

**HT museum –  
Museum of Post and Telecommunication, Zagreb**

## **Some Examples of Research in the Museum of Post and Telecommunication in Zagreb**

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### Research in museums

The research in the museum is an intellectual process of integration of museology with fundamental scientific disciplines. According to W. Gluzinski, the fundamental scientific disciplines (archeology, history, botany, physics etc.) are characterized by generalization through research of individual and creation of classifying and typological systems of elements, and for the museological research it is significant to make decision on specifics based on adopted generalization, and qualification of specifics into respective classes of adopted systems.

Back in 1846, Mijat Sabljar, the founder and the first director of the Croatian National Museum in Zagreb, said that the characteristics of objects worth collecting and storing in the museum were the same as the features of an object which made it subject of a scientific processing.

He was the one who already in 1850 began the inventory count of the material of the National Museum.

In 1971 prof. Antun Bauer, the founder of the Studies of Museology in Croatia, said that collections were precious as the matter of study and they had to be scientifically processed by the curators. It is a scientific work representing basis for evaluation of each material at the very entrance to the museum and especially when set up into museum exhibition.

Prof. Ivo Maroevic speaking of the subject matter of museum, points out its "museality". This is a quality of the object which in museum reality represents a document of real world from which it was transferred to the museum to testify about it. The very process of transfer of a segment from the primary world into the museum context he calls the "musealisation". Every exhibit of a museum due to its specific nature represents a unique artifact - it is a symbol in itself because representing a whole category of objects.

Complex scientific researches of the past and contemporary world can have their origin or/and confirmation in carefully explored adequate museum holdings. Viewed also in this manner - the research is at the core of museum work.

Out of all tasks and goals of the museum work (preservation, research, exploration, representation, education etc.) the most important is *preservation of memory*. Other heritage institutions (archives, libraries and data bases) have the same task, but only museum is the one doing it through the objects and contents related to objects.

Museum object is like the backbone of memory-unique, and, due to fast changes in environment and society and the resulting destruction, it is irrecoverable. Since there is a continuing lack of substitution in the market and on sites, preservation of the museum objects has become increasingly significant. Development of scientific methods in natural and technical sciences is reflected in their application in the complex museum activities of conservation and restoration as well.

Essential difference of basic scientific disciplines and museology concerning the object is in the communication aspect of a museum object. Messages sent by objects, in museums are turned into information. So, in addition to conservation and studying, the museality communication is another basic social task of the museum institutions.

Adding the concept of consciousness to the communication, John Fraser says: "Museums are the unique venue where our civic responsibility to one another and to the planet is the explicit

subject of discourse...Exploring the meaningfulness of what constitutes civilization is the underlying value of all exhibitions..." In the same manner, under the title "From the Public to Users" prof. Tomislav Šola has made conscious choice of cybernetic museum engaged for the benefit of community which it represents and/or whose interests it represents. In the spirit of activity directed philosophy under a slogan "learn about yourself", like GH Rivier who tried to establish the "mirror" of community in eco-museums, prof. Šola includes it as a task of each museum. Learning about oneself is good because of self respect, the sense of importance and pride, and also because of the critical view which can make an individual or a community better. All these are reasons why prof. Šola advocates change from "museum-temple" to the "museum-agera". Having thus presented "collective experience" of the community, it can be requested that what is good should be repeated on a broader plan, and what is bad may serve as a moral teaching or a warning.

The museum work shares the achievements of the new times. John Fraser says about it: "In the last hundred years, long distance communications and transportation systems have allowed humans to be more connected than ever before. It is impossible to keep information from flowing freely among most people on the planet." It could be supposed that in the museum practice the results of a research in this area might be first implemented right in the communications museums. So, for example, from the talk reported by Mr. Joachim Kalinich "The new concept of the Museum of Communication in Berlin" and Mr. Gunnar Nordlinder "New role of the Postal museum in Stockholm" at the CECOM-conference in 2002 in Berlin may be noticed that these museums in their new permanent exhibitions introduced large number of computers to present their collections, but also to establish overall communication.

The usual annual reviews on the work of the Zagreb museums include a column listing of the scientific researches. Due to non existence of defined criteria curators arbitrarily characterize their activity as a research one. So in the Report from 2003 we find uneven topics which include wide range of activities from the elaborating particular subject all the way to collecting, security, exhibition, publishing and educational work. It is interesting that in this Report 33 of the Zagreb heritage institutions quoted 39 works as results of a research mainly from the aspect of basic scientific disciplines, and two works deal with only a part of the museum's holdings elaboration mainly on its museological aspect.

## **Research in HT museum in Zagreb**

### *The history of the Museum*

Croatian museum of post and telecommunications is the institution which celebrated the 50th anniversary in 2003. The book, as the result of the work of Mrs. Kata Šutalo, the head of the Museum, was published for the occasion dealing with overall activities on collecting of the materials from the history of the post and telecommunications as well as additional efforts put into foundation of a museum in Zagreb. The book deals with the history of the organization of the Museum, organization of museum material and the list of employees, their works and publications and exhibitions of the institution up to this moment.

### *The history of post, telecommunications and philately*

In 1953 PTT museum was founded in Zagreb thus inciting reactions from the former General postal administration in Belgrade that insisted at the time on establishment of joint PTT museum in the capital of the former state. From the first day of operation PTT museum in Zagreb, in addition to collections of documents also had the initial materials of postage, philatelic and telecommunication collections. In spite of this, a few years younger PTT museum in Belgrade received the status of the state's museum.

In difficult working conditions and restricted resources, the Zagreb PTT museum develops wide research activities. Dr. Velimir Sokol, one of the founders and passionate advocate of locating

of the state's PTT museum in Zagreb, achieved the best results in the research of the history of post and telecommunications. His researches resulted in publication of monographs with elaboration on the themes "450 years of post in Zagreb, 1529-1979" (1979) and "Hundred years of telephony in Croatia, 1881-1981" (1981). Dr. Sokol has numerous discussions, studies and expert articles, such as "Professional couriers in the Dubrovnik Republic" (1968), "Place and role of postal history in the historical science" (1974) etc. His treatises "Has Lovrenc Košir proved to be the maker of the postage stamp concept" (1962) and "The fortunes and misfortunes of Lovrenc Košir", (1979) raised a number and vehement reactions.

In Lovrenc Košir's honor, as to the "inventor of the postage stamp", five stamps were released in Yugoslavia, in his birth home in Slovenia was put up a memorial plaque, and to honor this "deserving Austrian" Austria has also released a stamp. The Croatian historian of post dr. Velimir Sokol, driven by historical facts, wrote few works in which he proves that Lovrenc Košir was not the creator of introduction of stamp into postal traffic and that this honor belongs absolutely to Englishman, Rowland Hill. The fact that from 1979, under the decision of the Philatelists Union of Slovenia, the main Slovenian award for that area no more bears the name of Lovrenc Košir, proves that these arguments were undisputable. The dr. Sokol's discussion is known to be "an excellent material which is read as some crime novel, and actually represents a cold minded critical analysis of all that has been known so far about Lovrenc Košir; in the discussion, using only palpable and objective evidence supported by the laws of logics, he convincingly proved that L. Košir has absolutely nothing to do with the invention of postage stamp". However, many social and political changes lately happened in our region, and three years after the death of dr. Sokol, we hear that this year a book (of one author- Ernst Bernardini) was published in Austria and Slovenia dedicated to Lovrenc Košir as the inventor of postage stamp, and commemorative postage stamp was also released in Slovenia. It seems that this story will continue in installments...

#### *Another types of research:*

##### *The Collection of the Homeland War*

With the proclamation of the Republic of Croatia in 1991, the Zagreb PTT museum becomes the state's museum within the Croatian posts and telecommunications and is called The HPT Museum.

Over the next few years many versatile materials arrive to the museum and this resulted in forming of several new collections. One of them is the Collection of the Homeland War for Independence.

Huge part of this collection (documents, photographs, objects) has already served as original matter for writing a book "Croatian posts and telecommunications in Homeland War for Independence" issued by HPT Organization.

Naturally this is also a unique material for the future museum researches of this significant historical period for Croatia.

##### *Forming new philatelic collections*

In 1992, recognition of the Republic of Croatia by the United Nations and Universal Postal Union resulted in arrival of large quantity of a philatelic material to our Museum. It was a problem how to organize, deposit as well as to document it. Museological research in the sense of the solution to the problem was done by Dunja Majnaric Radošević.

- Letters were sent to fifteen PTT-museums in Europe. Answers to the questionnaire were precious guidelines for overall work on the philatelic collections of the museum.

- A visit to the old and well established Hungarian PTT museum and thank to the exceptional kindness of the director Mrs. Irene Kovach and other colleagues, we got direct insight into a long-term excellent work of the philatelic section of that museum.
- Significant contribution in the shaping of philatelic collections in our museum was made through the information acquired through interviews of a dozen of the reputable Croatian philatelists on their experiences in conservation and sorting of stamps.
- Naturally, in addition to this, the system by which all collections were formed until then in HPT museum has been taken into consideration.

The curator's research was conducted by her long year experience of museum work and resulted with forming the new collections.

They are Collection of postage stamps of the Republic of Croatia and Collection of foreign postage stamps.

The term "forming" implies organization of the arrangement of the very objects, respective documentation and inventory and permanent presentation concept.

The Museum contains from earlier period, the philatelic material (the Philatelic collection) which is now organized in several collections. Since 2000 all the philatelic collections in the Museum make the philatelic section of the HT Museum. Since 1997 it is centralized in an inventory base called "Promus" program.

The research on philately in our Museum is done in order to enable more easily differing holdings of the Philatelic section, finding its objects so that they could more simply enter the flow of the museum work such as research, conservation, presentation, communications etc.

The museum-object has infinite possibilities, but to realize most of them, we need researches. This short review modeled by our small museum is yet another proof of variety of the research aspects in the museums of communications.