

The International Olympic Committee issues clear and stringent rules on the rights of reporters and media companies to provide press coverage of the Games, and to use the Olympic logo, name, and images, in all communications.

However, the recent explosion in social networking has led David Schlesinger, Reuters Editor-in-Chief to call for reforms to the way in which the Olympics view these issues, stating that: *You[the IOC] need to deal with the almost impossible question of who is a journalist, and what does it mean to report."*



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The Birth of Digital Networking

We live in an age of social networking, where the use of Twitter, Facebook, MySpace and other digital file sharing applications proliferate.

Schlesinger's comment regarding the impossible question of 'who' is a journalist is an interesting one; for example, he feels that the first reports to come out of the 2012 London Olympics events will not be from Reuters, Associated Press or, indeed, any other news agency, but from "Twitterers"

sitting in the stadium banging out the result in a Tweet from their mobile phone".

Such a comment is very interesting, as it raises the question of what might happen to the impressive and pivotal media revenues that form the lynchpin of Olympic revenue & profit for the Games, if free social networking sites such as Twitter start to diminish the IOC's media-related bargaining power.

In a recent speech to the International Olympics Committee Press Commission, Schlesinger further argued that it was no longer effective or right to make the distinction between text and images, and between professional reporting and citizen journalism.

Exactly What is a Reporter?

If anyone can report on the Games, and broadcast it the world via Twitter, Facebook and MySpace, then...does that make them a reporter? If so, does this make them bound to legal restrictions imposed on any established newspaper or TV journalist? Schlesinger feels that this is a question that the IOC and press community cannot afford to ignore. Specifically, he feels that attempts at enforcing such laws to all non-licensed individuals sharing Games-related content (as presumably is currently the policy) would draw negative attention to the Games and ultimately prove futile:

"Working against them [social networkers sharing text and images of the Games] would

be crazy. Could you imagine gun-toting guards trying to confiscate every phone off every spectator? "That would become the story of the Games and it would ultimately fail."

Calls for Reform

Schlesinger believes that instead, the outdated rules that govern who can report from the Olympic Games need to be updated. *"The old means of control don't work. The old categories don't work. The old ways of thinking don't work. We need to come to terms with that"*

IOC Bans on Media Coverage

Schlesinger has personally been burnt by the Olympic media watchdogs. He faced a strong warning by the IOC after posting a blog about the Beijing Games, because he had included an unauthorised photo on it. He believed that his treatment had been unnecessarily heavy-handed, telling the IOC that:

"You'd have thought I'd mixed the water with the wine, or served beef at a vegetarian banquet. The full weight of the disapproval from the IOC came down upon us."

Clearly this is a situation to watch – and one that affects every single student that uses social networking technology!

START THE DISCUSSION

1. Do you think that the IOC will be able to uphold their media/rights laws or do you think they will listen to Schlesinger and adapt their approach?
2. Do you think that you will be sharing your thoughts, images and experiences of London 2012 on social networking sites?

FIND OUT MORE

Reuter Editor Calls for Reform of Olympics Accreditation

<http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=6&storycode=43857>

CREDITS

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