

Landmarks in the history of the media and the Olympics

Newspapers and broadcasts are effectively the primary sources for the study of the relationship between the media and the Olympic Games. The burgeoning significance of the Games through the decades can be traced in the national press of most of the countries who participate in the Olympic movement, and the official reports of each Olympic Games always contain details of the increasingly elaborate facilities provided for reporters and broadcasters. The timeline below features a selection of Olympiads which have seen significant developments in media technologies, with details about where research resources relating to them can be found in the British Library. Of particular note is the newspaper library in Colindale [<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/inrooms/blnewspapers/newsrr.html#>] which holds a comprehensive collection of UK regional and national newspapers as well as a good collection of foreign newspapers, and weekly and fortnightly sports publications.

Radio broadcasts held either in the Library's Sound Archive or in the BBC archive can also be consulted in the London reading rooms.

1908- LONDON. NEWSPAPER REPORTS, PHOTOGRAPHS; EARLY CINEMA

Real interest began to be shown in the Games as a public spectacle, and this was reflected by front page coverage in the popular press. The Daily Mirror managed to combine in *its* coverage the traditional British preoccupations of sport, the Royal Family and the weather! Theodore Cook's account of the 1908 games did not mention special arrangements for the Press, but Lord Desborough made a point of writing to the Press with details of the deliberations of the Council of the British Olympic Association in 1906 which accepted the offer to hold the Olympic Games in London two years later. The Games were filmed by Pathe, and part of the film survives.

Daily Mirror

Lon MLD4 NPL (plus electronic version in reading rooms)

Daily Telegraph

LON MLD7 NPL

The Times

(plus electronic version in reading rooms)

NLD1 NPL

British Olympic Association

The fourth Olympiad: being the official report of the Olympic Games of 1908 celebrated in London drawn up by Theodore Andrea Cook London, 1919

London Reference Collections shelfmark: 7904.d.7

Olympic hero: the sporting life of William Henry Grenfell, Lord Desborough (Published to accompany an exhibition held at Taplow Court). Taplow Court: SGI-UK, c1994
London Reference Collections shelfmark: YK.2003.a.15355

1924- PARIS: RADIO BROADCASTING

Regular public radio broadcasts were in their infancy at the time of the Paris Olympics, which were the first Games to be broadcast live, but this was soon to change as radio became one of the first mass media technologies. The British Library holds a number of sound broadcasts in its own collections [sound archive link] and also provides a listening facility for BBC radio broadcasts via its Listening Service. Unfortunately, radio recordings of the 1924 Olympics are not available as the BBC did not begin to archive its broadcasts until 1932, but there are a number of BBC recordings from the 1948 London Olympic Games.

Le Figaro, Paris
MF39 NPL

Dick Booth **Talking of sport: the story of radio commentary** Cheltenham: SportsBooks, 2008
London Reference Collections shelfmark: HUS.384.5409 Open Access

British Olympic Association
The official report of the VIIIth Olympiad, Paris, 1924 By F.G.L. Fairlie London, [1925]
London Reference Collections shelfmark: 07911.g.56

1936 – BERLIN: CLOSED CIRCUIT TV; ICONIC FILM

The opening ceremony of the games was shown live on closed circuit television in cinemas in Berlin. According to the official report of the Games 'a total of 162,228 people witnessed the XI Olympic games by means of television.' These Games were also the occasion of one of the most famous and controversial films about the Olympics: Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*. A number of books have been written about this and other films of this talented and controversial director.

British Olympic Association
The official report of the XIth Olympiad, Berlin, 1936 edited by Harold M Abrahams
London [1937]
London Reference Collections shelfmark: 07908.g.21

Selection of German newspapers at the Newspaper Library Colindale

Hinton, David **The films of Leni Riefenstahl** London: Scarecrow, 2000
DS shelfmark: m04/35265

Cooper, Graham **Leni Riefenstahl and Olympia** London: Scarecrow, 2001
London Reference Collections shelfmark: YC.2003.a.9688

Riefenstahl screened: an anthology of new criticism edited by Christian Pages, Mary Rhiel and Ingeborg Majer-O'Sickey London: Continuum, 2008
London Reference Collections shelfmark: YC.2009.a.847
DS shelfmark: m08/24353

http://www.olympic.org/uk/games/past/innovations_uk.asp?OLGT=1&OLGY=1936#
See a video showing part of the 1936 Olympic opening ceremony on the IOC's site

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/library/eventsexh/past/olympics/film-tv.html>
British Film Institute's Olympics page

1948 – LONDON PUBLIC TV BROADCASTING. FIRST PAYMENT FOR TV RIGHTS

The modest amount of around £1000 which was paid by the BBC for the broadcast rights of the 1948 Olympics in London, is dwarfed by the huge sums paid for TV rights in recent Olympics. In 1948 there were very few television receivers in London able to pick up broadcasts from the events taking place in the Wembley stadium; nevertheless, over 60 hours of coverage were broadcast by the BBC to the 50,000 homes within range. *The Radio Times* of 23 July 1948 predicted that 'the broadcasting and televising of the London Olympiad will be the biggest operation of its kind that the BBC has ever undertaken'; and in the *BBC Year book* for 1949 Mr Hotine, the BBC's Senior Superintendent Engineer, claimed that broadcasting the Games presented 'a planning and operational problem which had never before been encountered in the history of any broadcasting organization in the world' International interest in the event was naturally high, and was reflected in the provision made for the foreign media. The BBC's *Broadcasting handbook* for foreign correspondents provides a schedule of events, details of how to get to venues, and describes the broadcasting procedure (journalists were divided into groups, each of which had a BBC 'service organiser' based at the radio centre who would book radio facilities, tickets and so on). The radio centre itself had 8 studios and there were 12 mobile recording cars. There was also an information room with 'the official Olympic Games teleprinter service'. Journalists were expected to take public transport to get to the events.

The Radio Times: journal of the British Broadcasting Association
London: BBC, 1923
Newspaper Library Colindale &
London Reference Collections shelfmark: HUS 050 Open Access

British Broadcasting Corporation
Broadcasting handbook Olympic Games, London 1948 Wembley, 1948
London Reference Collections shelfmark: 7919.de.23

British Broadcasting Corporation
BBC Year Book 1949 London: BBC, 1943-1952
London Reference Collections shelfmark: PP.2491.cpe

British Olympic Association

The British Olympic association Official report of the London Olympic games, 1948

edited by Cecil Bear. London, 1948

London Reference Collections shelfmark: 7917.d.28

1960 – ROME. SATELLITE TV.

The 1960 Rome Olympics were broadcast live on the Eurovision link .The American rights to the Rome Olympics were sold to CBS for \$3.9mill

British Olympic Association

Official report of the Olympic games, XVIIth Olympiad...1960. Edited by Phil Pilley

London: World Sports, 1960

London Reference Collections shelfmark: 7925.de.5

Selection of Italian newspapers at the Newspaper Library Colindale

2000 – SYDNEY. INTERNET

European broadcasting of the Sidney Games was sold to the European Broadcasting Union for \$333 million, and the U.S rights to NBC for \$715million. Two Australian media organisations - Fairfax and News Limited - became official sponsors of the Games, the first time this had happened in the history of the Olympics. Helen Jefferson Lenskyj's *The best Olympics ever?* traces coverage of the events leading up to Sydney 2000 as they were reported in the Australian press and discusses some of the criticism of the organisation of the games by the Sydney Morning Herald and other papers. This Games saw official recognition of the first 'non-accredited' media centre in which journalists without the IOC's formal accreditation were given facilities to cover the games.

Thanks to the exponential growth of home computing the Internet had become a significant medium of communication by this date, but the IOC banned it from broadcasting audio or video from the Games. Despite this, websites about Sydney 2000 proliferated. See a selection of the Australian ones on 'Pandora' - Australia's web archive <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/col/c4006>

Helen Jefferson Lenskyj **The best Olympics ever? Social impacts of Sydney 2000**

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002

London Reference Collections shelfmark: YC.2002.a.17071

Sydney Morning Herald

1842-2008 microform MC562 NPL

2008 BEIJING. WEB2. MOBILE PHONE TECHNOLOGY; SOCIAL NETWORKING

Beijing 2008 saw new ways of consuming the Games. Big screens in street squares provided a way to participate in a shared experience at one remove from that granted to the privileged stadium audience. In the UK there were 19 big screens in public spaces in

towns and cities. NBC broadcast an unprecedented 3600 hours of Olympics news and events and individuals were able to have results sent to them on their mobile phones. TV rights were now fetching astronomical sums: the Beijing U.S rights were sold to NBC for \$894million.

The Beijing Games took place in a challenging media environment for the IOC and the Chinese organisers. There were many competing mass media, the most significant of which were the rapidly expanding interactive websites like YouTube, and flickr. The IOC had been forced to set up a special internet monitoring programme to try to track unauthorised content on the web, but in August 2008 it was able to reach agreement with YouTube to allow it to broadcast online highlights of the games to those parts of the world not covered by exclusive broadcasting deals. In return, YouTube undertook to try to keep unauthorised Olympics content off its site. YouTube and flickr (and others) provide an outlet for 'citizen journalists' to put their own spin on events, and there was more than just sport to engage them in 2008. The controversial torch relays made front pages in the world press and were lead stories on the television news; as was the controversy about restrictions on access to certain internet sites for the foreign correspondents in Beijing.

The IOC is keen to invoke the Olympics charter, which states that the Olympics must be made available for as wide an audience as possible. However, it also seeks to retain control over how the Olympics is communicated. These two ambitions are not always compatible and a key question for the future is whether the IOC can maintain its tight hold on its brand in the face of increasing audience fragmentation. This issue is similarly crucial for broadcasters, who are increasingly less able to predict audience size. In 2008 NBC used a new audience measurement tool (TAMI – total audience measurement index) for the Beijing Games which enumerated not only TV audiences for the event but also users of broadband, mobile and video on demand in an attempt to lend accuracy to their sales pitch to advertisers.

Owning the Olympics: narratives of the new China Monroe E Price and Daniel Dayan, editors Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008
London Reference Collections shelfmark: YD.2008.a.7703
DS shelfmark: m08/29666

2014 & 2016 -What new technologies will have appeared? European broadcast rights are already sold for \$316mill to SportFive with mobile and Internet rights being negotiated.

BBC Press Office reports that 'Beijing will be the first truly 24/7 Olympics'
http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2008/06_june/19/olympics11.shtml

NBC broadcasts 3600 hours of Olympics coverage (The Guardian 27 July 2008)
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/jul/27/olympicsandthedia.chinathedia>

IOC broadcasting page
http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/facts/broadcasting/index_uk.asp

LINKS

Intute sports broadcasting and media page

<http://www.intute.ac.uk/socialsciences/cgi-bin/browse.pl?id=114514>

News now sport

<http://www.newsnow.co.uk/h/Sport>

Paralympics sport TV

<http://player26.narrowstep.tv/assets/players/3206/html/index.html>

The National Media Museum

<http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/>

British Pathe (filmed the 1908 Olympics)

<http://www.britishpathe.com/>

NBC coverage <http://www.nbcolympics.com/>

BBC coverage <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/olympics/default.stm>

Terra Media site for history of media

<http://www.terramedia.co.uk/>

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