



**SPORTS PHOTOJOURNALISM: CONTROL AND REGULARISATION OF THE MAIN
ELEMENTS FOR RETRIEVAL**

**FOTOJORNALISMO ESPORTIVO: CONTROLE E REGULARIZAÇÃO DOS
ELEMENTOS PRINCIPAIS PARA RECUPERAÇÃO**

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyses the main rules to be followed for the control of the retrieval elements in sports photographs. Therefore, the study focuses on sports journalistic photographs and the regularisation of three elements used to retrieve the information: sportsperson, sport and date. Our business reality makes it unfeasible to carry out a detailed analysis of journalistic photographs, due to the need for speed, the increase in the number of photographs due to the new digital formats being used (Sánchez-Vigil, Marcos-Recio, 2009) and the lack of human resources.

KEYWORDS: Photojournalism / Sports / Regularisation / Documentary Management / Photographic Documentation Departments

RESUMO: Este artigo analisa as principais regras a serem seguidas para o controle dos elementos de recuperação nas fotografias de esportes. Portanto, o estudo se concentra em fotografias jornalísticas de esportes e a regularização de três elementos utilizados para recuperar a informação: esportista, esporte e data. Nossa realidade empresarial torna inviável a realização de uma análise detalhada das fotografias jornalísticas, devido à necessidade de velocidade, o aumento do número de fotografias devido aos novos formatos digitais utilizados (Sánchez-Vigil, Marcos-Recio, 2009) e a falta de recursos humanos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Fotojornalismo, Esportes, Regularização, Gerenciamento Documentário, Departamentos de documentação fotográfica.

1. Sports and the Media

Mass media and sports have traditionally walked hand by hand since the arrival of the media as a means to inform the masses. They have supported each other (media includes the press, radio and television) in order to obtain more audience within a framework of mutual parasitism. The development of sports at present could not be understood unless mass broadcasting is involved with millions and millions of spectators making it possible to create a *global village*, where everyone feels as belonging to the same tribe: *the sports tribe*.

The information being offered to the aforementioned tribe –information which is demanded by it- has very specific and inherent characteristics, which define it and make this task a peculiar activity with differentiating features.

Following an analysis of its progressive settling and development in the different environments of our current society, we come to the conclusion that sports are one of the most representative cultural phenomena of our century. This development and rooting in society is such that we can identify it in every one of the aspects of society, i.e. education, leisure, technology, business, commerce, politics and communications (Riera, 1985, ps. 21-23).

The increase in number of sports events runs parallel to the expectation these events cause during television broadcasts. The increase -and the increase in the level of professionalism- is closely related to sports as a show, as a source of entertainment and excitement, with its eco being spread and extended with the help of the modern social media.

Given that sports are a universal language and therefore a meeting point for different countries and cultures, interpretation is easy for any culture and the social impact is huge, they are sometimes used with political and propagandistic purposes.

Due to the above and other issues inherent to the sports event, sports have become an interesting and exciting part of our society, worth being studied from different perspectives and amongst them, the documentary perspective.

“The media have both taken advantage and helped sports, as they took advantage of sports events in order to reach a greater audience, and since this audience demanded sports, they have also promoted their being broadcasted. Thus the media became stronger and increased the communicative effect of sports” (Alcoba, 1987, p. 335).

Due to the existence of sport-dedicated channels and the great number of hours of radio broadcasting dedicated to them, it would seem that sports newspapers have now a lesser audience and interest, but this perception is totally wrong. The audio-visual media have reinforced the access to contents in the press, as a need for greater consumption has been generated. And the visual and audio-visual culture of the new digital media has reinforced the demand of users of a greater amount of photographic documents.

2. Sports Photojournalism

Photojournalism is a genre of journalism which is directly related to photography, graphic design and video. Professionals of this field are known as press photographers or photojournalists.

The development of journalist photography is closely related to the reporting of war conflicts and its existence was vital for the development of journalism.

The essential features to be considered in order to determine whether a photograph is journalistic or not are: its being current, objective, clearly narrated (i.e. it must be easy to

understand) and following the established formats (i.e. it must keep the rules of photographic format).

Sports photography is a type of photography that has attracted many professional photographers at some point. This genre ceased to be considered a lesser genre a long time ago, especially with major sports events relying on such a great number of supporters and the increase in the number of the media which systematically broadcasted the information and therefore obtained large benefits by the use of advertising.

New technologies have majorly impacted photography. Digital photography has changed to a great extent the way to work and the communications habits (Caldera-Serrano, 2008).

3. Particularities of Documentary Handling of Sports Photography.

With this paper we do not intend to assess or explain the way photographic material is handled in documentary terms, as there is already extensive literature available produced by reputed authors (Valle Gastaminza, Sánchez Vigil, in Spanish). However, we would like to clarify the parameters on which the description of sports material is based in terms of descriptions and creation of access points, as well as highlight elements relating to the visualisation and identification of photographs.

There are two key elements in photographic documentation database management when identifying and describing material:

Visualisation of the document: the formal and iconographic aspects represented on them must be identified. Identification of chronological, theme-related, geographical and name-related elements are not always easy to do from a simple look at the material, and other elements need to be considered in order to help discern the content aspects of the visual information. Recognition of people, places and themes is not always an easy task as the documentalist only has his/ her own cultural references in order to determine the visualised iconographic reality. For this purpose, the documentalist may use external tools such as sports newspapers, lists of the items of information from press offices, federations as well as magazines specialised in general or specific sports, etc.

The **heading of the photograph** is a key element for the retrieval as free text, together with the description of the image. We must highlight that the number of professional journalists accessing directly the documentary information via corporate intranets is increasingly larger, with them making requests from the documentary databases and selecting the corresponding materials. This means that free text provides many advantages against controlled documentary languages, as the heading must be created from the basis of the linguistic and expressive reality of the editors in the specific medium. The Documentary Department must be adapted to users and not force them to use our traditional methods. We will highlight as a general procedure that the heading must reflect the basic information in terms of who is the main character appearing on the photograph and what he/ she is doing; where and when are highly recommended too, but it may result complex and particularly confusing at times for the journalist. Starting by indicating the

sport involved in the photograph would help to the retrieval process by searching of this term without the need to use a controlled language.

Another important issue, which is often mistaken in some databases with photographic information, is whether the heading itself should include the description of the photograph. This is not easy to determine as many parameters will need to be taken into account, such as human resources, financial resources, user requirements, attitudes and aptitudes of the journalists. We believe it is necessary to make this distinction, provided that this was appropriate and relevant, by indicating in the description visual elements such as maps, climate conditions, environment, etc., i.e. elements which could not easily be included in the heading.

We will need to refer to the *day* and the degree of *sunshine* as ordinary elements, highlighting all those elements that may not be included in the aforesaid elements, such as rain, snow, night, etc. However, not only the outstanding weather conditions will be indicated but also the condition of the buildings in which the sports events take place will need to be identified; therefore, we will need to refer to whether a potential tool in a facility is empty or has spectators, has lighting or not, etc. Another interesting issue would be to analyse all connotations, i.e. the elements that are only suggested but not denoted on the photographs (Neal, 2010).

Descriptive Parameters of Sports Photographic Documentation

The databases with descriptions of photographic material could be -and are in fact- much more comprehensive than we are suggesting in this paper. However, the number of professionals carrying out documentary management tasks in the traditional way is decreasing. Additionally, the number of photographs is increasing due to the ease of reproduction of digital material and the journalist has more and more direct access to the databases through intranets. Thus, the tools to be used must be in accordance to the real needs and potential not only of the media but also of the users with whom the work is actually done. Anything outside this means a waste of time and money. What would be the purpose of developing such complex tools if they will not be used?

Apart from requesting in free text the description of the photograph and the heading, there are another three main elements used in this type of job.

People: sportsperson and people related to the world of sports.

Sport: indication of the specialisation, where necessary, and the competition in question.

Date of the photograph

Control of the Person's Name:

It is recommendable within the name fields to include individuals and corporate bodies amongst which entities, which are not corporate bodies in themselves but have a proper

name, need to also be considered. In the case of the names of the sports teams, elements adhered to the name which are related to advertising brands shall not be identified.

The regulated denomination of sportspeople is a complex element to determine in the media, due to the need of including names that are commonly accepted against an excess of regularisation (Caldera-Serrano, 2007). We must take into account that any information provided by the database must be adapted to the needs and knowledge of the service users.

Although it is not very regulatory and orthodox, we think the best way to adapt the access points to the needs is indicating it by using the formula that is habitual in the media with all the issues this brings up. This would mean offering names without surnames and in many cases, nicknames, in order to identify the players. **Ronaldo**, a Brazilian player in the last decade is known by this name, but it is less habitual to find professionals who may know his full name. The problems arise because the databases include the names of not just the sportspeople but also other celebrities, and therefore any potential future homonyms will need to be avoided by indicating the profession of the person. In the event that the same name was used by more than one player, which does not usually take place within one historic stage, the sport shall be indicated, followed by the club to which he/ she belongs at the time of analysis. This information, which shall not be included in the searches, will be provided by the system when asked, and it will be a discriminating element on documentary retrieval.

We may also find that some players are denominated by their name and first surname. There is a trend towards the identification of people by their first surname and an obviation of the second surname, which is undoubtedly under Anglo-Saxon influence. Should the aforementioned information be known, and the players be known as such, the information must be regulated according to the rules applicable to catalogue centres in the language of the Documentation Department.

With regards to sports institutions, it is necessary to make an exhaustive control of them, as it is very frequent for these institutions to change their names. The change in name, which is partially an element of added value, as it provides information on the institution and not only onomastic information, can pose serious issues in documentary retrieval, as the specific name must be known throughout history.

The change of name of an institution is not habitual in the case of football clubs, but it is in other environments where providing the name of the sponsor leads to the frequent modification of the name of the club.

Equally, regularisation will be necessary in order to name the national teams in the various sports. In order to do this, first of all the name of the country must be indicated, according to the geographical thesaurus, followed by the indication of the team and the sport.

With regards to the possibility that the institution and the team may be feminine or masculine, it is worth highlighting that the said information must be indicated in theme descriptors or as an element of the name access points. This matter needs to be treated with care in order not to incur in sexism, but this is an easily solved issue. Clearly we must identify these elements by theme or name –we prefer the latter- including an element to identify whether the sport is masculine or feminine. In order to save on workload, we prefer

to indicate “feminine” for the name of the team integrated by women and “mixed” for what we understand will become more a reality for some types of sports. No indication of the masculine attribute is the result of an unquestionable reality in the audio-visual media, i.e. the majority of team sports are performed by men, or at least the sports that are most frequently on the media. As an attempt to reach a compromise solution, it would be recommended for each information service wanting to adopt the said aspects, to make a deep analysis in order to identify whether it is more recommendable to indicate “feminine” or “masculine” for the management of audio-visual information.

Control of the Sport and the Competition:

Determining the type of sport is relatively easy. A good theme thesaurus must control all and each one of the existing sports or update them at the Documentation Department as they enter the scene. Additionally, and as a way of identification of the above element, a list of the various competitions existing for the said sport, needs to be made. For example: Tennis- Roland Garros.

And, finally, the date on which the competition was captured must be indicated, including the date, month and year.

Conclusions

Photojournalism Documentation Departments must adapt their professional work to the requirements of their journalists, which means sometimes moving away from documentary routines and habits when creating and implementing their databases and the regularisation of the elements in them.

The new reality has led to a change in the way the documentalist is present, as the journalist can directly access and consult the databases.

This is why the most important elements of the search of information in a sports environment are the heading and the description in free text, the name of the sportsperson, the sport and date of capture of the photograph.

We must reiterate that regularisation must adapt to users and that is why the control of people’s names is not regulatory at all, although it is useful for users, where the name of the character is indicated always as habitually used by journalists.

And finally, sports photojournalistic documentation is a segment of documentation that still needs a lot of work and efforts if we are to approach a reality that is different to that of other documentary and theme types.

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