collection, conservation, digitization and dissemination of sport archives in France, at the National Archives, the Ministry of Sports, and the town and provincial archives. The guide is frequently updated, and it needs to be, considering the increased growth of institutions that conserve archives. It also offers a bibliography of reading material and other resources, like

access to digitized news articles about sports on the Gallica website, created by the National Library of France, and audiovisual archives from the National Audiovisual Institute (INA). The subject areas in the guide are: archives on public policies regarding sports (State and local levels), archives from sports associations and federations, archives of athletes and coaches, archives on sports equipment, sports news, archives on the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, expositions, publications of archives and sports memorials, and for more information, a bibliography of books and websites. We have to point out one important thing about sports in France: the importance of State policies regarding this subject.

Some examples of work on sports archives

Archives on the sports movement at the National Archives of the World of Work in Roubaix

Its mission is to collect, conserve and disseminate archives related to business and professional life. With the National Sports Archives Center, it's possible to view the descriptive tools for sports archives online. Also, it's important to point out the dissemination of sports archives on the National Archives of the World of Work website. 2018 was the year of sports. Every month that year, archivists explored one subject area and document; for example, the subject of working-class sports and Olympism. In their scientific, cultural and educational projects (PSCE), the National Archives of the World of Work is focusing on the subject of the relationship between sports and the business world.

Municipal Archives of Saint-Etienne

The Municipal Archives of Saint-Etienne house collections of football archives. The ASSE (Association Sportive de Saint-Etienne) was founded by the supermarket chain Casino in 1933. A virtual exhibition on this subject can be seen on the archives' website.

Departmental Archives of l'Isère

The Departmental Archives of l'Isère created educational workshops about the Olympic Games. The 1968 Olympics took place in Grenoble, Isère.

Departmental Archives of Loiret

In 2019, the Departmental Archives of Loiret published a guide with sources of information on sports in Loiret, consisting of descriptions of both private and public archives.

Departmental Archives of l'Oise

In 2019, the Departmental Archives of l'Oise presented an exhibition entitled "Sports: a history in Oise". In particular, it was about the history of the archers, a tradition that is still around today, and games and sports in the Picardie region. It's important to point out that the province is located near Paris and it could accommodate athletes during the 2024 Olympic Games.

Conclusion

Given the organization of the Olympic Games, new projects and policies are going to be implemented in the time between now and 2024.

Greater dissemination of the sports archives on FranceArchives could be useful, by means of collecting new private archives, digitizing new documents, improving the indexing of documents related to sports, and getting new archives to participate. Also, FranceArchives is included on the European APEX archives website (<https://www.archivesportaleurope.net/fr/home>). Steps to disseminate the archives and contents on the Olympic Games could be promoted through this channel.

We should add that in 2019-2020, the Ministry of Culture will be having a call for tenders for the digitization of sports heritage archives. This call is organized by the National Library of France, the National Sports Museum in Nice, and Paris-Sud University. In addition, since 2006, the National Library of France has been in charge of the legal deposit of French websites and consequently, of French websites that have to do with sports (websites of sports federations, athletes and sites related to every edition of the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games: <https://www.bnf.fr/fr/archives-de-linternet>). The National Library of Spain carries out the same role.