

The Ihagee/Exakta Virtual Museum

Comments

In the Annual General Meeting of the Exakta Circle on 2000.04.09, the decision was made to support the plan for the development of the Ihagee Virtual Museum.

An informal group of Ihagee collectors, meeting in Boston on 2000.04.29, also supported the idea, but expected a rather informal setup. A suggested possible start would be an index, pointing to sites and pages already available. Webmasters are to be encouraged to use a common set of search terms, yet to be developed.

The rest of his file contains your earlier comments on the proposal for The Ihagee/Exakta Virtual Museum. Send them to:

e-mail hugo.ruys@ihagee.org

fax +31 35 6245810

mail H.D. Ruys, Tesselschadelaan 20, 1217 LH HILVERSUM, The Netherlands

Thanks and congratulations on a superb document.

Please be assured you have my full 100% backing for this project.

I shall do everything I can to ensure the Exakta Circle backs this project.

I look forward to greater discussions at the AGM.

Terry Calvert

I will be there. HR

It's a great idea. I think you now have no chance to EVER retire, it will become a full time job for you!

Of course I will help in any way I can with a virtual Ihagee site.

Gary Cullen

Your help will certainly be necessary, and probably more than just help. HR

The use of the words "every" and "having everything" appear to be a bit profound; when you focus on such items as the infinite lens lists, which you, I, or none of our distinguished colleges, have ever announced as, complete. It is an ambitious dream that would be beautiful, if it could only be truly realised.

Michael Scott

Of course we will never have everything, but making it grow will be part of the fun. HR

It is a good idea. The existing sites already form a permanent exhibition.

What I miss in the proposal is the Exakta-Era feeling. I also want to know everything about (contemporary) accessories. This will lead to cooperation with other collectors' societies.

I always make comparisons between Exakta and other cameras. E.g. in 1936, Exakta was 15-20 years ahead of the competition; twenty years later the Exakta Varex already had serious competition. In 1958 the Nikon F arrived ..

This makes things more complicated, but historical test reports and comments from photographers might be helpful.

Roland Zwiers

I most certainly didn't mean to exclude information about the environment and the contemporary developments and so far I don't see any objections to include them. HR

This is a fantastic idea! I think Ihagee products live in relative obscurity in today's collector world. The simple inability to attain accurate information of any kind is a huge deterrent to an average collector or dealer! Unfortunately, "blue books" are the most research that an average collector will ever do. A VIM site would serve to give Ihagee the publicity they deserve and open the eyes of the vast unknowing camera collector world. Ihagee was a company that puts all to shame when it comes to variety! Building the VIM would be a monumental yet worthwhile task.

Miles Upton

Building a physical monument like a cathedral must be very satisfactory and rewarding in itself. I hope and expect that building a virtual monument will be equally rewarding. HR

I have downloaded the content of your web page regarding the virtual museum. Not many comments, but I sympathise with most of your views on the way the museum need to be run. You certainly cannot expect everyone to travel (the very short distance) to Utopia in order to visit the hallowed turf!

On to the virtuality itself. It is difficult to see how organisation could be handled. As I see it there are several ways it could be achieved:

1. One person is charged with the setting up and organisation of a web site where all of the information would be stored. Quite an onerous task and would be full time for at least 6 months. Thereafter, with updates to photos etc. it might only be for 50% of the time!! I think that this option is a non-starter. Peter took on the collation and assimilation of the library and that was a large task, this would be even larger.
2. One web site acts as a hub for the museum and contributors would then provide links to each of the models/accessories featured. These links would then be 'pasted' to the main hub and a trail could be followed. There are disadvantages. One person, again, would need to be in charge of the uploading of the links, or even perhaps several people with access to the main server. Reliance is placed on the individuals to create and maintain (although the latter would be minimal once set up) a web space for their own particular piece of equipment. There would inevitably be duplication of items and who decides which, if any, are included. This latter could be overcome by the use of an index which would permit the browser to visit as many VX11a's as he liked from a selection on offer.

3. The final thought is that the museum could be a scattered entity with every contributor having their own site and a series of links connecting the various addresses. I think this would make for a difficult organisation and be too fragmented, it needs someone to take control of the whole concept.

I hope these ramblings make sense and are of use. I personally would be in favour of option 2 and would be willing to be a co-up-loader if this was the method adopted.

Who will decide? I suppose it will be down to a few individuals to actually do it and then the rest will follow. If it is left to a referendum and then a committee, I suspect nothing will happen.

Tim Sharples

I agree that organisation is essential and not at all easy. We need to organise the structure of the museum, the "up-loaders" or contributors and their way of working. I didn't give it much thought so far, but I believe that both the storage and the contributors will have a centre (a hub and a board) and distributed parts (separate sub-sites and committees). When outside funding is to be expected, we might even need an Ihagee Foundation to take the responsibility. HR

It should come as no surprise that I support the idea, and I agree with your assessment of the ways that a virtual museum would be better than an actual museum.

The only thing I am wondering about is copyright issues. I have a couple of 1937 issues of Popular Photography magazine containing Exakta ads. Popular Photography is still being published today. It may be necessary to obtain their permission before posting these old ads.

On the other hand, I am not certain whether advertisements printed in a magazine are the intellectual property of the publisher or the advertiser. I have created software ads which run regularly in a couple of computer magazines. I consider the content of these ads to be MY intellectual property, not that of the magazines.

I think the US ads were mostly placed by the Exakta Camera Company of Bronxville NY. I do not know whether this company still exists, or whether its assets may now belong to another company. Perhaps this is an area where I could do a little research.

There is another way to handle situations like this. Just publish the material on the web and see what happens. The odds are greatly in our favour that nobody will ever complain. And if they do, it is unlikely that they would seek to recover monetary damages. The worst thing that would probably happen is a "cease and desist" letter from an attorney representing the copyright owner. But because this material is so old, and because it would be presented in a good light, I don't think there would be any trouble.

Bob Snyder

The copyright problem might arise in many instances. In my view, any committee that has the task or proposes to put existing material in the museum has the obligation to consider this and ask for permission where possible. If the original is still for sale, an abstract and an indication how to obtain a copy could be the best way. HR

Is the museum to be thought of as a guidebook in which one or two representative examples of each particular model are shown? Or is it a research tool, where ALL

available examples of a thing can be found? I suspect that a guidebook is mainly of interest to new collectors, and research is the primary objective of experienced collectors. Both of these are important. But a guidebook or compendium is only as good as the research that goes into it.

A Proposal:

We could think of the virtual museum as a large collection of web pages, each having a unique address (URL). It does not matter where these pages are located. The pages can be distributed among a large number of web sites. As time passes, new pages are created and existing pages are modified, deleted, or moved to different locations (URLs).

Existing search engines (AltaVista, InfoSeek, Yahoo, etc.) can be used today to search for pages containing certain keywords such as "Exakta" and "Ihagee". But there are some disadvantages to this approach:

1.) They often return records having nothing to do with Ihagee/Exakta. For example "Exakta key chain cutter".

Solution: This problem could be solved if all persons publishing Ihagee-related web pages agreed to place a special keyword in the header of every web page. For example, the keyword "IhageeVirtualMuseum" is not likely to appear anywhere on the web except in web pages created by collectors. Consequently, a search for this word using one of the major search engines should turn up only the relevant web pages.

2.) The results are in no particular order, or at least not in order of recency. Therefore it is difficult to find newly added content without reading through the (ever expanding) list of pages.

Solution: Using AltaVista's advanced search it is possible to limit a search to web pages published between a user-specified range of dates. There is also a provision for sorting the results, but I'm not sure whether they can be sorted by date. Other search engines may provide similar capabilities.

After the keyword had been added to existing web pages, collectors could go to their favourite search engines and run the following types of searches:

Query: VirtualIhageeMuseum

Results: Everything posted by collectors who remembered to add the special keyword

Boolean Query: VirtualIhageeMuseum AND VXIIa

Results: Everything related to VXIIa

Boolean Query: VirtualIhageeMuseum

From: 01/JAN/00

Results: Everything new in the museum since Jan 1 2000.

Boolean Query: VirtualIhageeMuseum AND (VXIIa OR Elbaflex)

From: 01/JAN/00

Results: Everything about VXIIa or Elbaflex published since Jan 1 2000.

The advantages of this scheme are:

- 1.) It takes no centralised administration. It only requires that everyone agrees to use the same special keyword, and that this keyword be highly unusual (i.e. not likely to be found on unrelated web pages).
- 2.) It can be implemented very soon, and with very little effort.
- 3.) In the future, the popular search engines are likely to become increasingly powerful. For example, if it is not possible to sort results by date today, it probably will be possible in the near future.
- 4.) Additional keywords could be used to make the approach more powerful. For example, when searching for VXIIa, one normally has to think of all of the different ways that it could be spelled (VXIIa, VX-IIa, VX 2a, etc). I would suggest that a list of standard keywords be created (and periodically extended, as needed), and that publishers of web content be encouraged to place the appropriate keywords in the headers of their pages. Information can be placed invisibly in the header of a web page, so this does not force the writer to spell words a certain way. But by placing the appropriate keywords in the header, and being careful to spell the keywords correctly, the publisher will make it much easier for other collectors to quickly search for the information they desire.
- 5.) It leverages the existing technology infrastructure so that collectors can spend more time collecting, and less time building and maintaining the technology infrastructure of the museum.

I do not propose this approach as a total solution. I see it merely as one step toward the goal of a Virtual Museum.

Bob Snyder (cont.)

I also think that some form of decentralised network will be better than just a central site. The firmness of coupling and the way it has to be controlled is one of the things that have to be chosen/decided before we can start adding contents.

I'm not so sure about the proper working of search engines on a unique search term. I get the impression that we can't fully trust them and I KNOW that it takes a lot of time before they adapt to changes. My first feeling is that a hierarchical search structure, coming from a central "hub" and from there going to one of the many sub-sites is better, but I must admit that I am not a specialist. This means that, like in every other automation project, we need people to specify needs and people to design the system. HR

It is a nice and fantastic (which may not mean positive) idea.

I don't think it will be possible to finish that task. But that is not an argument not to try. Der Weg ist das Ziel! (The Road is the Target!)

But I doubt if it will be necessary to have everything in the Virtual Ihagee Museum. I don't think there is a need to show everything. made by Ihagee. But if so, how to select? Anyway, if the project will start one day, I will help.

Klaus Rademaker

This is the spirit! Of course we will never finish the task, but it will be nice to work on it, and every intermediate result is valuable to others.

"Having everything" is only the ideal situation behind the horizon. We will never know what "everything" is!

In my view, the various committees (as I call them) will decide for themselves what to publish in the sub-domain assigned to them after consultation with other groups and with their physical or financial limitations in mind. HR

It seems a good idea; it's very ambitious.

Reg Ronaldson

Don't worry. We will be quite content when the Museum is existing, unseful and growing. That is much less ambitious than complete, but good enough for many years. HR