

Planning and Development Leading to a Centre for Olympic Studies in a University Setting

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This investigation considered the planning and development of a centre for Olympic studies. It was argued that such a centre can be justified initially by the fact that the Olympic Games as a cultural development began in 776 B.C. and continued—for better or worse—until 393 A.D., a period exceeding 1000 years. Subsequently, the modern Olympic Movement, organized for the first time in 1896, has been enormously successful.

However, society in the twentieth-century world society has grown steadily and become increasingly complex. Concurrently, the scope and influence of highly competitive sport has grown at an almost frightening rate. It has been impossible for the Games to escape both the positive and negative influences of the various pivotal social forces at work (e.g., nationalism, economics). Resultantly, in 1990, slightly less than 100 years later because of perennial abuses and other concerns, there are those who would see the Games as presently constituted eliminated at the first possible moment.

The position taken in this investigation was that highly competitive sport (in this case the Olympic Games), is worthy of support to the extent that it relates beneficially to the development of the individual, to the general education of all people, and to the enhancement of the world's various cultures. It now appears that competitive sport will need to be re-structured in various ways at all levels if this goal is to be realized. It was argued further that scholarly and professional involvement in this enterprise is one of several ways in which the field of sport and physical education can upgrade its research efforts at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Also, the field must become able to cope with the knowledge becoming available as the burgeoning sport enterprise makes its influence increasingly felt—for better or worse.

The identification of a general theme for the Centre for Olympic Studies (i.e., the history and present development of the Olympic Games) having been resolved, this analysis discussed seven aspects of the development, a number of which may be included within the proposed center as discussed in sections 6 and 7 below: (1) historical background and present status; (2) a statement of purpose for the Centre, (3) available human and physical resources; (4) membership and institutional affiliations; (5) financing for the Centre (including grant funding); (6) activities of the Centre (including a teaching subdivision, involving courses, conferences, seminars, lectures, and opportunities for travel experiences), and a research subdivision (including an oral history section); and (7) organization and administration of the Centre. Additionally, publications relating to the Olympics movement, including conference proceedings, an annual journal, occasional papers, support for major works where possible, and a (proposed) semi-annual newsletter are anticipated. Finally, a physical resources and documentation division will provide a variety of scholarly services to those concerned, and an Olympics museum, including permanent and traveling exhibits, has been proposed for consideration.