

# THE EXPO BOOK

**A Guide to the  
Planning, Organization,  
Design & Operation  
of World Expositions**

In addition to this online publication,  
The Expo Book is available in print  
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# THE EXPO BOOK

## A Guide to the Planning, Organization, Design & Operation of World Expositions

### Chapter One: World Expositions Today

Where, Why, and  
How do They Come About?

*InPark Magazine introduces the first installment of THE EXPO BOOK. This much-needed business guide is intended primarily to assist those who are involved in, or considering becoming involved in, a modern world expo – whether as host, organizer, promoter, participant, sponsor, concessionaire, designer or contractor. THE EXPO BOOK will present useful information, guidelines, illustrations, facts and figures and relevant examples, gained through the authors' decades of experience advising the organizers of world expositions, Olympic Games and other mega-events. This first installment appeared in print in November 2007, in the Nov-Dec issue of IPM Magazine. Chapter Two is set for the Feb-Mar 2008 issue, with Chapters Three through Six following at two-month intervals through the end of the year. Following print publication, each chapter is being posted online at [www.InParkMagazine.com](http://www.InParkMagazine.com) and at [www.TheExpoBook.com](http://www.TheExpoBook.com).*

Although there hasn't been a World Expo in North America since Vancouver's successful Expo '86, there have been more than a half dozen such events hosted in Asia and Europe since that time. Recent and upcoming world expos include Lisbon 1998, Hanover 2000, Aichi 2005, Zaragoza 2008 and Shanghai 2010.

A world expo (aka world exposition, international exposition or world's fair) is a three-to-six month, one-time public event on a grand scale. It is a monumental and magnificent undertaking that can have significant positive world, regional and

local impact. For instance, an expo can help to focus attention on issues of global importance through its theme - i.e. the theme of Zaragoza Expo 2008 is "Water & Sustainable Development" and the theme of Shanghai Expo 2010 is "Better Cities, Better Life." An Expo can also bring more immediate and tangible benefits to both the host region and community and the expo's participants. We will elaborate on these important reasons for hosting an expo in the following pages and chapters of our book.

The governments of countries that are members of the Paris-based Bureau of International Expositions (BIE) are an expo's primary exhibitors. Other participants include provinces or states of the host country, corporations and NGOs. The pavilions and exhibits they create, in addition to the pavilions and exhibits of the host entity, are the main attraction for an expo's millions of visitors. (Expo 2010 Shanghai organizers, for example, anticipate some 70 million visits to the exhibits of about 200 participants; both of these goals, if

achieved, will represent world's records for expos.) For those who design buildings and exhibits and create guest experiences, there is great potential for personal achievement and international career advancement at a world expo.

In spite of the scope and benefits of these undertakings, there is very little published material on how expos are born, organized, designed, built and operated. As a result expo organizers often get off to a rough start, and designers, vendors and contractors are often in the dark about how to identify opportunities. This lack of shared wisdom and lack of continuity in the expo field are unnecessary – and they can cost expo organizers millions of dollars and months of valuable time. While each event is unique, there are many common factors that, if understood, would prevent or lessen many of the problems that tend to crop up again and again, consuming precious time and resources. This book is for the visionaries of today and tomorrow - who need to understand the challenges, and to be able to distinguish between necessary and unnecessary expenses - in order to cultivate the benefits of a world expo. THE EXPO BOOK will help them identify and connect with the information and the qualified people they need to achieve a successful and meaningful event with a valuable legacy.

Whether in America, Europe or Asia, the process of putting together an expo typically begins with initiatives to promote economic development, originating at the city level either through local governmental authorities or through business organizations or some combination thereof. Because an Expo needs a specific site, an early ingredient in the local initiative is the identification of a suitable location for the event. Although the site configuration and sometimes location may change as the proposal moves forward, it is often the case that a prime motivation for the local community to host an expo is the opportunity or need to significantly renovate a part of the city.

In addition to aiding practitioners, the authors are hopeful that this material may serve the interests of academics as well. An ulterior, but transparent motive in writing the book is our hope that out there lies someone or some group who might take up the challenge and put on the next great Expo.

### Building a Relevant and Memorable Event

The world expo is an event format that dates back more than 150 years, yet it is still fresh and relevant. With the right direction and organization a modern expo can be highly attractive to visitors and just as germane to all who take part or attend, as was that flagship event, London's Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, in its day. An examination of what the various participants (exhibitors, sponsors, attendees, media, host city/region) have to gain (or lose) in an expo enables us to articulate the message about the continuing relevance of these events.

World's fairs offer opportunities for creative architecture and experimental building design not found elsewhere.



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## Major International Expositions 1958 to 2015

1958		Brussels, Belgium
1962		Seattle, Washington, USA
1964-'65		New York, New York, USA*
1967		Montreal, Quebec, Canada
1968		San Antonio, Texas, USA
1970		Osaka, Japan
1974		Spokane, Washington, USA
1975-'76		Okinawa, Japan
1982		Knoxville, Tennessee, USA
1984		New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
1985		Tsukuba, Japan, USA
1986		Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
1988		Brisbane, Australia
1992		Seville, Spain
1992		Genoa, Italy
1993		Taejon, Korea
1998		Lisbon, Portugal
2000		Hanover, Germany
2005		Nagoya, Japan
2008		Zaragoza, Spain
2010		Shanghai, China (planned)
2012		Yeosu, South Korea (planned)
2015		Milan, Italy (planned)

\* Not a BIE-sanctioned event

### Host City

The underlying goals for a prospective host city of promoting such an event include boosting international awareness of the city, increasing tourism and business, and creating a catalyst for needed civic improvements including redevelopment or upgrading of a given district or area. The success of past host cities in achieving such improvements (Lisbon, Nagoya, San Antonio, Seattle and Montreal are just a few) is recognized by upcoming host cities such as Zaragoza and Shanghai, and prospective hosts such as Wroclaw, Poland; Tangier, Morocco; and Yeosu, Korea.

To host an expo, a city must, through the auspices of its national government, obtain the approval of the BIE (Bureau International des Expositions) through a competitive process in which two or more cities vie for the right to host the event for a given future date. The BIE is a treaty organization with a voluntary international body which currently has 104 member nations. It was established in 1928 to create and implement procedures and rules for the events. (See sidebar for more on the BIE and its rules.)

### Participants & Sponsors

As to the international participants, the host nation extends invitations to the BIE member nations and other countries to participate at an expo. In deciding whether to accept such an invitation, a prospective international participant must weigh the costs versus the benefits. If the location of the event is of interest in terms of market exposure, prospective trade and business opportunities, goodwill, etc. then participation will be quite relevant and resources will be allocated to make an appropriate presentation. In the case of China's forthcoming expo, the case for participation for many nations is probably quite strong due to China's status as a growing, important market for goods and services.

A recent phenomenon, starting with Seville Expo 92, is that the number of international participants seen at an expo has grown dramatically to more than 100 countries whereas in prior decades some events had fewer than 20. The reason for this is that the breakup of the former Soviet Union and other political changes gave rise to new and reestablished countries taking their places in the community of nations. For these newer participants, a presence

at an expo is an important step in reaching out to the world in a tangible, visible way.

NGOs such as the International Olympic Committee and the Red Cross do not mount large, expensive presentations at expos but they do have a place as these events afford them an opportunity to get out their message to a broad range of visitors who otherwise may not completely grasp the scope and range of issues and activities in which they are involved.

The benefits of a corporation being represented at an expo through exhibiting (or sponsorship) are manifold. An expo is basically a format for mass communication and, in the past, expos were often used as a platform for unveiling new products and innovations. An example of a notable invention introduced to the world at an expo is the IMAX film presentation technology showcased at Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan. Over the past few decades, the availability of other forms of mass media has diminished the trend; however, a number of corporations, mostly Japanese, did use the recent Aichi, Japan Expo 2005 to showcase future technologies including high-speed trains, musical robots and green building techniques. In a world awash with electronic communications, the world expo offers face-to-face contact. There, a corporation has the opportunity to meet in person with a broad swath of international public and the international business community, as well as government officials and dignitaries, in a controlled environment of its own design and to its own operational specifications.

Regional and local participants, such as state or provincial government or cities or other such entities, are stakeholders in an expo and generally work hard to make the most of it. At Aichi Expo 2005, the Aichi provincial government and other local municipalities were well-represented and used their presence as an opportunity to communicate information about environmental initiatives.

### Press & Media

The press loves an expo. Although they won't bestow the kind of unlimited attention that is showered on international sports, local and regional media outlets will cover an expo faithfully from planning to opening. Once open, being essentially a three- to six-month visitor event, an expo will draw press and media interest focusing

on its star attractions, its host city as a new or improved travel destination, the architecture of its buildings and human interest stories. The occasional visit of a dignitary, a noteworthy performance and opening and closing days can make local, regional and sometimes national media. Having once experienced an expo, the media of a former host city will be attuned to covering the events when they take place elsewhere. Video documentaries have been generated at expos focusing on particular exhibitions, innovations, and on the history of expos and with the rise of consumer-generated media enabled by the Internet, coverage of world expos that is more driven by individuals is on the rise. The international nature of expos is a natural match for the global media village and event organizers will do well to make the most of it.

### Visitors & Attendance

The experience of host cities in terms of attracting visitors differs considerably from one to another, ranging from those that exceed their forecast attendance numbers to those that welcome far fewer visitors than anticipated. Analyses of these experiences indicate that a variety of factors come into play including, but not limited to: location of the host city vis-à-vis other major population centers, weather, coincidence (i.e. timing) with other events in the country and in nearby countries, cultural preferences/background concerning hours of operation, perceived value for money (i.e. cost of a day out at the Expo for a family), and attractiveness of exhibitions, shows, insufficient or poorly targeted marketing, and the like. It is important to keep in mind that a huge proportion of the visitors will be from the host region or country. While the general format for an Expo is established by precedent and some of the BIE regulations, would-be Expo organizers have considerable scope to plan and shape the visitor experience and, in turn, can make the event relevant and interesting to suit local tastes and conditions. Many of the techniques of attracting and engaging large crowds of people that have been developed for sports events, theme parks and museums can also be productively employed at an Expo in order to enhance the visitor experience, prolong the length of stay and increase per-capita spending. For example, Vancouver, Seville and Lisbon all featured compelling evening and night programs that attracted visitors to stay long hours into the night which increased attendance as well

as spending. Nagoya's Expo 2005, located in a very densely developed urban corridor between Tokyo and Kyoto, featured extensive green areas, many of which have remained as a permanent park after the Expo. One of the problems at Expos, often cited by visitors, are the long lines waiting to visit the more popular pavilions. Aichi Expo 2005 addressed this by offering timed tickets, a popular approach common for regulating visitor flow at major art exhibits and some theme parks.

### Some Basics of Planning and Organizing Feasibility

As with any project that requires a large capital investment, a successful world expo project is one that meets and achieves established economic performance criteria. Educational and entertainment value notwithstanding, an expo is a business and one that should be approached with the same careful planning as one might approach any new industrial or commercial venture. There have been world expos that did not achieve the goals of the organizers and that were economic failures. Fortunately, there are also success stories that serve as useful models to guide the development of new projects.

A key component in the process of promoting the idea of an Expo for a given city, is the preparation of a feasibility study. The study should be done by a qualified consultant with an understanding of expos and of the overall economics of this unique type of event. Chapter II will provide more details on this part of the process. The findings of the study, should they be positive and reinforce the initial local enthusiasm for the idea, are then utilized to gain additional support and commitment for the undertaking. Assuming a favorable outcome of efforts to garner

additional support from the local community, additional levels of government and business are contacted to obtain support and commitment. When sufficient favorable support is available to move the project onto the national agenda of a given country, the more formal process of contact with the BIE can be initiated. (See BIE sidebar.)

The feasibility study enables organizers to shape reasonable expectations and goals for the event, balancing the aesthetic and educational mission with the economic one. It helps organizers pin down the particular benefits and motive to their particular community of promoting the development of a world expo, such as:

- Establishing or repositioning a community, region and/or country's image.
- Developing or redeveloping a major parcel or parcels of land.
- Attracting large numbers of people and generating demand for on and off-site purchases of goods and services including admissions, food and beverage, merchandise, overnight accommodations and the like.
- Creating jobs and economic opportunities.
- Accelerating the implementation of infrastructure and other improvements which, under ordinary circumstances, may take many years.

Because the objectives of a host city can vary substantially between communities, the size, number and type of participants, attendance, cost and eventual outcome of the projects can likewise vary greatly. The feasibility study takes these individual factors into account.

### Post-Expo Planning

The feasibility study should be tied directly to the post-use plan. Just as important as knowing how to allocate resources throughout planning and construction, how to build the expo organization, and how to staff the expo and maintain cash flow during operations, is knowing what, specifically, will happen to the expo site after closing day. All too often, this critical issue receives insufficient attention, yet this is one of the very first questions organizers should ask themselves and find an answer for. The post-use of the facilities and land, and the disposal of assets, play an important role in the overall economic results – so important that most of a later chapter will be devoted to this topic. Land, development and operations costs will vary significantly from expo to expo, and clear

and workable plans for the post-use of the site, and how that use will be funded, are absolutely essential to an expo being a success in concrete terms and in public perception.

For example, Spokane, Washington, by staging its World's Fair in 1974 on land recovered by relocating underutilized rail yards, gained a city park which is today an important amenity in that community. According to studies prepared by a local university after the expo, surrounding properties in the Spokane downtown area also experienced increases in valuation as the character of the downtown was improved by its proximity to the Expo site.

Tsukuba, Japan launched its Science City research and development park project located outside Tokyo with its own Expo'85. Brisbane, Australia, through its World Expo 88, redeveloped over 100 acres of land adjacent to the downtown and created the new South Bank Parklands which opened in 1992. The Brisbane event also utilized a modular building system for its international pavilions and some of the buildings were dismantled after the Expo and resold for commercial and institutional use throughout the region.

As an example of how much two expos can differ in the post-use of the site and how development is carried out, let's compare Seville Expo 92 and Vancouver Expo 86. Seville had the participation of 108 countries, 23 international organizations and many corporations. It was developed on a site of more than 800 acres and had an attendance of over 42 million. 1992 was a very important year for Spain as that country had the privilege of hosting two world-class events: Expo 92 in Seville and the Summer Olympic Games in Barcelona. Thematically, Expo 92 marked the 500th anniversary of Columbus' voyage to the "new world." Practically speaking, the expo was cast as a vehicle to promote the south of the country which, although traditionally a highly productive agricultural region and a growing tourist destination, lacked an agenda for a modernized economy. The investments in the Expo project were significant, including a high-speed train linking Madrid and Seville and a new airport terminal in Seville; the site itself required major investments in infrastructure and services and several major theme pavilions were erected which were impressive to foreigners and local residents alike.

Expo 92 was very heavily attended by locals, and public sentiment was so strong that a year after its closing, the expo grounds reopened for operations, eventually permanently closing as attendance decreased and costs of renovations and upkeep increased. At present, the former expo site accommodates the theme park Isla Mágica as well as the historic Cartuja Monastery where Columbus spent some time in between his travels to the New World, and the Sevilla Technopolis, a city-sponsored industrial park. Many of the expo buildings have been torn down over the years, although some of the large pavilions remain.

By contrast, Vancouver Expo 86 had a total of 65 exhibitors and participants, 41 of which were international. It was held on a 220-acre site and received some 22 million visits. Today, the

### The BIE: A History



In the history of world expos, the Bureau of International Expositions (BIE) has played a key role. It was formed in 1928 by 43 nations motivated by the need to establish a forum to regulate expos. In the international law of 1931 that codified convention agreements made in 1928, the basic concepts of event categories were outlined as were the ideas relating to event frequency.

The BIE is funded by member nations, which fluctuate somewhat in number due to changing political and diplomatic agendas, who pay a membership fee to support a small, permanent staff based in Paris. Each member nation also designates a representative to the BIE (although most meetings, held in Paris, are attended primarily by the staff of the nations' respective embassies).

In recent years, the BIE has sought to increase its revenues through the application of a percentage fee based on attendance at Expos. However, unlike the IOC which, with the significant economic success of the Los Angeles Summer Olympics of 1984 was transformed from a fragile, some would say nearly impoverished organization to a multi-million dollar international business, the BIE has not made any gestures towards enhancing the value of the BIE Expo "brand." By virtue of its charter and by the direction of those who have held positions of authority within the BIE, the lure of commercial enterprise has strongly been resisted and would be out of character for the organization.

Since its inception, the BIE has occasionally promulgated additional regulations in response to gained experience and the desire to address certain problems with the process and challenge of hosting an Expo. Due to the need for the sovereign governments of the member nations to approve any modifications to the 1931 law – a lengthy and laborious process that is, moreover vulnerable to political interests – new regulations are implemented more in spirit and practice than in law. For example, for changes to the law to be approved by the United States, they would have to be adopted by the Congress and Senate, a formidable challenge by any measure.



One of the primary issues in the realm of organizing expos has been the proliferation of events. After decades of international expositions being organized around the world, by World War II the frequency of expos was approaching an average of one per year. One concern is that with too many events on the agenda, sufficient time is not available to stage a quality event. Other issues are cost, and politics - as nations are constantly being courted by expo organizers to participate at the next expo while being vulnerable to home-grown public scrutiny of the financial resources needed to fund their pavilions and exhibits. At the same time, the invitation to participate in an expo, being made at the highest level of diplomatic relations (i.e. nation to nation), carries a certain amount of weight due to international relations which includes influence on trade and business. Should a country decline such an invitation, the political fallout might be significant. (Saluting the newly formed European Union was a compelling motive for nations to take part in Hanover Expo 2000, and China's emergence in world trade makes a powerful case for showing up at Shanghai 2010.)

It is noteworthy that the BIE has not rigorously applied enforcement, allowing certain closely spaced events to receive sanction in spite of the potential problems. For example, in 1992 both Seville and Genoa hosted BIE-sanctioned world expos in neighboring countries. The very next year, Taejon, Korea hosted yet another world expo while planning was underway for events in 1996 (Budapest), 1998 (Lisbon) and 2000 (Hanover). In prior years, the BIE sanctioned events at two-year intervals - three in North America: Knoxville (1982), New Orleans (1984) and Vancouver (1986) - and one in Australia (Brisbane 1988). Although officially a horticultural exposition sanctioned by the International Association of Horticultural Producers, Osaka Expo 90 was also recognized by the BIE. See the section on Obtaining BIE Approval, below, for a fuller explanation of timing and how opportunity windows often supersede the attempt to regulate expo frequency.

former expo site accommodates a master-planned waterfront community, including a science museum in the building that was the original preview center for the expo.

Vancouver's vision for a dramatically restored waterfront, replacing rundown sawmills and industrial uses that were in conflict with the desired urban character for the area and the rising profile of the city, was achieved largely through the vehicle of hosting the expo. Seville's ambitions for a post-expo legacy were less focused, as firm plans for the reuse of the site were never fully embraced by the political establishment; as a result, some of the potentials for leveraging expo-related investments for long term benefit were not realized.

### Hiring an Expo Consultant

The human resources needed to successfully plan, design, construct, operate and close out an expo are quite extensive, ranging from skilled professional and technical personnel to manual

laborers. However, unlike a typical business in which missteps and errors made while going up the learning curve can be rectified in ongoing operations, the one-time reality of an expo means that any mistakes, once made, will be difficult to recover from without major corrective action. In some cases, seemingly small mistakes can affect the entire outcome of the undertaking.

Thus, the experience of those familiar with these events is highly valuable to expo organizers. This is particularly true at the outset of an effort to host an expo, as the consultant's presence should ensure that essential strategic questions are posed and, with the appropriate technical studies, answered. Although no doubt well-intentioned, some would-be organizers have at the beginning of their efforts invested heavily in master plans and renderings without their architects knowing what the physical requirements of an expo are. Others have launched expensive media campaigns without having an understanding of the likely questions which the proposed host community will soon ask, such as "Who pays for all this?"

Keeping an expo consultant on board as the proposed event begins to achieve broader support and through the ensuing stages will continue to add value to the undertaking because each phase has its own set of challenges. Upon sanction by the BIE, the proposal becomes a commitment on the part of the host city and there is a dramatic shift in the focus of the organizer requirements from that of an entity solely focused on promoting the event to one which must now face the myriad of physical, political and financial demands required to put on the expo. At this time, the experienced expo consultant can provide the needed direction to expo management to ensure that internal organization requirements are met, participants are contacted and engaged, and the physical requirements of the project are appropriately designed, built and constructed.

In the critical stage when the expo prepares for operations, the expo consultant, along with other specialized advisors, can ensure that required staff are hired, trained and prepared for the opening. Within days of opening, it is not unusual for an expo to encounter some problems; in these instances, and based on extensive experience elsewhere, the expo consultant can assist in assessing the

issues and recommending remedies. While each expo is unique in many ways, it is also possible to characterize the stages of the evolution of an expo as fairly typical, and therefore prior experience is invaluable in charting the way forward, from stage to stage.

### Selecting a Theme

The BIE classification system that designates an expo as "Registered" or "Recognized" (see sidebar) also has a thematic dimension. The Registered or Category I event is to have an all-encompassing - Universal - theme whereas the Recognized or Category II event is to have a more narrow, specific - Specialized - theme. For example: Seville Expo 92 (Category I) had as its theme "The Age of Discovery" which was developed to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' first voyage to the new world; the theme was sufficiently broad to encompass the many discoveries and innovations since that historic event. Vancouver Expo 86 (Category II event) was organized on the theme "World in Motion-World in Touch: Human Aspirations and Achievements in Transportation and Communication." Aichi Expo 2005 (Category I) had the theme "Beyond Development: Rediscovering Nature's Wisdom" whereas Montreal's 1967 Expo (Category I), was organized around "Man and his World."

Because each event presents a unique set of political, socioeconomic and cultural circumstances, the selection of a theme will entail the consideration of many factors. Expo organizers have used a variety of techniques to develop themes including: creation of a panel of experts, engaging a marketing/advertising firm, public solicitation/competitions, etc. No matter which procedure or combination of procedures is utilized, the selection of a theme should be based on certain criteria or parameters that permit comparison. A typical list of evaluation criteria in selecting a theme would be as follows:

- Appropriateness to the Expo location.
- Simple and flexible.
- Not requiring an overly technical or academic presentation, nor a disproportionate investment in presentation technology.
- Easy to translate into different languages (and across cultures).
- Fresh: not used in recent expositions.
- Embodying a beneficial attempt to improve man's knowledge

- Having world-wide appeal and a concept sufficiently universal as to have potential application for every participant
- Providing opportunities to exhibitors to present themselves in a meaningful way
- Not dependent on a political climate (which may well change between the time the application is submitted and the fair opens)

### Duration and Season

Until the early 1990s, expos were typically six months long, although there were some smaller, shorter events prior to WWII. Today, depending on its category, an expo lasts three to six months and is usually scheduled between late spring and fall (for a six-month event, April-October is typical in the Western hemisphere). Some past events were of longer duration. For example, San Francisco's 1939-1940 event and New York's 1939-1940 were each staged over two six-month seasons in two consecutive years, closing for the winter for renovation and replacement of various exhibits and participants which, for one reason or another, did not reappear in the second season.

### Expo Categories

After World War II, the BIE also developed a classification system for events. The basic concept has been to promote two general types of expos. Until very recently, the two types were defined as Universal and Specialized. The Universal Exposition (or Category I event) was considered the largest and most important of the BIE-sanctioned events, occurring, on average, once every 10 years. The Specialized Exposition was to be held in between the larger Universal events, and was classified as a Category II.

A profound change in this system has been seen with the BIE's decision to abandon the Universal/Specialized categories and adopt a format which features Registered and Recognized events. Registered events, of six months' duration, can be staged every five years. The alternate format now available is the Recognized Expo - a smaller, three-month, regional expo that can be staged in the intervals between the Registered events. The first Recognized BIE world expo was to have taken place in Manila in 2003. Due to the economic downturn in the Philippines, the event was cancelled by the Government. The upcoming Zaragoza Expo will be the first to be organized under the Recognized regulations.

Since most of the experience (and data) concerning world expos is on the old system (i.e. 1958 to 2005), it is important to understand that the future experiences will be different. As mentioned, the forthcoming Zaragoza Expo 2008 is a three-month Registered event, so it will be interesting and educational for the expo community to see how the various metrics associated with the event compare with prior events (i.e. attendance, participants, etc.)

Chapter Two will go into detail on the process of obtaining BIE approval for a proposed world expo.



Expo 2000's Estonia Pavilion. Photo by Urso Chappell.

### Understanding an Expo as a "Project"

Planning and hosting an expo has the following kinds of organizational and management requirements:

- A definitive beginning and end. (Unlike most projects, the goal of an Expo is to go out of business successfully on a predetermined date. This calls for management strategies which are quite different from almost any kind of project wherein sustaining operations is the goal).
- A series of evolutionary steps, leading from the broad and general, to the highly specific and detailed.
- A need to measure and ensure progress on a progressive, continuing basis.
- A structure which can quickly shift from planning to testing, then operations to close down.
- A structure which can quickly and efficiently grow from a staff of several hundred to many thousands of people.

Because of these requirements, the Expo organizing process can best be viewed as a project consisting of several phases of development, the Expo-time operations and, ultimately, close down. In this regard, the organizational approach to managing this unique project is quite different from that needed by most businesses and large scale enterprises. Figure A shows a typical expo organization chart. However, as we shall explore in Chapters II and III, the number and type of personnel required within the expo organization will vary dramatically from one phase of the project to another. It is important to be prepared to deal skillfully with transitional needs within the organization.

### Some Recent Efforts to Organize Expos

There have been several recent efforts to organize Expos in various parts of the world. Some were approved and their planning and organizing well underway when canceled by the host city or country; others were studied and lobbied for but didn't make it to the bid stage. Recent examples of the former include Chicago 92, Vienna-Budapest 95 and Budapest 96. The latter include the planned Carolinas World Exposition 2002 (Charlotte, North Carolina), Hong Kong Expo 2002, San Antonio Expo 2002, the Pan Pacific Expo (San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose), Atlanta 2007, and Toronto Expo 2015. Other efforts that bear mention are Manila (Philippines) and Calgary (Canada).

Hong Kong's pursuit of an expo began some years before the so-called "handover" which took place on 1 July, 1997 when the sovereignty of Hong Kong was transferred from the United Kingdom to China. Promoters of the plan sought to commemorate the transfer in a positive way; however, underlying this motive was an anxiety about the effects the handover might have on the image of Hong Kong as an important tourist destination. In the end, the transitional government decided not to proceed with the event; tourism plummeted to almost zero. Later, Hong Kong funded the development of a new Disney theme park in order to provide an additional attraction to restore the higher levels of business travel and tourism which the former territory enjoyed.

Both San Antonio and San Francisco had hosted expos previously and, in both cases, the desire for a repeat event was based on a perceived need to reposition the tourism profile of the community during times when each city was facing a dip in economic activity. Finding a suitable site in the extensively developed San Francisco Bay Area proved a challenge although former military bases were offered as candidates in San Francisco (Treasure Island), Oakland (Oakland Army Base), and Alameda (Naval Air Base). In each case, before the feasibility of the event was fully studied, community leaders backed away from the projects as a pro-active media campaign was not in place to respond to citizens' questions.



Heatherwick Studio's winning design for the British Pavilion at Shanghai's Expo 2010. Photo courtesy of Heatherwick Studio

There have also been departures from the typical operating season. Considerations for determining an appropriate season to host an expo include weather patterns, typical vacation times in the host country, and the availability of unskilled and semi-skilled labor (students are often used) to operate the event. On the first point – weather – the extreme heat encountered by visitors at some expos - Seville and Lisbon being recent examples - has been a negative factor contributing to significant discomfort and even medical problems. On the other hand, the alternative of staging the events in winter would increase the need for indoor spaces and very likely reduce attendance.

The limitations the BIE has placed on the duration and frequency of events reasonably take into account the substantial costs of participation. On an operational level, however, the shorter events present major challenges for concessionaires who operate food and beverage and merchandise facilities; the fixed costs of setting up restaurants and shops make it more difficult to achieve a reasonable return in less than a six-month season.

Atlanta undertook a fairly robust market/economic study effort to examine the potentials for an Expo to be hosted in 2007, but coming off of the Atlanta Olympics of 1996, community leaders had second thoughts about the timing of taking on yet another major event; several potential sites were eventually studied including a temporary adaptation of the Atlanta Speedway.

More recently, Toronto, Canada undertook feasibility studies and conducted numerous public forums with a view towards organizing an event in 2015. With the deadline for making a bid to the BIE looming, the effort was derailed by the inability to gain provincial financial support for the project. However, in the aftermath of this work, there are now four Canadian cities are reported to be considering bids for a future expo. Given the esteem with which Canada is held by the international community for its prior events (Montreal and Vancouver) as well as its stellar record in participating in expos held by other countries, it is safe to say that a well-organized Canadian bid would be more than welcome at the BIE.

It is also important to note that with the large number of international participants at recent expos, many countries are now having a first-hand look at what an expo is and what benefits it can bring. With tourism being the number one industry in the world and many countries and destinations vying for market share, it is probably just a matter of time before new potential candidates for expos emerge on the scene.

The film *Rainbow War*, produced by BRC Imagination Arts for the Canadian Pacific Pavilion, was a hit at Vancouver's Expo 86. It received an Academy Award nomination in the Short Film category. *Photo courtesy of BRC Imagination Arts*



## About the Contributors

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