

# Info Policy News: Olympic Issues and ACTA

By Devon Greyson.

By the time this Browser issue is published, the Information Policy Committee will have just completed revisiting our strategic directions and clarified our priority directions for 2010. However, we already know that the 2010 Winter Olympic Games – and accompanying information policy challenges – are clearly a major issue to watch out for in the first few months of this year.

This quarter's Info Policy news will highlight a report from our November Salon on the Olympics and free speech issues, as well as answer key questions about the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement.

Hot topics on the listserv lately have included committee member Heather Morrison's ongoing coverage of [the dramatic growth of open access](#), the upcoming legislative review of BC's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), and the CRTC's hearings on the role and future of community television.

## Information Policy Salon: The Olympics and Free Speech

The Intellectual Freedom Committee and the Information Policy Committee collaborated to host a potluck dinner, followed by a very informative salon on Friday, November 27 with guest speakers Chris Shaw, and David Eby.

**Chris Shaw, UBC professor and author of *Five Ring Circus: Myths and Realities of the Olympic Games***, focused on four themes: cost, impact on the poor and homeless, environmental impacts, and transparency and accountability.

Shaw explained to the audience that the Olympics are going to end up being vastly more expensive than BC residents were originally told they would be. Final assessments of the total cost, even years from now, will likely be mere estimates. He asserted that Vancouver is far from unique in struggling with the impact of the Olympics on the homeless population, as "all Olympic cities displace the homeless." This is both because poverty is unsightly to the television

cameras, and due to the massive real estate development projects involved.

In addition to environmental impacts of the games, Shaw discussed the lack of transparency on the part of VANOC, which is not subject to FOI legislation despite receiving significant amounts of public funding. Security efforts related to the games have also highlighted the information asymmetry between VANOC and Olympics-related security, and law enforcement operations and lay individuals.



Canadian artist Kimberly Baker creates art that challenges Bill C-47, the Olympic and Paralympic Marks Act, and addresses issues such as freedom of expression and homelessness. Reproduced with permission from [Kimberly A. Baker \(www.kimberlybaker.ca\)](#)

**David Eby, Executive Director of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association**, took the stage after Shaw, and focused his portion of the salon on free speech, surveillance and homelessness issues.

According to Eby's analysis, the Olympic ideal of all nations putting aside disputes in the name of sport, of being an apolitical event, facilitates communication of certain types of messages and hinders others. This plays out in a way that is hardly apolitical at all, allowing official messages – such as those of corporate sponsors – and shutting down free and democratic dialogue.

Eby discussed the host city contract, which led to bylaws that restrict signage, vending, public assembly and group activities during the Olympics. He also raised the alarm over what unknown types of crowd control techniques the police may be preparing to use on mass demonstrations.

The BCCLA has been assured that the surveillance cameras that are proliferating around Olympic venues are only on lease, and will not remain in town after the Olympics. However, they recently found out that the cameras, once set up, will be offered for sale to municipalities at a discounted rate.

BCCLA has been training legal observers to be security effort watchdogs during the Olympics. If you would like to become more informed, or possibly get involved in protecting freedom of speech and assembly during the games, Eby suggests that individuals consult the BC Civil Liberties Association website:

<http://www.bccla.org/temp/olympicmain.html>.

### 5 Facts About: ACTA

ACTA has been in the news a fair bit lately, but what's it all about? Is this something librarians should know? Will the treaty have any impact of library issues? Here are 5 brief facts about ACTA, and links to websites where you can start learning more:

1. ACTA stands for the **Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement**, a treaty-in-negotiation between many countries.
2. According to the Canadian government, the goal of ACTA is "to put in place international standards for enforcing intellectual property rights in order to fight more efficiently the growing problems of counterfeiting and piracy."

3. WIPO—the **World Intellectual Property Organization**, a specialized agency of the United Nations—has since 1967 been acting in this role. ACTA is an agreement directly between participating nations, with no UN mediation.

4. According to Canadian government websites, the following countries are involved in negotiating ACTA: Canada, Australia, the European Union and its member countries, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, and the United States.

5. ACTA has been criticised for conducting meetings in a clandestine manner, and concerns have been raised that the treaty may encourage surveillance and diminish privacy, violate and/or trump national copyright or privacy legislation, damage the free and open source software movements, and criminalize normal consumer behaviours.

You can find more information on ACTA at the following websites:

- The **Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic** (CIPPIC):  
<http://www.cippic.ca/acta/>
- **Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada**:  
[http://www.international.gc.ca/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/fo/intellect\\_property.aspx](http://www.international.gc.ca/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/fo/intellect_property.aspx)
- **Michael Geist's** blog (with links to many other ACTA resources):  
<http://www.michaelgeist.ca>

### About the Information Policy Committee

The BCLA Information Policy Committee (IPC), a standing committee of BCLA, aims to advance and preserve access to information, and to advocate for the public interest in government decisions relating to information policy.

Any BCLA member is welcome to join the IPC. For more information, join our listserv by using the BCLA website listserv management tool here:  
<http://www.bclibrary.ca/listservs/bcla/>

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