

Museums in Danger

47th IATM Conference
8-11 September 2024
Finland

Conference Reader

47th IATM Conference | 8-11 September 2024 | Finland + optional study day 12 Sep 2024

Mon, 9 September 2024 | Vapriikki Museum Centre

Emergency Preparedness in Museums – the Benefit of Emergency Alliances

Peter Giere, Curator Embryologic collections & head of the Competence Centre Collections, Museum of Natural History Berlin

Museums play a vital role in the preservation of cultural heritage – however, being both equipped with technical infrastructure and subjected to the elements, they are not exempted from disasters striking. As just seen in the blaze of the Copenhagen Børsen with its collection of fine art, fire as one form of devastation can strike at any time, especially during construction phases. This, however, is only one threat to preserving our cultural heritage for future generations, weather extremes including extreme precipitation along with widespread flooding, hurricane force winds and other adverse conditions are a serious threat to heritage institutions. Unfortunately, owing to climate change with increased energy in the atmosphere, this threat is growing. So it is up to museums and other heritage institutions to prepare for the increased probability of a disaster striking – as part of preventive conservation efforts. Institutions have to invest in disaster preparedness to prevent a disaster or to mitigate its effect on the heritage objects. Besides individual preparations to identify and reduce the weak spots in an institution's infrastructure and outer shell, this includes addressing different disaster scenarios and how to deal with damaged heritage objects in the aftermath. In Germany, the widespread absence of awareness for the necessity to prepare for devastation in the government and institutional administration led to the foundation of emergency alliances by conservators and others in order to assist each other when disaster strikes. This system of mutual benefit as a grassroots movement now is endorsed by museum administrations and a federal agency, but funding by the government still often is missing. However, especially for smaller institutions, membership in an emergency alliance can be as essential as an insurance would be if it was not for government liability. Based on the challenges to

preserve cultural heritage in times of crisis, this talk looks into the efforts of individual museums and an emergency alliance to prepare for different scenarios of disasters and how to mitigate ensuing detrimental effects on the objects under their care.

About Peter Giere

Originally trained as a biologist at the Universities of Marburg and Victoria, BC, Peter Giere entered the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin as a PhD student in zoology. His dissertation on the cranial morphology of mammals got him in touch with the vast collections housed at this institution and elsewhere. Working with collection material and collections led to his fascination with these cultural assets and culminated in becoming a curator at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, where he currently is the scientific head of the Embryological Collection. As a curator, Peter Giere deepened his interest in maintaining the physical properties of the collection material under his care and he got involved with preventive conservation issues, especially disaster preparedness. Initially, he organized awareness workshops at his museum and in the world of natural history museums, followed by leading the disaster preparedness group at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin. Pursuing this interest, he became one of the driving forces in an emerging group of persons at the Berlin Museum Association to work on disaster preparedness – a group that subsequently led to the formation of the emergency alliance of Berlin museums where Peter Giere currently is speaker.

What is the value of emergency alliances for museums (in times of crisis)?

Emergency alliances as grassroots networks by professionals in the care for cultural heritage can be beneficial in the preparation for coping with disasters that may strike an institution housing cultural objects and in anticipating ways for mitigating the consequences.

Between Old and New - A Delayed Capital Project's Influence on a Museum

Richard Zima, Head of Content and Exhibitions, Hungarian Museum of Science, Technology and Transport

The Hungarian Museum of Science, Technology, and Transport is undergoing a significant renewal process. For over 100 years, it stood as one of Hungary's most popular museums, nestled in the City Park. However, the building itself endured the bombing of 1945, leading to nearly two decades of closure. Unfortunately, the subsequent restoration utilized subpar techniques and materials, resulting in rapid deterioration. Consequently, in 2015, the decision was made to demolish the old main building, paving the way for the emergence of the New Transport Museum on a fresh plot. Renowned architects and exhibition planners diligently crafted the new plans culminating after years of dedicated effort. Nonetheless, typical of many large-scale projects, the process has been significantly hampered by funding constraints. Which delays the commencement of actual construction indefinitely.

This talk delves into the museum's existential struggle as it endeavors to showcase its collection, which has languished in storage for nearly a decade.

Early on, the museum team recognized that their only avenue to public visibility was through organizing special temporary exhibitions at the new site. The chosen future development site – a former railway maintenance hall – possesses a unique ambiance but suffers from neglect, presenting both opportunities and challenges. While ample space allows for the display of large vehicles, essential for a transport museum, delicate artifacts necessitate costly and specialized protection if exhibited there. The hurdles of using an aging industrial site coupled with restricted operating hours and the perpetual anticipation of project commencement, profoundly shape the exhibition organization process.

This study delves into the myriad challenges confronting the museum during the nebulous interim period between old and new, encapsulating its valiant struggle for survival.

About Richard Zima

Richard Zima is a historian and political scientist who has been actively involved in the exhibition planning processes at the Hungarian Museum of Science, Technology, and Transport since 2019. He served as the chief curator for the museum's new permanent exhibition which has completed its planning phase. Collaborating with the lead exhibition designer Kathrin Milic-Grünwald from Atelier Brückner and lead architect Charles Renfro from Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Zima contributed to the development of a comprehensive history of Hungarian transport. The planned exhibition, spanning 12,200 square meters, aims to explore both the social and technical aspects of transportation featuring 110 large vehicles and 1200 smaller artifacts.

Zima has contributed to several exhibitions of the museum and is currently Head of the Division of Content Development and Exhibitions. Notably, he has also served as the chief curator and project lead for the special exhibitions "The Cycling Shift" in 2023 and "What Drives Us? - Energy Mix in Transport" in 2024.

Museums in Crisis - Experiences (and Solutions) from around the Baltic Sea

Tuomas Värjö, Boat and Boat Engine Collections, Forum Marinum

In recent years, different kinds of crises have caused major challenges to societies around the world, and also put museums' resilience to the test. It has become apparent that museums, memory institutions and cultural institutions in general play a big role in ensuring societal resilience during difficult times.

During the COVID-19 crisis, restrictions and special measures were put into place by national and local authorities in different countries. In the absence of concrete, live events and normal social gatherings and contacts, the thirst for culture and entertainment still was great: The number of virtual exhibitions in galleries and museums increased, various online events were tried out, and

artists organised pop-up concerts from their home studios. Different solutions to continue cultural activities for different audiences were tried, with varying success.

The Baltic Museum Resilience Project (BaMuR), co-funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, has brought together partners from five countries around the Baltic Sea. Since 2022, we have been looking at experiences during the COVID-19-crisis in different museums in Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Lithuania and Poland. We aimed to learn more about how it affected them, and what kind of measures they tried out to address the negative effects they encountered during this extraordinary time. Based on this work, our goal has been to create tools for museums and memory institutions to increase their resilience in the face of future crises of different kinds. In this presentation, a brief outline is provided of the work done during the project, and some tools and solutions to increase resilience are suggested for discussion among museum professionals participating in the IATM conference. A particular emphasis is on digital resilience, and in the possibilities (and limits) of using virtual exhibitions to improve it.

About Tuomas Värjö

Tuomas Värjö was born in Kuopio in Eastern Finland on September 18th 1980. After studying history and humanities in the Finnish capital, he completed his Master of Arts (MA) degree in History at the University of Helsinki in 2008.

In 2009, he joined the staff of the Forum Marinum Maritime Centre, a national specialist museum for maritime history and the Finnish Navy Museum in Turku, Finland. He has worked as a museum curator since 2018, in charge of Forum Marinum's sizable boat and boat motor collections. Apart from collections work, he is also regularly involved in the museum's exhibition projects.

His research interests include the history of technology, boatbuilding and shipbuilding in Finland, and the history of Finnish naval vessels. Recently, he has worked as a coordinator in different projects at Forum Marinum, including the Baltic Museum Resilience Project (BaMuR) and the LIMM project on Finnish clinker-built wooden boats.

How can museums from around the Baltic Sea inspire museums globally?

In the countries around the Baltic Sea, we have many different museums working in a number of national museum environments. Different sizes, organised as public and private entities, or combinations thereof. There is a lot of variance and differences between our museums. At the same time, there are many things that connect us: lots of shared history and common themes, a dedication to high quality museum work for the benefit of different audiences, and a willingness to cooperate with each other in making things better for the future. This combination of differences and unifying factors gives strength and resilience to the museums in the Baltic Sea area, and can also be manifested in an ability to inspire museums globally.

Stronger by Networking. Resilience through Association

Heini Sorakivi, Project Manager, Finnish Association of Traffic Museums

Trafiikki-museot ry - the Association of Traffic Museums is a network of ten Finnish museums in the field of transport and communication. Located in eight cities across Southern Finland, five of our members are museums with national responsibility, and five are significant museums within their theme. Together, our expertise covers the vast sphere from communication and media to railways, shipping and motoring, even technology as a whole.

Together we share projects, a joint online shop, expertise and communication. We put our resources together in developing our competence, services, influence and our ability to adapt to changing circumstances of the society and museum industry. A unique association offers its members training, peer support and a community – working for the same mission: better preservation and appreciation of our cultural heritage of transport and communication.

Our association turns twenty this year. These twenty years of co-work have taught us a lot. Many things have changed – the museum field itself has been transformed over the last two decades. However, the very core of our association has remained the same: The trust in the power of networking. We believe that joining forces builds us stronger and more prepared for the possible dangers and turbulences of the future. We claim that associated museums are more resilient ones. In the times of uncertainty, the bound networks become safety nets.

About Heini Sorakivi

Heini Sorakivi, Master of Arts, is currently working part-time as a project manager of the Finnish Association of Traffic Museums, her other part is dedicated to audience outreach at Forum Marinum Maritime Centre in Turku.

She has a history of working within the museum field in diverse positions for a few years now. Throughout her career she has worked closely with audiences. She started as a museum assistant, then moved on to work in diverse development projects, mainly focusing on learning in museum and finding new ways to use cultural heritage in education. Most recently she has worked in the educational department at the Finnish Postal Museum.

Looking at things from your position in the museum world, in times of crisis, who you're gonna call?

It is fair to say, that my first contacts would be found within the Association of Traffic Museums. Our network is based on community and support in good and bad times. I would turn to my "Trafiikki-colleagues" for peer support, cheering up and also tangible help.

Visit to the Lenin Museum in Finland, set to re-open as Nootti - The Museum of Finnish-Russian Relations.

Kalle Kallio, Director, Lenin Museum

Turning a Challenge into an Opportunity: Echoes of the Blitz at London Transport Museum

Matt Brosnan, Head Curator, London Transport Museum

In 2024, London Transport Museum opened “Echoes of the Blitz: Underground shelters in Ukraine and London“. This exhibition presents 70 photographs illustrating the experiences of civilians using underground train stations to shelter from air raids in conflicts 80 years apart. The project met challenges and seized opportunities using agile decision-making and collaboration.

As always, the first challenge was funding. As we developed this project, it became clear that another gallery for which we had secured funding was not achievable in its original timeframe. We decided to take a bold approach by pitching a reallocation of this funding to our photography-based space. While this carried risks, we wanted to avoid damaging our relationship with the funder and hoped they would value reinvesting their money in a project with similar aims. Fortunately for us, they agreed.

The next challenge was that this funding could only be applied to the physical elements of the new gallery. However, we saw an opportunity here too. We wanted to develop a photography space that could be reused sustainably for successive exhibitions. Using the funding to pay for the gallery fit out, AV hardware, a sustainable LED lighting system and frames would help to support this model. Like many projects, we were up against timing. The funding had to be used within a specified time and we needed to carve out time for this project within an already busy workload for all the people who came together to make it happen: curatorial, design, development and communication teams. The final challenge was the content. As the first show of a new offer, it had to be impactful.

Serendipitously, we were in discussion with a German media agency keen to display photographs of sheltering in Ukrainian metro stations during the ongoing war. We saw the opportunity to work with them collaboratively to combine our historic images with their contemporary photojournalism.

This presented challenges in the sensitivity of featuring an ongoing conflict, which required a careful approach to press and marketing. The logistics of developing exhibition content across borders was also experimental. A productive working relationship with our partners ensured success.

About Matt Brosnan

Matt Brosnan is the Head Curator at London Transport Museum (LTM), where he has worked since early 2018. He leads the curatorial team who manage, develop and share a growing collection of 500,000 objects that documents the last 200 years of London's rich and varied public transport history. This includes sharing LTM's subject matter and collection through exhibitions, galleries, digital content, publications and heritage events. Matt previously worked at the Imperial War Museum for 12 years as a curator, historian and department head, curating many exhibitions and working on IWM's First World War galleries.

Design | Development | Marketing and Communications

Documentation and Highlighting of the Ongoing War: Experience of the War Museum in Ukraine

Yurii Savchuk, Director, National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War
Short summary of presentation by Yurii Savchuk, Director General, National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War

The National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War is one of the largest museums in Ukraine. It was established in 1974 and opened in the current location in 1981. The famous dominant object of the Museum is the 102-meter Motherland Monument, the tallest statue in Europe.

Since the early days of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Museum has been documenting the ongoing war and highlighting it. In particular, it conducted 21 field expeditions to the liberated areas of Ukraine in order to collect the evidence of war. Since then, the museum has already collected more than 12,000 war artifacts.

They became the basis for the current exhibition activities in Ukraine and abroad. During the wartime, the museum's exhibitions were arranged in Ukraine and 15 other countries. The most notable projects are:

- "Kyiv: One-Day Report. March 8, 2022". World's first museum photo exhibition on the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war. Its world premiere took place in Verdun (France) within the first month of the war. Presented in 9 countries in total;
- "Ukraine – Crucifixion". World's first stationary museum exposition on the ongoing war. Presented in Kyiv on 8 May 2022. It was the basis for international projects in Riga (Latvia), Tallinn (Estonia), New York (USA) and Bratislava (Slovakia);
- "Crossroads. Sweden – Ukraine (1000 Years)". The largest international museum project in Ukraine. It united the efforts and collections of almost 30 museums, archives and libraries of Sweden and Ukraine in order to present the millennial historical ties between two countries. Inaugurated by H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden at the Swedish Army Museum in Stockholm on 15 February 2024.

At the same time, after restoring access for visitors on 8 May 2022, the museum has hosted more than 400,000 people in its venues in Kyiv since, including more than 70 international delegations from 39 countries around the world.

The war realities became a catalyst of the museum's reinterpretation. The museum broadens its perspective of history by linking together the heritage of the past and present wars. It reflects the idea that the current war is a culmination of a century-long struggle of Ukraine for independence.

At the moment, the museum is preparing a new permanent exhibition, which will cover its Ukrainian history of the First and Second World War and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. These changes in the museum's perception also lead to visual changes. In particular, one of the largest projects of 2023 was the replacement of the Soviet emblem on the shield of the Motherland Monument with the Ukrainian state symbol of Trident, which reflected the final breach of independent Ukraine with the Soviet totalitarianism. Notably, the dismantled Soviet 'hammer and sickle' is on display as a museum exhibit.

The museum's activities during wartime received international recognition. Among others, it was awarded the special judges' prize by the Museums + Heritage Awards jury for the exhibition "Ukraine – Crucifixion" and professional resilience during the war; and received a special judges' recognition of the European Museum Academy Awards for the preservation of heritage and documentation of the war events.

It's goal is to be the place of remembrance of the current Russo-Ukrainian war and the future victory of Ukraine and the free world. Therefore, many of the museum's efforts are directed towards memorialization and museification of the war that is still underway. There are many challenges now: the lasting Russian aggression, the difficult situation in the country, a highly traumatized Ukrainian society and more. The museum needs international support and cooperation. That is why the opportunity to share its experience during the conference in Finland is highly appreciated.

About Yurii Savchuk

Yurii Savchuk is the Director General of the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War. Additionally, he is active as a member of the Supervisory Board of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation. He holds a PhD in History, his research mainly focuses on the auxiliary sciences of history: museology, Ukrainian heraldry, vexillology, attributics, and emblematics.

Yurii has curated over 20 exhibitions in Ukraine and 13 countries abroad. He is the author of nearly 100 scientific publications and co-author of the project of the Great State Coat of Arms of Ukraine.

Can museum documentation and collecting be objective (in times of conflict)?

It is complicated. It can be said that documentation and collection processes, as well as all other spheres of our museum's activities in the wartime, can be objective more or less, as the museum's researchers are first of all scientists, whose mission is to document the events that are really happening in the country. Documentation and collection carried out by the museum are intended to highlight different facets of war: the Russian invasion and its consequences for the people of Ukraine (devastation of the settlements, war crimes against the population, survival of civilians in the extreme conditions, damage done to cultural heritage, economic damage etc.), as well as the fight of the Ukrainian people for independence. Of course, the Russian army's equipment, weapons, documents, propaganda materials and everyday items are collected, stored and displayed by the museum. At the same time, it is impossible to use the same approaches in showing the objects of the Russian army and Ukrainian soldiers, as the purposes of showing both categories are different. Similarly, it is impossible to be 100 per cent "neutral" documenting the war in Ukraine, under Russian attacks, and seeing how Russia destroys the lives of thousands of people in your country every day for its imperial ambitions. In this case, being "neutral" sounds like holding an equal attitude towards both sides, which is definitely not applicable to our case, as we clearly see the aggressor and the victim of the aggression, which tries to protect its existence.

Are Aviation Museums and Collections More in Danger during Armed Conflicts than other Cultural Institutions?

Matias Laitinen, Curator, The Finnish Aviation Museum

Many transport museums are situated in areas that can be described as transportation hubs. During armed conflicts active transportation hubs like rail yards and ports are very often on top of the list of aerial strikes and bombardment. What stands out even more is that many aviation museums in the world are situated next to airfields, in areas of major airports or even in areas of active air force bases.

Airfields and airports next to the major cities are key areas for hostile air assaults in the early phase of armed conflicts. The latest case is the Battle of Antonov Airport in Hostomel, Ukraine in February 2022. Air force bases, on the other hand, are all targeted for strategic air strikes.

Museums of transport history usually hold large collections which include big object types like ships, locomotives, and aircraft. Many aircraft in museums are not easy to disassemble for possible land transportation to safety. Which aircraft should and could be saved and evacuated in time, and where to?

In my paper, I will present how aviation museums and collections are situated in Finland and generally in Europe. Then, I will show examples of how airfields and airports have been targeted in some conflicts around the world. At the end, I will discuss some ways of transporting the aircraft on land.

About Matias Laitinen

Matias Laitinen is a maritime archaeologist working at the Finnish Aviation Museum as a Head of Collections. He has worked at the Finnish Aviation Museum since 2007. In coming years, Matias will, together with his collection team, prepare all the collections of the Finnish Aviation Museum for the move to a new location before the end of 2028. He has a MA in archaeology from the University of Helsinki and also worked several years at the Finnish Heritage Agency and Forum Marinum Maritime Centre.

The Climate Effects of Having a Hobby

Anni Antila, Development Manager, Mobilia

When we modify raw material or already existing things or move ourselves from one point to another, we consume energy. Most often, producing this energy causes climate effects and local pollution or other negative consequences on the environment. This is true, even if we use 100% renewable energy, but the consequences may be so little that they are hard or impossible to measure or compare to the whole picture.

Transport is a large factor causing global warming and road transport as individual and flexible has been regarded as a key factor in climate debates. Motoring and motor vehicles cause multilevel effects, not only on climate but also on health, safety, living comfort and sometimes on cultural heritage. On the other hand, after the early 20th century Western and some Asian societies are based on motorized road transport and fossil economy. Automobiles have facilitated huge steps in medical, emergency and security safety nets as well as contributed to economy, social life, communities and leisure. Many attempts to look back to healthier times have therefore proved to be anachronistic.

What if your dear hobby is based on these culprits of many harmful consequences? Are enthusiasts of historical vehicles messengers of doom? Is the idea of a responsible use of historical internal combustion engines an absurd one? Are there alternatives for fossil fuel? And furthermore, what kind of role could transport museums have at formulating and broadening more responsible ways of “hobbies of apocalypse”? This is a vital question especially on historical road vehicles when it’s a known fact that nine of ten vintage cars are owned and used by private enthusiasts, not museums. Using a historical vehicle preserves intangible heritage but also means taking risks. These are no easy questions.

About Anni Antila

Anni is the Development Manager at Mobilia. She has a degree and background in the Finnish Defence Forces, but has worked in museums for a decade now, with necessary museum studies.

Her museum career consists of smaller and bigger museums as well as art and cultural history. Her skills and experiences focus on preserving mobile heritage and unprejudiced exhibitions. Anni researches responsible ways of preserving and using historical vehicles and broadening principles of conservation and restoration among enthusiasts and audiences that are not museum professionals or experts on tangible heritage. Anni is somewhat enthusiast on mobile heritage herself, too, working on bicycle history & vintage bicycles, but she and her family also own a couple of old Triumphs.

Sustainability Work at Mobilia

Elina Toukola, Customer Service Manager, Mobilia

Mobilia's sustainability work started about ten years ago with investments into the building and its infrastructure. When oil heating was replaced by wood chip heat and solar panels were installed. For the past couple of years, new sustainability work has involved the entire museum, aiming at the development of a more sustainable tourism industry. Visible steps in this work have been the Ekokompass Environmental System Certificate and the Sustainable Travel Finland – signifying sustainable tourism – awarded to Mobilia by Visit Finland in autumn 2023. Additionally, a carbon dioxide footprint calculation is currently being prepared.

Taking carbon neutrality targets into account, and, on the other hand, our important task of promoting the equality of all road users, is part of our current strategy. In connection with this process, Mobilia has had to consider the road transport industry's relationship to climate change and Mobilia's own role in the social debate. The other half of the work has been to assess the climate impact of Mobilia's own operations and create concrete targets.

The sustainability work has required a lot of research. Ready-made examples are not necessarily suitable for museum activities as such. We have had to choose the goals that we want to strive for, and which ones we perceive as too difficult and/or insignificant in terms of the result. Gathering information on the subject has increased our understanding, we know, it is a continuous process.

About Elina Toukola

Elina has 20 years of experience in diverse customer service work at Mobilia. She is responsible for our public relations and marketing, customer services and our museum shop. She is also closely involved in our different events. Because of her central role, she has been a driving force in Mobilia's sustainability work.