

International initiatives in sports archives

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The ICA/SPO Section¹ was created in 2004 at the International Archives Congress in Vienna with some very specific objectives: to preserve and safeguard sports archives and to raise awareness among governments, institutions, organizations and the general public on the need to preserve the records created by all the people, public and private institutions, businesses and associations that have to do with the sports world. Another one of its objectives is to share and spread the information that the ICA/SPO has by organizing seminars, workshops and roundtable meetings.

There is a lot to share and to debate. There are many experiences around the world related to sports archives, but I will only be mentioning some of the initiatives surrounding the processing and dissemination of archives in this field, without evaluating any of them in terms of the archival processing carried out.

The first experience I'll share is the one being developed by the **ICA/SPO Section**, which is the design and creation of a sports-related archives directory. This directory is intended to be a collaborative and participative tool to provide and acquire knowledge about sports archives around the world, as a way to access the sports records collections by geographical location.

The second experience is one that is offered by the **Archives Nationales du Monde du Travail**² (ANMT) in Roubaix (France), where they hold a large number of private collections related to sports: collections belonging to sports clubs and federations, personal collections belonging to male and female athletes and sports journalists, collections from the French Olympic Academy, from professional sports associations, associations on violence in sports and expat athletes associations, among others. One aspect to keep in mind is that they provide the inventories of the collections online and thus provide very valuable information for conducting research.

Another initiative implemented by the ANMT in 2018 is called the "document of the month" from the sports collections they hold. For example, the month of August was dedicated to the collection from athlete Sandra Porter, a professional wrestler from the thirties, in the 20th century. Sandra Porter's family donated a collection of documents (photos, posters, letters, etc.) through the departmental archives and the French Olympic Academy.

The third experience is one that is offered by the **London Metropolitan Archives**³ (**LMA**), which created an online project with an interesting resource: a directory of the archives they have relating to the Olympics. This way they could share the information, records and experiences from Olympic cities. The project was completed after the London Olympic Games, and currently it is not available online, but it will become one of

¹ <https://www.ica.org/en/about-section-sports-archives-spo>

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³ Member of the ICA/SPO.

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the projects that are preserved by the UK Web Archive. A project like this is important for preserving sports memories.

The fourth experience is that of the **Sports Museum of Finland**.⁴ The Museum's archives house collections from sporting organizations and clubs and athletes' personal collections. One of the services it provides is writing and publishing the history of the clubs. Currently, it is writing a book on the history of the Finnish Table Tennis Association.

The Sports Museum serves as the official national depository for documents related to sports in Finland.

The fifth experience that we want to share is that of the **Centro Sportivo Italiano (CSI)**, with a project that resulted from an agreement between the CSI and the Association of Church Archives to reorganize the CSI Historical Archive, located in Rome.

In 2017, they hosted the exhibition "Nati per Correre", which explained the sports and culture project with materials from the CSI archives: objects, flags, historical documents, drawings, portraits, medals with information about athletes, etc. The exhibition was a testament to the sports culture of the CSI. In May 2018, they presented the Historical Archive reorganization work.

The sixth experience we'd like to inform you about comes from the **International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF)**.⁵ The awareness of organizing their documentary collections is long-standing.

This initiative to organize the documents, to make both the administrative records and the historical documents more accessible, is a very important step and it has an added value. It is very important that a federation like the IAAF has an interest in preserving the legacy of athletics, of its heroes and heroines, of its artifacts and of the textual documents, videos and photographs that represent them, while at the same time, involving and inspiring elite athletes and their supporters now and in the future.

The International Olympic Committee⁶ offers us an experience in the organization of their audiovisual archives, which has received awards for their effort to preserve and manage them and to make them available to broadcasters and researchers. The audiovisual archives of the Olympic Games include 2,000 hours of cinema, 33,000 hours of video, 8,500 hours of audio and more than 500,000 photographs, as well as 2,000 archive documents and 22,000 photographs of the pieces in the Olympic Museum.

The implementation of a program called "Patrimonial Assets Management Program" was the result of a study on the collections, conducted by IOC archivists. The study found that within a few years, 50% of the videos they held couldn't be played, that 20% of the faded photographs couldn't be used, that there aren't audio players available for a large part of the collection and that the films were slowly deteriorating. The project consisted of restoring and digitizing these collections.

⁴ Member of the ICA/SPO.

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Equally important is the publication of a guide for managing sport archives, which isn't directly intended for archives related to Olympic events.

Another initiative is the one being developed by the **Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF)**, which contains documents in digital and paper formats, audiovisuals, and a microfiche collection that need to be preserved and made accessible to future generations. The documents available on paper and microfiche are digitized, processed for optical character recognition (OCR) and authenticated with digital signatures. The CBF's cloud infrastructure is integrated with Piql, so the archives are easily transferred electronically for their preservation and physical storage in the Artic World Archive.

The Physical Education Memory Center (CEMEF) Implementation Project is an experience developed by the by the Higher Institute of Physical Education - University of the Republic of Uruguay (ISEF- Udelar) with the goal of carrying out archival processing on the organization's historical documentation to eventually be able to disseminate it.

Together, the **European Committee for Sports History (CESH)** and the **ICA/SPO**, along with others, presented a petition to the European Union to promote a strategy to safeguard and optimize the use of sports archives in Europe, as a central part of European cultural heritage, in addition to other historical archives. It called for them to encourage member states to adopt adequate policies regarding sports archives and specifically, to designate a competent authority to manage these archives at the national level. It also pointed out that in many member states, it was the sports organizations themselves who were responsible for the sports archives, since the public priorities and resources were not focused on archiving concerns. It also emphasized the need to address the challenges surrounding digitization. Currently, this petition is pending a resolution.

Another example is the project called "Unlocking the Hidden History of Women's Football", which was carried out by the **National Football Museum** in 2018. This project has been very valuable in understanding and assessing the history of women's sports and began with a plea to any person who had participated in women's football during 1945 and 1993.

As for **Catalonia**, 2013 saw the start of the project called "Fem esport, fem arxius" [Let's do sports, let's make archives], linked to the ICA/SPO, in which different public institutions in Catalonia participated with the goal of promoting the recovery of archives from sports clubs and federations. At the moment, we notice a moderate increase in the number of documents from sports clubs and federations being deposited into Catalan public archives.

Also within the framework of this project was the creation of a management guide for sports clubs and organizations that is pending publication.

Some other specific initiatives have been implemented at the **Argentina National Archives**; at the **Castile and León Football Federation**; at the **Uruguayan Football Association**, which promoted the organization of the archives from the first World Cup in 1930, and at the **UAB School of Archives and Records Management (ESAGED)**, with the Master's program final projects, in surveying the collections of the Catalan sports federations and auditing the documentary production of the Catalan Tennis Federation, etc.

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And to conclude this list of some of the initiatives carried out in different countries around the world in the organization of documents in sports archives, I can't forget to mention a project that, although not a part of the archiving field, does provide us with concrete personal information about historical athletes, an extremely important tool for us to be proactive and search for the personal archives of athletes around the world and to recover the oral memory. I'm referring to the Facebook and Twitter account **Oldest Olympian** (*@OldestOlympians*).

The celebration of this **1st International Seminar on Sports Archives** in Girona, organized by the Diputació de Girona, the Girona City Council, the Generalitat de Catalunya and the ICA/SPO, has made it possible to have a place to express the concern and interest in raising awareness and sharing knowledge with different professionals in the sports world, sports federations, clubs, businesses and many, many athletes.

We've identified a wide variety of projects and initiatives that all have one common goal: to preserve records and documents related to sports. From the ICA/SPO we are aware of what this first Seminar on Sports Archives entails and what its outcomes are.

We have opened the door! We have the ball on the table! We have to go ahead.

Thank you.