

To every collector of Ihagee/Exakta, products and history, in the world.
To every collectors' Society for or with Ihagee/Exakta collectors.

The Virtual Ihagee/Exakta Museum (a proposal)

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Doing as much as we can, we collectors know that our collection will never be complete. It is impossible for everyone to have everything. Some objects are too rare and expensive, and buying everything will remain outside the possibilities of non-multi-millionaires, living only one lifetime. So we want a place that has everything somewhere else: The Ihagee/Exakta World Museum. Let us see what we expect or demand from this (non-existing) museum.

Requirements for The (real) Ihagee/Exakta World Museum

- 1 It has every Exa(kta), not only a copy of every model, but also of every sub- and subsub-model, variety and variance, visible or invisible from the outside.
- 2 It has every other Ihagee camera in all its models, varieties etc..
- 3 It has every other Ihagee product (enlarger, copy stand, rings etc.) ever produced.
- 4 It has every lens ever made to fit every Ihagee product in all its variances.
- 5 It has every above mentioned object on display and available for handling.
- 6 It has every publication, from where ever in the world and in time, touching one or more of the above mentioned objects for whatever reason.
- 7 It has every publication mentioning anything about the history of Ihagee, Johan Steenbergen, Karl Nüchterlein and every other organisation or person who has influenced the development, sales and use of the objects.
- 8 Every publication is immediately available for reading and instant copying.
- 9 Because "having everything" will probably take until eternity, it has a staff constantly hunting for more objects and publications; those will be acquired and made available immediately.
- 10 This staff will be available around the clock, 24 hours a day 365 days a year (yes, one holiday every four years) to answer even the most stupid questions politely and instantly, and to tell us how much we should pay for possible additions to our own collection.
- 11 This museum is at the most a few hours travelling away from our home, where ever we live.

The organisation that will run this museum will have a few other considerations. Let us see what the museum organisation wants and thinks.

Considerations from The (real) Ihagee/Exakta World Museum Management

- a The museum has to attract a reasonable flow of visitors to cover the costs, or at least to justify the received subsidies and other funding.
- b Only fanatics (another word for Ihagee/Exakta collectors) are interested in everything, so exposing everything will certainly chase everybody else away. (Consider the very limited interest of non-Ihagee collectors for special Ihagee exhibitions on fairs.)
- c To keep it interesting for visitors with only a general interest, most objects will be stored in the basement or the attic in very compact, multi-layered crates.
- d Requests to see stored objects can't be honoured; you will be asked to wait until they (possibly) show up in a special temporary exhibition (one every 5 years).
- e Requests for handling exhibited objects can't be honoured because that would disrupt the safety system.
- e The documentation will yellow and/or rot in the same basement/attic.
- f Unfortunately they cannot provide a copying service, because locating a document is too cumbersome.
- g A plan to index all documents in the coming three decades has been rejected in third draft form because it requires too much money and too many people.
- h The last curator who was interested in this subject unfortunately died two years ago; the new one is mostly interested in publicity for his museum and steam engines. He is expected to resign in twenty years.
- i They consider storing the crates in another city to reduce the risk of fire.
- j There is no money, there is no money, there is ...

Besides this, the museum will have to warn us that every book they have was outdated in some way the day after publication. The next update will appear many years from now and, of course, outside their responsibility.

The best or only place for The (real) Ihagee/Exakta World Museum

The only place we could consider as acceptable in principle for everybody is the Technical Museum in Dresden. However, the staff of this museum is well aware of the points a to j, although they probably would say it in a different way. Besides, how many collectors will visit Dresden more than once or twice in their lifetimes? The globe is simply too large.

If we are realistic, this all means that The Ihagee/Exakta World Museum we want is situated in Utopia, the only place that has enough space and money and is situated near everybody's home.

What then? Do we have to give up our dream altogether, or is there an alternative without this overdose of utopism? There is. It is

The Virtual Ihagee/Exakta Museum

Knowing now that storing and accessing everything we want in a physical or material way is impossible, we have to study the possibilities of immaterial storage. This will of course be quite different from the ideal situation of the points 1-11, but it has one enormous and maybe irresistible advantage: it is realisable. Look at the following considerations.

Considerations to chose for The Virtual Ihagee Museum.

- 1 A growing amount and percentage of collectors has access to Internet, and in time every living collector will have it.
- 2 Many web sites already contain something about our subject, and some are dedicated to it.
- 3 The cost of storage on computers diminishes every year. In a couple of years, storage of a copy of every document of interest will be affordable.
- 4 On Internet it is irrelevant where the data you want are stored: one or hundreds of places, it doesn't matter.
- 5 Technically it is simple to start and run a web site.
- 6 Keeping a document up-to-date is (technically) easy. Every correction and addition can be processed immediately (in practice maybe monthly).
- 8 Many collectors are quite willing to show their collection, and particularly their rare objects, to visiting collectors.
- 9 Many interesting objects are not unique. Being able to look at and handle one copy near your home is nicer than to know that there is one in the (real) Museum far away.

The Virtual Ihagee/Exakta Museum will be an Internet based system that contains all available documents, a description of all known products and indications of where a real copy of the products (and maybe also the documents) can be seen and handled. Because our knowledge keeps growing, the data in the system will be updated frequently.

Creating the Virtual Ihagee/Exakta Museum is not impossible. It is a technical possibility, it is a financial possibility because it can always be limited to the available means, but it could be a big organisational challenge. Many collectors will have to contribute to this museum to create, fill, update and maintain it. Its lasting success will be based on (at least) the following assumptions.

Assumptions for success of The Virtual Ihagee Museum

- a The plan gets and keeps full support from every Ihagee/Exakta Society of reasonable size in the world. By this right now I mean the British and French ones, but maybe there are more, now or in the future. As soon as one society sees the Virtual Museum as competition, as not "self", the museum could be lost.
- b The plan gets and keeps support from major general collectors' societies. Most important are the large/national societies in countries where no Ihagee/Exakta collectors' society exists. In this way the support of collectors in these countries can be gained.
- c The system (not only the plan) will be supported by many collectors. Probable we need a dedicated (and also virtual) organisation with many specialised committees to collect and maintain the contents of The Virtual Ihagee Museum in such a way that those contents get and keep the respect of all concerned.
- d This organisation will not belong to, but will constantly be in close contact with all interested collectors' societies, individual collectors with "open" collections and with real museums with material of interest.
- e Some funding is needed. The work has to be done absolutely voluntarily and unpaid, the organisation will communicate mainly via Internet, but the web site(s) will cost money and it would be nice if some expenses could be compensated.

The Virtual Ihagee/Exakta Museum will be set up and maintained by an (also virtual) organisation, existing of committees of contributing collectors, fully supported by all Ihagee/Exakta and general collectors' societies all over the world. Some funding is necessary.

This text has been published on web site www.ihagee.org.

A message about its existence or the text itself has been sent to the board of the British Exakta Circle, the board of the French Exakta/Ihagee Club de France, the board of the Dutch collectors' society Fotografica, all Ihagee/Exakta collectors I know and the board of the Steenbergen Foundation.

What happens now? Of course you have comments, maybe you see problems and have objections, hopefully you have suggestions, know improvements and, who knows, even want to join and contribute.

If this proposal appeals to you, point it out, send it or give it to everybody else you know who might have an interest. AND send me your comments.

I don't own this idea or plan, but to begin with it seems practical that I collect and re-distribute any reactions. Please let me know your comments and ideas. I will put them, possibly in abbreviated form, next to this text on www.ihagee.org.

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