

Project: Thoroughbred of the Sea
The trial voyage to Dublin

Dissemination plan

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Introduction

Background

Thoroughbred of the Sea is a combined research and dissemination project whose purpose is to create and communicate new knowledge on Viking longships and society. The project concerns the museum's reconstruction of the Viking longship Skuldelev 2.

Since it was commenced in 1996, the project has involved the building of a model in a scale of 1:10, the full-scale reconstruction of the ship, and preliminary sea trials with the ship and crew. The project is now entering a new phase: an expedition from Roskilde to Dublin in 2007 and back again in 2008.

Dendrochronological analysis has shown that the original ship was built in Dublin in 1042. It probably sailed to Roskilde in connection with the flurry of diplomatic activity following the Battle of Hastings in 1066 – an event that currently represents the end of the Viking Age. The ship is thus of importance for European history, and the project therefore addresses an international audience.

As the ship's connection to both Dublin and Roskilde is well documented, the project will particularly focus on disseminating information on Danish/Nordic and Irish aspects of the Viking Age, close cooperation on communication tasks with Danish and Irish institutions, and on activities and exhibitions in Roskilde and Dublin.

The task

The task is primarily concerned with publicising the ship, her voyage and the investigation and research processes to be performed during the expedition. The expedition must also be related to the work already performed over the last 10 years. And finally, the ship, the voyage, and the results of the investigations performed must be publicised in a broader cultural historical perspective.

The challenge

The main challenge in this phase of the project is to develop a method for publishing information on the ship and its voyage, and on the various investigation and research processes performed along the way – far from land and spectators – and to an international audience. To meet this challenge, the dissemination plan is primarily based on providing information electronically, with the project's own website as the major platform.



Publicising processes involves different challenges than publishing results. It is not possible to present an overall sequence of completed events, where the scientist has organised and sorted the issues and documentation material, eliminated any pitfalls or dead ends, and guided the ideas and hypotheses to a satisfactory conclusion. Instead, the audience is thrown into the process at random points in time – where the scientists involved have yet to gain an overview of the results of the process in progress. If the investigation and research processes are to be presented in a way that avoids confusion and frustration, the audience must be given an insight into the premisses of the process and must feel that they have become involved in the questioning thought process. The process in progress must therefore be presented as part of a well described chain of events capable of creating a better understanding of the relationship between the cultural historical issues, the project's objectives and methods, the processes previously completed and the expected results.

Providing information on the project's basic ideas and research methods is thus of prime importance. Reconstructing and testing a partially preserved shipwreck is an extremely comprehensive and complex process in which many paths are followed simultaneously. We must gain an overall understanding of, among other things, the design and character of the original ship and the way in which the materials were used. We must acquire the craftsmanship skills and knowledge of materials necessary to reconstruct the ship and all her parts, and master the technique of sailing her. The process raises a broad range of questions and issues and involves many people with very different backgrounds. From the dissemination point of view, the challenge is therefore to relate the process in progress, and the questions it raises, to the project in its entirety. And to demonstrate the way in which the questions and issues raised by the process prompt us to examine and interpret the source material with new eyes.

Although experimental archaeology has provided much new information on Viking ships and expeditions over the last 20 years – knowledge which could not have been acquired in any other way – many people still focus on the limited value of the method in authenticating cultural historical evidence. While the method shares this limitation with most other humanistic research methods, it is evidently more apparent here because the hands-on investigation and research processes are carried out by non-academics. The challenge of the dissemination task lies in meeting such skepticism in a way that allows the audience to grasp the fact that there are many ways of approaching a scientific research process and that it is precisely the many eyes involved that help us spot and recognise new knowledge and understanding. And that they can join in!

By publicising the project's investigation and research processes, the public are thus offered an insight into the world of research, the curiosity that drives the researchers involved, and the questions and thought processes arising from the research methods used. Part of the project's objective is thus to provide a well balanced cultural historical concept of truth and to present several viewpoints on, and approaches to, the history of Viking ships, culture and society.



Dissemination content

The ship

The original ship, Skuldelev 2, is on display at the Viking Ship Museum along with an exhibition that details the history of the ship and the Thoroughbred of the Sea project via models, animations, films, photographs, texts and access to the electronic information provided by the project website.

The full-scale reconstruction of Skuldelev 2, the *Sea Stallion from Glendalough*, is the most valuable card in publicising the ship and project. Here, the public meet a complete, fully equipped ship. The lines of the ship can be followed unbroken from stem to stem and the many details studied in their entirety. In comparison with the original wreck, the Sea Stallion thus gives a better, and more complete, impression of Viking longships.

At the same time, the ship is real, it exists and can be experienced in full life size. The movements, smells and sounds of the ship, and the many marks of wear and use, transcend the abstraction of electronic information.

The experience is direct, sensuous, and emotive, and thus also meaningful and interest creating.

During the voyage to Dublin in 2007, and the return journey in 2008, the Sea Stallion and her crew will put ashore where possible and necessary. On such stopovers, a relatively limited audience will have the opportunity to see the ship and meet her crew. The fact that the ship and crew are undertaking a scientific expedition in the wake of the Vikings will give the experience a special dimension. Their experiences at sea will have affected the crew, possibly even exhausted them. The ship will have to be checked, and possibly repaired. Stocks of food and water will need to be replenished. The many activities around the ship will thus make it easier for people to imagine what sailing a Viking longship was really like.

When the Sea Stallion arrives in Dublin in mid august 2007, the crew will display the ship to the public. On her arrival, the ship's sailing ability will be demonstrated on the Liffey and the ship will be opened to the public once she is berthed. The Sea Stallion will spend the winter in Dublin, where it will be exhibited in cooperation with the National Museum of Ireland. The general public in Ireland will thus have ample opportunity to view the reconstruction of the Irish-built longship which, for a while at least, will have returned to its original home.

The voyage

Fantastic voyages have always produced new tales and stories, and many classic stories and tales are based on a travel motif. Journeys – especially those that are out of the ordinary – apparently fascinate most people. Publicising the voyage itself, its conditions and its tales, will provide a perfect starting point for creating interest in the project as a whole.

Information will be communicated electronically during the course of the expedition in an appealing, easily read, personal form, allowing the public to imagine what it is really like aboard the ship.



The ship's current position, course and travel plan will be updated several times a day on an electronic map, and links (to the Danish Meteorological Institute for example) will provide information on the actual and forecast weather conditions in the relevant area. Photographs of the conditions at sea – from clear blue skies and flat calm waters to steel grey clouds and foaming wave tops – will be used to bring the weather situation and the conditions experienced by the ship and crew to life.

The story of life on board will be told via personal accounts, photos and video films. The ship's cook will report daily on the menu, while the ship's nurse will comment the crew's state of health. A member of the crew will keep a diary, telling their own personal account of the voyage, the ambience on board, the hardships suffered and the fantastic experiences encountered along the way. In addition, several selected crew members will be profiled, giving an overall impression of the many different individuals participating in the project, their motivation for being there, and their experiences. Such personal profiles will thus indirectly contribute to describing the project as a social experiment in so far as its successful completion depends on 65 present-day individuals functioning together under conditions which, in the 21st century, can only be described as extreme.

The research processes

The idea is to present the project's investigation and research processes as they occur. The expedition will focus on three major areas: the testing and evaluation of the reconstruction itself; the ship's sailing characteristics and manoeuvrability; and the crew's functions, organisation and life on board.

The ship can be considered an experimental setup, a hypothesis which reflects our preliminary interpretation of the original ship and its missing parts. The voyage will test the hypothesis in a scale of 1:1. The problems and issues which arose during the reconstruction work will be followed up through systematic documentation of the ship's construction and condition. If parts have been added which do not function in the entirety of the ship, they will fail.

During the voyage, details of this issue will be communicated via the shipwright's electronic diary, where he will note his own thoughts and observations, and store documentation in the form of photos and other data. The data collected will be subsequently analysed and published in more conclusive form.

The ship's sailing characteristics, speed and manoeuvrability will be investigated under realistic conditions in relation to the wind and weather, the waters crossed, currents, wave height, etc. The objective is to derive data which not only provides new insight into the sailing characteristics of this specific ship, but also contributes to a better understanding of the travelling speed and seaworthiness of Viking longships in general. During the voyage, aspects of this issue will be communicated via an electronic log containing the skipper's thoughts and considerations and a wide range of raw documentation data on speed, angle to the wind, balance, steering characteristics, etc. The data collected will be subsequently analysed and published in more conclusive form.



The crew's functions, organisation and life on board will be investigated in order to provide an insight into the problems encountered while travelling in a Viking Age longship. Among other things, the amount of food and water consumed will be recorded along with various other data, and the provisions, clothing, navigation methods, etc. used in the Viking Age will be tested under realistic conditions. During the voyage, such information will be communicated via the electronic diaries of crew members.

The Viking Age

To give the general public the greatest possible benefit of the project, the problems and issues investigated must be considered in a broader cultural historical perspective. The ships and expeditions of the Vikings will therefore be highlighted, especially those involving longships. The Viking history of the areas the ship passes along her route will also be publicised, focusing on Roskilde and Dublin in particular and the Viking influence in Denmark and Ireland in general.

The communication of such information will be based on recent research in various fields and disciplines. It will include brief presentations in words and pictures, specially designed for the project website, and articles written by leading scientists and researchers. The material will be compiled and edited in cooperation with Roskilde Museum and the National Museum of Ireland among others. It will be published in full on the project website and in abridged form in exhibitions and articles.

Museums and tourist organisations along the route will also be invited to participate in a dissemination partnership allowing members of the public to find information on local Viking history, relics and attractions via the electronic map used to show the ship's current position and route.

The Vikings

Our perception of the Vikings and the times in which they lived is part of our common historical awareness – in Denmark, the other Nordic countries, and most of Europe. The Viking Age is an important item in school curricula and Vikings are a popular symbol in the marketing of Danish goods and Denmark as a tourist destination. By publicising the project, it will become part of this awareness. Members of the public will meet the project with certain preconceived ideas about the Vikings and their society, and the project will in turn affect these preconceptions.

In this respect, it will be relevant to publicise the way successive generations have viewed the Vikings in different lights, depending on the historical awareness of their own times. Vikings have thus changed appearance and personality several times over the last 400 years, and our present perception of them is therefore the result of progressive development, the story of which we will tell on the basis of art, symbols and other artefacts.

It would also be interesting to create a modern-day snapshot of how people living in the areas once occupied by the Vikings perceive the Vikings and the



Viking Age. The project will therefore attempt to document such perceptions via interviews with crew members and the people they meet along the way. The interviews will be videotaped and will initially be used to produce brief, on-site reports for publication on the project website. The video material will subsequently be edited and the best material combined to form short documentaries, which will be published electronically. In addition, schoolchildren will be encouraged to send drawings and comments to the website.

Finally, we will use interviews with crew members to investigate and publicise the way in which the expedition has altered their own perception of history. In part, the project's method is designed to seek new awareness through personal involvement. During the expedition, 65 present-day individuals will experience the same basic conditions and problems that faced the Vikings aboard their longships. How can food and water best be stowed? Where can personal belongings be kept safe and dry? Where is there room to sleep? And how is one affected by such close proximity to 64 other people, who are also tired and weary?

The project cannot provide certain answers to such questions, but it can renew interest in the Vikings, creating a wish to know more about their way of thinking and their logic, and a desire to understand who they really were. The Viking poetry, sagas and nicknames that have survived since ancient times reveal that the Vikings had a humour similar to our own. And humour is undoubtedly vital if the extreme conditions aboard a longship are to be endured. Other sources give the impression that, in some areas at least, the Vikings had completely different values than ourselves – their idea of honour, for example, or the importance of an everlasting reputation. It was perhaps such aspects of their culture-dependent personality that provided the impetus for their daring expeditions through uncharted waters and open seas.

News

The project involves a very large number of people who constantly require information and updates on the progress made. While this applies primarily to the volunteer crew and their families, spread over Denmark and many other parts of the world, it also applies to the many parties involved along the entire expedition route. And finally, it applies to the sponsors and grant providers. At the same time, there will be intense public interest in the project, which has received considerable press coverage. The publication of news and stories about the project will therefore be intensified from 1 November 2006.



Dissemination media

Visual identity

The museum's value system includes a desire to meet its public with a conscious attitude to aesthetics, partly because the museum is mainly a visual experience. This project is no exception. The ship herself is a visual experience – as illustrated among other things by the fact that she has been chosen as one of the twelve representatives of exceptional craftsmanship and design in the new Danish cultural canon. And the dissemination plan is also based on visual media.

Because of the extreme size of the undertaking, and to provide room for its many partners, the project has been given its own visual identity with, among other things, its own logo. To underline the project's close ties to the Viking Ship Museum, however, a graphic identity has been produced by the museum's designer in collaboration with the design bureau Kontrapunkt that closely resembles the one developed by Kontrapunkt for the museum itself.

The museum's photographer is responsible for ensuring a high, uniform quality of the photographic material (photos and film) shot and used in connection with documentation and dissemination tasks.

www.seastallion.dk

The project website is a cornerstone of the dissemination plan. In its present form, it was developed prior to the four-week training voyage across the Skagerrak in the summer of 2006, when it had some 5,000 visitors daily. The website will also be an important electronic element in the exhibitions prepared in connection with the project.

A closed area of the website will be used as an electronic communication platform for crew members, while the open area will be used to publicise the project for a wider audience. Several parts of the website's public area will be developed and structured in the coming year, prioritised in relation to available resources: The Expedition, Research Processes, The Cultural Historical Context, The Vikings, Teaching, and News.

The expedition, the research processes and the cultural historical context will, together with news items, be given highest priority.

Exhibitions

Exhibitions at the Viking Ship Museum

The Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde has publicised the project in various exhibitions since 2000 – partly in the Viking Ship Hall itself, where the original ship Skuldelev 2 is on display, and partly on the Museum Island, where the reconstruction was built. The exhibitions have been altered over the years and will now be adapted to the expedition itself. Besides posters with text and illustrations, the exhibition will publicise the expedition via films and the real-time provision of electronic information offered by the website.



Exhibitions at other museums

The material prepared for the exhibition at the Viking Ship Museum can be adapted and reused for exhibitions at selected museums in other countries. At present, agreements have been reached concerning exhibitions in 2007 at the National Museum of Ireland and the University of Glasgow's Hunterian Museum. It would be natural to make similar arrangements for 2008 with museums in, for example, Portsmouth, York and possibly London.

Mobile exhibition

Based on the material produced for the exhibition at the Viking Ship Museum, it will be possible to offer institutions in the areas the Sea Stallion passes along her route a poster exhibition that can be supplemented with films and electronic displays via links to the project website.

Exhibition at the ship herself

The ship will be equipped with a poster exhibition for display on board or in close proximity when berthed.

Teaching material

The project will, of course, be ideal for incorporation in history lessons at junior or secondary school level. That other subjects will also be able to take advantage of the project is amply illustrated by the fact that the ship formed the general theme of the final mathematics exam for Danish lower-secondary school leavers in 2006.

While the material publicised on the project website will be directly suitable for teaching purposes, supplementary teaching aids and pupil exercises will be prepared by the museum's School Service in collaboration with Avedøre College and Trelleup School. Such material will be made available in the teaching area of the project website.

The School Service at the Viking Ship Museum will also extend its existing school material on the Sea Stallion.

Publications

In connection with the expedition, the Viking Ship Museum will publish a catalogue describing the project. The catalogue will be written by members of museum staff and illustrated with photos taken by the museum's photographer among other things. The catalogue will be published in Danish and English.

In November 2007, a book describing the voyage to Ireland will be released by the publisher Sohn in cooperation with the Viking Ship Museum. The book will be written as a personal account of the voyage by Henrik Kastoft, and will be illustrated with photos taken by the museum's photographer. It will be published in Danish and English.

On the ship's return in 2008, the results will be scientifically analysed and published in the English language monograph series *Ships and Boats of the North*, published by the Viking Ship Museum Press.



On completing the project in 2008, the Viking Ship Museum will also assess the possibilities of publishing the recorded material in popular scientific form, photo books, etc.

Documentaries and films

The expedition will provide a unique opportunity to film a fully manned Viking longship on the open sea and against the dramatic coastlines of Scotland, Ireland and England. The museum's photographer will participate in the expedition, completing the photographic documentation of the ship and project begun in 2000.

To ensure the best possible film shots, and to reach the largest possible international audience, a documentary will also be produced in cooperation with Irish, British and American television companies. The Viking Ship Museum will retain the rights to such footage, which will subsequently be cut and edited together with the museum's own photographic material.

The crew

The volunteer crew is the most direct target group to whom information on the project must be communicated. The main precondition for a successful expedition is that all crew members are fully aware of the project's basic principles and goals and that everyone is capable of performing their specific responsibilities on board. The crew is thus also a fantastic resource which can be utilised in publicising the project, the ship and the expedition to a broader audience during the voyage itself.

The members of the crew who have a particular interest in dissemination tasks will thus be involved in the preparation of specific investigation and communication activities and will be trained technically and linguistically in meeting the public, writing reports for the website, holding talks and lectures, and meeting the press, film crews, etc.

Newsletter

From 1 November 2006 to 1 September 2008, progress will be described in an electronic newsletter published in Danish and English every two weeks. The newsletter will be distributed via the museum's mailing list, which is open to all, and will also be made available on the project website.

