

Heritage Day Russia, 19 March 2010 in The Netherlands

How does exchange of knowledge in the field of cultural heritage take place between the Netherlands and the Russian Federation? How can the Netherlands contribute to the dealing with and understanding of heritage in Russia? And reversed, how and what can we learn from Russia in the field of heritage? The concept of reciprocity recurred many times during the Heritage Day Russia, which was held on March 19 2010 in the Doelenzaal at the Library of the University of Amsterdam (UvA). This was the sixth Heritage Day organised by the Centre for International Heritage Activities (CIE).

In his opening speech our host Steph Scholten, head of the Heritage Collections of the UvA, stressed the importance of the day held at the university. The UvA was and still is involved in different heritage projects in Russia, such as the restoration and presentation of the anatomical collection of Frederik Ruysch in the Kunstkamera, St. Petersburg.

The aim of this Heritage Day was to create more coherence between the various cultural heritage projects and to discuss coordination between Dutch partners and cooperation with the Russia Federation. This event gave the participants the opportunity to meet each other and become inspired by each other's initiatives. Next to this, there was the possibility to present your project on a poster. More than twenty Dutch organizations and the Russian Dmitry Likhachev Foundation showed their projects to the participants.

In the morning a large and diverse audience attended the keynote speech by Sjeng Scheijen. He introduced the topic of Russian – Dutch cooperation in the field of heritage by questioning who could learn from whom in this particular field. For instance, compared with Dutch museums in Russia much more curators are working with the museum collections and they tend to be more extensively specialised in specific topics than their Dutch counterparts. Scheijen also mentioned the importance of Russian writers and their influence on the shaping of Dutch literary tradition and the impoverishment of Dutch academic tradition.

This introduction was followed by presentations and discussions on three different topics: *Collection management and Capacity Building*, *Management in Built Heritage* and *Research and Public Awareness*. Each theme was illustrated by two experts working in the heritage field. These panels formed the introduction to the workshops of the afternoon sessions. To this program an extra workshop on *Mutuality of Mutual Cultural Heritage* was added.

Panel 1: Collection management and capacity building

Lia Gorter - Foundation for Cultural Inventory (SCI)

Benno van Tilburg – The Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE)

Modertor: Sjeng Scheijen

Lia Gorter presented the working methods of her Foundation for Cultural Inventory (SCI). One of their projects was a trial project to assist Russian regional museums to make inventories and digitizing their collections. Benno van Tilburg introduced the project of the RCE on Novaya Zemlya and their cooperation with Russian museums to date a part of a wooden shipwreck from Novaya Zemlya. In the following discussion the question was raised about the need for Dutch help in Russian museums.

Panel 2: Management in Built Heritage

Peter van der Toorn Vrijthoff - STAG

Marieke Kuipers - The Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE)

Moderator: Sjeng Scheijen

Marieke Kuipers gave an introduction on the mutual cultural heritage projects of the RCE in Russia. Examples of this are the Summer garden in St. Petersburg and the Manifaktura in Jaroslavl. Peter van der Toorn Vrijthoff continued on the topic of built heritage in Russia by sharing his experiences in setting up a project in Kemerovo, Siberia. An important issue from the panel discussion was the difference in work ethics in the Russian Federation and the Netherlands and the different incentives for starting a project on both sides.

Panel 3: Research and Public Awareness

Marlies Kleiterp - Hermitage Amsterdam

Hans van Koningsbrugge - Groningen University

Moderator: Sjeng Scheijen

Marlies Kleiterp gave a quick introduction on the Hermitage Amsterdam. She compared the new museum in Amsterdam, which has no art of itself, with the State Hermitage in St Petersburg, which was opened to public in 1852 and has more than 3 million art objects. Hans van Koningsbrugge raised the question how to make archive research more 'sexy' and offered some solutions to this problem, namely: the publishing of books, making exhibitions and making a documentary.

Besides the questions raised in the presentations and panel discussions in the morning, the identification process of projects of the last couple of months had also led to important questions.

In the afternoon the topics of the panel discussion and other issues that were put forward by participants, could be discussed in workshops. With these workshops experiences could be shared.

Workshop 1: Collection management and capacity building

This workshop focuses on the process of collection management and capacity building in various institutions, such as museums, libraries and archives. Related themes are collection policy, acquisition and de-accession policies, preservation and conservation, loan policy, capacity building by means of education and training programmes. Capacity building in the field of collection management focuses among other things on preventative restoration and conservation, security and storage of collections. Other important issues for collection management related to recordkeeping are making inventories and digitizing the collection.

In this workshop we would like to discuss with you the way of collection management in Russian and Dutch Institutions. Did the Russian Federation and the Netherlands undergo a different development in the field of collection management? How do Russian institutions deal with collection management, and with the preservation, conservation, and digitization of their collections? How does a possible difference in the development of collection management influence the cooperation between the two countries? How can both countries learn from each other's practice?

Workshop 2: Management in Built Heritage

The preservation and conservation of built heritage is important to preserve heritage for future generations. Good conservation policies can save heritage, like monumental buildings, gardens or townscapes, from destruction or oblivion. In order to preserve built heritage high quality and up to date methods of restoration and conservation are required. While preserving built heritage one is often confronted with different interests of various interest groups: economic interests; marketing plans, groups with contested views about the meaning and purpose of a heritage site. In particular the reallocation of industrial heritage, country estates and (adjacent) landscape architecture face an

increasingly expanding attention of Russian experts, local and federal government and the public, at the moment.

Important issues for cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Netherlands in the field of management in built heritage are technical cooperation, exchange of knowledge and the influence of different interest groups in the Russian Federation and the Netherlands and how to deal with this. How can knowledge be exchanged in a bilateral way? How can the Netherlands set an example in the field of reallocation of industrial heritage, country estates, gardens and landscape architecture? Other important topics are: what insight in governmental policies of the counterpart organisation or country is needed for a healthy cooperation? And which role do these policies play?

Workshop 3: Research and Public Awareness

Research is important for heritage activities; it should be one of the first steps when starting a heritage project. Research not only plays an important part in heritage projects, but can also be the core business of a mutual project itself: cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Netherlands in the field of academic research.

The accessibility to information and sources can be problematic. Not only on account of possible language barriers, but also because Russian archives might have a restricted accessibility. A second level in the problem of accessibility concerns the limited reach of academic research, which is often only published in databases or academic magazines.

Journalists on the other hand are experts in disclosing information to the public through various media channels. Museum curators are also aware of the importance of opening up their research or 'stories' through exhibitions and other forms presentations to create public awareness for a research project.

An interesting question in this regard would be how to reduce the first level of the accessibility problem. How should Dutch research into Russian archives be stimulated and encouraged? In addition the second level should be discussed. Are there or should there be different methods in reaching the Dutch and the Russian public with research results? Does the language barrier influence attempts on reaching the public and how does the language barrier influence cooperation between for example universities, archives, museums and journalists? What examples are there of journalists and academics working together and how can this cooperation be strengthened? What role do museums and exhibitions play in the creation of public awareness of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Netherlands?

Workshop 4: The Mutuality of Russian-Dutch Cultural Heritage

Mutual Cultural Heritage is a loaded term; it defines the cultural heritage between the Netherlands and the Russian Federation. In this workshop the mutuality of heritage is discussed.

Which heritage is labeled with this definition and how does the Russian Federation experience mutual cultural heritage? How do we share this heritage and what are the problems of formulating a reciprocal definition? Next to this, why is Russia part of the eight priority counties, appointed by the Dutch government while there is no colonial past as there is for many of the other priority countries. In addition, how is Russian heritage in the Netherlands experienced compared to Dutch heritage in the Russian Federation? The responsibilities for this type of heritage for the Netherlands and for the Russian Federation can be discussed and the definition of mutual cultural heritage specified.

Conclusions

At the end of the day the conclusions of the workshops were presented. Important themes discussed in the workshops were issues as demand driven working, the maintenance of networks and personal contact with counterparts, and a bottom-up approach. The reports of the workshops will follow soon. Also the importance of expert meetings together with Russian counterparts was stressed. An important event in this case is the bilateral year between the Russian Federation and the Netherlands in 2013, which can offer new opportunities for cooperation. In October this year a Heritage Day will take place in Russia as well.

The outcomes of the workshops and the lectures presented during the morning will be send to our Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. This will help our policy makers to develop a view on knowledge exchange on cultural heritage, with results directly from the field itself.

The day was organized in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute for Heritage (Erfgoed Nederland) and the University of Amsterdam.