



**Association  
Internationale  
d'Histoire des  
Chemins de Fer**

**International  
Railway History  
Association**

**Asociación  
Internacional de  
Historia  
Ferroviaria**

## HIGHLIGHTS

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March 2020

## Bleib gesund

While writing my editorial for this new issue of our Newsletter, I hear Bruckner's fourth symphony, the so called Romantic. Despite covid19, there are still moments of beauty. Music and Railways is a perfect marriage for daydreams. Bruckner wrote his symphony in 1874, I presume. About this masterpiece two versions of the story are well known.

The first one is dealing with the young Bruckner and his friend whose father was a chief engineer of the Austrian Railways and who let the boys ride on the footplate of the locomotives. There he heard the chime whistles, a dialogue of collaboration to have the efforts synchronized. The other version brings us even closer to our own organisation. Bruckner was in this version friendly with the locomotive engineer on the Südbahn at Wiener Neustadt and sometimes he had the occasion to assist on the test runs on the Semmering line. The horns echo the whistles of trains on the Semmering line. Our first conference

dealt with the Semmering line. (courtesy by Phil Pacey, owner of the former website Music and Railways)

Nevertheless, it is almost impossible not to write about covid19. Therefore the title of my editorial: Bleib gesund, referring to a book by Heere Heeresma, a fine Dutch writer who has nothing to do with railway history. Sometimes we need something completely different to keep good health. It is the best time to think about the insanity of train rides, or the presumed insanity of train travel.

The Dutch author Johannes Kneppelhout (1814-1885) travelled by train in the UK in the 1850's and he wrote on matters of speed and their effects on one's health: "ever been on the high speed train in England? It is horrible. The tumult of the train itself, that of the air, pressed against the objects that you pass by, and of the trains that you meet, make all conversation impossible. The dribbling, the droning, the cranking, the banging, it all heats you up. At an

irresponsible and outrageous pace from sixty to seventy miles an hour, the heart jumps up in the chest, the brains shake in the head. You break a sweat, you run out of breath."

Kneppelhout suffers from a headache and he feels broken at arrival. This isn't a strange experience, in times of brain madness due to the high speed of trains, so-called delirium furiosum. Flaubert didn't sleep the night before he left for a train journey, because he wanted to sleep while travelling. Schivelbush wrote inter alia on these topics. With covid19 inspiration, we might have a closer look on the effects of health and disease caused by rail transport.

Let's go to work: we have to write history.

Paul VAN HEESVELDE  
Chief-Editor



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER - The time after ...

Dear members, dear friends,

This message will reach most of you at your home where many of you are confined, alone or together with members of your family, in respect of the instructions given by authorities to prevent or reduce the expansion of Covid-19. Most of us share this strange and quite unique situation where private and family life as well as professional activities have to be simultaneously managed from one single place and with restricted access contact to people or other external sources. For most of us a situation never experienced before... also a time for meditation and reflection...

Of course, in this time of risk and threats to everyone's health and even life, our thoughts and wishes go to all of you, to your families and colleagues from your companies, universities or other institutions. Priorities are today a safe behaviour and the protection of all people around us.

This crisis had as a consequence to drastically reduce or even suspend some essential activities contributing to the economy and social life. Industrial production is stopped in many areas, trade is reduced to a minimum level of exchanges in most branches. In the transport industry, traffic volumes have dramatically fallen in domestic as well as in international traffic, in particular in the field of passenger transport. Airlines and airports nearly cancelled all activities, railways and railway stations are offering a minimum level of services, ships and their cargo are waiting in ports, national borders have been re-established...

Middle or long term impact of this crisis on the economy is unpredictable. But according to all forecasts, nothing will be again as it was before, once the Covid-19 crisis has been overcome. The transport sector will probably have to face huge changes and disruptions due to economic and social consequences of the crisis, limitation in financial resources in several vital sectors, changes in priorities and policies relating to health, mobility of people, sustainability, urbanisation, organisation of trade, digitalisation, globalisation, ... The year 2020 marked by the worldwide circulation of Covid-19 and its impact will be a big issue for historians in the next years and decades...

Similarly, intellectual and cultural life is also deeply affected by the crisis. Schools and universities are empty, festivals, conferences, exhibitions are cancelled or postponed, museums and remarkable places of the historic or cultural heritage are closed to the public.

One of the findings of today's experience is that a continuation of part of these activities can be ensured thanks to the use of innovating digital tools. This trend is illustrated by the implementation on large scale of teleworking, videoconferences and virtual meetings, cooperation platforms, e-learning and MOOCs, virtual visits of museums and exhibitions .... This newsletter circulated to IRHA members is another example of a tool aiming to maintain and develop a "virtual" cooperation among members and partners of our association.

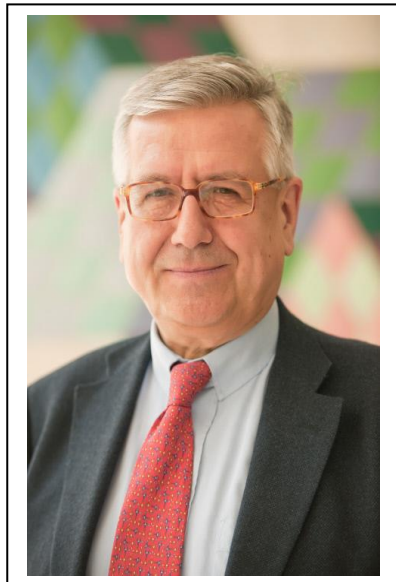
On the other hand this period will probably demonstrate the limits of the "dematerialised and digitalised" society" and highlight the essential role of living together, meeting face to face, cooperating with each other, exchanging, developing new solidarities.

As soon as the situation will be normalised we will define new steps for our common actions. Targets are the organisation of our next IRHA historic conference on "Europe and the Railways", the progress in the edition of the books in particular on "Railways in WW1", as well as at the facilitation of regular exchange of information on all activities in the field of railway history an heritage.

A meeting of our general assembly will be planned with the objective to update our program of work and take stock of the results already obtained. In the meantime, take care of you and of all people around you with the hope that we can reach the "time after" in good health in a not too far future....

With all my best wishes

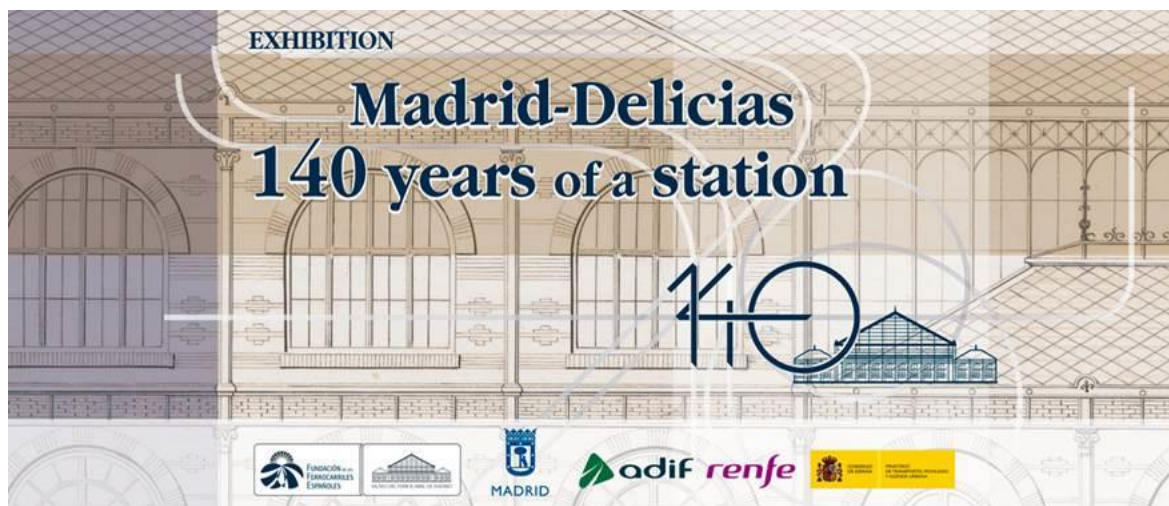
Paul Véron – IRHA President




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**Paul Véron**  
IRHA President

## Exhibition news



A message by Francisco Polo Muriel

Madrid-Delicias, 140 years of a station

140 years ago to the day, numerous personalities and authorities of that time attended the solemn opening ceremony of Delicias Station, then called Ciudad Real Station. It was one of the best examples in Spain of cast-iron architecture in the last third of the 19th century and the central station for the railway line to Extremadura and Portugal.

In order to commemorate this event, the Spanish Railways Foundation, through its Madrid Railway Museum and in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, Renfe, Adif and Madrid City Council, has organised the temporary exhibition "Madrid-Delicias. 140 years of a station," which pays tribute to the building that has housed the Museum since 1984.

The exceptional situation we are experiencing, due to the declaration of a State of Emergency in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, has prevented this exhibition from being opened to the public in our Museum as planned. However, after the effort put forth by our team in recent months, we could not let this date pass by without making it available to our visitors virtually, until circumstances enable otherwise.

We hope that the tour of this building's historical significance will provide company for you at home and enable you to enjoy a break, during the difficult circumstances that we are all going through at this time. I am sure that we will soon be able to wander around our Museum rooms once again and contemplate, in person, this exhibition that will be open to the public until April 5, 2021.

March 30, 2020

José Carlos Domínguez Curiel  
Managing Director of the Spanish Railways Foundation

See: [http://www.museodelferrocarril.org/140Delicias/index\\_en.asp](http://www.museodelferrocarril.org/140Delicias/index_en.asp)



Francisco Polo Muriel

## CONFERENCE NEWS – CALL FOR PAPERS

The 48th ICOHTEC Symposium in 2021 in conjunction with The International Congress on the History of Science and Technology (ICHST) in Prague, the Czech Republic, 25–31 July 2021.

See: <http://www.icohtec.org/w-annual-meeting/prague-2021/call-for-papers/>



Call for Papers to the Transport History Session  
Solving Problems or Creating Bottlenecks?  
The Role of Technology in the Development of Transportation

For millennia, transportation has been a vital sector of human societies that has met the demand for moving people, raw materials, products, precious metals and money as well as information, knowledge and pieces of art between places. Making long journeys has always been troublesome, and people have devoted a lot of time and effort to overcome obstacles for travelling and transporting.

This session focuses on the role of technology in making transportation easier, faster, and more efficient and reliable. Transportation has always required technological solutions. Moving people and goods from one place to another has frequently faced various challenges and obstacles, and to surpass them, humans have relied on technology. In the course of centuries, some solutions quickly became problems or brought about new difficulties that jammed or even blocked further developments. In other occasions, there occurred phenomena that Thomas P. Hughes called reverse salient, failures in planning which hindered a technological system from achieving some of its original objectives.

Technological solutions applied to transportation have shaped local communities, regions, countries and even civilisations. A research question for the session is how decisive transportation technology has been in outlining societies in different parts of the world. How influential transportation has been in various historical epochs?

The scope of the sessions includes road-, rail-, water- and airborne transportation (railways, tramways, trucks, buses, ships, ferries, planes) as well as elevators, escalators and funiculars, etc. We welcome presentations addressing any of these means of transportation in sundry time periods and geographical settings and using different methodological approaches. The main goal is to analyze what kinds of challenges have emerged and how were they solved. Co-authored paper proposals are welcome. At least one of the authors has to be personally present in the session and deliver the paper. Online presentations (via any video-conference software) will not be accepted.

Applicants should submit a paper abstract of 250 words at maximum and a one page CV (of each author). Both documents should be in English. Please, send them in MSWord or rtf format to Timo Myllyntaus (timmyl@utu.fi) and Hugo Pereira (hugojoze.pereira@gmail.com) by Wednesday 8 February 2020.

I am confident that the organizers will accept a certain delay, due to the particular situation in which we are living today. Please contact the organizers.

See also: <http://www.icohtec.org/>

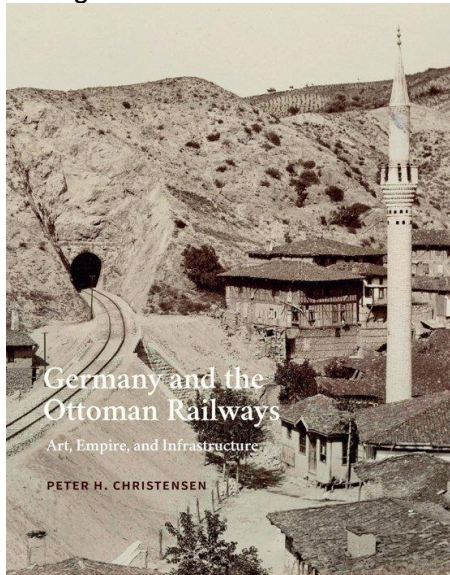
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**ICOHTEC  
SYMPOSIUM  
2021**

## Railway Readings

, Peter H. Christensen, *Germany and the Ottoman Railways: Art, Empire, and Infrastructure*.

The complex political and cultural relationship between the German state and the Ottoman Empire is explored through the lens of the Ottoman Railway network, its architecture, and material culture



With lines extending from Bosnia to Baghdad to Medina, the Ottoman Railway Network (1868–1919) was the pride of the empire and its ultimate emblem of modernization—yet it was largely designed and bankrolled by German corporations. This exemplifies a uniquely ambiguous colonial condition in which the interests of Germany and the Ottoman Empire were in constant flux. German capitalists and cultural figures sought influence in the Near East, including access to archaeological sites such as Tell Halaf and Mshatta. At the same time, Ottoman leaders and laborers urgently pursued imperial consolidation. *Germany and the Ottoman Railways* explores the impact of these political agendas as well as the railways' impact on the built environment. Relying on a trove of previously unpublished archival materials, including maps, plans, watercolors, and photographs, author Peter H. Christensen also reveals the significance of this major infrastructure project for the budding disciplines of geography, topography, art history, and archaeology. See in particular the review of the book by Emily Neumeier on H-Net: H-AMCA, H-Net Reviews. January, 2019.

<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=52242>



From September 25 to October 14, 2018, Rails & History boarded the Innovation train, organized by the SNCF to celebrate its 80th anniversary. Rails & Histoire have organized during this period conferences for an interested public. Issue 53 of *La revue d'histoire des chemins de fer* provides readers with a written and illustrated version of six of these lectures, offered by members of the association's scientific committee and other researchers. From Parisian transport to the Lyon tramway, from the Breton network to the Paris-Toulouse line, from the cross-Channel rail link to the regionalization of transport in the Massif Central, this issue invites you to (re) discover rail networks.

Ariane Verderosa, *Cheminots Portrait d'une communauté de travail*.

Ariane Verderosa's book offers an exploration of the world of railway workers, at the crossroads of their deep rooted professional identity, their particular social rules and the reality of railway production at a time when profound reforms are changing the organization of SNCF and nature of the contract signed with its employees. Ariane Verderosa, a former journalist at Agence France Presse, now responsible for the SNCF social observatory, gives us, together with France Berlioz - journalist, a sociological survey supported and illustrated to conquer existing myths and ideas and brings a better understanding of this unique working community that has left no one untouched.



RAILWAY HISTORY  
KNOWLEDGE  
FACTORY

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Next issue:  
Summer 2020  
(as I live and breathe)

Do not forget to visit  
our website!

WWW.AIHC-IRHA-  
AIHF.COM

## Railways History Conference in Sao Paolo postponed

The 5 th International Congress on Railway History and Heritage planned in Sao Paulo has been postponed to 23-24-25 September 2020

Dr. Eduardo Romero de Oliveira, Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP), Coordinator of the Railway Memory Project and Chairman of the Organisation of the Congress, informed us that due to the preventive measures against the spread of the COVID-19 adopted by the Brazilian government, the government of Sao Paulo and educational institutions, it is not possible to hold the 5 th International Congress of Railway History and Heritage entitled "The Legacies for our Future" and planned on 25-27 March 2020 in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

It was decided to postpone this international congress - supported by our association IRHA among other institutions - to the 23-24-25 September 2020 with the hope that the international health situation is already normalized in this period.

Information on the congress is available at following address:

<https://memoriaferroviaria.rosana.unesp.br>.

You will find more information on this conference in the Summer issue of our newsletter, as far as we have news on this behalf.

Further on, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest sympathy and condolences to all those affected by this severe Covid-19 crisis

***Next issue – June 2020***  
***Deadline for copy: June 15th***

SEE YOU ONE DAY:

***The only way to be sure of catching a train is  
to miss the one before it.***

*Gilbert K. Chesterton*