

COMMENTARY

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Media museums, research, and the preservation of the immaterial heritage

Museums are also doing research. When dealing with preservation measures concerning the media, museums have traditionally been interested in saving communication instruments and technology: radios, telegraphs, telephones, computers et cetera. As the media are increasingly influencing society as a whole, are media museums supposed to focus on material objects? Could the role of communication and messages gain a more central place in the museological preservation of the media? As the example of the Internet Museum shows, there are several directions to take.

In a process often labeled mediatization, the media are occupying an increasingly central role in shaping societies (see e.g. Couldry & Hepp, 2013). At the same time, museums *as media* are increasingly moving from object-centered displays to interactive experiences in what has been described as a “crisis of the object”, a trend that is by some accounts threatening the monumental “aura” of objects in museums (cf. Smith, 2006: 546-547; Henning, 2006: 71).

The crisis of the object is nowhere as apparent as in the case of media museums. As the focus of preservation is changing from object to message, from media technology to communication in the media, media museums are in the midst of a shift from a material world to an immaterial one.

Preserving messages (and other forms of immaterial heritage) requires a new kind of paradigm.

Contemporary collecting

Many media museums are increasingly interested in what has since the 1970s been called

contemporary collecting. Contemporary collecting was once a novel new way of looking at the museum work, where objects are replaced with various preservation techniques, ranging from ethnographic observation to photography, audio and video to interviews in different media (cf. Axelsson, 2014). Contemporary collecting seems to perfectly meet the needs of media museums struggling with disappearing objects.

In relation to the media, contemporary collecting can take many forms, depending on who is preserving and what is being preserved. The Finnish Museum of Games in Tampere has been able to preserve contextualizing interviews with thirty prominent game designers, dealing with the ways games are being and have been made.

Similarly, Rupriikki Media Museum has interviewed fifteen people from various demographic groups about their social media usage, first in 2010 and later, in 2015, an update with the same persons.

Sometimes collecting can be carried out with the more active assistance from the community dealt with. The changing exhibition *My Game History* open at the Finnish Museum of Games from January to March 2017, dealt with thirteen students from the University of Tampere and their respective stories about how they became gamers. The exhibition is

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realized as a university course, aimed at students from diverse disciplines.

Media preservation can take other forms, also: the Media Museum in Odense is planning to adopt a media-archeological approach (Huhtamo & Parikka, 2011) for researching the ways the museum audience interacts with older media technologies like videocassette recorders, double deck boomboxes and other portable cassette players, as well as gaming computers such as Commodore 64. This materialistic and retrospective turn aims at using the “dead media” in terms of extinct and forgotten media technologies to challenge the established narratives of media history.

Collaborative creation of collection

As apparent, preservation work is not done in a vacuum, but increasingly in cooperation with different kinds of groups and communities.

The Finnish Museum of Games, for example, has been planned with the support of universities in Tampere and Turku. The objects on display have been chosen from the collections of a hobbyist collector group and the private collections of numerous game designers, game journalists and the gaming community. Active cooperation has resulted in hundreds of object donations, research and collection work relating to them, as well as a very representative collection of photographs about gaming in its various forms.

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The above examples are just some interpretations of the ways that media preservation in an immaterial age can be dealt with. All of them deal with the preservation of communication and messages, not the physical objects that museums have traditionally been interested in.

Although immaterial, they are still museological *objects*, as they are on display in exhibitions and in the focus of preservation efforts by the museums. Thus, there also exists an ongoing negotiation regarding their value, a negotiation that includes the remembering of some things about them and the forgetting of others (Vahtikari, 2013 & Badenoch, 2014).

Re-negotiation of the historical value

In this vein, it is important to admit that museums are places where, over time, museological objects gain new meanings in an ongoing triologue between a) the object, b) the way it is displayed and/or preserved and c) the reception of the audience in reaction to it (Akker & Legêne, 2016: 7).

The ongoing re-negotiation process is possible for material, but also immaterial objects, and a serious reminder of the importance of museums in the digital age. Museums are about dialogue and triologue: a place for re-contextualizing, re-evaluating and shaping our understanding of history – and a place for doing these things together.

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Nordic media museums

The Danish Film Institute, Copenhagen
<http://www.dfi.dk>

The Danish Film Institute (DFI) is Denmark's national agency for film and cinema culture, operating under the Ministry of Culture. The museum supports the development, production and distribution of films and run the national archives. The DFI Film House in the heart of Copenhagen provides a meeting place for filmbuffs and filmmakers alike with the Cinematheque and its three cinemas, a videotheque, restaurant and café, bookshop and a film lab for children, FILM-X.

Enigma, Copenhagen
<http://www.enigma.dk>

Museum of post, telecommunications and communication is Denmark's communications museum. The museum holds Denmark's national collections of post and telecommunications and has the largest stamp collection as well as the country's main reference library in its field.

Media Museum, Odense
<http://museum.odense.dk>

The Media Museum focuses on the history of print and electronic media in Denmark. Through special exhibitions, basic exhibitions and new communication initiatives, you are given a vivid insight into the media and its development as well as a critical introduction to the role of the media in society and the technology used, past and present. The Media Museum does not provide a complete picture of Danish media history, but an overview with the help of important points in its history. This is done on the basis of research, relevant collection, registration and storage.

Ragnarock, Roskilde
<http://museumragnarock.dk>

A museum on pop, rock and youth culture. Centered around the music, the museum tells the story about the youth culture and the musical eras from the 1950's onwards. Music has been the speaker of the youth and has created the foundation for various political views, technologies, linguistic trends, media and fashion.

Struer Museum, Struer
<http://www.struermuseum.dk>

Besides exhibitions about the culture life in and around the town of Struer, the museum hosts a section about the world famous consumer electronics company B&O. At the B&O section you can experience the history of a West Jutland business adventure, which has made B&O to an international success. Follow the development of the world-famous design icons. Relive the history of radio and television, and experience how these medias have changed our daily lives.

Päivälehti Museum, Helsinki
<http://www.paivalehdenmuseo.fi/en/>

Presents the history of media, modern-day media and the future of media as well as the freedom of speech in Finland and in other countries. The museum aims to promote the ability to interpret the media and particularly, to encourage children and adolescents to read. The museum is run by the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation, a private, non-profit organization, which strives to secure quality journalism and protect the freedom of speech in Finland.

Media Museum Rupriikki, Tampere
<http://vapriikki.fi/>

A history museum devoted to mass communication. Located in Vapriikki Museum Centre, the museum features a permanent exhibition about the history of mass communication and networking. The exhibition is built with the help of objects from Tampere Museums' extensive collections, as well as objects on loan from Sonera Historical Collections. Rupriikki has worked extensively with preservation projects dealing with media usage, development and communities.

Radio and TV Museum Mastola, Lahti
<http://www.lahdenmuseot.fi/museot/>

A museum that collects, researches and exhibits artefacts and traditions connected with broadcasting. The main sets in the collection are radio and TV receivers, broadcasting studio technology, items related to program produc-

tion, amateur radio and DX listening devices, domestic audio recording equipment, radio valves and telephone appliances. A fully renovated museum opened in February 2017.

The Finnish Postal Museum, Tampere
<https://www.postimuseo.fi/en/>

Founded in 1926 and in 2014 the museum started a new era by moving from Helsinki to Tampere, founding a private museum foundation networked with various partners. The collections comprise a large number of objects and images as well as all stamps issued in Finland and various special philatelic items. The Museum hosts Finland's only public library specialising in postal history, where researchers has also access to extensive archives. The museum arranges special exhibitions of numerous topics and interesting events.

Filmmuseet i Oslo, Filmens hus
<http://www.nfi.no/filmkunnskap/filmmuseet>

A museum with a collection from Norwegian and international cinematic history. The museum's own cinema displays historical films, including the first films what where shown in Oslo in 1896, and new Norwegian short films. The origins of the film industry are documented through authentic, optical toys and old film sets. The museum also houses costumes worn by major movie stars, themed exhibits with animation, advertising, Norwegian film censorship and a quiz station, as well as some of Norwegian cinema's most famous props and characters.

The Norwegian Radio and TV Museum, Selbu
<http://norskradio-tv-museum.no/>

The museum exhibits the history of the radio in Norway, from 1890 until 1980. The collections include pictures, music and radio programmes. The focus lays on the radio production in Norway, and especially the bigger ones. Even though there was a period when Norway had about 50 radio stations, Tandberg, Radionette, Salve Staubo and Edda Radiofabrikk were always dominating the radio industry. These are all widely presented in the museum, from the first to the last machine. The facilities take

up about 700 m2 and is the largest in Norway.

The Museum of Print, Sula
<http://www.sula.kommune.no/>

The museum aims to be a lively museum where the visitors can experience the work of book printing. During many years, Knut Øvregård was running a printing office in Langevåg, and today the museum is located in his old premises. Old traditions are kept alive, and the museum collection consists of printing presses turned by hand, back from 1893 – and everything is still working.

The Tele Museum – Museum of the Norwegian Communication History, Oslo
<http://telemuseet.no/>

An independent, cultural historical, scientific institution, organized as a foundation. The aim is to shed light on the connection between telecommunication and social development in Norway. An important source of knowledge is the Museum's collections of telecommunication history and the work of Telenor, the main funder of the museum. The museum also contributes with photographs and objects from the collections to other exhibitions around the country.

Rockheim, Trondheim
<https://www.rockheim.no/>

The national museum of popular music. Behind the scenes, Rockheim's staff is engaged in managing and researching Norway's pop and rock music, and in making it accessible to the public. The visit to Rockheim begins in the spectacular "Top Box". From the main exhibit on the 6th floor you proceed down floor by floor. The music and stories are communicated by means of interactive exhibit technology and objects from the museum's collections.

The Fjeld-Ljom Press Museum, Røros
<http://www.fjeld-ljom.no/>

Located in the former premises of the local newspaper Fjeld-Ljom. It is a museum where newspapers can still be made the old way, with lead types, clichés and hard work. The machines found in the museum are authentic, and most of them are used in the production of the old local newspaper. Some of the machines in inherited by ot-

her local newspapers. The machines operate fine and can be demonstrated at the museum.

Fotomuseet Preus museum, Horten
<http://www.preusmuseum.no/>

Preus museum is Norway's National Museum of Photography. Founded in 1995 when the Norwegian Government bought the collections that belonged to Preus Fotomuseum, a private museum, the Norwegian State is now the owner of the museum. In May 2001 the museum moved into Magasin A at Karljohansvern in Horten, about one hour's drive from Oslo. The collections contain photographs, cameras and other technical equipment that shed light on the history of photography. There is a wide representation of the international history of photography in the image collection. Preus museum's library holds international standard.

The Film Museum, Kristianstad
<http://www.regionmuseet.se/filmmuseet.htm>

Located in Kristianstad, where some of the first Swedish films were produced in the early 1900. The Museum is based in the old original film studios. The collections include pictures, sounds, suits and objects from the first decades of Swedish film productions. The Film Museum is one branch of the Regional Museum.

IT-ceum, Linköping
<http://www.datamuseet.se>

Sweden's only museum for computer-related history. A collaboration between Linköping University and the municipality, the museum opened in 2004. The museum aims to shed light on the past, present and future where computers play or have played an important role. The permanent exhibition *Digital Dreams* focuses on Swedish computer development from the 1950 until today.

Stockholm Museum of Video Games
<http://stockholmsspelmuseum.se>

Opened in 2016, the museum aims to exhibit the history of gaming and gaming culture in Sweden. Through the different stations in the Museum the visitors can play the games and discover the consoles that shaped Swedish

gaming culture over the years. The collection includes everything from the 1970's "Space invaders" to the latest VR technology.

The Swedish Broadcasting Museum, Motala
<http://www.motala.se/radiomuseum>

Located in the premises of the old transmitter station from 1927. The Museum's collection includes the original transmitter used to send Sweden's first radio call in 1927, with the strength of 30 kW. The transmitter was replaced in 1935 by a much stronger one, which is also stored and available to view at the Museum.

The Post Museum, Stockholm
<http://www.postmuseum.se>

Situated in the oldest building of the Swedish postal organization, dating back to the 17th century. The Museum opened in 1906 and is owned by the Swedish postal service, PostNord. The collection of the Museum consists of many objects, books and journals, stamps, photographs and archive documents of various kind. The philatelic collection for example, consist of almost 4 million stamps as well as original and printing proof for Swedish stamps.

The Museum of Cinema and TV, Säter
<http://biografmuseet.se>

Founded in 1989, the museum represents the history of moving image in Sweden. The Museum works in preserving historical objects from the last few years of silent films to the birth of sound films, the breakthrough of TV, Video technic, mobile phones and cameras.

The Swedish Music Hall of Fame, Stockholm
<https://smhof.se>

A museum, opened in 2013 in Djurgården, on the Swedish popular music. One part of it consists of the popular ABBA museum. The exhibition *Swedish Popular Music* shows how Swedish popular music has evolved over time. Examples are shown of how music, media, technology and societal influence each other.