

The history of the museum

Always at the Cutting Edge

The Museum of Communication looks back on an exciting history: Founded in 1907 as the Swiss Postal Museum, it was renamed in 1949 as the Swiss PTT Museum. Since 1997, its name is the Museum of Communication and it offers an innovative exhibition program for everything to do with communication.

From Swiss Postal Museum (1907–1949) ...

The first reference to a Swiss Postal Museum was made in 1893. The pioneers were the first postal museums in Berlin (opened in 1874) and Vienna (1889). References to first steps in building a collection are found from 1901 and the Swiss Postal Museum finally opens in the main building of the post office at Bollwerk in Bern on June 22, 1907. Space begins to get scarce at the beginning of the 1930s and the search for new premises is launched. The Museum closes in 1933 and its contents are temporarily stored in Bern's Natural History Museum until the Postal Museum can reopen in 1936 in the newly built Alpine Museum at Helvetiaplatz.

... through Swiss PTT Museum (1949-1997) ...

In 1949, with the centenary of electronic newsgathering, the Directorate-General of the Post Office decides to bestow a collection on the Museum dealing with the history of telecommunications and to rename the museum the Swiss PTT Museum.

For another 40 years, the PTT Museum rents space from the Alpine Museum. Space limitations restrict the possibilities for temporary exhibitions. The Museum increases its presence by organizing exhibitions in Lucerne's Museum of Transport and elsewhere in Switzerland. In the mid-1970s, the Alpine Museum terminates the PTT Museum's rental contract.

At the same time, a cultural center is being planned in Bern in Unteres Kirchenfeld. The PTT joins the project. The new PTT Museum in the Kirchenfeld neighborhood is built between 1987 and 1989 by Andrea Roost Architects and celebrates its official opening on June 22, 1990. The PTT Museum swiftly gains a good reputation based on its interactive permanent and temporary exhibitions.

... to Museum of Communication (since 1997)

The deregulation of the 1990s turns the state-run PTT operations into two independent companies: Post and Telecom. The PTT hands over its museum to the newly founded Swiss Foundation for the History of the Postal Service and Telecommunications on January 1, 1997. It is renamed the Museum of Communication on March 13, 1997. At the same time, the PTT's valuable collection of stamps is handed over to the Foundation. The Museum of Communication is now the owner of the world's largest and most important collection of Swiss stamps with a very valuable inventory of foreign postage stamps. Foundation bearers are the PTT and, as of January 1, 1998, their successors: the Swiss Post and Swisscom AG. The bearers further commission the Foundation to manage the historical archives and the PTT library in Bern from 1999 onwards.

The name Museum of Communication is also its program: The museum is transforming from a technology-oriented corporate museum to a museum of cultural history that has a very broad understanding of the term communication. New areas of collection come into being, the subject matter for temporary exhibitions is broadened and permanent exhibitions are completely reworked (2003: opening of "so near and yet so far: People and their Media", 2007: opening of "As Time Goes Byte: Computing and Digital Culture" and "Imagery that Sticks: the World of Stamps"). Today, the Museum of Communication is an innovative enterprise that offers its visitors a multifaceted experience based on a multithematic approach.