



# President's Letter

International Association of Transport and Communications Museums **March 2017**

Dear IATM Members,.

This report will cover the activities for the International Association of Transport and Communication Museums (IATM) for the year 2016. The report will cover the objectives, conferences, activities, programs and significant results realized during this past year. For information on the Association please refer to our website at <http://www.iatm.museum>.

The Association like many associations has been caught up in the transformation of museums and the question of their continued relevance occurring over the last years. It was felt that given the new visitor experience drivers, challenges associated with the care and stewardship of large post industrial revolution transport collections that it was time to pull together as an association and address the issues as a collective. The Association has been successful in refreshing its vision and mandate and put into place initiatives that would provide a much more proactive and nurturing role for its member museums.

## 2016/2017

In 2016 from the 25th to the 28th of September the IATM supported a conference in Edinburgh and Glasgow, Scotland. Over 60 transport and communication museums attended with participants from India to Ottawa Canada and many in between. The theme was The Role of the Artefact in Twenty-First Century museums and provided an insight on some of the new forms of interpretation and visitor experience. Presentations and papers were delivered on the role of the artefact which included the question of the use and continued running of transport and communication artefacts. In addition some seminars centred on conservation and the artefact. The report on the conference will be available online by April 2017. The conference was well attended and included visits to the National Museums of Scotland's 11 new galleries and the Glasgow City Museum to experience their new vision in the delivery of the visitor experience.

In 2012 the Association created its support program called *Skillbridge*. The impetus for this program was the recurring conversations at conferences on the need to share experiences amongst members and the relative lack of funding and administrative support available for many of the museums. To date there have been a number of exchanges that have produced enviable results and better working relationships among participating museums.

I would like to cite one wonderful letter that accompanied a report from the *Heritage Transport Museum Taoru India* to the *Verkehrsmuseum Dresden* as a testimony to the power of the Skillbridge program.

*"It has been an honour to receive the Skillbridge Fellowship offered by IATM. It was a great opportunity to visit the Verkehrsmuseum Dresden, Germany. There were plenty of insights into the innovative ways of making displays, conceptualizing the exhibitions and conducting educational programs.*



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*The museum has range of collection pertaining to the themes which are somehow similar to the thematically build collection at Heritage Transport Museum. I was taken around the galleries and special exhibitions by the respective curators, which enhanced my knowledge about the stages of conceptualizing the exhibitions at the museum. Apart from that, the PR Dept. of the museum provided an insight into the marketing and event management strategies of the museum. It was also thought provoking to learn the ways of the promotion of museum and its events through various social media. The educational quotient in the museum is quite experimental and hands on, and at the same time interactive. And the library and archives has the amazing references of the vast history of the transportation in Germany since olden times.*

*It was lovely interacting with the staff of the museum, and the beginning of the whole program was full of fun with a trip to Moritzburg during Summer festival. I got a chance to visit the depositories and other transport museums within Dresden, and study their collection. In the whole it can be said that the experience was full of learning and fun."*

This coming year the Association will endeavour to engage more of its member museums in the Skills bridge program. Each of the participants have found it valuable both for the exchange of best practices and for solidifying ties among sister museums in other countries that serve disparate communities but face the same issues as an institution.

In 2017 the IATM conference will be held in *Lucerne* and *Berne* Switzerland from the *24th to the 27th of September*. The theme will be centred on the new role of the museum in the 21st century with the actual title to follow. It proves to be a dynamic cross section of presenters from various disciplines and specialities both from the museum community and from without. The strength of the conference is as always its international flavour and the quality of the participants.

In 2015/16 the Association was able to welcome a number of new members and unfortunately said good-bye to some members of long standing that found membership was no longer part of their operating mandate. We welcomed names:

- Volandia, Flight Park and Museum from Italy
- Museum of Science, Technology and Transport from Hungary
- Museu do Automóvel Famalicao from Portugal

Another initiative that we were able to realize was accommodating a funding drive request from the Portuguese National Railway Museum. This was posted on our web site and face book. While IATM doesn't currently play an advocacy or policy development role we can provide a vehicle for member museums to post their initiatives and access a wider international market.



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I attended the ICOM meeting in Milan both as Director General of the Canadian War Museum and as President of IATM. I noted that ICOM has a wider circle of influence and connectivity but I felt that if we became more than an affiliate we would lose some of our own visibility and flexibility to address the needs of our members. Some of the burning issues covered were the change in visitor demographics and expectations, which we are addressed at the conference in Scotland, the protection of intangible heritage and the protection of collections in times of conflict and natural disaster. All issues that we face.

## **Proudest accomplishment**

I would submit that the greatest achievement of the Association in the last four years is the complete evolution of its vision and the programs and offerings that it provides for its members. This was guided by the former president Robert Sjöo from the Swedish Railway Museum who led the association with passion and vision. The association is now a vibrant entity that supports its member museums as they tackle the changing role of museums in the 21st century and care for their collections. It brings together advocates and experts from a range of disciplines to help address individual and global challenges. The Skillbridge program is just one aspect of a new and revitalised IATM that seeks to expand its network of support and the exchange of competencies and mentoring activities around the world.

In going forward we will need more initiatives like Skillbridge that would provide a real value for member museums. We will also endeavour to be more active on the social media channels like Facebook with up to date material supplied by member museums. We will send out a request for material in the coming months.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Quick', written in a cursive style.

Report written by Stephen Quick

President of the International Association of Transport Museums  
Director General Canadian War Museum  
Ottawa Canada