



newsletter

Issue Twenty-Nine

December 2003

Happy Christmas from the NMDC Secretariat! This issue of the NMDC newsletter includes an update on all our activity, including the final results of the Human Resources benchmarking and a special report on Human Remains.

NMDC News

NMDC Meeting

Estelle Morris, the Minister for the Arts, attended the full NMDC meeting on 28 November, providing the opportunity for a lively and open discussion on areas of current interest including plans and priorities for the next government spending round (SR2004). The Minister acknowledged that museums had not done as well as other DCMS sectors in previous spending rounds and that it was probably their turn in the forthcoming round, although there is likely to be little extra funding available at all this year. The Directors referred to the current research projects commissioned by NMDC and drew the Minister's attention to significant cultural, economic, educational and social contribution of the National Museums. They said they were keen to work with DCMS to demonstrate that with additional funding even more could be achieved. Issues that were discussed included partnerships with organisations beyond the museums sector, contribution to tourism, encouraging a culture of private giving to the arts. There was also a discussion about capital charging and other aspects of Government resource accounting.

Also at the meeting, the Directors discussed and agreed to adopt the three major research papers – National Dimensions, Valuing Museums and Creativity - subject to the final amendments being made by the respective working groups. The three documents will be launched in February.

Electronic Records Management

The Electronic Records Management group meet again on 20 November. There will be a full report on this issue in next month's issue of the NMDC newsletter.

NMDC Chairman

Robert Crawford has been formally reappointed for a second term as Chairman of the National Museum Directors Conference. At the meeting on 28 November, members expressed their thanks for his good work.

National Dimensions

Directors approved the final draft of National Dimensions, the report on collaboration and partnership between national and non-national museums at their meeting on 28th November, subject to final amendments. The draft has been widely circulated to museum sector bodies for comments and suggestions. The report will include many case studies of successful partnerships and makes recommendations for future collaborations. The report will emphasise the importance of Renaissance in the Regions and the contribution the national museums can make to the overall success of the initiative.

Leadership

Resource has agreed to provide funding for evaluation of the Leading Networks and the evaluation brief is being sent to all network co-ordinators. Meanwhile, another co-ordinators training/induction day is being planned for the New Year. Roy Clare and Sarah Newton will be meeting Chris Smith, Director of the Clore Leadership Foundation later this month to explore how best the NMDC Working Group can assist with promoting progress in this strategically vital area.

www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

Human Remains Report

The Human Remains Working Group, chaired by Professor Norman Palmer, published its report on 14 November.

The report reveals that there are at least 61,000 human remains held by at least 132 museums in the UK. Of these 25 institutions have collections of over 500 items. 13 of the institutions holding human remains from overseas have received requests for the return of human remains. A total of 33 requests for return of human remains were reported by these institutions, of which 20 were made to three institutions – the British Museum, Natural History Museum and Royal College of Surgeons.

The key recommendations of the report are:

- **Legislative change** - The law as it effects the holding of human remains by museums should be changed, including the statutes which govern national museums which should be amended to empower national museums to relinquish human remains. Legislation providing for the mandatory return of human remains by museums should not be introduced at present.
- **National Human Remains Advisory Panel** - in broad conformity with the functions and powers of the Spoliation Advisory Panel, which would have the power to make recommendations on all issues relating to the return, retention, treatment, handling, use, safekeeping and control of human remains.
- **Licensing Authority** – a licensing system shall be introduced to regulate the holding, return, treatment, handling and disposal of human remains within museums, in broad conformity with the proposals currently being developed by the Department of Health for the proposed Human Tissue Bill. Institutions would be required as a condition of licensing to subscribe publicly to a code of practice on the care and management of human remains.

The recommendations also state that no institution shall retain, or perform any other act in relation to human remains where it knows or has compelling reason to believe that the original removal of the remains occurred without the consent of the deceased person or that person's close family, or that the present retention, or other proposed act is without the consent of close family, direct genealogical descendants, or those who have within the deceased person's own religion or culture a status or responsibility comparable to that of close family or direct genealogical descendants. (Recommendation XV)

The report includes a statement of dissent from Sir Neil Chalmers, a member of the Working Panel. Sir Neil supports many of the main conclusions of the report however he dissents from several of the report's recommendations in the detailed formulation. The Natural History Museum is concerned that some of the detailed recommendations of the report are unnecessarily bureaucratic and in practice unworkable. The Museum is also concerned that the Report does not fully recognise the undoubted public benefits deriving from medical, scientific and other research. The NHM holds a collection of 19,500 human remains dating back to pre-historic times, the majority of these coming from the UK.

NMDC View

The National Museum Directors Conference supports the proposal that museums currently prohibited by law from returning human remains should be given the discretion to do so. The NMDC would not wish to prescribe one particular means of achieving a relaxation of the prohibition, currently imposed for example by the British Museum Act of 1963, since different national museums have different preferred ways of achieving this end.

NMDC supports the report's recognition that the holding of human remains and the carrying out of medical, scientific and other research upon them brings great benefits to humanity, and that there needs to be a balanced case by case assessment of such benefits, in relation to the benefits of communities claiming their return. NMDC also supports the proposal to establish a licensing authority to enforce high standards of collections care in museums and the operation of transparent, publicly acceptable procedures for responding to claims for return and for considering proposals for research programmes.

However, NMDC strongly opposes the mandatory return on human remains implied by Recommendation XV in the report, which recommends that there should be return on receipt of a validated request from a claimant community or from individual descendants within that community. NMDC also opposes the recommendation for extensive consultation with bodies from countries whose communities do not seek return of human remains

NMDC is opposed to establishment of a Human Remains Advisory Panel, on the grounds that it would be at best redundant, at worst obfuscatory, when set alongside the proposed licensing authority. NMDC is also greatly concerned about the suggestion that ministers and officials might become involved in dispute resolution, on the grounds that this would compromise the responsibilities of trustees of national museums.

NMDC is writing to Tessa Jowell setting out their concerns. The Secretary of State will consider the reports findings and issue a consultation paper early in the New Year.

The members of the Working Group were: Tristram Besterman, Sir Neil Chalmers, Maurice Davies, Hetty Gleave, Dr Sally MacDonald, Dr John Mack, Professor Sir Peter Morris, Dr Patrick O'Keefe (retired June 2002), Dr Laura Peers, Professor Dame Marilyn Strathern.

The Working Party report, which runs to 314 pages including appendices, can be downloaded from: http://www.culture.gov.uk/cultural_property/wg_human_remains/default.htm Hard copies are also available from DCMS

NMDC HR Forum Benchmarking 2003

Last month we reported the initial findings from the HR Forum's benchmarking exercise of human resources practices across the national museums sector, which was undertaken during Summer 2003. We are now able to present a summary of the full report.

Strengths

- Labour turnover in the UK is currently 15% and in the museum Sector 13%.
- Absence rates at 9.65 days per head per annum are below UK industry (10) and well below public sector norm (13).
- Employee satisfaction in the UK typically stands between 40% and 62% whereas in the national museum sector it is 74% (however only 38% of respondents actually conduct surveys).
- Formal disciplinary hearings (0.63%) are below UK industry average (1.92%).
- Gender balance is 50/50 and ethnic minority representation in the sector is 7.79%. Anecdotally issues remain around women at senior level and the spread of ethnic minority representation across organisations, so this data requires sophistication.
- Disabled representation stands at 2.05% compared to 1.7% in the Civil Service. Workers aged over 60 comprise 8% of the Museum Sector workforce.
- There is high support for induction, professional education and vocational qualification support. Nearly 70% of the Sector support management development and 58% have attained some form of quality standard.
- HR representation on boards in the sector (67%) is also ahead of UK industry (55%).

Areas for Development

- Days lost through industrial action (62) are higher than the UK generally (20), although nearly all these are concentrated in disputes in just three organisations.
- Training spend per head (£277) is above the public sector norm, but significantly below UK industry (£474) and the percentage of salary budget dedicated to training stands at 1.25% when 2-3% is felt to be appropriate.
- Leadership and executive board development programmes are not supported as much as they could be as under half all organisations do not have any provision at all. Whilst 25% of organisations are found to have IIP accreditation, in fact all organisations known to hold the standard responded, making the true figure much lower.
- The percentage of HR staff who are professionally qualified stands at 39% which could be improved as the profession moves into Chartered status.

The HR forum represents senior HR professionals in NMDC member institutions and also the Historic Royal Palaces and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. Thirteen institutions participated in the survey.

Members News

Dana Centre Opens

The Dana Centre, a unique and innovative centre where adults can talk science, discussing contemporary science issues and their impact on people and society, opened at the Science Museum last month. This dynamic events space will bring the hottest themes in modern science to adults-only audiences through a programme of bold and innovative events, all in the comfortable surroundings of its stylish cafe-bar.

The Centre, in a new building at 165 Queen's Gate, is backed by the BA (British Association for the Advancement of Science) and the European Dana Alliance for the Brain. To find out more visit: www.danacentre.org.uk

NML Visitors Boom

National Museums Liverpool venues are having one of their busiest ever years thanks to blockbuster exhibitions including Grossology, Rosetti and Spirit of the Blitz. The museums group have already reached their millionth visitor this financial year, well ahead of targets. Figures for October 2003 show an increase of almost 50% across the eight venues compared to the same month last year. The Grossology exhibition has proved so popular attracting around 4,000 people per day, that its original four month run has been extended until 29 February 2004.

Lindisfarne Gospels Website

The British Library and North East Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (NEMLAC) have created a website which acts as a front-end to education resources, visitor information, historical background and other useful websites relating to the Lindisfarne Gospels and to Holy Island (Northumberland).

The site includes a set of assembly materials covering all Key Stages with ideas for RE work, and new resources will be added over the coming months covering other areas of the curriculum. The site also includes links to image banks, publications, historical and artistic material, and places to visit to support any project. The site can be found at: www.lindisfarnegospels.org

British Library Business Research

The British Library has launched an innovative research service aimed at the business user to supply information individually tailored to customer needs. The research team supplies robust and crucial business information on science, technology, patents, medicine and commerce, removing the need for people to leave their place of work to find the information needed.

The service provides particular benefit to small or start-up companies, as well as large organisations. The Mark Sheahan, who won the Innovator of the Year 2003 award made use of this resource when he invented the Squeezeopen™ plastic container and spoke at the launch of the service saying "The British Library's staff provide professional guidance and draw on flexible tools for information needs. This means that anyone from the lone inventor to the multi-national organisation can spend more time learning and less time looking for information". For more information visit: www.bl.uk

Library's Accountancy Commended

The runner-up spot in a top accountancy award has gone to the British Library. The Library was shortlisted in the 'Software Implementation Project' category, for its implementation of a new payroll system at the awards sponsored by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). The Library was the only public sector organisation to make it on to the shortlist in the eight categories and was highly commended by the award panel.

Moving Here Award

Moving Here, the website celebrating 200 years of migration to England has been voted "Best History Site" by Internet Magazine. Moving Here is the result of a collaborative project by museums, libraries and archives and including between museums, libraries and archives, led by The National Archives. The site was launched in July this year and has already had over 9 million hits. It was funded by the New Opportunities Fund as part of their digitisation programme. The site was praised for its fascinating content, layout and ease of navigation. Try it out for yourself at www.movinghere.org.uk

Current Issues

Resource Chief Executive

Chris Batt has been appointed as Chief Executive of Resource. Chris had been Acting Chief Executive since May 2003 and was previously Director of Resource's Libraries and Information Society Team.

Announcing the appointment, Mark Wood, Chair of Resource said, "Chris has a strong track record as someone able to forge successful partnerships and deliver on major projects. He was able to convince the Board that he has a clear vision of the way Resource can now provide strong strategic leadership to the museum, library and archive domains and, in particular, help them play a broader role in areas such as education."

DCMS New Head of Museums

Nigel Pittman has been appointed as the new Head of Museums and Cultural Property Division at DCMS. Nigel will start on 5 January and replacing Bryony Lodge, who is going on maternity leave. Nigel was recently DCMS's Senior Adviser for the Iraq Project Team, and has previously been head of built heritage at DCMS, chief executive of the Community Fund and worked for the National Museums of Scotland.

Nigel Pittman will also have responsibility for the Museums and Libraries Sponsorship Unit, which will continue to be headed by Richard Hartman. This change brings all aspects of museum policy and operations under one Division Head.

Arts Council Chairman

Professor Sir Christopher Frayling is to be the new Chairman of Arts Council England. Sir Christopher has been Rector of the Royal College of Art since 1996, and is Chairman of the Design Council and a Trustee of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Gerry Robinson will step down as Chairman of Arts Council England in January 2004 and Sir Christopher will take up the post shortly.

New Director for Baltic

Stephen Snoddy has been appointed as the new director of the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead. Mr Snoddy is currently Director of Milton Keynes Gallery. He replaces Sune Nordgren who moved to become the founding director of Norway's National Museum for Art, Architecture and Design.

Illicit Cultural Trade in Property

Estelle Morris, Minister for the Arts had called on museums to respond to the growing problem of illicit traffic in cultural property by drawing up firmer guidelines on collecting. DCMS held a seminar to discuss this issue last month and small working groups are to be established to draft guidelines of recommended good practice for museums to follow.

DCMS has also issued an open invitation to members of the British art market to a seminar at the British Museum on 15 January 2004 which will include presentations on UK implementation of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, the *Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003* and the new Money Laundering Regulations. A guidance leaflet on the new statutory instruments (1970 UNESCO and the *Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003*) will be launched by the DCMS at the seminar. For further details see: www.culture.gov.uk/cultural_property/illicit_trade.htm

Meanwhile, the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee has been hearing evidence on the steps taken to end the trade in illicit cultural property. Last month Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell MP and Home Office Minister Caroline Flint MP appeared before the committee on 11 November 2003. The committee has heard that no database of stolen goods has yet been established because of disagreements about the form it should take and access to information. Caroline Flint said the Home Office had to consider cultural property theft in the context of other policing priorities. The Committee also heard that there has been no progress on legislation to enable national museums to return works of art that are discovered to have been spoliated. Tessa Jowell told the Committee that she had not received advice from the Spoliation Advisory Panel that a legislative change was required. Transcripts and evidence submitted can be found at:

www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmcmums/cmcmums.htm

A full report on parliamentary activity this month relating to museums is available from the NMDC Secretariat. Please contact Alex Baker for details (abaker@iwm.org.uk).

Saving Art for the Nation

As part of their centenary celebrations, The National Art Collections Fund (The Art Fund) held a two-day conference in London last month to discuss the future of acquisitions of art by public collections. The conference brought together a range of leading speakers and panellists to discuss fundamental questions concerning national heritage, national identity and culture and the future of museum collection worldwide. Speakers included several national museum directors from the UK and abroad, as well as journalists and historians.

Sir Nicholas Serota highlighted the need to support contemporary collecting pointing to "the acute gaps in the field of modern and contemporary art, where we have failed to nurture the creation of major collections of 20th century art." Writing in *The Guardian* on 29 November, David Barrie, Director of The Art Fund said, "Serota was right. If a masterpiece will be on public display abroad, we don't need to 'save' it" and that The Art Fund was considering the issue.

Heritage Counts

The annual audit of the state of England's historic environment was published at the end of November. Heritage Counts 2003 (formerly the State of the Historic Environment Report) takes housing as its main theme and argues that the historic environment should be at the heart of core central and local Government policy such as housing and regeneration. The report reveals the growing shortage of specialist building skills in the sector. It also reveals that 75% of green spaces have lost historic features and £3.5bn would be needed to repair and replace features and facilities in England's parks. A total of 24 heritage organisations contributed to Heritage Counts, which is produced by English Heritage. The summary, data and regional reports can be found at www.heritagecounts.org.uk

SPECTRUM Update

The mda are keen to hear from anyone interested in being actively involved in the development of the next edition of SPECTRUM. They are seeking participants for a number of working groups to implement various aspects of the specification. If you are interested in contributing, please write to Effie Patsatzi (effie@mda.org.uk) by 19 January with a brief description of your relevant experience and particular area of expertise.

Blue Plaques for Lottery Projects

Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell has launched the first of thousands of National Lottery blue plaques to increase recognition of how the Lottery has transformed communities across the UK. The first 10,000 blue plaques will be sponsored by lottery operator Camelot and distributed to lottery-funded venues across Britain by the 10th anniversary of The National Lottery in November 2004. Nearly every lottery beneficiary will eventually receive a plaque with the crossed fingers logo and the words "Awarded National Lottery Funding". Over 150,000 projects have benefited from lottery funding since it was launched in 1994. The plaques were launched at the British Museum, which has itself received £47m from lottery via the Heritage Lottery Fund and Millennium Commission.

Basic Skills in Museums

New research funded by Resource reveals the considerable level of support for adult learners provided by museums, archives and libraries in England. *Mapping the Territory*, published by the National Literacy Trust, is a baseline study of the ability of museums, archives and libraries to contribute to the Government's targets for basic skills educated. There are an estimated 7 million people in the UK with literacy, numeracy and language skills needs. The illustrates the wide variety of approaches taken by museums, libraries and archives and the key findings include:

- 84 % of responding museums, archives and libraries have some type of outreach or promotion to help reach adults with basic skills needs;
- 68 % of responding organisations are engaged in partnerships which aim to improve adult basic skills; and
- 78 % exploit technology to improve access for adults with basic skills needs.

The full report and case studies can be found at: www.literacytrust.org.uk/mapping/index.html

New Copyright Legislation

The changes to copyright law required by the EU Directive on copyright came into effect on 31 October. The legislation restricts copying under "fair-dealing" to research for strictly non-commercial purposes. The Museum Copyright Group will be publishing a user-friendly report on the practical implications of the Directive for museums, libraries and archives. This will be available very shortly on the Museum Copyright Group's website, hosted by the mda, which also contains a useful summary of the Directive. www.mda.org.uk/mcopyg/index.htm

Treasure Trove in Scotland

The Scottish Executive has launched a consultation on Treasure Trove arrangements in Scotland. The consultation document sets out the Scottish Executive's response to the Normand Review of Treasure Trove Arrangement in Scotland published in April this year, and seeks further comments on a number of the recommendations that were made in that report. Launching the consultation, Scotland's Culture Minister, Frank McAveety said that people who find hidden treasure should have their names on museum plaques under their discoveries, The consultation closes on 6th February 2004 and full details can be found at:

www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education.rts-00.asp

Disability Database Launched

Resource has launched an online database of 200 trainers, auditors and consultants specialising in disability issues. The database was developed in response to the needs expressed by museums, libraries and archives that participated in Resource's 'Survey of provision for disabled users in museums, archives and libraries' in 2001. The database can be found at: www.resource.gov.uk/action/learnacc/00access_03.asp

Customer Service Staff Development

As part of its Workforce Development Strategy Resource has commissioned London Fields Productions Ltd to undertake research on workforce development issues for customer service staff. Resource are consulting staff in large and small organisations about their own experiences and problems they've encountered regarding: barriers to learning; preferred learning styles; demand for learning; career progression; skills gaps; appropriate training and development provision. The consultants are keen to seek the opinions of those who work in a museum, archive or library. To take part in the online survey go to www.surveys-direct.org.uk/resourcesurvey.htm before 8 January 2004.

Shadow Culture Minister

Julie Kirkbride has been appointed as the Conservative spokesperson on culture, media and sport spokesman. Prior to her appointment, Ms Kirkbride was a member of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee. The post of culture spokesperson is now outside the Shadow Cabinet.

Artifact Launched

Artifact, new online information service for the arts and creative industries was launched at the London Institute Gallery and the Manchester Art Gallery. Artifact is a freely available Internet gateway developed by a consortium of partners led by the Manchester Metropolitan University. It provides quick and easy searchable access to the best arts and creative industries information on the Internet. It has been specifically designed to support the learning, teaching and research needs of those in post-16 education but will also intended to be of use for anyone interested in any aspect of the arts and creative industries.

www.artifact.ac.uk

Audiences for Digital Culture

The Cultural Content Forum has published a report evaluating the audiences for online cultural content. The analysis reflects the experiences of 90 different evaluation studies from around the world and found evidence of emerging consensus for user profiles. For more information visit:

www.culturalcontentforum.org

London Student Pledge

Schools Minister Stephen Twigg has announced that London secondary pupils will get free or subsidised entry to a range of cultural, artistic and sporting attractions in London to help them launch their potential. The ten point *London Student Pledge* is the Government's plan to ensure every secondary pupil gets the most out of living in the capital. It includes the aim that every student in the capital shall have the opportunity to:

- attend an artistic or sporting event at one of London's major venues;
- take part in a public event such as a sports match or demonstration, musical performance or art exhibition; experience cutting edge science and technologies.

For more information visit:

www.londonchallenge.gov.uk

Contact details for the NMDC Secretariat:

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International Issues

Beer Logos to Stay

The Smithsonian Institution has rejected calls from congressmen to remove advertising slogans from one of the artefacts in their collection. *The Washington Post* reports that 20 congressmen had written to the National Air and Space Museum complaining that beer logos on a famous Laser 200 acrobatic plane in their collection represented commercialisation and alcohol advertising. The monoplane was built and flown by Leo Laudenslager who won several national competitions in acrobatic flying. The plane, which was originally blue and yellow, was repainted red with Bud Light signs when Laudenslager retired from competition flying and appeared at air shows sponsored by Anheuser-Busch. *The Washington Post* reports that Gen. John R Dailey, Director of the National Air and Space Museum said the museum does not alter artefacts unless a repair is necessary and the displays the artefacts in a historically honest manner.

Cargo Handlers Charged with Art Theft

Two cargo handlers were charged with stealing a painting by Lucian Freud from a cargo building at JFK International Airport. The artist was shipping the work "Painter's Garden" to the Acquavella Gallery Manhattan for an exhibition of his work in May. CNN reports that the thieves were caught on tape by surveillance cameras breaking into the United Airlines cargo building on 11 November. A spokesperson for the Queens District Attorney told CNN the painting was recovered the following day in the backyard of an abandoned home in Queens.

National Museum of African-American Culture

The US Senate has approved a Bill that would provide \$17m initial investment for a national museum of African-American culture in Washington. *The Independent* reports that the new museum is estimated to cost \$350m and would be funded equally by public and private contributions. The museum will be placed under the aegis of the Smithsonian Institution. The museum, which is unlikely to open before 2013, follows decades of campaigning and was first proposed in the 1930s.

Admission Charges

The Art Newspaper has published a list of admission charges for leading international museums. Their research reveals that the Saatchi Gallery in London is one of the most expensive.

Guggenheim, New York \$15 (£8.89)
Saatchi Gallery, London £8.50
Mori Museum, Tokyo ¥1,500 (£8.22)
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York \$12 (£7.11)
Museum of Modern Art, New York \$12 (£7.11)
Vatican Museums, Rome €10 (£6.94)
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna €10 (£6.94)
Hermitage, St Petersburg €8.75
Louvre, Paris €7.5

**Happy Christmas from
NMDC!**

Forthcoming Meetings

HR Forum

1.00pm, Thu 11 Dec, V&A

Spoliation Advisory Committee

3.30pm, Mon 15 Dec, Tate

Museum Copyright Group

12.00pm, Fri 23 Jan, Manchester City Art Gallery

Leadership Working Group

11am, Friday 6 February (venue tbc)

www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

NMDC Meetings 2004

Full Conference

Friday 2 April 2004

Friday 9 July 2004

Friday 3 December 2004

Executive Committee

Thursday 8 January

Friday 4 June

Friday 10 September

Friday 5 November

The members of the Executive Committee are: Robert Crawford (Chair), Mark Jones, Sir Nicholas Serota, Lindsay Sharp, Michael Fopp, Gordon Rintoul and Lynne Brindley.

All meetings begin at 11am and take place at the Imperial War Museum.