



Welcome to this month's NMDC newsletter which can also be found on our website:

www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

NMDC News

Spending Review 2004

NMDC's work on SR2004 continues with parliamentary activity, press campaign and meetings with key contacts. The Treasury's initial announcement of departmental allocations for 2005-8 is expected at the end of June, although it is unlikely that funding levels for museums will be announced until after the summer.

Meanwhile, we are beginning to develop our communication campaign and research priorities for the next two years.

National Army Museum

Alan Guy has been appointed as Director of the National Army Museum. Alan has been Acting-Director since the death of Ian Robertson in August 2003. He was previously Assistant Director, Administration since April 2000 and before that was Assistant Director of Collections.

UK Joint Forum on Museums, Libraries and Archives

NMDC was invited to attend the second meeting of the UK Joint Forum on Museums, Libraries and Archives in Belfast on 26 May. The meeting at W5, MAGNI's discovery centre, was hosted by Dr Aideen McGinley, Permanent Secretary of the Department for Culture, Arts and Libraries in Northern Ireland. Representatives of the museums, libraries and archives agencies in Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland met to share news about recent developments, discuss issues of common interest and opportunities for future cooperation. It follows the signing of the Agreement between the four countries in 2003.

Leadership

The Leadership Working Party met on 21 May and discussed the evaluation of the Leading Networks, which had been carried out by Anne Murch Associates. The Leading Networks initiative was conceived to create self-sustaining networks among sector leaders to provide support and develop leadership capabilities. Initial training and briefing events for network coordinators were organised last year by the Leadership Working Party, in partnership with the Museums Association and with funding from MLA. Nine networks are now in existence coordinated by eight different people. 24% of those attending briefing events have formed a network. Network aims include supporting career or job transition, combating isolation and tackling shared work challenges. A summary of the evaluation can be found on the NMDC website at: www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/leadership.html The next meeting of the Leadership Working Group will focus on aspiring leaders.

Meanwhile, the first 27 Clore Leadership Fellows have been announced. They were selected from over 440 applications. Fellows from the museum sector are: Nick Merrimen, Curator of Museums and Collections and Reader in Museum Studies, University College London; Keith Merrin, Director of Bede's World; Jaqueline Riding, Director of Handel House Museum; Axel Ruger, Curator of Dutch Paintings, National Gallery; and Kathleen Soriano, Head of Exhibitions and Collections Management, National Portrait Gallery.

Fellows are selected annually, from the cultural sector or beyond, to undertake a year-long programme of work, research, training and secondment. They have the option of remaining with their present employers, or of receiving a full-time scholarship of £20,000. For full details go to: www.cloreleadership.org

Members News

NGS Wins Gulbenkian Prize

The Scottish National Gallery of Art has won the Gulbenkian Prize for Museum of the Year. The gallery, part of the National Galleries of Scotland, won the prize for *Landform*, its dramatic and innovative landscaping project, designed by the American architect, Charles Jenck. Landform, which was inspired by chaos theory, took two years to build at a cost of £380,000. It has become one of Edinburgh's most visited attractions drawing record numbers to the Galleries.

The Gulbenkian Prize, now in its second year, aims to celebrate some of the most inspiring and innovative initiatives that have had a genuine and demonstrable effect on the public perception of museums and galleries. The Gallery has said it will use the £100,000 prize money to further develop the gallery grounds with a new, redesigned sculpture garden.

NMSI Sustainable Development

The National Museum of Science and Industry has published a report giving details of their work over the last couple of years to improve their sustainable development performance. Science, technology and innovation are central to the process of questioning how we value, make, buy and use things, which is at the heart of the debate on sustainable development. In July 2002 the NMSI Board of Trustees made a commitment to champion sustainable development as a core value of NMSI and agreed a strategy to do this by being an example, engaging with society and through this becoming an expert. NMSI now has a small internal unit of staff dedicated to building sustainable development activities through the Museums.

The work featured in the report includes numerous exhibitions and activities engaging staff and visitors in key issues about the future - such as *Rethink Rubbish – Small Actions, Big Changes*, a mobile exhibition on a bus created by NMSI Trading for East Sussex County Council -as well as details of measures to improve NMSI's environmental performance looking at energy use, carbon emissions, waste output, recycling rates and water use. The report reveals that NMSI's total energy use has been cut by over 10 percent since 2001, which with dramatic increases in visitor numbers means energy use per visitor has been cut by half. Water use has been cut by 25% between 2002 and 2003. The report can be found at:

http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/nmsipages/sustainable_development.asp

Royal Armouries USA

The Royal Armouries opened its newest museum on 22 May in collaboration with The Frazier Historical Arms Museum in Louisville Kentucky. Royal Armouries USA occupies the third floor of the Frazier Museum and presents the history of the British Isles from 1066 to the early 1900s. The displays include nearly 400 artefacts from the Royal Armouries collection, which had never previously been displayed together, as well as state of the art audiovisual and multimedia displays and life-size tableaux. The objects are on a three-year loan from the Royal Armouries, after which time they are expected to be replaced by new loans from the Armouries' collection.

The Museum's permanent collection of American arms, which was assembled by Owsley Brown Frazier, is displayed on the second floor and tells the story of the American history from Christopher Columbus to World War I. Mr Frazier, former Vice-Chairman of the wine and spirits company which produces Jack Daniels and Southern Comfort, has donated his arms collection to the museum and provided \$32m to convert the buildings which house it, as well as donating an undisclosed sum for further acquisitions. For more details visit:

www.frazierarmsmuseum.org

National Gallery Technology Award

Zoomable Pictures, the National Gallery's revolutionary online facility for viewing their collections, has won a Museums and Heritage Award for Excellence in Use of Technology category. The high definition zoomable images, launched last year, were created using scanning technology developed by the National Gallery's Scientific and Photographic departments in partnership with Cassini Division Ltd. *Zoomable Pictures*, already allows visitors to explore in detail over 100 works in the collection and the Gallery aims to make the feature available for every painting in the permanent collection.

National Museums Liverpool's Conservation Centre was highly commended in the Use of Technology category for *Copying Caligula*.

The British Museum won the Permanent Exhibition category for the Wellcome Trust Gallery: *Living and Dying*. The National Maritime Museum Cornwall was commended for Landesign. For full details of awards visit: www.museumsandheritage.com

If you have any comments on the NMDC Newsletter or would like to contribute to a future edition, please contact Emily Adams - eadams@iwm.org.uk

Best Value Review of NGS

The National Galleries of Scotland have published a summary of the findings of Best Value Review undertaken by Deloitte. The Review has revealed an annual deficit of £3m and cumulative shortfall of more than £8m by 2009. Key issues which emerged from the Review included:

- NGS has a substantial and growing financial deficit which must be addressed effectively and immediately
- Almost all stakeholders reported improved relationships with the Galleries in recent years
- NGS was seen to be particularly responsive to customer needs in education.

The recommendations of the report include scooping and implementing an action plan to address the Galleries' potential financial deficit. Copies of the report are available from Emma Davies at edavies@nationalgalleries.org

NMM Universal Appeal

The National Maritime Museum has launched its *Universal Appeal* to raise money for the new planetarium at the Royal Observatory Greenwich. The Observatory, home of Greenwich Mean Time and the Prime Meridian, is part of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site. The £15m project will extend the Royal Observatory's visitor facilities, improve its educational resources and replace its renowned planetarium. The new planetarium presents an opportunity to create a technologically more advanced facility in which the Observatory's expert astronomers will be better able to interpret the skies and engage visitors. More than £10m has already been pledged by the Heritage Lottery Fund, DCMS, the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council and private donors. The project is due to be completed by Spring 2007. For more information visit: www.nmm.ac.uk/universalappeal

Turner Prize Shortlist

Tate announced the four artists shortlisted for the Turner Prize 2004 on 18 May. They include Langlands and Bell, who were shortlisted for *The House of Osama Bin Laden*, an exhibition first shown at the Imperial War Museum, featuring photographs and digital animations and video works made following their visit to Afghanistan. The other artists shortlisted are Kutlug Ataman, Jeremy Dellar and Yinka Shonibare. The Turner Prize is awarded to a British artist under fifty for an outstanding exhibition or other presentation of their work in the twelve months preceding May 2004. The exhibition at Tate Britain opens on 20 October and the winner will be announced during a live Channel 4 broadcast from Tate Britain on Monday 6 December

It's Ingenious!

The Science Museum, National Railway Museum and National Museum of Photography, Film and Television have launched: www.ingenious.org.uk an online resource celebrating human ingenuity. The site includes access to over 30,000 images of objects from the NMSI collections as well as in-depth articles, online discussions. The website presents four different interlinked section: Read, Debate, See and Create providing engaging and thought-provoking connections between objects, people and innovations. Ingenious was funded by £1m from the New Opportunities Fund Digitise Programme. The NOF Digitise projects are showcased at www.enrichUK.net

SeaBritain 2005

The SeaBritain 2005 team led by the National Maritime Museum has welcomed the Royal Navy's announcement of its plans for the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar. SeaBritain 2005 will see a year-long celebration of Britain's relationship with the sea. At the heart of this will be the Trafalgar Festival, a programme of events and activities during the summer and autumn of 2005 – including the Royal Navy's special events, which will commemorate the Nelson anniversary. The programme will culminate in the Trafalgar Weekend on 21-23 October 2005. Preliminary details of the events can be found at: www.seabritain2005.com and organisers planning their events are invited to register their details on the website.

Demonstrating Value

The British Library are holding a conference on 21 June to examine the methodology leading public and voluntary sector organisations are using to measure the benefits they deliver. The conference follows the recent study commissioned by the British Library, which demonstrated that the Library delivers £363 million in value to the UK economy each year. Tony Travers of the London School of Economics will be talking about the recent work he has done for NMDC on Valuing Museums. For further details visit: www.bl.uk/cqi-bin/events.cgi

Appointments

The Prime Minister has re-appointed Mr John Lewis as Chairman of the Wallace Collection until 31 December 2004. John Lewis has been Chairman of the Wallace Collection since 1998, after becoming a Trustee in 1994.

The Prime Minister has appointed Robert Dufton as a Trustee of the Museum of London. Mr Dufton is Director of the Rayne Foundation, an independent grant-making trust supporting the arts, education and social development, and was previously a member of the HLF senior management team.

Current Issues

Their Past Your Future

A £2 million lottery grant is being made available through MLA to enable museums, libraries and archives in England to take part involved in the Their Past Your Future project, part of the Veteran Reunited campaign, which will run from February 2005 to February 2006. There are two ways for museums, libraries and archives to get involved: either by hosting the travelling exhibition (either on site or at an external space), or by adding value with events and activities to support the programme. Bursaries of between £15,000 and £25,000 will be available.

MLA is asking people to register for an application pack by **23 June 2004** at pastfuture@24hourmuseum.org.uk You will receive a username and password, which will allow them to register their interest, give details of their proposed events, and receive an application pack.

Trends in Education

The London Museums Hub has recently undertaken consultation with a number of experts in the education sector with a view to identifying some of the key trends that will be shaping teaching over the next five years. This consultation took the form of an expert panel, which met for the first time at the Museum of London in May. The panel was made up of specialists from a high profile range of research and policy-shaping organisations including the Institute of Education, DCMS, DfES, NESTA, Becta, King's College London, University of Liverpool and QCA.

The panel sought to gain an insight into the emerging issues and developments across a wide range of educational fields and to examine how these will impact on formal education practise in the near future. The panel also discussed how museums could address these emerging issues to effectively support teachers and pupils.

Trends were identified included an increasing emphasis on personalised learning and assessment, an increasing recognition of the importance out of school learning opportunities and changes in teaching practice. A summary of the findings of the panel will be published on the London Museums Hub pages on the ALM London website (www.almlondon.org.uk). For further details of the work of London Museums Hub, please contact Fiona Davison, Hub Executive (fdavison@museumoflondon.org.uk)

Big Lottery Fund

The Big Lottery Fund, the new Lottery distributor responsible for half of lottery good cause funding, came into action on 1 June. The new organisation, formed from the New Opportunities Fund and Community Fund, has launched a consultation on the direction of its future programme. They are asking for comments on funding for the voluntary and community sector, for health, education and environment as well as for transformational and specialist programmes. The consultation also asks how the fund should involve the public, reach the hard to reach, work regionally and how to fund long-term change. The consultation ends on 30 September 2004. Details can be found at: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Estelle Morris has appointed ten people to the interim board of the Big Lottery Fund. They include Anna Southall, former Chief Executive of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. The other board members are: David Campbell, Roland Doven, John Gartside, Douglas Graham, Dugald Mackie, John Naylor, Esther O'Callaghan and Diana Whitworth. Dame Valerie Strachan, has been appointed as Vice-Chair.

University Museums Report

The University Museum Group have published a report highlighting the contribution of university museums and makes 38 recommendations for government and parent universities. University museums comprise 4% of the UK's museum sector, ranging from 'high street' institutions to small departmental museums buried on campuses. About 100 are regularly open to the public and the 38 museums funded by AHRB/SHEFC attract almost 2 million visitors alone. 30% of all collections 'Designated' by the DCMS as being of national or international importance are held in university museums.

The recommendations include that university museums and the HE sector should work closely with Government to extend the exemption to university museums under Section 33 of the VAT Act 1994, to enable free-admission universities to recover VAT.

The report makes many recommendations relating to the role of university museums with the university, including developing strategic partnerships with university education departments to ensure museums resources are incorporated in teacher training. Other recommendations relate to widening participation and community engagement and links with schools. UMG's website is www.umg.org

Draft Charity Bills Published

The Government has published its draft Charities Bill. The Bill follows the *Private Action: Public Benefit* report by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit in 2002. The proposed legislation sets out 12 charitable purposes, and will create a new legal definition of charity, based on a requirement to provide a public benefit.

The regulatory role of the Charity Commission will be set out in statute for the first time. The Commission, which is likely to be renamed, will have four statutory objectives: increasing public trust and confidence in charities, increasing charities' compliance with their legal obligations, increasing charities' accountability to the public, and maximising their economic and social impact.

Other measures include the creation of a new legal entity, the Charitable Incorporated Organisation, for charities that wish to take a corporate form and measures to support charity trustees. Trustees will be able to apply directly to the Charity Commission as well as to the courts for relief from personal liability for breach of trust.

The specific changes relating to exempt charities, including many national museums, are set out in Chapter 4. The Bill proposes measures intended to ensure exempt charities are subject to the same accountability transparency and requirements at other charities that are registered with the Charities Commission. While many exempt charities are already regulated by a government department or public authority in respect to the activities and functions they undertake, there is at present no mechanism for monitoring compliance with charity law. Rather than duplicating existing monitoring, the Bill proposes that the main regulator for each exempt charity takes on responsibility for monitoring compliance with charity law, with support and training from the Charity Commission. DCMS is therefore the proposed regulator for exempt charity national museums that it funds. DCMS would then, for example, have responsibility for ensuring the assets of a charity are applied solely for the purpose of furthering its object, which must be for the public benefit.

A joint committee of MPs and peers, chaired by Alan Milburn MP, will scrutinise the Bill before it is put before Parliament later this year. For further information visit: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/active/charitylaw/index.html>

The draft Charities Bill will cover England and Wales. The Draft Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Bill published by the Scottish Executive can be found at: www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/social/charitiestrusteesbill.pdf

Pay in museums

The Museums Association has published *Pay in Museums*, the results of a survey that compared the salaries for a range of museum jobs with an equivalent range of public and private sector jobs. It shows that museum salaries - from front-of-house to curators to conservators - are low and getting worse. For more information visit www.museumsassociation.org/

Strength in Diversity

The Home Office has published a consultation paper, *Strength in Diversity* which looks at issues such as citizenship and identity, eradicating extremism, tackling inequality and building cohesive communities. The consultation paper poses key questions such as:

- How can we ensure that people from all communities feel a sense of pride in being British, without feeling they have to leave other traditions behind?
- How can we tackle more effectively the disadvantages experienced by different sections of the population, within a strategy that delivers equality for all?
- How can we most effectively respond to the threat from political and other forms of extremism? How do we understand and tackle its causes?

The consultation document can be found at:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs3/strengthindiversity.html The consultation is open until 17 September 2004.

UK to Ratify Hague Convention

The UK Government has agreed to ratify the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Adopted in the wake of the massive physical destruction of the Second World War, the Hague Convention was the first international agreement to focus exclusively on the protection of cultural heritage. States party to the treaty have committed to safeguarding cultural property in periods of hostility, and also in times of peace.

109 nations have ratified or acceded to the agreement since 1954 and the Red Cross and heritage organisations have been campaigning for the UK to do so for many years. Making the announcement, DCMS said UK had not previously ratified the Convention due to issues surrounding interpretation and implementation and that these deficiencies were remedied by the adoption of the Second Protocol in 1999. DCMS and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office are taking forward ratification of the Convention and are committed to finding the most effective proportionate legislative route in consultation with other Government Departments and the broader sector.

Public Spending on the Arts

The Centre for Cultural Policy Research at the University of Glasgow has published new research comparing levels of public funding for the arts in Scotland with the other nations of the UK over the period 1996/97 to 2001/02. The report, which is based on an analysis of existing published and unpublished data from central government and public bodies, includes data on central government and local authority spending across the UK. The definition of "arts" used in the study includes museums and galleries. The findings include:

- public funding of the arts account 0.49% of all public expenditure in Scotland, 0.36 in England, 0.32 in Wales and 0.31 in Northern Ireland.
- arts expenditure per head of population is considerably higher in Scotland than in the other countries of the UK –£31 in Scotland, £18 England, £23 Wales, and £21 Northern Ireland. However, it is arts expenditure by local authorities that accounts for this.
- Despite the real terms decline in arts spending by local authorities since re-organisation in 1996, per capita spend by local authorities in Scotland still exceeds that of local government elsewhere in the UK

The report can be found at: www.culturalpolicy.arts.gla.ac.uk/research/cultstats_briefings.html

Appointment by Lot

The Public Administration Select Committee held a seminar last month to discuss whether an element of random selection should be included in the trustee appointment system. This followed the Committee's report last year, *Government by Appointment: Opening up the patronage State*. Committee members argued that they were not challenging the "appointment according to merit" principle, but rather seeking to extend the definition of merit and the range of skills and experience that this might include.

The seminar heard from the Communities Fund who began appointing 'By-Lot' members to their regional boards in 1997. Members of the public were identified by a random lot based on postcode and were then invited to apply for the Board. In this way, their appointment was covered by Nolan procedures. Feedback from Community Fund staff, users and board members suggested the experience had been very positive one, with 'By Lot' members able to bring a different perspective to discussions. Issues that arose during the trial included remuneration for Board members. It was difficult for people who had more junior positions in their work life to get time off for the Board duties. It was not yet clear how the system would be carried forward following the merger of the Community Fund with the New Opportunities Fund.

Record Overseas Visitor Figures

VisitBritain reports that between February and April 2004, six million international visitors travelled to the UK, representing the highest ever-recorded number of visitors in this period and an increase of 20% on the same period last year. The increase has been driven by substantial growth in North America and Europe. Overall figures for the year from January are up by 9% on 2004.

Spending has been slower to catch up. Despite an 11% increase in visitor numbers for the first quarter of the year, spending for January to March has rose by only 3%. The figures for March alone, reveal that while total visitor numbers that month were up by 15% compared to 2003, total spend was down by -2%. However, in April, a 41% increase in visitors from North America, compared to April 2003, contributed to an 24% increase in total spend. For full details go to: www.visitbritain.com/corporate/links/visitbritain/press.htm

Handheld History

English Heritage has launched a new audio guide for mobile phone users linking them to the lives of famous figures commemorated with English Heritage Blue Plaques in central London. The lives and work of Charles Dickens, Christina Rossetti, John Maynard Keynes and around 60 others are narrated by Stephen Fry and Joanna Lumley. To access the service users need to dial 0901 8143210 and enter the birth and death date of the person written on their Blue Plaque. For example the code for Charles Darwin is 18091882. The listener will hear a brief introduction explaining the link between Darwin and the building at 110 Gower Street, a short biography and then a story about Darwin's early travels on HMS Beagle. Calls cost 25p per minute from BT landlines.

A text message service is also available for 500 Blue Plaques in central London, providing a snippet of information about the person. To access this, users have to text hhh followed by the initial an surname of the person to 82222. This costs 25p. For more information visit: www.handheldhistory.com

Axa Prize Entries

UK and Eire non-profit art galleries are being encouraged to send in applications for The Art Newspaper AXA Art Insurance UK prize for the best exhibition catalogue of the year (published between 29 June 2003 and 30 June 2004). The deadline is 12 July 2004. An article on why The Art Newspaper thinks catalogues need improving can be found at www.theartnewspaper.com/axa.html

Museums Best About Living London

A new survey published by the Greater London Authority reveals that 29% of Londoners said the range of museums and art galleries in the Capital was among the three best things about living in London. Museums came fourth after shops (40%), the mixture of people who live in London (30%) and job opportunities (30%). Nightlife, including theatres, clubs and bars made the top three for 27% of Londoners. For details visit:

www.london.gov.uk/mayor/annual_survey/index.jsp

Economic Impact of Theatre

Research published by the Arts Council England reveals that the economic impact of UK theatre is £2.6bn, including an impact £1.1bn beyond the West End. The report, *The Economic Impact Study of UK Theatre*, by Dominic Sheland of University of Sheffield, found that every audience member spends an average of £53.77 on food, transport and childcare when they visit a West End theatre. For more details visit: www.artscouncil.org.uk

New Culture Online Project

Estelle Morris announced a new arts project for Culture Online last month. MadforArts will provide a forum for thousands of people with experience of mental health issues to give their views on a piece of art, architecture or music. MadforArts will be launched on 10 October to coincide with World Mental Health Day. For more information about Culture Online visit: www.cultureonline.gov.uk

Libraries Adapt for 21st Century

MLA has welcomed the findings of major new research published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA), which show that libraries are moving with the times and drawn in new visitors with cutting edge technology and longer opening hours. Library visits increased by almost 5 million and library investment has reached an all time high of £1bn. Libraries are buying more books - spend on books is up by almost 6% and the total spend on CDs, Videos and Talking Books is also up. The CIPFA Public Library Statistics for 2002-3 is based on returns from 205 authorities (99%) in England, Scotland and Wales.

MLA has also published a report on the Lottery-funded People's Network. There are now 4000 library ICT centres throughout the UK and 32,000 new computers giving free or low cost internet access in all public libraries. The report can be found at: www.mla.gov.uk/information/publications/00pubs.asp

www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

International Issues

Landmark Spoliation Ruling

The US Supreme Court has delivered a landmark ruling in the case of Maria Altman's claim for her uncle Ferdinand Bloch's collection of works by Klimt. The Bloch's Klimt collection was confiscated by the Nazi's in 1938. The six paintings claimed, include the famous portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer, currently in the Austrian Gallery in Vienna. The Supreme Court has ruled that Ms Altman is entitled to sue the Austrian government in America for the return of the painting. The ruling has implications for national sovereignty and international law and it possible the ruling could open the floodgates to lawsuits from Americans against foreign countries.

Museum Seeks to Buy Looted Art

The Musee de Beaux-Arts of Strasbourg is seeking funds to compensate the heirs of Bernard Altmann for a Canaletto painting in its collection which was found to have been confiscated by the Nazis in 1938 after Mr Altmann fled to London. *The Art Newspaper* reports that the museum, which is owned by the city, agreed to the principle of restitution after confirming that the painting, a view of La Salute in Venice, had been looted, but is seeking to keep the work. Corinne Herschkovitch, attorney for the city of Strasbourg, told *The Art Newspaper*, that the case is proceeding as a settlement negotiation, not a court case. The painting was bought by the museum in 1987 for 3.5m Francs (\$588,000) but the prices that would be paid to the heirs has not yet been agreed. If the city is unable to raise the money, it has agreed to return the paintings to the heirs.

Uffizi Expansion Plans

Plans to expand the Uffizi have been fast-tracked by the Italian Government. *The Art Newspaper* reports that the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, has announced that the €60m project to double the display space from 6,000 to 13,000 sq m will be completed by 2006. The Uffizi currently receives 4,500 visitors a day. With the expansion, visitor numbers are expected to rise to up to 7,000.

LACMA Free Overnight Party

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art are planning a free all night party on 17-18 June in celebration of LA's continued support of the museum and its current exhibitions. LACMA hosted its first all night party last year, which attracted more than 9,000 visitors with queues a quarter of a mile long. This year a priority admission system has been introduced with visitors registering in advance on the website to avoid the queues. For more details visit: www.lacma.org

Houdini Exhibit Enrages Magicians

An exhibit at the Outgamie Museum in Appleton, Wisconsin, USA, has attracted protests from members of the Magic Circle for revealing how Houdini performed his *Metamorphosis* trick. In the illusion, Houdini, appears to handcuffed in a sack and locked in a trunk and then switches places with an assistant on the outside. Houdini lived in Appleton as a child. The museum's AKA *Houdini* exhibition includes 38 artefacts, 190 documents and hands on displays that include handcuffs, lock picks, a straitjacket and jail cell. The museum's website is: www.foxvalleyhistory.org/houdini/index.html

Most Expensive Ever Painting

A painting by Picasso became the most expensive piece of art ever sold, going \$104m at Sotheby's in New York last month. *Garçon a la Pipe*, which Picasso painted in 1905 at the age of 25, was previously part of the collection of the late Mr and Mrs John Hay Whitney. The winning bid was made by an anonymous telephone bidder. The record price previously paid for a painting was Vincent Van Gogh's *Portrait of Dr Gachet* sold at Christie's in 1990. The current whereabouts of that painting are a mystery, although last year *The Art Newspaper* reported that it was rumoured now to be in Europe.

Parliamentary Report

Charitable Giving

The House of Lords held a debate on charitable giving. Lord Joffe introduced the debate to call attention to the 25% fall since 1992 in charitable giving as a percentage of GDP. Lord Joffe also pointed out that the poor who give to charity give on average three times as much as a proportion of their income as the better off, the top 20 per cent who give on average only 0.7 per cent. Speakers included Baroness Pitkeathley on her last day as Chair of the New Opportunities Fund, and Lord Brooke of Mandeville who raised the issue of Sir Nicholas Goodison's recommendations that acceptance in lieu should be extended so that the donation of cultural objects of pre-eminent quality could be set against income tax. Responding for the Government, Lord McIntosh questioned Lord Joffe's figures and pointed out that substantial funds had been channelled to charities through the National Lottery, for example £2.5bn through the Community Fund since 1997. In reply to Lord Brooke he said more responses to the Goodison report could be expected in the months and years to come.

Illicit Trade in Antiquities

MPs held a two-hour debate on the illicit trade in cultural property on 24 May. The debate was introduced by Richard Allen MP, who last year championed the bill that became the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003. MPs were concerned about the lack of long-term commitment from the Government to fund the Portable Antiquities Scheme and trading of antiquities on e-bay. There was also concern about the lack of enforcement of the new law on cultural property, with reports of the Crown Prosecution Service unwillingness to pursue cases of theft or vandalism of cultural property that has a low financial value.

As always, a full parliamentary report is available from the NMDC Secretariat.

Contact details for the NMDC Secretariat:
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Forthcoming Meetings

Human Resources Forum

11am, Fri 18 Jun, Museum of Welsh Life

Learning & Access

11am, Tue 29 Jun, National Portrait Gallery

Museum Copyright Group, Wider Group meeting

1pm, Wed 30 Jun, The National Archives

National Museum Director's Conference

11am, Fri 9 Jul 2004, Imperial War Museum

PR Group

11am, Wed 25 Aug, National Portrait Gallery

NMDC Executive Committee

11am, Fri 10 Sep, Imperial War Museum

Learning & Access

11am, Fri 29 Oct, National Portrait Gallery

NMDC Executive Committee

11am, Fri 5 Nov, Imperial War Museum

National Museum Managers' Consortium

10.30 for 11am, Fri 12 Nov, Science Museum

National Museum Director's Conference

11am, Fri 3 Dec, Imperial War Museum