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Welcome to this month's NMDC newsletter which contains an update on our activities and the latest news from the museum sector in the UK and beyond. www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

NMDC News

Article in Art Newspaper by Chair of NMDC

In this month's Art Newspaper Mark Jones, Chair of NMDC, shares his thoughts on Blair's legacy for British museums. Visitor numbers may have risen and the Renaissance programme may have breathed new life into regional museums but, ten years on, how do UK museums measure up to their international counterparts?

All Party Arts and Heritage Group Meeting

Members of the All-Party Parliamentary Arts and Heritage Group gathered to hear Mark Jones speak about national museums and the spending review. The presentation was followed by a lively and engaging discussion about museums and government policy. Mark's presentation can be downloaded from the NMDC website at: www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/apahg_presentation.html

Westminster Hall Debate on Museum Policy

Following a request made by NMDC and MLA to museum constituency MPs, Sharon Hodgson MP has secured a Westminster Hall Adjournment Debate on Government Policy on Museums on 6 June, 11.00-11.30. Rt Hon Richard Caborn MP, Minister for Sport, will speak for the Government.

IPPR on Identities

Sandy Nairne, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, chaired an NMDC seminar on *Identity, diversity and citizenship: Lessons for our national museums* at the British Museum, with a presentation by Ben Rogers, ippr. A copy of the presentation and a seminar report will be available on the NMDC website shortly. More details of ippr work on identities at: www.ippr.org/research/teams/project.asp?id=1892&pid=1892

Members' News

NMDC Members Recognised at Museums & Heritage Awards for Excellence

NMDC members have been recognised at the 2007 Museums & Heritage Awards for Excellence, created by The Museums & Heritage Show and supported by Heritage365 magazine, which recognise and celebrate best practice within museums, galleries and heritage visitor attractions.

World Museum Liverpool won best Temporary or Touring exhibition with 'Eye for Colour'. The V&A Museum of Childhood was commended in the Heritage 365 Readers' Award category and the *National Army Museum's* Marketing Campaign for the Summer 2006 Exhibition, *Somme 90*, which saw 73% new visitors to the London museum in July last year, was commended for excellence.

www.national-army-museum.ac.uk/press/files/newsReleases/sommeAward.pdf

For more information visit www.museumsandheritage.com/files/MH%20Award%20Winners%202007.doc

A Million Visitors for *Manet to Picasso* at National Gallery

Manet to Picasso: A Redisplay of Modern Masters from the National Gallery Collection received over one million visitors - the first time a free exhibition at the Gallery has reached this milestone. The show, which ran from 22 September 2006 to 23 May 2007, exceeded the previous record of 572,244 visitors to *London's Monets* in 1996, in January 2007. www.nationalgallery.org.uk/about/press/2007/million_manetopicasso.htm

V&A Celebrates its 150th Anniversary

To mark the 150th anniversary of the V&A opening at the South Kensington site, 150 leading designers, architects, photographers and artists have contributed a page to an anniversary album, highlighting how the V&A inspires them. The pages will be displayed in the Grand Entrance from 26 June and on the V&A website from 11 June before being bound into the album. www.vam.ac.uk

National Museums Liverpool Visitors Rise for 6th Year

National Museums Liverpool received more than 1.69 million visitors between April 2006 and March 2007, a rise of more than 5% compared to the 1.6 million who visited last year.

The Walker Art Gallery received 43% more visitors, following the opening in April 2006 of *Big Art for Little Artists*, the children's gallery, which attracted a new audience of families and young people, and popular exhibitions. Visitor numbers were up 26% at the Merseyside Maritime Museum and up nearly 25% at the Lady Lever Art Gallery. www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/about/news/newsarticle.asp?id=613&venue=0

The start of construction on the new Museum of Liverpool site was marked by a ground cutting ceremony with Loyd Grossman, Chair of National Museums Liverpool, on 30 April 2007.

www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/about/capitalprojects/mol/schedule.asp

Natural History Museum Reaches Agreement to Return Aboriginal Remains

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) and the Natural History Museum reached agreement regarding data collection on the remains of 17 Tasmanian Aboriginal people, which were previously part of the Museum's research collections, at three-day mediation in May. The agreement allows for some material to be preserved in Tasmania under the joint control of the TAC and the Museum. The remains accompanied the TAC delegates on their return to Tasmania, following a hand over ceremony at the Museum. www.nhm.ac.uk/about-us/news/2007/may/news_11682.html

Work Starts at the Natural History Museum on the Encyclopedia of Life

The Encyclopedia of Life (EOL) project, a collaboration of leading scientific institutions to create a free online encyclopedia of all living species on Earth, was launched in May. The EOL website will have entries, checked by experts, for every species of animal, plant and organism and will be available to scientists, teachers, students and anyone interested in the natural world. Species entries will be live from 2008 and it is expected to take 10 years for the 1.8 million known species to be put online. New species - there are an estimated 5-50 million species on Earth - will be added as they are discovered.

The Biodiversity Heritage Library, a collaboration with nine other institutions to scan and digitise millions of biodiversity documents, will be incorporated into EOL and over a million natural history books will be scanned and added. www.nhm.ac.uk/about-us/news/2007/may/news_11709.html

Behind the Scenes at the British Museum

The Museum, a new 10-part BBC TV series about the British Museum, is being shown on Thursday evenings on BBC2. Filmed over the past year, the series gives a behind-the-scenes account of the Museum's work in London, the UK and throughout the world. 2.7 million people watched the first programme. www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/the_museum/news_and_debate/news/the_museum_on_screen.aspx

Tate Consults Young People

Tate has launched a consultation with young people across Britain on Tate's plans for the future, in association with Creative Partnerships, BT and Channel 4 Television. 150 young people were invited to Tate Modern on 29 May to explore options for the development of the building and participate in the first "giant sleepover" in the Turbine Hall. Over 60% of Tate Modern's audience is under 35 years old.

The consultation will be developed through an online programme and in autumn 2008 Tate will stage *From My Space to Your Space*, a conference organised by young people, which will be held simultaneously at all four Tate galleries and culminate with the publication of the first young people's *Creative Manifesto* for Britain in the 21st century. www.tate.org.uk/about/pressoffice/pressreleases/2007/9753.htm

Donation for Tate Modern Development

Banker John Studzinski has committed £5 million towards the development of Tate Modern, the first major private donation to the project and the largest individual gift made to Tate Modern. Mr Studzinski has been a Tate trustee since 1998. The development will provide a new building to house modern and contemporary art. www.tate.org.uk/about/pressoffice/pressreleases/2007/9752.htm

New British Library Centre for Conservation

The new British Library Centre for Conservation opened on 17 May. The Centre provides world-class facilities for all aspects of book conservation, including education and training, and for the national Sound Archive. It brings together staff and facilities that were previously dispersed across London, to enable unrivalled standards of care for the Library's collections. The Centre allows the Library to offer training for conservation professionals and public access, through tours of the studios, demonstrations and lectures. www.bl.uk/news/2007/pressrelease20070517.html

New Members Appointed to British Library Board

Five new members have been appointed to the Board of the British Library, for a four year term from 1 April 2007. They are: **Dawn Airey**, Managing Director of Channels and Services, Sky Television; **Sir Kenneth Calman**, Chancellor of the University of Glasgow; **Professor Kate McLuskie**, Director of the Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham; **Maggie Semple** Chief Executive Officer of The Experience Corps Ltd (TEC); and **Professor Wendy Hall CBE, FEng**, Professor of Computer Science at the University of Southampton. www.bl.uk/about/governance/blb.html

National Slate Museum Celebrates Twinning with US Museum

On 19 May the National Slate Museum, Llanberis celebrated its 'twinning' with the Slate Valley Museum in Granville, New York. The celebration highlighted the cultural and historical ties between the people of the slate quarrying communities of north Wales and those of the slate region in the USA.

The twinning event is part of Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales' centenary programme and international strategy, which is currently focusing on North America. The Museum's impressionist and post impressionist collections are due to tour North America in 2008/09. www.nmgw.ac.uk/en/news/?article_id=352

Your Archives

Your Archives is a new resource that allows people to share knowledge of archival sources held by The National Archives and other UK archives. Using technology pioneered by Wikipedia online encyclopaedia, users can contribute content, edit pre-existing pages, submit articles about historical records held in UK archives, expand Catalogue entries, publish transcriptions of documents in DocumentsOnline and update National Archives' Research Guides. The site is designed to offer information additional to that currently provided and is distinct from The National Archives' main website.

yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Museum of London Displays Archaeological Finds from St Martin in the Fields

Finds from an archaeological dig at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, which include a Roman skeleton dated to about AD 410 and Saxon artefacts from around AD 500, are on display at the Museum of London until 8 August. The finds indicate that the Romans remained in the city longer than previously thought and that the Saxons arrived earlier. www.mol.gov.uk/English/NewsRoom/Current/St_Martins_release.htm

Sir John Soane's Museum Nominated in 'Britain's Best' Campaign

Sir John Soane's Museum has been nominated in UKTV History's *Britain's Best* campaign, which aims to find the nation's favourite historical site. The campaign involves two television series, the second of which will air from 23 July to 27 August, with the final programme on 17 September, when the winner will be announced. Voting for *Britain's Best* historical site is open until August 27.

The entry for Sir John Soane's Museum is at: uktv.co.uk/index.cfm/uktv/britainsbest.siteDetail/id/27

Current Issues

Taking Part Survey Published

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has published *Taking Part*, a report on the extent and nature of participation in culture, leisure and sport. The *Taking Part* survey, commissioned by the DCMS, is based on 28,117 interviews with adults aged 16 or over in England. Key findings include:

- 64% of adults visited a museum, a library or an archive at least once in the previous 12 months;
- 42% visited a museum/gallery;
- 48% attended a library.

The main reason given for attending a museum over the past twelve months was 'to see a specific exhibition or display; for libraries it was 'to borrow, return or renew books' and for archives, it was 'to find out about family history'. The main reasons cited for non-attendance at museums, libraries and archives were 'not really interested' or 'no need to go'.

Comparing data for recent attendance and attendance as a child shows that people who visited museums and libraries as children had significantly higher recent attendance rates than those who did not.

Findings from the survey will be used to help shape future policy to improve engagement across the cultural, leisure and sporting sectors. The *Taking Part* report and further information are available at:

www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Research/taking_part_survey/surveyoutputs_may07.htm

New Scottish Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture

Linda Fabiani MSP has been appointed Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture in the new Scottish government. In this cabinet role, which reports to the Office of First Minister, she is responsible for Europe, external affairs, culture and the arts, architecture, built heritage, Historic Scotland and lottery funding, major events strategy and Gaelic. www.scottishexecutive.gov.uk/About/Scottish-Cabinet

New Welsh Minister for Education, Culture, and the Welsh Language

Carwyn Jones has been appointed to the Cabinet post of Minister for Education, Culture and the Welsh Language in the new Welsh Assembly Government. He will be responsible for: education (from early years to further and higher education); skills; Welsh Language, sport and the arts. He was Environment, Countryside and Planning Minister. new.wales.gov.uk/news/presreleasearchive/1477807/?lang=en

New Northern Ireland Minister for Culture Arts and Leisure

Edwin Poots has been appointed Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure in the Northern Ireland Executive. He was Chairman of the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee of the Centre which oversaw the workings of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and a member of the Assembly's Environment Committee in the 1998/2003 Assembly. www.dcalni.gov.uk/news_details.htm?newsRef=467

Art Fund to Sponsor the Museum Prize

The Art Fund has announced that it is to sponsor the Museum Prize, the largest arts prize in the UK, from 2008. The Prize, run by the Museum Prize Trust and currently sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, will be known as *The Art Fund Prize for Museums and Galleries*. It is given annually to a UK museum or gallery to recognise excellence and innovation. www.artfund.org/news/archive/577

This year's £100,000 Gulbenkian Prize was won by Pallant House Gallery in Chichester, for its £8.6 million gallery extension, which includes geothermal heating and cooling designed to cut carbon emissions. The judges praised the flair and sensitivity with which the new building had been integrated with the original Queen Anne House and commended the presentation of the collection and displays. The Pallant House Gallery trustees plan to put the prize money into an endowment fund which they aim to use to offer free entry to the Gallery. www.thegulbenkianprize.org.uk/press/pr250507.htm

Art Fund Director Calls for Tax Incentives for Art Donations

In response to news that The Seattle Art Museum has received more than 1,000 works of art, worth £1bn, from 53 donors as part of a campaign to celebrate its 75th anniversary, Art Fund Director David Barrie has called for tax breaks on donations of works of art in the UK. In an online [blog](#) he argues that generous tax incentives allow museums and galleries in other countries to acquire works of art through donations and calls for tax incentives to encourage people to donate works of art during their lifetime. www.artfund.org/news/archive/570

Effective Collections

As part of the £1m Effective Collections scheme, the Museums Association (MA) is looking for museums to trial long-term loans and stored collection reviews. The MA is also seeking suggestions for ways of developing long loans to museums and other public places. Ideas for pilot projects, which will run until autumn 2008, are invited for submission by July.

Effective Collections will be launched in July and the project's full phase will begin in autumn 2008.

Has *Collections for the Future* Influenced your Museum?

The launch of *Effective Collections* will coincide with a publication exploring the impact of the *Collections for the Future* report on the sector. The MA is looking for case studies and would like to hear from museums that have been influenced by *Collections for the Future*.

Details and contacts at: www.museumsassociation.org/news1/effectivecollections&search=1.6

Lord Bruce-Lockhart Appointed Chair of English Heritage

Lord Bruce-Lockhart has been appointed Chair of English Heritage. Lord Bruce-Lockhart is currently Chair of the Local Government Association and has held leader and chair roles in local government, the public and voluntary sectors. He is currently a Trustee of Leeds Castle Foundation, chair of Rochester Cathedral Council and president of Kent Thameside Development Board. Lord Bruce-Lockhart will serve a five year term from 1 August 2007.

Announcing the appointment Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, paid tribute to Sir Neil Cossons for the work he has led during his term as English Heritage Chair.

www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Press_notices/archive_2007/dcms058_07.htm

MLA Appoints New Head of Museum Policy

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) has appointed Hedley Swain as its new Head of Museum Policy, to provide leadership in delivering policies for the long-term transformation of museums services in England.

Hedley was Head of Early History and Collections at the Museum of London. He is a member of the Museums Association Ethics Committee and Convenor of the Human Remains Subject Specialist Network. www.mla.gov.uk/website/news/press_releases/new_head_of_museum_policy

Ministers Discuss the Cultural Olympiad

In a speech in Liverpool on 15 May, **Tessa Jowell**, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, announced that the Legacy Trust, jointly funded by the Big Lottery Fund, DCMS and Arts Council England, will have £40 million to support cultural and sporting engagement across the UK in the run-up to the 2012 Olympic Games. She stated that she believed that this figure would “rise dramatically” with commercial sponsorship and pledged that around 70%, £28 million, of the total would go to cultural provision. There would be one major, five year, arts project and a handful of large grant programmes each year.

Tessa Jowell said that the Cultural Olympiad, which starts after the Beijing Olympics next year, will be “a cultural festival to surpass all others...The best the world has ever seen”.

For the full speech see www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Press_notices/archive_2007/dcms057_07.htm

In an article in the New Statesman, Culture Minister **David Lammy** outlined plans for the 2012 Cultural Olympiad. He said that he wants to “get beyond what is normally thought of as a culture festival...to tap into a real sense of national community”. He mentioned three initiatives:

- Open-air screens and stages where people can watch the Olympics, arts performances and events.
- The International Shakespeare Festival, featuring film, music and the visual arts.
- A nationwide International Museums Exhibition, giving foreign curators the opportunity to reinterpret British national collections.

He added that he hoped 2012 would be an opportunity to “find new and interesting places to mount exhibitions that tell our island story in new ways and to new people”.

The article is available at: www.newstatesman.com/200705140028

Consultation on the Use of Unclaimed Assets

The Government has launched a consultation on the most effective way to distribute unclaimed assets - money in dormant accounts. It proposes that in England unclaimed assets could be used to provide youth services, informed by the Children and Young People's Review, social investment and more sustainable funding for social enterprises, charities and community groups.

The consultation asks where the greatest need for finance and funding for third sector organisations lies and whether the principles outlined are the right ones.

The closing date for responses to the consultation is **9 August 2007**. The consultation document is at: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consultations_and_legislation/unclaimed_assets/consult_unclaimedassets_distribution.cfm

Museums Association Backs Proposal on Valuing Collections

The Museums Association has backed the Accounting Standards Board (ASB) proposal to require museums to put a value on their collections, where possible, with the caveat that many will not find it practicable. Responding to the ASB's consultation document, *Accounting for Heritage Assets*, the MA has said it would prefer a system that either values everything or nothing in a museum's collection over the current hybrid system where only recent purchases are capitalised.

www.museumsassociation.org/13807&_IXNEWS_=23 [To see the full response, please click here](#)

Seminar: Museums and Galleries as Centres of Innovation

National Museums Liverpool Conservation Centre will present their experience of using Public Sector Research Exploitation (PSRE) funding to progress the commercialisation of conservation services and product development at a seminar on 20 June. The seminar, organised by Partnerships UK in association with the Office of Science and Technology, will offer an opportunity to share knowledge, network and explore potential for collaboration. The event is free of charge, but places are limited.

13:00-15:00 20 June 2007 London SW1 Details & booking: www.partnershipsuk.org.uk/commercialisation/CommEvents.asp

Creating Exceptional Experiences for Children and the Family Audience

This book features interviews with ten leading practitioners who have been involved in successful museum projects for children in the UK and USA. www.heritage365.com/comment/new-children-and-museums-book.asp

Demos Report on Culture, Participation and the Web

Following the closure of Culture Online in March 2007, this report explores online engagement with culture to date and asks about future directions and how technology can be used to develop a more democratic culture. www.demos.co.uk/publications/loggingon

New Arts Council Director of Learning and Skills Strategy

Laura Gander-Howe, former Director of Lifelong Learning and Skills for the Learning and Skills Council, has been appointed Director, Learning and Skills Strategy at Arts Council England. Further information at: www.artscouncil.org.uk/pressnews/press_detail.php?rid=10&id=864

Bill Morris to Speak on Heritage

Bill Morris, Director of Culture, Ceremonies and Education for the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, will be the key note speaker at a joint Heritage Link and Heritage of London Trust event on 19 June. Mr Morris will explore how the heritage community can participate in opportunities arising from the 2012 Olympic Games. The event is free and open to all.

13:00-16:30 19 June 2007 Toynbee Hall, London E1 Please register before 12 June.

Information and registration at: www.heritagelink.org.uk/docs/InvitationDraft19Jun.pdf

Inspiring Our Ambitions through Sport, Art, Culture and Place

The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, in partnership with the IDeA Cultural Services Improvement Unit (funded by MLA), has published *Inspiring our ambitions through sport, art, culture and place*, a series of essays by local government figures highlighting the contribution of culture to regeneration, the creative industries and community cohesion. Visit: www.sfi.uk.com/publications.htm

Parliamentary Report

Lords Debate on Heritage and Arts Funding

Speakers in the House of Lords debate on 17 May called Government attention to the effect on heritage and arts of the transfer of Lottery funds to the 2012 London Olympic Games. The additionality principle, that Lottery money should not be used as a substitute for government funding, was raised by several speakers and many sought assurance that no further diversion of Lottery money would be made.

Responding for the Government, Lord Evans stated that the contingency of £2.7bn should meet any further rises in costs for the Olympics and promised more information on the proposed repayment to Lottery distributors after 2012. He drew the Lords' attention to a speech Gordon Brown made at the Brighton festival in which he said: "I do intend to make sure that what happens over the next period is not detrimental to the arts and will not allow the fact that we are having an Olympic Games to come in the way of the arts" and spoke of wanting to give every child and young person access to the arts and a chance to learn about "the great range of culture, from music to drama, and everything else". www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200607/ldhansrd/text/70517-0014.htm

Parliamentary Questions on Heritage and Arts Funding

Questions about the impact of the increased budget for the 2012 Olympics on funding for heritage and the arts were asked in the House of Commons on 21 May. In response to calls for details of how funds would be 'repaid' to lottery distributors following the sale of land after the Olympics, David Lammy, Minister for Culture, declined to give details, but stated: "We have made a pledge, however, that the money should come back to the lottery good causes after it has gone to the Olympic Delivery Authority. We will stand by that pledge". [House of Commons Hansard Debates for 21 May 2007 \(pt 0001\)](#)

MPs pressed the Government for assurances that no further cuts in heritage funding would be made and on a favourable Comprehensive Spending Review settlement for English Heritage. In response David Lammy said "We have seen a huge success in the Open Days across the heritage sector... We want to build on that success and, quite rightly, that is the case that we are making to the Treasury." [House of Commons Hansard Debates for 21 May 2007 \(pt 0002\)](#)

Forthcoming Debates

Paul Holmes MP Liberal Democrat spokesman for Arts and Culture has secured a Westminster Hall Adjournment Debate on 6 June on the impact on arts and heritage of diversion of lottery funding to 2012 London Olympic Games. David Lammy will speak for the Government.

In a House of Lords debate on 7 June, Lord Hastings of Scarisbrick will call attention to the characteristics of a multi-cultural Britain in the light of the legacy of William Wilberforce.

Early Day Motions on Free Entry and on Museums and Galleries Month

Dari Taylor MP has tabled an Early Day Motion welcoming the rise in attendance at North East Hub Museums resulting from the policy of free entry and calling on the Government "to assure the museum-going public in the North East that this programme, which has contributed to the cultural and economic renewal of the region, will continue to receive the full funding it needs".

It has been signed by 32 MPs. edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=33246&SESSION=885

Hugo Swire MP, Conservative Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, tabled an Early Day Motion in support of Museums and Galleries Month, which has been signed by 51 MPs.

edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=33169&SESSION=885

Inquiry, Debate and Questions on Science

Inquiry into Science and Discovery Centre Funding

The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee is holding a short inquiry to look into the funding of science centres, examining their role in public engagement and attracting young people to science. Those wishing to respond are invited to submit written evidence by **11 June 2007**.

www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/science_and_technology_committee/scitech020507.cfm

Grand Committee Debate on Science and Heritage Report

On 12 June at 15.30 a House of Lords Grand Committee will debate the Lords Science and Technology Committee report on Science and Heritage. Lord Davies will speak for the Government.

House of Commons Questions on Science Teaching and Promotion

Dr Iddon MP tabled questions to ministers about financial support for the promotion and teaching of science and engineering. His question and the response from DCMS are available at:

[House of Commons Hansard Written Answers for 18 May 2007 \(pt 0001\)](http://House_of_Commons_Hansard_Written_Answers_for_18_May_2007_(pt_0001))

Public Accounts Committee Report on DCMS Office Costs

The Public Accounts Committee's 23rd Report, published on 8 May, criticises the cost of DCMS London offices and calls on the department to "set standards for office accommodation, benchmark accommodation costs and use between organisations, challenge assumptions about the need to occupy prestigious offices, and hold organisations to account." The Department for Culture, Media and Sport and 24 of its sponsored bodies (excluding national museums and galleries) occupy 95 offices in England, housing 5,000 staff at a cost of over £40 million a year.

www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/committee_of_public_accounts/pacpn070508.cfm

International Issues

2007 North American Art Museums Survey

The annual State of North America's Art Museums Survey, published by The Association of Art Museum Directors, shows that there has been a resurgence of activity in art museums since 2002. Of the 167 museums that responded to the survey, 61% of reported an increase in visitors in 2006 compared to 2005, 58% increased revenues and 37% increased acquisitions. Museums report that they are collaborating to share rising insurance costs, reported by half of respondents, and making greater use of their collections, rather than loans. www.aamd.org/newsroom/documents/2007SNAAMReleaseData_FINAL.pdf

American Association of Museums appoints New President and CEO

Ford W. Bell has been appointed President and CEO of The American Association of Museums, to succeed Edward H. Able, Jr. who retired last year after 20 years of service. Bell has been a trustee of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the James Ford Bell Museum of Natural History, which is named after his grandfather. www.aam-us.org/pressreleases.cfm?mode=list&id=128

New US Museums and Community International Collaborations

The American Association of Museums has announced a new partnership in cultural diplomacy with the US Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. *Museums & Community Collaborations Abroad* is designed to strengthen connections between people in the US and abroad through museum-based exchanges. Additional information at: www.aam-us.org/mcca

Smithsonian Art Museum Directors Respond to Criticism

Leaders of the eight art museums run by the Smithsonian Institution have responded to criticism in an external report detailed in last month's Art Newspaper. Their responses to the report can be read at: www.theartnewspaper.com/article01.asp?id=636

First European Strategy for Culture

The European Commission has adopted a policy statement on the role of culture in a globalising world. It affirms the central role of culture in the process of European integration and proposes a cultural agenda for Europe and for its relations with third countries.

The policy aims to introduce a more structured system of cooperation among Member States and EU institutions on cultural matters and to involve the cultural sector more closely in European affairs, through a new Cultural Forum. ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/communication/comm_en.html

French President Aims to Introduce Free Entry to State Museums

The Art Newspaper reports that newly elected President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, has said that he intends to introduce free entry to state museums. He has also said that he aims to ask EU member countries to reduce import VAT on art shipped within the European Union.

Mr Sarkozy appointed Christine Albanel, a former president of the palace of Versailles and advisor on education and culture to former President Jacques Chirac, as culture minister.

www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/min/index-min.htm

2007 European Museum of the Year Award Winners

The winners of the 2007 European Museum of the Year Awards were announced on 5 May. The Micheletti Award for the most promising technical or industrial museum went to Brunel's ss Great Britain. The Council of Europe Award was awarded to the International Museum of the Reformation in Geneva, Switzerland, the first museum to deal with the Reformation in Europe. The German Emigration Centre in Bremerhaven, which tells the story of people who left Germany for the New World, won the 2007 European Museum of the Year Award. www.europeanmuseumforum.org

Vienna Museum to Receive Batliner Collection of Modern Art

The Art Newspaper reports that the Albertina, Vienna, is to receive the Batliner collection of modern art, which includes 500 major paintings ranging from Impressionism to contemporary. The works will be "permanently deposited" at the Albertina, for an initial loan of ten years. The Batliner family will be able to borrow works for up to two years and to sell a single work if they face financial difficulty. The loan can be withdrawn if, following the departure of the current director Dr Schröder, the Batliners are dissatisfied with his successor. www.theartnewspaper.com/article01.asp?id=647

www.albertina.at/cms/upload/presse/texte/2007/batliner_forberg/Albertina_Pressemappe_D.pdf

Looking for Solutions to the Problems of Success

Eric Gibson, Leisure and Arts Features Editor of The Wall Street Journal, has called on museums that have "won the battle for the public's interest and enthusiasm" to take steps to "cure the Mona Lisa syndrome" - where it is impossible to view great works of art because of crowds - and improve visitors' experience of art. He writes: "If the ideal of a democratic culture is to allow the largest number of people access to the greatest number of cultural treasures, then by any measure the ideal has been fulfilled beyond anyone's wildest imaginings." but "...it should also matter what the experience of the art is like". The author cites the Tower of London's use of a slow moving walkway, which allows visitors a clear view of the Crown Jewels, as one way of addressing the issue. opinionjournal.com/taste/?id=110009998

Forthcoming NMDC Meetings

Shared services project meeting

Thursday 7 June, 10.30am, Science Museum

UK Affairs Committee

Wednesday 13 June, 2pm, Manchester Art Gallery

NMDC Meeting

Friday 13 July, 11am, V&A

HR Forum

Friday 8 June, 11am, Royal Naval Museum

PR Group

Thursday 12 July, 11am, Imperial War Museum

Spoliation Advisory Committee

Thursday 19 July, 4.30pm, Tate Britain

If you have any comments on the NMDC Newsletter or would like to contribute to a future edition, please email the Editor, Zoë Nasatyr, at news@nationalmuseums.org.uk

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