

COOPERATION OF NORDIC AND BALTIC ROAD MUSEUMS

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Abstract. In 2002, at the initiative of the management boards of Nordic and Baltic Road Administrations, a cooperation network of the Nordic and Baltic national road museums was established. In the network the Nordic countries are represented by Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland, and the Baltic states by Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia. The aim of the cooperation is to promote studying, exhibiting and preserving history of roads and bridges in the Nordic and Baltic countries and to strengthen the position of road museums as knowledge centres for road history research and also as valuable tourist attraction. This partnership has high recognition among road museum professionals, as well as, management organizations. This report is an overview of museum cooperation. It gives a slight insight into every museum, as well as, into plans of future cooperation.

Keywords. Museum, history, international cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

Roads are a very important part of infrastructure in every country. For a long time, they have provided for mobility needs of people and facilitated development of state economy. The fastest development of road network in the world started in the 20th century.

To save the evidence, which tells about history of a road sector, museums were established in many places. Road museums are in almost every country of the Baltic Sea region. Museums in their own distinctive way process human-made artefacts and provide accessibility to experience of events and connections related to these artefacts for the next generations. Rapid growth of modern society in all aspects of life is making museums and their display change, too. Therefore, exchange of information and experience is a very important work of every museum.

International cooperation of museums of the Nordic and Baltic countries that started in 2002 is a great opportunity to exchange knowledge with representatives of similar museums, gain experience and see work of other museums on a professional level. Cooperation promotes implementation of preliminary plans, education of personnel and improvement of routine tasks. It is an invaluable support to those museums that have small number of employees.

Road museums play a significant role in education of society. As service providers to local people and tourists, museums give an important contribution to public relations and publicity of their administrative institutions.

1 MUSEUM CONCEPT AND BASIC PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION

Museums as a cultural phenomenon are a very old occurrence. Together with a change of political and cultural values, the importance of museums has changed too. It is calculated that nowadays, for example, in Europe, the number of museums has quadrupled comparing to 1950.

According to the Statutes of ICOM (The International Council of Museums), adopted during the 21st General Conference in Vienna, Austria, in 2007:

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purpose of education, study and enjoyment.

In every country museums operate in the context of their national museum policy. Artefacts, acquired and conserved in museums, are carriers of meaning that express the special need of humans to save evidence of their existence with certain materials and objects.

Museums can develop understanding of identity and belonging to a certain place of residence, society or profession. Thus, for instance, road museums are responsible for preserving, researching and popularization of history of roads and bridges in wide social circles.

Museums can bring enjoyment, entertain and touch one's feelings. Thus, they can serve as a precondition for further education of an individual. Museum collections and their descriptive documents serve as knowledge centres and information depositories. They play a very important role in developing comprehension and accurate evaluation of surrounding world. Therefore, museums perform a special function for public good – from surrounding abundance of objects they highlight special documents and objects that can serve as witnesses to certain reality.

Plentiful and informative exhibition of public and private museums contribute to culture, economy and politics.

For successful operation of museums, it is necessary to take into account the key principles:

Work with collection:

- Acquisition of objects;
- Formation of exhibition;
- Documentation of artefacts;
- Development of information system (database).

Scientific research:

- Study of historical material;
- Work with archives;
- Preparation of publications;
- Lectures, presentations in seminars and conferences.

Work with public:

- Visitor analysis and surveys;
- Preparation of permanent exhibition;
- Preparation of expositions;
- Educational work of museum;
- Museum marketing.

Museum administration:

- Financing;
- Legal issues;
- Work with personnel;
- Materials for technical base;
- Indicators of work productivity.

Consequently, it can be concluded that museums shall ensure efficient educational work, meet requirements for conservation and administration of collection, provide high-quality technical means and attract new visitors with the help of well-considered marketing.

Development, resources and quality of museum services are the issues that shall be discussed openly to find professional and political solutions.

Museum personnel have a special responsibility for protection of collective memory of society. Therefore, experience of museum employees is very important since they often work in circumstances when there are not enough human resources and financing, but they are able ensure operation of museum in all key areas.

Acquaintance with new ideas and practical solutions, learning from achievements (and mistakes) of other museums is a task for all museum employees. Sometimes it is not easy, especially in small museums where very little time can be devoted to reading and studies. Therefore, international cooperation between road museums is essential for museum employees of all member states.

2 DEVELOPMENT AND OBJECTIVE OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF MUSEUMS

The road museums in countries of the Baltic Sea region have developed owing to commitment of road workers to gather old machinery, tools and other equipment, photos, documents and preserve the history related to their profession. For example, the Swedish National Road Administration started to create collections as early as in 1946, but Road Museum in Iceland was founded in 1949.

For those travelling the roads, historic roads and bridges tell a story of the development of road maintenance and traffic. They provide the modern traveller with information on the way connections were built, as well as, information of the builders and the use and users of the connections.

The built up environments related to road maintenance, including the road and road constructions, such as bridges, and also the roadside buildings, are part of our cultural scenery and cultural history. The leading principles of protection of national cultural heritage include that parts of such environments should be preserved for the future generations.

At the initiative of the management boards of Nordic and Baltic Road Administrations, a cooperation network of road museums of the Baltic Sea region was established in 2002. In that year, management of the Mobilia, the Finnish road museum, invited colleagues from other countries to the first meeting. The meeting was held in the road museum, and it was attended by representatives from Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This meeting was especially significant to the colleagues from the Baltic States, since it was the first opportunity to learn about experience of colleagues from the Nordic countries. It was hardly possible during soviet times and first years of independence. In the first meeting a representative of every country introduced its museum and his/her work in it.

In 2002, draft for the document “Memorandum of Understanding between the National Road Museums of Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden” was prepared, and it was planned that all public road administrations of the member states will acknowledge it.

In 2004, document was signed by all of the member states in Norway. Representative of the Ministry of Transport of the Kingdom of Denmark, who was also present at the seminar, expressed the wish of his organization to join the Nor-Balt cooperation when a road museum will be established in Denmark.

The Agreement set the aim of the cooperation: “To promote studying, exhibiting and preserving road and bridges history in the Nordic and Baltic countries and to strengthen the position of the road museums as knowledge centres for road history research and also as valuable tourist attraction.”

2 MUSEUM OVERVIEW – COOPERATION PARTNERS

Since 2002, cooperation partners have been meeting in one of the museums of the member states every year. Meetings are organized as three day long seminars where a representative of every museum reports about work carried out during the year, future plans and ideas. These meetings offer an opportunity to meet museum employees of the host country, see exhibitions, collections, and discuss administration issues.

Moreover, there are excursions to historical roads and bridges in every country. In some countries, such as Finland, Norway, Sweden and Estonia, road museums are responsible for preserving these objects and providing information about their history.

Seminars give knowledge that is necessary for improving work quality of every museum in local, regional, national or international context.

2.1 Finnish Road Museum “Mobilia”

Mobilia is the national road traffic museum in Finland. It is situated in Kangasala, 20 km south-east of Tampere. The Mobilia Foundation was established in 1986. In 1991, the Mobilia Foundation was changed into a foundation financed by organizations. The Finnish Road Administration joined the foundation and agreed on establishing a road traffic museum with a more extensive scope of operation.

Mobilia’s main exhibition is changing annually. The 59 roads and bridges of museum, situated throughout the country, are also part of the exhibition. In summer, Mobilia arranges a number of events. The exciting attraction within Mobilia is the Children’s Traffic Park, which was opened for summer season of 2008.

At the moment, Mobilia is the museum of 24 road traffic organizations. It is run as an enterprise, based on long-term customer relationships, economic profitability, and unique expertise within the road traffic sector.



Fig. 1. Children’s Traffic Park in Mobilia

2.2 Swedish Road Museum “Pylonen”

The collecting of old machines, tools and other items of interest started by the Swedish Road Administration in 1946. The first road museum was opened in Malmköping in 1985.

Road Museum “Pylonen” was inaugurated by His Majesty the King of Sweden in 1991 when the Swedish Road Administration celebrated its 150th anniversary. The museum was situated at the main office of SRA in Borlange, ca 250 km north of Stockholm, until the end of 2012.

The museum set up new exhibitions every year, for instance, “Saving Lives on the Road” or “Light Motor Bikes”.

Based on decision of the new administration, Swedish Road Museum and Swedish Railway Museum were reorganized and became one unit under the name of “Swedish Transport Administration Museum”. There is a decision to move Road Museum to Railway museum in Gävle.



Fig. 2. Building of Pylonen in Borlänge.

2.3 Norwegian Road Museum

The Norwegian National Road Museum can be found 12 km north of Lillehammer. It was opened for public in 1992.

In the museum’s outdoor and indoor exhibitions visitors can wander along road environments that represents thousand years of Norwegian road history.

The Rock Blasting Museum includes a unique sound, light and film experience about the history of rock blasting techniques inside a 240 meter long tunnel in the bedrock.

The traffic safety centre’s videos and exhibitions demonstrate the dark sides of road traffic and show how you can become a better road user.

H. Blindheimsvik’s village shop serves as a combined shop and exhibition, and Lysaker Inn, rebuilt at the Road Museum, invites you to enjoy tasty treats in a 19th century environment.

There are more than 360 huge road machinery items in the collection of the Museum, but a new and modern permanent exhibition is planned to open in 2014.



Fig. 3. Main building of Norwegian Road Museum

2.4 Iceland Road Museum

Since founded in 1949, the Iceland Road Museum has been constantly expanding. In the very beginning its collection was housed in a small room in the basement of the local school. Nowadays 13 reconstructed buildings, including a school, a church and a small hydro-electric power plant, are to be found on the museum site.

In 2001, an agreement was made between the Icelandic Road Museum and the Skógar Folk Museum about a new Museum of Transport. The museum was opened in 2002. It explores the history of transport, communications and technology in Iceland in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Skógar Folk and Transport Museum is situated in the countryside in Southern Iceland, 154 km east of Reykjavík. It welcomes more than 40 000 thousands visitors every year.

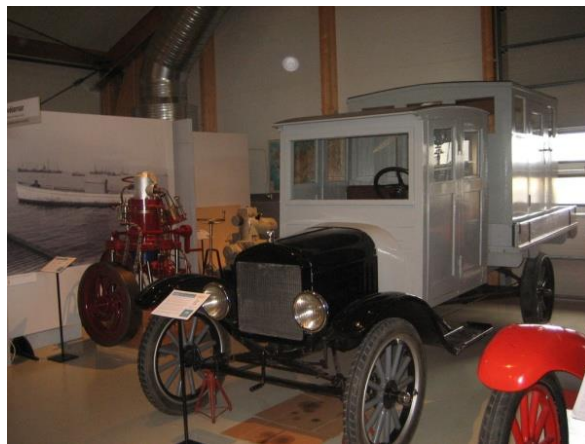


Fig. 4. Exhibition in Iceland Road Museum

2.5 Estonian Road Museum

The Estonian Road Museum was established in the end of the year 2000. It is located in the former Varbuse post station, alongside the centuries old curvy and narrow post road. The post station, completed in 1863, is the only post station complex in Estonia that has been fully preserved.

The majority of the museum's 20th century road machines, as well as, passenger cars are exhibited in the machinery hall. The museum also collects Estonian-made vehicles designed for driving on different roads, such as winter, bog and ice routes.

The permanent exhibition of the museum, History of the Road, tells us about the development of roads and means of traffic since prehistoric times till our days.

Comprehensive Open Air Exhibition was opened in the Museum in summer of 2010.



Fig. 5. Open Air Exhibition in Estonian Road Museum

2.6 Lithuanian Road Museum

The Lithuanian Road Museum was opened in Vievis on 19th October, 1995 in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the motorway Vilnius – Kaunas.

The collection of the museum consists of 6000 exhibits, which reflect the history of Lithuanian roads from the Roman Empire to our days.

There are some unique exhibits in the museum. For example, ancient footwear of the stone crushers “chempes”, worn to protect feet when crushing stones. A unique authentic horse-driven bitumen-heating boiler, made by the Genschel company in Germany in 1854, is exhibited in the Museum.



Fig. 6. Cooperation group of International Road Museums in Lithuanian Road Museum

2.7 Latvian Road Museum

The Latvian Road Museum is situated 60 km west of Latvia’s capital Riga, in medieval manor Šlokenbeka. Today, the 15th century manor is an architectural monument, reconstructed from ruins by Latvian road builders.

The Latvian Road Museum was established in 1976. It was the first museum of this type in the former Soviet Union.

Today, the museum occupies several premises of the manor. There are materials about first log and cobblestone road, first roads projects, as well as, horse driven equipment and road machinery is displayed.

A unique item in the museum is a steam roller “Marchall”, produced in UK in 1924.

The museum works on a project of expanding its exhibition near the manor since stone walls of the architectural monument restrict settings of new road building machinery.



Fig. 7. Exhibition of the Latvian Road Museum in front of an **old loving house** of the Šlokenbeka Manor

2.8 Danish Road and Bridges Museum

The Danish Road and Bridge Museum was a newly established museum located in Holbaek near Copenhagen. It was opened for visitors in 2011. There was a new house constructed for museum needs, and a new and contemporary exhibition was arranged there. Unfortunately, due to some financial problems the museum was closed a year later.



Fig. 8. Testing of the old road roller in Danish Road and Bridge Museum

3 FUTURE GOALS OF MUSEUM COOPERATION

Nord-Balt Road Museum cooperation is very significant for all its partners since we deal with a very specific field of cultural heritage of society – industrial heritage.

There are some ideas of making the cooperation more effective.

They include small goals for quick implementation, goals that require more time and financing, and ideas for further cooperation in the future.

Fast goals:

- Special places in websites about other museums. Each museum prepares and submits materials about its offer;
- Exchange of booklets between museums

Medium goals:

- Participating in the VIA NORDICA conferences;
- Participating in the Baltic Road Conferences;

- Participating in the PIARC workshops if possible;
- Exchange of specialists between museums;
- Making expositions in museums about other museums;
- Travel exhibitions between museums.

Major goals:

- Creating a road museum route through Nordic and Baltic countries;
- Publishing a book about museum cooperation;
- Publishing research works of museums in a joint edition once in two years;
- Making common virtual exhibitions.

Some of the cooperation goals are being implemented already. Namely, exchange of brochures between museums and work on research for publishing. Participation in bigger conferences and seminars mostly depends on available financing for these goals, but popularization of this cooperation in such conferences as VIA NORDICA and the Baltic Road Conference would attract even more attention to the history of roads.

4 BENEFITS OF THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE ROAD MUSEUMS

Exchange of experience and joint seminars for road museum employees are very important for every road museum. They contribute greatly to improvement of museum work, since every one of them is the only road museum in its country.

There are benefits of international cooperation of road museums:

- Support to museums in their aim to learn from each other and obtain the new ideas;
- It promotes the exchange of experience and information, enlarging the theoretical and practical knowledge and improving the professional skills of our personnel;
- We have an opportunity to get acquainted better with every road museum; it supports museums in fulfilling their role as keepers of technical heritage by promoting their importance;
- We have a better insight in museum work and facilities, which helps to integrate new knowledge in our everyday work;
- With cooperation we elevate standards of museum operation expressed in professional documentation, new research, modern displays, interesting programmes and events.

CONCLUSIONS

Each of the road museum of the Baltic sea region countries is different, with its own background, history and quality, but we are united by the same mission of preserving and researching road history and our everyday work.

Museums entertain and educate their visitors, as well as, carry out scientific research, acquire and conserve collections. Many museums also offer conference services or rent their rooms or territory for different kind of festivities and occasions.

Therefore, information exchange between specialists is very significant on both national, and international level. It encourages development of new products that introduce with the history of roads and bridges, and educates society.

As service providers to the local society and tourists, museums give an important contribution to public relations and publicity of their administrative institutions.

Importance of the cooperation of the Nord-Balt road museums can be proven by its existence for 12 years despite various political changes in the countries and museum administrations.

During various changes in society that concerns all aspects of life, museums provide that important link between the past and the present; they are a starting point for forming the future.

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