Professional Collaboration of Technical Museums in Russia. Trans.1.

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Science and technology museums in Russia. The process of formation and development of science and technology museums is closely connected with public apprehension of the role of technology in the culture. The growing interest of the Russian state to its cultural heritage, society to its history, and corporations to their roots enables new impulse in the development of museum activities facing challenges of modern society. Trans. 2

Most of these new bodies of coordination of cultural activities are built using latest telecommunications technologies and are supplied with cutting edge computer equipment.

Association of Science and Technology Museums. The notion of the “monument of science and technology” Trans 3. is of great importance in the history of formation and development of science and technology museums. Analyzing the above specified definition as an important criterion I would like to highlight this particular social significance of science and technology monuments. Demonstration of “science and technology impact on development of the society, evolution of “man-technology-nature” system is one of the most complicated problems to be solved currently by Russian museums.

The science and technology museums to a greater extent than other profiled museums are able to involve the visitor in any activity and to stimulate his own activity. This distinctive feature is a turning point in modernization of new and updating of operating Russian engineering museums, which in fact are becoming interactive centers for knowledge dissemination.

The Association of Science and Technology Museums within the Russian Committee of ICOM is non-governmental organization, established in 1988 by the Conference of national science and technology museums, held in the Urals city of Nizhny Tagil. It acts on the basis of the Charter of the Russian Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). The founders of the Association are: the Polytechnical Museum, the Central Museum of Railway Transport of the Russian Federation, the Alexander S. Popov Central Museum of Communications, and the magazine "Museum World". Currently the Association includes 46 museums and 7 individual members. The members of the Association are leading museums of science and technology, including museums of various ministries and departments, industrial enterprises, educational institutions, as well as private technology museums. Functions of scientific, institutional and methodical centre of Association are assigned to the Polytechnic Museum, which possesses appropriate information base to coordinate overall activities of science and technology museums round the country. Following key strategies of ICOM, the Association contributes to increasing knowledge, sharing mutual support, setting partnership and carrying inter-museum dialogue on. The Association renders assistance and provides support for science and technology museums in their formation and renewal, facilitates the exchange of best practices, including dissemination of benchmark foreign experience, coordinates activities to identify and preserve the monuments of science and technology, carries out activities to increase skills of museum professionals.

The Association properly unites and facilitates technical museum’s community and members, both institutional and individual. Without exaggeration at present it is the most sustainable and stable body of the ICOM Russia.

Communications and Postal Museums. The communications museums form a special group within the Association of Science and Technology Museums. This group includes postal and philatelic
museums and expositions, communications museums, radio and television museums, electric communication and space communication museums, exploratoriums, “smart buildings”. Trans.4.

Development of communications museums is closely connected with semantics of the present, which is based on primary human demand in information exchange, predeterminating constant growth of the communication area. This understanding of nature of museum communication is especially relevant for communications museums, which are targeted to reveal social and cultural features of the “information society” phenomena.

The Russian communication and postal museums are distinguished by concepts of formation and replenishment of their collections. On one hand, the communication is considered by the nature of applied technical devices which are divided into mail and electric communications; information transmission by electric signals through wires (wire communication), or (and) radio signals (radio communication). On the other hand, the communication is understood as production industry securing message transmission. However another important problem directly connected with the definition of communication is the identification of the role of information transmission in a certain cultural or social community. Trans.5. Thus the “communications museums” are documenting:

variety, formation and development of information transmission technical devices;
history of communication as a production unit of a certain region; role of communication in social life of the society;
contribution of prominent scientists and inventors to development of communications devices.

Every given museum documents each of the highlighted directions differently, depending on national peculiarities, history of origin, organizational belonging, and finally, understanding of its museum mission.

Recent development of the Central Museum of Communications has been manifested in a number of significant transformations expanding its primary activity, which proves high adaptability of the museum to social environment and stipulates process of modernization in the museum. It grounds a track for development of the whole group of communications and postal museums, and possibly, science and technology museums of the country in general.

All major communications and postal museums are independent members of the Association of Science and Technology museums and participate in all its programmes.

Information technologies as subject matter of museum collections. The information technologies are becoming an integral part of cultural domain. Science and technology museums and communications museums are currently creating preconditions for systematization and retaining of the process of information telecommunication technologies development for the history. Creation of museum multimedia programs and space for inter-museum information exchange is intended to spread knowledge, preserve and translate world historical heritage. Trans.6.

The documenting of the process of historical development of information technologies is a new phase in museum design and replenishment of museum collections, especially in telecommunications museums. Apart from historical artefacts, rapidly developing communication devices, the following things become communications museum pieces: software, complex infotelecommunication systems, multimedia products, managerial technologies. New museum exhibits require changes in the concept of museum collecting as well as in recording and safekeeping requirements.

Summary: Trans. 7. Multiple problems of current importance of Russian technology museums are caused by various reasons: "adjustment processes" in the country and in state ministries; imperfect regulatory
framework in the museum; revolutionary changes in information technology and communications.

Russian communications and postal museums discussed these problems in September 2007 in St. Petersburg at the First All-Russian Conference of communications museums "Problems and Prospects", organized by the Alexander S. Popov Central Museum of Communications and supported by the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications of the Russian Federation, Russian Foundation of the History of Communications, FSUE "Russian Post", and the Association of Science and Technology Museums of the “ICOM Russia”.

The conference was attended by about 60 people from different regions of Russia - representatives of departmental museums of communications (telecommunications, mail, education), public cultural institutions, owners of private collections, scientists specializing in technology history. Reports and discussions covered wide range of issues related to the conservation, study and public presentation of scientific and technological industry monuments of "Communication" branch, as well as activities of departmental communications museums and problems they face.

The conference resolutions covered issues of facilitating modernizing of communications and postal museums to preserve them as socio-cultural institutions integrated in market economy of modern Russia. Since then all-Russian conferences of communications and postal museums will be held every two years in different regions of Russia. They will discuss current strategic problems of development of museums and preservation of scientific and technical cultural heritage for future generations.

These and other imported issues of coordination and methodology of development of science and technology museums in our country are curated by the Association of Science and Technology Museums of the “ICOM Russia”.

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