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## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE REVIEW

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This Educational Review also has an Olympic theme and offers a book review and two reviews of other resources. The reviewers were deliberately selected because of their diverse backgrounds, level of teaching experience and disciplinary interests. This diversity was an attempt to offer readers an insight into different perspectives on some of the educational resources available to help us to prepare students to begin to understand the phenomenon known as 'the Olympics'.

**Stephanie Jameson (Resource Reviews Editor)**

### The Olympic Games: a perspective from the USA

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The commercial and media success of recent years has contributed to an increased interest and awareness around the Olympic Games. A number of useful and exciting new resource sets have been produced by a range of organisations around the world in order to support teaching and learning with regard to the Olympics. Literature regarding issues such as; environment education, history, culture, economics, business, geography and of course sport are readily available on-line. The success of the Athens games, coupled with the interest generated by the games being held in China in 2008 and London in 2012 has provided significant momentum to the list of resources available to students. These resources provide students the opportunity to build a better understanding of the global role of the Olympic movement and to explore the potential for both good and bad that such a monolithic sport monopoly offers. With the number of resources available on the Internet, issues of trust, quality, and research skills become real and significant concerns, particularly in a HE learning context. Given the on-going interest generated by Athens, Beijing and London, web-based resources are constantly evolving, as such this review will focus on some of the more popular, but trusted educational sites available.

**The Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Network (HLST)** offers a 'Resource Guide to the Olympic Games'. The focus of the guide is contained to 'broadly socio-historic-cultural aspects of the Games', in order to avoid to wide a remit and to be of value to students and researchers. The majority of material on the site is contained in either academic books or articles from peer reviewed, popular journals. This includes material taking an uncritical position towards the Olympics, as well as that which is more questioning of the Games, and of the IOC. Whilst the sheer magnitude of material listed is impressive, the guides suffers as most of the material is not hyper-linked, requiring researchers to identify appropriate databases and to find the articles, etc. The sources are somewhat dated and could include further links to web-based sources.

The Resource Guide is available at

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/hlst/documents/resource\\_guides/olympics.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/hlst/documents/resource_guides/olympics.pdf)

**America.gov.** If the above guide takes a somewhat Eurocentric view, the same cannot be said for this site. America.gov is the US Department of State's Olympic web-site. This site

offers an interesting range of sources, ranging through links to the official Olympic organisations, issues regarding the Olympics, energy and conservation sites, and web-sites and blogs of individual athletes. The site also has an up to date bibliography of texts concerned with aspects such as the role of the media, the economics of the Games and human-rights issues, coupled with suggested films. This is a much more limited site, but one which offers a number of useful links for researchers looking for more than the bare statistics, and overly-positive tone, that many other sites offer.

The resources on the Olympic Games are available at [www.America.gov/st/sports-english/2008](http://www.America.gov/st/sports-english/2008)

**The International Centre for Olympic Studies.** Whilst many institutions teach and research the Olympics as part of their sports or events remit, one institution goes a stage further. The International Centre for Olympic Studies, at The University of Western Ontario, has since 1989 had as its primary mission the generation and dissemination of academic scholarship focused specifically upon the socio-cultural study of the Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement. This centre was the first such academic centre in the world and remains the only centre in the USA devoted specifically to Olympic Studies. The Centre produces *OLYMPIKA: The International Journal of Olympic Studies*, hosts an International Symposium for Olympic Research in every Olympic year (this years was held in Beijing in June) and maintains a resource unit at The University of Western Ontario. *OLYMPIKA* offers articles which range from consideration of the survival of the 'Olympic Idea' to 'Figure Skating Judging Systems', and everything in between. There are also book and article reviews in each volume. This literature is well supported by the Proceedings of the International Symposium for Olympic Research. Within the pages links are made to all of the usual suspects, including the International Olympic Sports Federations, Recognised Sports Federations and other Research and Documentation Centres, including Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport, Barcelona.

The International Centre for Olympic Studies can be found at [www.uwo.ca/olympic/links.html](http://www.uwo.ca/olympic/links.html)

**Australian Centre for Olympic Studies.** Although similar in nature to the Western Ontario site, the Australian Centre for Olympic Studies does not offer the same depth of resources. ACOS was initiated in 2005 in order to provide a focus for Olympic studies within Australia. The centre aims to examine Olympic studies in their broadest sense, to consider issues relating to the Olympic Games and to research the Paralympic Games and other major sporting events. The site has links to organisations such as the Olympic Committees, Olympic Studies Sites and general Olympic related sites. The real value of this site however, is its on-line bibliography, which is up-to-date, extensive and very comprehensive. The bibliography, presented by Veal and Toohey (2008) contains over 2000 separate entries, listed alphabetically by author. If an Olympic themed article has been published, it is almost certainly in this bibliography.

The Australian Centre for Olympic Studies can be found at [www.business.uts.edu.au/olympic/index.html](http://www.business.uts.edu.au/olympic/index.html)

**The British National Film Archive.** Finally, as they say a picture is worth a thousand words, particularly in these days of active student engagement. I would urge everyone to visit The British National Film Archive, which holds a wealth of information about the Olympic Games. As they themselves say 'it is a wonderful coincidence that the modern Olympic Games officially began in 1896, the same date as the creation of the moving image'. Images date back to 1906 and include films and tv recordings of such moments as Hitler opening the Berlin games, the 1908 marathon, the first post-WWII games and the Munich massacre.

The National Film Archive can be found at [www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/library/eventsexh/past/olympics/film-tv.html](http://www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/library/eventsexh/past/olympics/film-tv.html)

## The Olympic Games: an event management perspective

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The Olympic Games is one of the world's largest events and should, therefore, provide a wealth of interesting literature for those interested in all aspects of the academic discipline of event management. Those who are more inclined towards an event studies perspective can focus upon topics such as the politics related to producing a successful bid or the way in which the event is used to convey meanings about the host nation and its people.

Alternatively, those interested in the operational management aspects of the event should be able to focus upon the planning, operation, impacts and subsequent evaluation of the staging of the Games. However, a review of the educational resources that are available indicates that although there are some excellent sources of information available, there are some huge gaps in relation to the actual management of this event.

**www.gamesbids.com** is an independently run website that maintains an archive of the all of the bids made for the summer, winter and youth Olympic bids that have been made during 2008 and also provides copies of all the current bids that have been submitted for the 2016 games. Details are provided on each stage of the voting process to enable the reader to identify patterns in voting activity and to monitor the progress of each city's bid. The site is divided into sections relating to the bids received for each games, an easily searchable archive, and up to date stories on the progress of each bid. The site is of particular interest to those interested in event management as it allows for a comparison to be made between the content of a city's initial bid, its subsequent revisions and, when comparing it to material that is available elsewhere, the similarities and differences to what was actually delivered when the games took place.

**www.vancouver2010.com** is the official website of the winter games of 2010 due to be held in and around Vancouver, British Columbia in February and March 2010. A first time visitor to the site may be a little put off by the sheer amount of information that is immediately available and the number of possible links and subsections as the site provides information aimed at such diverse populations as spectators, local residents, athletes and those with a more general interest in the event. The Vancouver games, like those of Sydney 2000, raises several issues relating to the portrayal and use of indigenous peoples and there is an excellent section that aims to address this particular issue. The site has its own useful resources section, which although it attempts to cover a huge range of topics, is a useful starting point for those becoming interested in the philosophy and history of all aspects of the winter games.

**http://iocc.ca/** (The Impact on Community Coalition) is an excellent example of an independently created website that is "dedicated to maximizing the positive impacts of the 2010 Vancouver/Whistler Olympic Games for the host city and surrounding regions, while minimising the negative impacts". The difference between this site and those which are maintained by official Olympic organisations (even though the website seeks to subvert this by the use of IOCC in its URL) is that it gives a voice to the people who will directly pay the costs associated with hosting the event and gives them a forum to air their concerns, hopes and expectations for the event. The site also has a newsletter that you can sign up for to keep up to date with recent developments, videos and presentations that have been made by those related to the organising of the games in British Columbia. It is also interesting to note the connections that have been made with residents groups that are concerned with some aspects of the 2012 games in London.

**http://www.olympic.org/** is the official website of the Olympic movement and it provides an excellent educational archive ([http://www.olympic.org/uk/passion/studies/index\\_uk.asp](http://www.olympic.org/uk/passion/studies/index_uk.asp)) that covers all aspects of the event, including audiovisual resources that can be used. There is also a historical archives section that aims to preserve the documents produced and received by the International Olympic Committee in the course of its activities, and others

from private collections. Some of this material can be accessed online, but for the items that are not currently viewable there are clear instructions on how they can be obtained or how an appointment can be made to view them. It is also possible to view a virtual Olympic Museum ([http://www.olympic.org/uk/passion/museum/index\\_uk.asp](http://www.olympic.org/uk/passion/museum/index_uk.asp)).

However, as mentioned at the outset, there does seem to be a gap in the material that is available to those with an interest in how the Olympics are managed as an event. Whilst there is a great deal of information available about how bids are made and developments up to the date each Olympics begins, there is, after this, almost complete silence. There seems to be little information available on how the event itself is planned at an operational level and even less from official sources on any subsequent evaluation that takes place in the weeks and months following the event. As such, whilst the Olympics is undoubtedly one of the world's largest events, there tends to be more information available to those who are interested in its politics and economics than those who are interested in operational issues.

## Book Review

**Toohey, K., and Veal, A. J. (2007). *The Olympic Games: a social science perspective*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Sydney: CABI Publishing. ISBN 978-0-809-1**

The Olympic Games are becoming a popular field of research in the social sciences. The study of this modern (and post-modern) phenomenon usually provides significant data and adds further to the debate. So, it was with great pleasure and eagerness that I decided to review this book. My impression from the first edition was that it was a solid and coherent analysis of the Olympic phenomenon from ancient times to the present. The second edition follows the same *recipe* as the first. The changes, indeed, are not many, either in structure or context of the book. The aim remains the same: to provide a useful handbook for students and scholars in the field of Olympic studies and social sciences in general.

Technically, the book is an Olympic studies handbook: it contains a rich historical review of the Olympic Games; a deep and detailed insight of the IOC and its function; and a presentation of the modern Olympic reality (media, scandals, doping and so on). The problem, though, is that it creates a contradiction to its own title: in that it fails to give a comprehensive *social science perspective*.

Looking specifically at the structure of the book, the first chapter is the introduction; the second, third and fourth chapters conduct a detailed historical review of the Olympic Games, from their origins, through their revival and up to today. In chapter four there is also a presentation of the IOC, its commissions and functions. However, the small reference to 'critics of the IOC' in this chapter does not reflect the huge debate concerning the role of the IOC over the years and its political and ethical responsibility for key events in Olympic history. There is a lack of critical evaluation in this chapter and the quotations from academics in this field are more than 15 years old, even though a substantial bibliography has been evolving over the last decade.

The next chapter, called "Politics, Nationalism and the Olympic Movement" is quite significant to the book's ideological shallowness. This chapter deals with the politics of the Olympic Games: either it involves incidents during the Games, or the political background of the hosting nation. There are several notable shortcomings in this chapter, including little reference to opposition to the Olympics. The authors mention only one case even though, again, there is a distinctive bibliography in this field (see Lenskyj 2000; 2004). In the section called "Political demonstrations, terrorism and security of the Games", after mentioning several incidents such as the terrorist act of Munich 1972, the Atlanta bombing of 1996 and the increased security/fear in Sydney and Athens, Toohey and Veal also mention Carlos' and Smith's "Black Power" salute in the Olympic Games of Mexico 1968. By mentioning this incident among those others, they directly link it to terrorism. Furthermore, they go as far as to characterise this act of protest as *trouble*, when dealing with it earlier (p. 112):

The first sign of trouble at the Games occurred when Tommy Smith, a 200 metres sprinter, said that if he won his event he did not want Avery Brundage to present him with a medal.

To present a symbolic act of protest, which is widely perceived as an icon of bravery and solidarity (vindicated by history), as “trouble” and link it to terrorist acts must surely be a mistake. Because, if it is not, then it belongs to the ailing ideology of “who’s not with us, is against us”. The same mistake is made earlier in that chapter where, at the end of the section about Munich’s terrible terrorist act with its 17 dead, Toohey and Veal mention “another less violent and less well known protest at the Munich Games” (p. 108), which was when Irish protesters rode bicycles into the British road cycling team during competition. This is a confusion of two completely different acts.

One of the strengths of the book is the in-depth analysis of doping in sport and particularly in the Olympic Games, in chapter 8. It provides different aspects of drug use and the history of doping and contributes to the debate on this issue. Another strength, given that the book is targeting students, is the wide variety of issues that are discussed. The book’s essential value rests in the in-depth historical references and in its simple and understandable writing. However, the book fails to deliver a constructive critical argument on the role of Olympic Games. Toohey and Veal’s contribution to the critical thought of Olympic studies, through this book, is limited and the ideological context that the book embraces represents a political realism, which ultra-conservative ideological groups and politicians have lately been promoting. In this view no distinction is drawn between terrorists and those who protest against the Olympics. This is a pity because the over-protective attitude which is shown by Toohey and Veal towards the IOC may, for some, call their objectivity into question.

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