

JRTR

Japan Railway & Transport Review

Feature

World Railway Museums (part 2)

- The Railway Museum: Initiatives and Challenges
- Opening of SCMAGLEV and Railway Park
- Modern Transportation Museum (Osaka) and Umekoji Steam Locomotive Museum (Kyoto)
- Tobu Museum of Transport and Culture
- The UK's National Railway Museum
- DB Museum—The Whole World of Railways
- China Railway Museum
- The Railway Museum as Science, Industry and History Museum—Past, Present, and Future—

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A collection of photographs of the museums featured in this edition. The original photographs were provided by the museums.

High Hopes for Virtual Reality Technologies

It is my personal opinion that museums should be places to satisfy intellectual curiosity. I would like them to strive to give satisfaction 'to the utmost' and 'through hands-on experiences' rather than simply providing transitory satisfaction. This feeling is particularly strong in respect to industrial and science museums. By 'to the utmost' I mean that it would be ideal for museums to have the capacity to deal with the intellectual curiosity of visitors so no visitor can say he or she has not received an appropriate answer or solution to their questions. For that reason, museums need to take a proactive stance in terms of unflagging research and studies because it is museums where the human and physical environment best suited to such activities can be found. By 'through hands-on experiences' I mean to go beyond the limits of static displays, using methods to promote understanding that are more true-to-life and closer to reality. However, as is obvious in the example of the simulated driving of a train, preparation such as education and training is required to appropriately experience professional jobs. These are professional jobs for the very reason that they are not easy for an untrained person to perform. Things that can be experienced in a museum are only the most rudimentary of tasks for which safety can be assured, meaning that intellectual curiosity cannot be satisfied to the utmost. Virtual reality technologies may allow us to eliminate the contradictions and overcome limitations. I hope that technologies advance to the level where they can be put to practical use in pursuing the ideal of museums—amateurs having the ability to be more like professionals and being able to have experiences closer to reality. Japan is fortunate to have an abundance of excellent researchers in the area of virtual reality. There is also recognition that railway museums are the most appropriate place to apply such technologies. Therefore, railway museums should be supportive of efforts to apply these technologies to exhibits.

K. Aoki

CONTENTS

Feature: World Railway Museums (part 2)

The Railway Museum: Initiatives and Challenges	6
Opening of SCMagLEV and Railway Park	12
Modern Transportation Museum (Osaka) and Umekoji Steam Locomotive Museum (Kyoto)	18
Tobu Museum of Transport and Culture	24
The UK's National Railway Museum	32
DB Museum—The Whole World of Railways	38
China Railway Museum	42
The Railway Museum as Science, Industry and History Museum—Past, Present, and Future—	46

Breakthrough in Japanese Railways 9

JRTR Speed-up Story 2	
Part 2: Speeding-up Conventional Lines and Shinkansen	51

Another Perspective

Hiroshima's Camera	61
--------------------------	----

Topics	64
--------------	----

Photostory

Access to Museums	2, 73
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