1997 OLYMPIC COLLECTORS FAIR INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Man, by which we mean the human being and no disrespect to women, evolved as a collector. In prehistoric times he collected for his subsistence and survival - food, skins, wood, bones etc. Since we know today that food collecting and hunting did not take up more than part of the day, we can surmise that in his free time man also collected for pleasure or for decorating his abode, mostly shining objects found in his surroundings as archeological diggings give evidence to. Man also collected trophies of animals and other men killed by him, which became the symbol of chieftains and the first kings.

In more recent, but still ancient, times collectibles were the envy of nobility, thus to be found in palaces. Early in human history, temples and other places of worship were filled with collectibles, offertories of worshippers. In fact, temples were the first museums.

Among the early collectibles sport memorabilia can be found in Egypt, and Olympic memorabilia in ancient Greece. They belonged to private collectors - athletes or spectators, nobility but mostly to be found in the treasure houses of the various cities.

In this respect permit me to state that the first documented air mail message was Olympic. Taurosthenes of Aegina, who won the wrestling at the 84th Olympiad(444 BC), tied a ribbon around a pigeon's leg and released it. The pigeon arrived in Aegina the same day (170 km.) announcing his victory. Unfortunately, the ribbon has not been preserved (though surely we can find the descendant of the messenger), but Olympic philately can pride itself of having been the first documented air-mail .

Olympic coins of that era are the pride of Olympic numismatists and other memorabilia (amphorae, discuses etc.) are to found in museums.

During the middle ages, most of those items not buried under Olympia, were displayed in the houses of the nobles and preserved in churches (mostly in the Vatican).

Modern collecting of Olympic relics started with the first archeological excavations in Olympia in 1829 (the French Morea expedition). The relics went to the Louvre.

Most of the objects found went to the museums of the respective countries that were responsible for the expeditions, but many went into private collections, either of participants or collectors that bought from them.

Memorabilia from Olympic Games can be found from the so-called Olympic Games in England and the Zappas Games which preceded the Coubertin Olympic Games. With the 1894 Paris Congress, the real Olympic Games Collectibles collecting did start.

This very, very brief and far from exhaustive introduction to collecting in general and to Olympic Collectibles in particular, brings us to the actual Olympic collector. What is he (or she) ? What are the definitions of the various collectors ? How could or ought they to collect ? What are their privileges and duties within the Olympic Movement ? Finally, where do we go from here, after having participated at this fair? And what is the message that we ought to give to our colleagues world-wide ?

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Let us try and define Olympic collecting in general, notwithstanding the nature of the collectible.

LEVEL OF COLLECTING	INDIVIDUAL COLLECTOR	MUSEUM
1. ACCUMULATION	BEGINNER	IN DEPOTS
2. CLASSIFICATION	PHILATELIST, NUMISMATIST, SOUVENIR HUNTER	CLASSIFICATION
3. RESEARCH	OLYMPIC PHILATELIST, OLYMPIC NUMISMATIST OLYMPIC MEMORABILIA COLLECTOR	OLYMPIC LINKS

1. The beginner, in most cases, starts a collection by accumulating Olympic « items » bought or received on the occasion of an Olympic Games, either as a participating athlete, an official, a member of the Olympic family or a spectator. The beginner can also be any person world-wide buying or receiving an Olympic « item ». By « Olympic item » we mean any Olympic-linked object, whether a stamp, a coin or any other souvenir. It is not sure whether the beginner will continue his (her) Olympic collection. This will depend on the quantity of the items received (bought), his (her) general interest in Olympics, age, other, previous interests, attitude of family or friends towards Olympisme, and the stimulation received from other Olympic collectors. It is my estimate that 90% of the beginners are temporary fans, at most « accumulators » which could become serious collectors with correct motivation and prodding.

The items that reach the museum (sports, Olympic, NOC etc.) are at the beginning in boxes and taken out at a later date.

2. The second level of collecting encompasses « classification ». At this moment the collector becomes a philatelist (collecting stamps), a numismatist (collecting coins) and a hunter of memorabilia. Collecting has become a hobby, a serious pastime and the « items » are being classified (whenever possible) according to philatelic, numismatic or memorabilia criteria. But, his (her) level are the same as other philatelists or coin collectors, and besides the theme « Olympic », there is no real link/connection with Olympisme. At this stage of collecting, we may assume that the person is « hooked » and that while the level of collecting from the Olympic point of view is not yet perfect, he (she) will continue the collection.

In the museum the items are taken out of the boxes and being classified according to their Olympic nature. However, no real study is made and a description in depth is yet to be made.

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3. The third level of Olympic collecting necessitates « Olympic Research ». Olympic Research means to find the link/connection between the « item » and Olympic history :

- the purpose of making
- made when, by whom, and technical properties ?
- how many ?
- distribution : giving or selling ?
- what connection to an Olympic event, competition or other ?
- if written, do the « historical facts » correspond to the real facts ?
- source of acquisition (facultative)
- market or collectors' value

Research makes the real difference between « common » and « Olympic « collection/collecting. This is true for an individual collector or a museum. A museum that satisfies itself with displaying and describing the item without giving the related research facts, is not a real museum - it is a show room.

If the collector has reached this level of collecting, he (she) can be defined as an « Olympic Collector » and ought to merit all the privileges connected to that definition (we shall go into this in a few moments).

In fact, this is one of the important messages that we wish to convey to you :

« AN OLYMPIC COLLECTOR MUST HAVE THE OLYMPIC KNOWLEDGE THAT GOES WITH HIS (HER) COLLECTIBLES »

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Which brings us to the definition of the collectibles :

1. PHILATELY	2. NUMISMATICS	3. MEMORABILIA
STAMPS AND RELATED PHILATELIC ITEMS	COINS AND RELATED NUMISMATIC ITEMS	ALL THE OTHER SOUVENIRS
NUMISMATIC COVERS	OLYMPIC NOTES	

In fact, all collectibles are « souvenirs » from and of the Olympic Games or the Olympic Movement. Hence, they are all « memorabilia ». « Memorabilia », from a linguistic point of view is wrong : it means « Matters or events worthy to be remembered ; points worthy of note ; things to be remembered ». But, use makes the language, and by now « memorabilia » has been accepted as the souvenirs of the event not the event itself. **By the same token, « memorabilia » was limited to all items which do not belong to philately or numismatics. Let us stay with that definition.**

We have coined stamps to be « two-dimensional » items, a definition widely used by John Krimsky. who, though a philatelist himself, likes to mock a little bit at stamps with this definition. Well, numismatic covers are "tridimensional".

Numismatics claims also to include medals - since according to numismatists anything « struck » belongs to numismatics. Memorabilia collectors contest this and classify medals within « memorabilia ». We should determine to which discipline medals belong.

Olympic notes - though unknown until today, may make their appearance and will constitute the two-dimensional coins.

To summarize :

1. Philatelic items can be two- or tridimensional.
2. Coins and notes belong to numismatics.
3. All other souvenirs belong to the memorabilia class.

« IT SHOULD BE DETERMINED TO WHICH DISCIPLINE MEDALS BELONG TO ».

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And now some words and questions about the future of Olympic collecting :

1. What should be the duties or the tasks of the Olympic collector ?

2. Should the Olympic collector stay a specialist in one discipline of collecting - a philatelist, a numismatist or a « memorabiliaist » (a new word ! !), or should he (she) become a generalist and collect stamps and coins and memorabilia ?

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1. There are some duties and tasks that I can think of, considering that the aim of the Olympic collecting should be one way to promote and advertise Olympisme :

- Increase his (her) general knowledge of Olympic history (ancient and modern).
- Create a bibliography (or copies of documents) related to the collectibles of his (her) interest.
- Through research answer all the questions mentioned above; this could be incomplete with some memorabilia, but one must try to obtain most answers.

Until now the Olympic collector asked for privileges, hich he (she) obtained:

- he (she) was welcome to all "Olympic events": Games, Sessions, Congresses etc. where one ould seek and trade for new items
- he (she) was invited to be members of Oltmpic collectors' associations
- he (she) could participate at Olympic Fairs
- he (she) had access to all Olympic publications and displays
- he (she) could participate at the Olympic collectibles exhibition (during the Games)
- he (she) had access to the Olympic Family faciliteies etc.

Now, the Olympic collector should have some duties, and mainly: **SHOW AND DISPLAY HIS (HER) COLLECTION AT ANY APPROPRIATE OCCASION TO PROMOTE THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT. THE ITEMS SHOWN MUST IMPART OLYMPIC KNOWLEDGE TO THE SPECTATOR OR VIEWER. GIVE PAPERS AND CONFERENCES ON OLYMPIC COLLECTIBLES. WRITE ARTICLES ABOUT OLYMPIC COLLECTIBLES.**

Carl DIEM, in 1913 for the opening of the "Deutsches Stadion" (for the 1916 Games), said: "Until now we claimed the Stadium, now the Stadium claims us" .

"UNTIL NOW, WE OLYMPIC COLLECTORS CLAIMED PRIVILEGES OF THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT, NOW THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT CLAIMS DUTIES OF US".

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2. « AN EXPERT IS A PERSON THAT KNOWS MORE AND MORE ABOUT LESS AND LESS ».

	PHILATELY	MEMORABILIA	COINS
1. SPORTS • DISCIPLINES • COMPETITIONS • TORCH RELAY	• STAMPS • CANCELLATIONS • CANCELLATIONS	• Newspapers, pictures • TORCHES	
2. ATHLETES • ANY • MEDALISTS	• Stamps	• ACCREDITATION • MEDALS	• Coins
3. TEAMS		• PINS, BADGES, ACCREDITATION	
4. OFFICIALS AND REFEREES		• PINS, BADGES, ACCREDITATION	
5. ADVERTISING	• STAMPS (general)	• POSTERS (specific) • MASCOTS	• Coins
6. SPECTATORS		• TICKETS • PROGRAMS	
7. SOUVENIRS	• Postcards	• MANY	
8. FINANCING	• Some stamps	• SOUVENIRS FROM SPONSORS	• COINS
9. IOC, NOC ACTIVITIES	• Cancellations	• PINS • INVITATIONS • MENUS	
10. CULTURAL EVENTS	• Cancellations	• TICKETS • PROGRAMS	

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CAPITAL LETTERS = MANY OBJECTS

small letters = some or few objects

The table shows us that the historical events can better be documented by philatelic items, while the human and logistic aspects can better be documented by memorabilia. Coins are important in financial support.

Philately, general, thematic or Olympic has a long organized past, which aimed more and more toward specialization, from a philatelic point of view. The Olympic collector followed this trend to the extreme, and we only find very few « general » Olympic collectors. This specialization caused new horizons to be explored, meaning more historical knowledge about the theme. The rules for showing and guidelines for collecting stress the necessity to link the philatelic items with the « Olympic » facts they documents. Thus, for us, the important parameters to evaluate such collections are the « degree of possible completeness » - the aim of almost all collectors, and the « Olympic knowledge ».

TYPE OF COLLECTION	COMPLETENESS	OLYMPIC KNOWLEDGE CORRESPONDING TO THE THEME
GENERAL	40%	MEDIUM, NOT DETAILED
ANCIENT GAMES	75%	HIGH, DETAILED
1896-1906	70%	HIGH, DETAILED
1896-1940	50%	MEDIUM, NOT DETAILED
1948-1996	50%	MEDIUM, NOT DETAILED
2 GAMES	80%	HIGH, DETAILED
1 GAMES	90%	HIGH, DETAILED

The Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP), recognized the danger of super specialization, which led to loss of interest of the collector and mainly the spectator. FIP consequently created the « OPEN CLASS », which allows in a display 50% of philatelic items and 50% of memorabilia relative to the same theme. We believe that the same advise ought to be given to the Olympic philatelist : »INCREASE YOUR OLYMPIC KNOWLEDGE (HUMAN AND LOGISTIC), EXTEND YOUR COLLECTION (LIMITED IN CHANCES OF PHILATELIC COMPLETENESS), INCREASE YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC CULTURAL HERITAGE BY INCORPORATING INTO YOUR COLLECTION OLYMPIC MEMORABILIA AS WELL ! »

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While Olympic memorabilia collecting has a long history, no obligation for classification or in depth study of the objects existed - as far as the individual collector was concerned. This is growing lately, but still far from being satisfactory.

If we try to apply the same criteria (as to philately) to memorabilia collectors, we get the following picture :

TYPE OF MEMORABILIA COLLECTED	COMPLETENESS	POSSIBLE OLYMPIC KNOWLEDGE CORRESPONDING TO THE THEME
ALL MEMORABILIA	10%	LOW, NOT DETAILED
ANCIENT GAMES	5%	HIGH, DETAILED
BADGES, PINS OF ALL GAMES	40%	MEDIUM, NOT DETAILED
BADGES, PINS OF ONE OR SOME GAMES	50%	MEDIUM, DETAILED
MEDALS OF ALL GAMES	20%	HIGH, DETAILED
MEDALS OF ONE OR SOME GAMES (MORE MODERN)	60-75%	HIGH, DETAILED
TORCHES OF ALL GAMES	60%	HIGH, DETAILED
TORCHES OF ONE OR SOME GAMES	80-90%	HIGH, DETAILED
OTHER MEMORABILIA OF ALL GAMES	20%	LOW, NOT DETAILED
OTHER MEMORABILIA OF ONE OR SOME GAMES (MORE MODERN)	40%	MEDIUM, NOT DETAILED

We believe that the Olympic memorabilia collector could do better, from the Olympic Movement promotion point of view if he would limit him(her)self to a certain type of memorabilia and add some philatelic souvenirs, to extend the historical aspects of his (her) collection.

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Coins are easier to analyze, because of the limited amount of objects. This, on the other hand, facilitates a high level of Olympic knowledge - related to the specific coins.

TYPE OF COINS COLLECTED	COMPLETENESS	POSSIBLE OLYMPIC KNOWLEDGE CORRESPONDING TO THE THEME
ALL COINS	10%	HIGH, DETAILED
ANCIENT GAMES	5%	HIGH, DETAILED
OFFICIAL COINS	40%	HIGH, DETAILED
UNOFFICIAL COINS	50%	HIGH, DETAILED
OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL COINS	20%	HIGH, DETAILED

Olympic coin collectors are a special breed. While they could extend their collection, thus also their Olympic Movement promotional participation, I opine that they would shy away from it. They do, on the other hand, claim fatherhood to Olympic medals (winners and commemorative), as the latter are « struck », sometimes by the same mints that strike the coins. Whether medals are officially part of memorabilia or coins is, in my opinion, secondary. Whoever collects them is welcome.

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Individual collecting, contrary to a museum's one, is a hobby and should stay one. Liberty in the choice of the collection; liberty (sometimes dictated by circumstances) in the amount of money spent; liberty to define the limits of the collection. But, like democracy, which also guarntees freedom and liberty, free choice and the freedom of expression, Olympic collec ting imposes certain obligations and duties.
Thoses duties consist mainly of spreading the Olympic ideal and culture through one's collection.

Do specialise if you like, but do not limit your knowledge.
Become a general collector if you like, but the trees should not hide the forest.
But, never turn into an expert, otherwise you will not see the forest.

Finally, do not collect to excess.
"WHEN A MAN PLUNGES INTO THE MIRE OF EXCESS, IT IS UNCONCEIVABLE THAT HIS FACE WILL NOT BE MIRY SOMEPLACE"

HONORE DE BALZAC

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