

## An International Footbag Archive

The nature of the sport of footbag is such that an internationally established resource repository would require free online access to a collection composed primarily of digital artifacts. There are a number of factors to consider in planning such a facility that elucidate this conclusion, including the intended audience, infrastructure, the nature of the collection, and access.

**Intended Audience:** The archive would be designed with footbag players in mind (past, present, and future), with consideration that the average practicing athlete is an approximately 20 year-old, white, unemployed student male. And, while perhaps the majority of athletes reside in North America, the sport's populace is widely spread across many countries around the world. This unique community is so geographically sparse that few cities in the world boast more than 5 to 10 experienced players; hence, the internet has been instrumental in communication and coordination of players and organizers worldwide in the development of the sport and remains today an integral tool that is arguably necessary for its future growth. And, while potential user groups such as event organizers, judges, sponsors, and the general public would be welcome to access the resources, their needs would be considered secondarily.

**Infrastructure:** Due to the aforementioned dispersed audience and its significant lack of funding, a physical facility would be largely a waste of valuable and non-existent resources, save perhaps the housing and maintenance of dedicated internet servers as presently provided by well-endowed benefactors such as Steve Goldberg, co-founder of the International Footbag Players' Association (IFPA). The web interface itself would be user-friendly and incorporate faceted searching of metadata-enriched documents. It would also be password protected and require a

free sign-up process that would protect potentially sensitive materials from public internet queries.

**The Nature of the Collection:** The archive would be, at least initially, limited to online access due to the fact that not only do the sport's adherents reside few and far between, but that relevant resources from which they would benefit have naturally been, if not born digitally, made accessible almost exclusively via the internet. These resources would include digital and streaming video (including the conversion and preservation of VHS and DVD materials); digital images (including digitally scanned photographs and slides); the singular e-publication, *The Vasek Klouda Manual: How To Footbag* (and, if and when released, footbag founder, John Stalberger's *Kicking Around An Idea: "Hack The Sack"*); and archived websites (such as Footbag.org, FreedomFootbags.com, Fourkast.com, GlobalFootbag.org, PlanetFootbag.com, and the now-defunct Flipsider.com), online forums (such as Modified.in, which has acted as the premiere, if not singular, international hub of discussion for over a decade), and email lists (such as Footbag.org's "Announce," "Footbag," "Freestyle," and "Sewing," which have predated Modified.in by 8 years, since 1994). These are the primary artifacts that are widely valued by the community as documenting the history and progression of the sport. And while the inclusion of physical materials such as historically relevant footbags, equipment, and trophies would certainly be of great value to such a repository and its patrons, this would not take precedence over the more immediately beneficial development of collecting, preserving, and making accessible the aforementioned digital resources.

**Access:** Access to the collection would be facilitated by the implementation of customized Dublin Core metadata elements in combination with a basic classification scheme to differentiate resources types (such as video, photo, website, etc.) Video materials would likely require the

most complex cataloguing, including, in addition to the Dublin Core Metadata Element Set (DCMES), essential elements such as player, event, location, date, tricks, concepts, adds (the trick difficulty/complexity system), and video and audio credits. In supplementation to these administratively-designated data, social media tagging would be supported, as it has proven to provide significant added value. The classification scheme itself would simply denote format of media – for example, “video,” “e-book,” “website.”

**Conclusion:** The cataloguing and preservation of relevant resources integral to the sport would not prove to be a significantly daunting task in relative archival terms, as the sport is still very young, disorganized, and lacking in extensive documentation. However, it would require the introduction and maintenance of consistent and user-friendly standards in order to effectively and practically provide support services to the footbag community in an ongoing capacity.