

WORKSHOP:

COTMA — WHAT IS NEEDED?

chaired by
Dr. John Radcliffe
COTMA Chairman

Chris Steele asked what happens when sub-committees were formed — does information get back to the committees?

John Radcliffe stated that committees can work, giving the Electrical Rules Committee as an example.

Bill Kingsley mentioned the broadening of the COTMA structure by the formation of the Operations Group; however, whatever structure is used, it is vital for museums to respond to requests. He finds difficulty in getting information back from museums, and cannot assist them if they do not respond.

Craig Tooke noted that there were only 2 outstanding overhead and electrical requests and expressed surprise at the lack of requests in this area. He expected that in future there would be more requests for technical assistance rather than spare parts. Bill Kingsley mentioned that provision of spare parts was not one of the original aims of COTMA.

Dick Jones stated that SPER needed some small amounts of equipment from the MTA, but that safety and other codes of practice were their main concerns. The 3801 incident had prompted widespread concern about safety, and all NSW rail organisations were now

under accreditation, which was issued by the State Rail Authority. The New Zealand experience with accreditation and self-regulation was also referred to.

Howard Clark noted that the important thing was to do something about safety *before* you think you have a problem. While it was difficult for small organisations to recognise their own shortcomings, external persons or bodies such as the Department of Labour could perhaps assist. A uniform Safety Code for Museums could be looked at.

It was emphasised that museums need to consider possible future government regulation, and should anticipate this by initiating self-regulation. It was noted that Dave Rawlings' paper on accreditation [published with these Proceedings] is available to inform and assist museums in this matter.

The work on Collection Policies was put forward by Richard Gilbert as another area where dissemination of information through COTMA can assist other member Museums. He noted, however, the danger of just adopting an existing policy without the wide consultation and involvement of members which went into drawing up the policy in the first place.

WORKSHOP:

MEMBERSHIP FOR THE YOUNG

chaired by
 Bill Kingsley
 COTMA Executive Officer

This was totally a discussion Workshop, led by Bill Kingsley, seeking and finding ideas. At the 1990 conference in Wellington, Richard Gilbert had provided a paper entitled "Is Your Museum Dying?". That paper and the discussion which followed it included ideas on how to obtain young members. This Discussion Workshop now needed to probe the question of how to retain those young members.

Family involvement was seen to be most important. Martin Grant indicated that PETS had 3 father-son teams and 1 father-daughter team. Craig Tooke said that MTPA had 1 father-son team. It is known that SPER and TMSV both have at least 1 father and son, while AETM and WTM both had 3-generation teams.

Paul Edwards (as one of the sons) indicated that it was vitally important for young members to feel and be part of the total team. Ray Blackmore (as another) listed the following needs for young people:

- to assist the experienced and be encouraged by them
- never to work unsupervised or alone, as interest will wane
- no restrictions should be placed on the type of work
- excitable nature of some young people can be steered into enthusiasm

Don Campbell emphasised that young people need and want personal help and attention.

John Horne warned that Museums must ensure that they are not full of cliques into which young members cannot fit.

Lewis Nyman asked us not to expect too much from

young members, and the group agreed that we must allow young members to ask all those "stupid questions" and be given patient, understanding answers.

Phil Bertram saw parental support as important. He also pointed out that many young people see preservation as a rewarding way to fill in spare time, but that this came easier with trains than trams.

Two very important questions were then raised. Bob Serle wanted to know how young members would travel to and from the Museum: whether by public transport, parent's car or with older members. David Critchley queried whether young members should be told what they were to do and where they were to help, or whether they should be asked what they would like to do.

Reference was made to the excellent record of the Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society in SA for their achievements in encouraging and utilising the potential of young members. There were always important and rewarding tasks for young members to do, and even more important and rewarding tasks for them to see as goals for the future.

When asked, as the youngest delegate present, what rewards he found in being a member of PETS, Paul Edwards stated that relaxing with fellow members was most important. He also put a very appropriate conclusion to the discussion by telling us of his satisfaction at seeing Fremantle 29 restored and running, and knowing that he had been part of the team that made it happen.

The active involvement of all the Delegates in this Workshop was excellent, and gave support to the need for all Museums to give serious thought to means of encouraging and inspiring their young members.

WORKSHOP:

ARCHIVES

chaired by
Barrie King
Perth Electric Tramway Society

The workshop was structured around a number of stimulus questions, which are given with comments from the discussion. In finding their own answers to these questions, museums will be developing an Archives policy. This policy could be part of an overall Collection Policy, but more is involved in archives than just collecting.

1. WHAT IS MEANT BY "ARCHIVES"?

The term "archives" encompasses both *information*, which may be

- technical
- social
- historical

and the medium used to store the information, such as

- documents
- photographs
- films
- videos
- sound recordings

Not included are objects or artefacts.

A distinction can be drawn between *official records*, from government departments, and *social records*, for example newspapers.

2. WHY PRESERVE THESE ARCHIVES?

Preservation of archives can be thought of as preservation of the information contained in them. This information is part of our cultural heritage. We have a responsibility to ensure that the information is available to future generations — for many hundreds of years.

From a tramway museum point of view priority may sometimes need to be given to preserving the information contained in the archives, rather than the original form.

Archives of a museum's own development, besides being history in their own right, can help to provide documentation and evidence for government grants.

3. WHAT SHOULD BE PRESERVED?

Museums should consider what *needs* to be preserved; for example it might be decided not to save a whole newspaper if the interest is just in one article.

There are now policies requiring official records to be held in a public repository, but many items from earlier years are not available. Such official records would not need to be collected by museums, but appropriate documents could be duplicated for museum members' use.

In places where there is little official material preserved, the Museum policy might be to take anything which becomes available.

4. HOW SHOULD ARCHIVES BE PRESERVED?

Different types of archives require different specific storage, but in general there is a need to preserve and secure archives against

- theft
- fire
- flood
- humidity (mould)
- temperature
- chemical fumes
- magnetic fields
- insects
- excessive handling

If we spend the time and money to collect, organise and preserve material, it should be stored properly. Copied slides, for example, should be stored in archival quality slide files which are available.

Some records are in unstable form, for example modern newspapers and certain old films. Preservation may require transfer to a more stable medium. If they have already deteriorated, some restoration may be needed.

Electronic records also present a problem. Apart from possible deterioration of the storage medium, will appropriate reproduction technology be available in, say, ten years time — or 100 years time? Video tape, for example, cannot be considered an archival material. Computerised databases raise questions about the future existence of computer systems to access them; as technology changes, information will progressively need to be transferred to new systems.

5. WHERE AND HOW SHOULD ARCHIVES BE STORED?

Many tramway museums keep at least some of their archives on museum premises, but the typical

tramway shed is not ideal — dust and heat, moisture and frequent handling are likely to cause damage.

Backups should be made of the most important material, and these should be stored away from the main collection. If there is a need for reference collection at the museum for quick access by the restoration and maintenance teams, this could be copies of the originals.

Some material of wide social importance perhaps should not be in museums' hands.

What about individuals' private records?

6. HOW IS ACCESS TO BE MANAGED?

When will access be available? how often? by whom? Will borrowing be permitted? Under what conditions?

The collection must be accessible. However, access, and associated handling, can threaten preservation. The need for handling can be minimised by

- cataloguing,
- indexes,
- finding aids,
- information.

For most purposes access to copies should be sufficient.

When including archival material in displays, do we display originals or copies?

It was noted that at the Stanhope St Hall in Melbourne, the Norm Maddocks collection has been set up with copies available for browsing, research, etc.

7. HOW IS CATALOGUING MANAGED?

Under the control of a single archivist plus helpers, or a committee?

8. WHAT ARE THE FUNDING IMPLICATIONS?

To acquire and preserve archives properly requires adequate funding. Museums' funds are generally committed for current maintenance and restoration work. It was noted that the Victorian Department of the Arts provides funding for archives work.

Funding might be available through "taxation incentives for the arts" programmes. Manuscripts can be valuable; they need to be valued by two people recognised in the field, and the institution needs to be registered. Taxation deductions are only available if you are alive(!), so people can be encouraged to donate material now rather than hang on to it.

WORKSHOP:

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT REVIEW

chaired by
 Dr. John Radcliffe
 Australian Electric Transport Museum

As part of its preparation for seeking full accreditation as a regional or specialist museum by the History Trust of South Australia, the Australian Electric Transport Museum (AETM) was encouraged to have a professional conservation management review undertaken of its St Kilda Museum. This was undertaken by ArtLab Australia (Adelaide), the cost being in part supported by a History Trust Grant.

Workshop discussion centred on the following issues which arose from this review and which are of relevance to other Tramway Museums:

- Are the museum's objectives clearly defined? Are members aware of them and do they accept them?
- Does the museum have a corporate plan for future development, are members aware of its contents and are mechanisms in place to review and update it as milestones are achieved?
- Is there adequate interpretation of the museum collection for the visitor, including the place of the various exhibits in the social development of the community?
- To what extent are exhibits to be conserved, restored and/or operated? (There can be conflicts between conservation and operating objectives.)
- Are adequate records held of restoration work so future researchers and those responsible for ongoing maintenance know what has been done?
- Is the quality of scholarship and research for restoration adequate?
- Is the accommodation in which the vehicles and other artefacts are kept secure and environmentally satisfactory?
- Is there provision to cull (deaccess) less relevant material?
- Is archival storage for associated records (photographs, administrative files, drawings, books, uniforms, destination blinds, tickets, etc) the best which can be arranged?
- Is pest control monitoring and treatment adequate?
- Is there a disaster preparedness plan for the museum and are staff/members trained for its possible implementation?
- Is the accession register complete and is a duplicate copy held off-site?

As museums move from the basic requirement of sheltering their vehicles to becoming comprehensive museums with conservation/restoration programmes, regular operation and the interpretation of the role of tramways in the historical development of their communities, all of these issues become significant.

WORKSHOP:

COTMA ELECTRICAL OPERATIONS RULES

chaired by
Craig Tooke

Melbourne Tramcar Preservation Association

Craig Tooke, as COTMA Electrical Officer and Chairman of the Electrical Rules Committee, related briefly the history of the Rules.

1. Requirement by the Wellington Conference 1990 for the setting up of the committee and detailing its membership.
2. Appointment to the Committee of representatives by the four Victorian Museums.
3. Complete revision and rewriting of the MTPA Electrical Rules by the Committee, leading to Draft 1.
4. Comments on Draft 1 by the Victorian Museums and by Noel Blackmore of PETS.
5. Preparation of the Final Draft and associated notes.
6. Distribution to all COTMA Museums just prior to the Conference.

Craig explained briefly the need for and nature of the rules and opened the Workshop for discussion.

Chris Steele stated that non-Victorian Museums had not had sufficient time to study the Rules and that further amendments might still be necessary.

Following considerable discussion, the Workshop recommended that rather than the Rules being a Voluntary Code of Practice, the Rules be presented as Guidelines, and that the Electrical Rules Committee be kept as a Committee of Review.

Three motions were then proposed by the Delegates at the Workshop to be put to the Conference General Meeting:

1. That the Final Draft Presentation of the Electrical Rules Committee be accepted by this Council Meeting as the COTMA Electrical Operations Guidelines.

Moved Dennis O'Hoy/Noel Blackmore.
Carried with 1 abstention.

2. That the Electrical Rules Committee be retained as a Committee of Review and to report if necessary to the next Council Meeting or as required.

Moved Barry Ollerenshaw/Lewis Nyman.
Carried with 1 abstention.

3. Thanks to all the Electrical Rules Committee and congratulations on their work and diligence.

Moved Dennis O'Hoy/Ray Blackmore.
Carried unanimously.