

ARCHIVES OF NAUTICAL CHARTS AND PUBLICATIONS, LEGACY OF THE 150-YEAR ORGANISED HYDROGRAPHIC ACTIVITY IN THE EASTERN ADRIATIC, PRESERVED IN THE MUSEUM OF THE HYDROGRAPHIC INSTITUTE OF CROATIA

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Hydrography as the branch of applied science dealing with the measurement and description of physical features of the navigable portion of the Earth's surface, is of vital importance for the high-quality construction and production of nautical charts.

First scientifically based hydrographic measurements on the Croatian coast were conducted by France in the times of Napoleon, managed by Charles Beautemps-Beaupré (1766 –1854), a French hydrographer and cartographer, engineer of the Chart Depot in Paris later to become the French Hydrographic Institute. The results of his work were the basis for subsequent hydrographic and other marine investigations in the Adriatic Sea. Hydrographic activity was constituted as an institution in 1860 by establishing the Hydrographic office in Trieste. The successor of that institution is the Hydrographic Institute of the Republic of Croatia (HHI), based in Split, which year of 2010 marks the 150th anniversary of organised hydrographic activity in the Eastern Adriatic. Throughout its long-time production of navigational charts and publications, the Hydrographic Institute has built valuable archives of historical data: its own charts at different scales, different nautical publications, as well as nautical charts received on exchange basis from related institutions both in Europe and worldwide, covering not only Eastern Adriatic but also other sea areas all over the world.

Nowadays, when the old techniques in the chart production and hydrographic survey have been replaced by new technologies, the Institute has fulfilled the idea of establishing a museum to preserve the memory of its cartographic and hydrographic legacy, and display the old methods used in the hydrographic survey and chart production. Layout of the museum, mainly dedicated to the nautical cartography, contains historical charts, old instruments and equipment, materials, and machines used throughout the Institute's history in the conduct of hydrographic survey until its final product – the nautical chart. It displays charts and maps from the 17th century, an atlas from 1899, sounding sheets from 1907, original manuscripts on the research of the Adriatic Sea from 1911, engraving pins, stripping films, old printing machines, etc.

In the last two years, besides physical preservation of old charts and maps, their scanning, processing and storing in a digital format are carried out using the high-quality scanner Karto scan FBV.

One of the future plans for the museum is an interactive section with the possibility of representation of old charts, or viewing of old video records from different sources: television broadcasts and field recordings. Access to the museum layout will be also available on the Institute website.

Further research into the archival material of the HHI and its selective exhibiting in the museum brings about several problems. Organizing of the archival material by its nature, importance, age, etc. is a time-consuming process requiring the engagement of more than a few persons. Another problem is funding of additional premises for the expansion of the museum. Final problem is finding the documents from the times of Napoleon, Austria-Hungary and the former Yugoslavia, concerning the foundation of the Institute, and different commands regarding hydrographic surveys and investigations from that period.

It is proposed that the above mentioned problems could be resolved through:

- the support of the responsible ministries of the Republic of Croatia, and of the local community,
- applying for EU funding, as well as direct support of the European Commission,
- the cooperation with related institutions, and with the state archives of Italy, Austria, France...
- selling souvenirs, facsimiles of old charts and atlases, and similar items in the future gift shop of the museum.

Museum is situated in the building of the Institute, offering its visitors, mostly students, the possibility of getting knowledge about the past and present of nautical cartography.

The HHI Museum is established in an effort to recollect the entire history of the hydrographic activity in the Eastern Adriatic Sea, however laying emphasis on its "most popular" part – the navigational chart. It is therefore considered to be a great contribution towards preserving the development of a specific branch of the cartographic heritage – nautical cartography – throughout history.

Like other museums, the HHI Museum will help toward getting acquainted with tradition, and having respect for that tradition, to gain knowledge about the past achievements guiding the future development of the hydrographic activity.

Institute museum is the place to embrace a part of the common history of the European peoples living in these parts. Such evidence of their common past will be a pledge of their common future as well.

Museum opened: 14.11.2010 by the President of the Republic of Croatia Mr. Ivo Josipovic.