

Teresa Williams

Promotions with student-athletes

Are you in compliance?

If you follow college sports, you probably know that the men's basketball team at Butler University had an amazing run in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) tournament this spring. Supporters from around the country got caught up in the excitement as the team from a small school in Indianapolis won its way to the championship game.

Even if you are not a basketball fan, you have probably heard of the NCAA. And if you are an academic librarian, odds are you work at one of the institutions where athletic teams compete under the guidance of the NCAA operating bylaws. But did you know these bylaws can have a direct impact on your library promotions?

At Butler University Libraries, we learned about NCAA regulations in 2007 as we developed plans for a National Library Week (NLW) celebration involving the Butler men's basketball team. In this article, we share our experience with the NCAA compliance process and offer suggestions for others who may be considering library promotions with student-athletes.

NCAA divisions and bylaws

Headquartered in Indianapolis, the NCAA is the governing body of college and university athletic programs in the United States. The association has close to 1,300 members, which include colleges, universities, and conferences. Members are classified into one of three divisions based on several criteria, including the number of men's and women's sports sponsored by the institution, type of financial aid provided for student-athletes, and contest (game) requirements.

The NCAA is self-governed, meaning that its members rule the association. Each of the three divisions publishes its own manual of bylaws, which are subject to change each year. Bylaws differ among the divisions, and Division I members, which are mainly larger institutions, tend to be the most restrictive.

While the divisions vary in their interpretation of the rules, each is expected to uphold the NCAA's core purpose, which is to "govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike manner, and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount."¹

Only amateur athletes can compete at NCAA institutions, and many of the bylaws have been established to protect a student-athlete's eligibility to participate in intercollegiate sports.

In each NCAA division, participation in a promotional event is ruled by Bylaw 12.5.1.1, which spells out the conditions under which a student-athlete may take part in a promotion sponsored by institutional, charitable, educational, or nonprofit agencies. Academic libraries at member institutions fall under these guidelines.

Several requirements must be met for an athlete at an NCAA institution to receive permission to participate in a promotion sponsored by an educational organization. Some rules that are consistent across the three divisions include the following:²

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- The student-athlete does not miss class.
- The student-athlete's name, picture, or appearance is not used to promote the commercial ventures of any nonprofit agency.
- The student-athlete receives written approval to participate. At Division I institutions, approval must be obtained from the director of athletics (or his or her designee). At Division II and III institutions, Bylaw 12.5.1.1 requires written approval from the chancellor or president (or his or her designee).
- All money derived from the activity or

project goes directly to the member institution, member conference, or the charitable, educational, or nonprofit agency.

- The specific activity or project in which the student-athlete participates does not involve co-sponsorship, advertisement, or promotion by a commercial agency, with some exceptions (as spelled out in each division's bylaws). For example, some institutions may permit the commercial entity to include a logo of a restricted size on print copies of promotional materials, such as calendars or posters.

Our experience with the compliance process

For NLW in April 2007, we planned to use software from ALA to design READ posters featuring "campus celebrities." Players from Butler's popular men's basketball team were at the top of our participant wish list.

In late February, two months before the promotion, we contacted the athletics department to start the permission process and immediately encountered a setback. Based on the language of NCAA Division I, Bylaw

12.5.1.1., the compliance office questioned whether a photo of a student-athlete holding his favorite book constituted a commercial endorsement. After some discussion, it was concluded this would not be a violation of NCAA bylaws because the posters promoted reading rather than a commercial product.

While we were working to resolve this issue, the regular basketball season had come to an end, and the team was selected to participate in the NCAA national tournament. For the student-athletes, this meant extra practices,

increased media requests for interviews, and more travel time. For us, the demands of the tournament schedule made it difficult to obtain required signatures, and as the team advanced to

the NCAA regional finals, we were unable to secure permission to produce a poster of the student-athletes.

With this experience in mind, we started our 2008 NLW plans in January, and successfully gained approval to feature five senior players from the men's basketball team, as well as their coach, on a READ poster. It took several weeks of working with the athletics compliance officer and sports marketing department to complete forms, collect signatures, and arrange a time for a photo session when all five student-athletes were available. But the effort was worth it; the poster was well-received on campus and drew attention to the library's NLW events.

In 2009, we combined the NLW theme of "Worlds Connect @ Your Library" with the personal passion of a student-athlete. One of the men's basketball players had started a nonprofit foundation to advance education in



2008 READ poster. Image courtesy of Butler University Print Marketing and Communications.

Uganda, and we asked to partner with him to collect books for the foundation during NLW. The compliance office granted permission for the student-athlete and three of his teammates to participate in our “Breakfast with the Library” event.

It was a win-win situation: The library had a good turnout for the breakfast, and the student-athlete received hundreds of donated books for the foundation. The athletics office later approved a photo of the event for publication in *American Libraries*.³

While these successful promotions featured members of the men’s basketball team, in the future we would like to involve athletes who play for one of the many other sports organizations at Butler.

The permissions process may become a little easier for us as our compliance office is considering a “blanket” permission form for activities sponsored by a campus unit. Student-athletes would sign the form at the beginning of the academic year, and separate permission forms would not be needed for each event.

Tips for promotions with student-athletes

1. Plan ahead. Contact your campus athletics office several weeks or even months in advance of your event. A permission form may require multiple signatures from coaches and players who are often out of town for competition. Obtaining signatures during tournament playoffs is especially difficult, and the athletic director may have questions or concerns that need to be addressed before

Additional NCAA information

Learn more about the NCAA and the by-laws that may affect your library promotions by visiting the NCAA headquarters Web site at NCAA.org. On the Web site, you will find copies of the division manuals, statistics on college sports, and items maintained by the NCAA Virtual Library, including special reports, a news archive, and a Legislative Services database of rulings that impact member institutions.⁵

student-athletes are granted permission to participate.

2. Build collaborative relationships.

Don’t wait until your promotion deadline is approaching to get to know the professionals in your campus athletics office. Find a time during the athletic off-season to meet the compliance officer and talk about potential promotions and the process of obtaining permissions. If the athletics office has a sports marketing department, work with a representative to identify collaborative opportunities you might not have considered.

3. Look for online information. Your athletics office may have a compliance Web site that outlines regulations for promotions involving student-athletes. While on the Web site, look for online permission forms, and check for game schedules or other special events that might conflict with the timetable for your program. Butler’s athletics Web site includes a promotional activities form and helpful information on compliance and amateurism issues.⁴

4. Be flexible and appreciative. Keep in mind that student-athletes should not be asked to miss class to participate in a promotional event. You may need to adjust the time and day of your activity to accommodate academic and practice schedules. And don’t forget to thank the student-athletes for their participation.

When we gave copies of the READ poster to the five student-athletes involved in our promotion, they were pleasantly surprised and told us that many organizations do not give them personal copies of promotional pieces.

5. Rely on the experts. Librarians know how to find and evaluate information. Even so, when it comes to regulations involving student-athletes at NCAA institutions, leave the interpretation to the professionals in your campus compliance office. Because NCAA bylaws are subject to change and can be handled multiple ways depending upon the institution and situation, a promotion that may have been approved for a previous event or for another library may not be permitted.

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consummate host and revealed Bermuda to us in its best light, although it must be said that beginning with the descent to the airport a visitor is hard pressed to uncover the downside of Bermuda.

This experience was a cultural and global opportunity to partner with other library professionals while presenting an occasion to observe how another country prepares its citizens to participate in the 21st-century global environment. Not only did we have the chance to work with and meet library person-

nel from across Bermuda, but to also actively participate in an exchange of ideas about how information is preserved. Although we sensed the difficulty of maintaining libraries and data storage facilities with reduced resources, we also witnessed the commitment of Bermuda's information professionals to sustain their environments. Overall, our time spent in Bermuda was both inspirational and educational and underscored the importance of working across boundaries to share information and resources. ♪

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Notes

1. "Core Purpose," National Collegiate Athletic Association, ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?key=/ncaa/NCAA/About%20The%20NCAA/Overview/mission.html.

2. "NCAA Rules and Bylaws," National Collegiate Athletic Association, ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?key=/ncaa/ncaa/legislation+and+governance/rules+and+bylaws.

3. "Worlds Connect @ Your Library," *American Libraries*, June/July 2009, 24–25.

4. "Butler University Compliance," www.butlersports.com/information/compliance/compliance_info.

5. "NCAA Virtual Library," National Collegiate Athletic Association, www.ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?key=/ncaa/NCAA/Library/. ♪

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of Mark Mostert, professor at Regent University in Virginia, shows the often-neglected and almost hidden history of the Nazi Aktion T-4 program. Techniques and methods for exterminating asylum inmates and others considered defective or degenerate served as a blueprint for the concentration camps. Although there is nothing graphic about the historical photos, their presence alongside the text and narration makes this video profoundly disturbing. Access: <http://www.regent.edu/acad/schedu/uselesseaters/>.

Radio broadcasts

• **BBC's Ouch!** This Web site from the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) features news, blogs, podcasts, and interviews by and for all those interested in contemporary issues facing those with disabilities. Access: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/>.

• **Beyond Affliction: The Disability History Project.** A radio program by producer Laurie Block was the result of her interest in media portrayals of people with disabilities. The site and program are sponsored by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Portions of the shows may be viewed on the site, and tapes and transcripts of the shows may be ordered. The site also contains photos and other primary source material connected to the project. Access: <http://www.npr.org/programs/disability/>.

Conclusion

As with any newly established discipline, Disability Studies has its share of internal, academic disputes and controversies. As scholars work to make disability more visible in our society and history, brand new lines of inquiry can be investigated, and classic texts can be re-examined to effect paradigm shifts in our understanding of our cultures. ♪