

**Coventry Transport Museum –  
One of Four Finalists for Gulbenkian Prize for Museum  
of the Year**

**The dust and damp of the coalface, the stench of a herring curing factory, the sounds of the steam age and the roar of the fastest car in the world are all part of the museum experience of the four Gulbenkian finalists.**



Britain's industrial heritage and economic regeneration are the dominating themes for this year's Gulbenkian Prize for Museum of the Year, the UK's largest single arts prize of £100,000. All are superb examples of museums listening to and working with their local communities. In every case, there is genuine local involvement and remarkable collaboration.

**The four finalists are:**

Big Pit, National Mining Museum of Wales, Coventry Transport Museum, Time and Tide, Museum of Great Yarmouth Life, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk Locomotion: The National Railway Museum at Shildon, Co Durham. The four finalists came from a shortlist of ten which included Compton Verney in Warwickshire, the National Trust's Back to Backs in Birmingham.

**Coventry Transport Museum**

The £7.5 million task of revitalising the museum was completed in March 2004. The most dramatic change has been the creation of a brand new frontage for the Museum, facing out on to the City's new Millennium Place.



Four new galleries have been added to existing displays and include an introduction to Coventry's unique role in transport history, which pays tribute to the people who worked in the industry. Two particularly popular exhibits are the World Land Speed Record Cars, Thrust SSC and Thrust2.

**The redevelopment has resulted in a much more integrated and cohesive experience for visitors. Residents, the museum says, who hadn't set foot in the museum have been drawn in by its stronger outward presence; in the first six months since the relaunch, the Museum received over 180,000 visitors, beating all targets and doubling previous visitor figures.**

All four projects have received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The winner will be announced during Museums and Galleries Month on **Thursday May 26<sup>th</sup>** at the Royal Institution of British Architects.

For more information please visit: [www.thegulbenkianprize.org.uk](http://www.thegulbenkianprize.org.uk)

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**Please Note:** The full meanings of all acronyms used within this newsletter can be found in the '**Glossary of Acronyms**' box on the back page.

## Collections and Stewardship

### Museums Registration Scheme

**Congratulations to Roman Alcester on recently achieving Full Registration.**

**Roman Alcester** is an exciting new exhibition interpreting and displaying objects from Alcester's Roman past. Alcester is one of the most investigated Roman small towns in the country, with over 100 archaeological digs in the last 80 years. Recent excavations have revealed much about the area of the Roman town which would have been outside the boundary wall built in the 3rd century AD. The new Roman Alcester exhibition means that many important objects can be seen back in the town where they were first discovered.

### Heritage Protection Review: changes to the listing system in April 2005

DCMS and English Heritage (EH) are currently taking forward proposals for the comprehensive reform of the heritage protection system in England and Wales. The main element of these reforms will be the unification of the current systems of listing, scheduling and registering for historic sites into a single designation regime, complemented by a new, unified 'heritage consent' and including the scope for statutory management agreements for complex sites.

**Immediate changes made from April 2005 are:**

Administration of the listing system will now be through EH; a new notification system for the owners in listing cases; new consultation arrangements for owners and Local Planning Authorities; better information for the owners of listed buildings; a new formal review process for listing decisions.

For more information and copies of their leaflet are available from: [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk) or [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk) EH Tel: 0870 333 1181 Email: [customers@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:customers@english-heritage.org.uk)

### National Archaeology Week Sat 16 – Sun 24 July 2005

All applications are welcome for this year's National Archaeology Week. NAD 2004 was a great success where 232 venues participated which attracted over 100,000 visitors. It is an excellent opportunity to promote your group, organisation, museum or heritage site.

Typical activities for the week are themed days, tours, guided walks, craft demonstrations, public talks/lectures, and finds/identification days. See the variety of last year's events by visiting: [www.britarch.ac.uk/nads](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/nads)

For more information and booking form email: [naw@britarch.ac.uk](mailto:naw@britarch.ac.uk)

All forms must be returned by 13 May 2005 to be included in the printed listing of events.

### "Back to the Futures Together"

Following a discussion at a Libraries Forum meeting last year, MLA West Midlands ran a small workshop on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2005 looking at collection issues for the libraries domain. This was an opportunity to revisit the Futures Together work completed 5 years ago and the various recommendations that were made at that time. Present were invited representatives from different kinds of public library service, higher education libraries, cathedral libraries and special libraries. Providing the input were MLA Council and MLA West Midlands staff along with Jane Arthur from the WM Museums Designation Group. Four main themes were explored together:

- The extension of designation to libraries and archives – this is an area where MLA West Midlands staff have already been providing pre-application advice and will be participating in the England-wide assessment process
- The need to improve standards of care for library special collections – this is an area where we are keen to ensure that all libraries holding special collections have access to the support and advice they need
- Being aware of funding opportunities – this links to MLA West Midlands' wider work on advising museums, libraries and archives on funding opportunities including appropriate library bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund
- Marketing library collections through Cornucopia or similar portals – this links to the wider implementation of INSPIRE in the region as well as building the cross-domain collection approach pioneered in the WM through Crossroads

There was some lively debate about "what is a library collection" and how this differs from subject strengths within library stocks. There was also a very positive invitation from the WM Museums Designation Group to open up their group to any WM archives and libraries with designated collections after announcements are made in September.

For MLA West Midlands this was a useful day and we hope to use our greater understanding of library

special collection issues to inform the 2005-6 Business Plan.

## Celebrating Johnson's Dictionary – 1755-2005

**Samuel Johnson is one of the most important historical figures in the history of England and the English language. Born in Lichfield on the 18th September 1709, Johnson wrote what is perhaps his most famous work in 1755, 'A Dictionary of the English Language' the first of it's kind and the basis for later dictionaries, and an invaluable crib for us all whether schoolchildren or grown-up.**

Johnson's birthplace is now The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum. Important Johnson Collections can also be found at Birmingham Central Library.

<http://www.lichfield.gov.uk/simuseum/>

[www.birmingham.gov.uk](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk)

Various activities will take place during 2005 to celebrate Johnson's Dictionary and the anniversary provides the perfect opportunity to explore our language and the power of words, whether written or verbal, read or sung.

**Associated events for 250th anniversary at the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum and Lichfield Heritage Centre are as follows:**

### 6th April

**Pre-publication book launch event at the museum for Dr Johnson's Dictionary: The Extraordinary Story of the Book that Changed the World** by Henry Hitchings. 6.30-8pm. Free admission.

**15th April** (anniversary of the first publication of Johnson's Dictionary)

**Launch of Boobies and Blockheads tours** (new for 2005)

2 -3.30pm followed by refreshments

### 8th July to 4th September

#### **Dr Johnson and the Word Detectives**

A temporary exhibition on the story of Johnson's Dictionary and the work of the Dictionary makers.

### 24th September 2005

**Johnson Society Annual Supper.** Tickets by application to the Johnson Society of Lichfield.

### **Boobies and Blockheads Tours: May - Sept**

A new guided tour celebrating the words, wit and wisdom of one of Lichfield's most famous sons, Dr Samuel Johnson.

**2nd May** 2-3.30pm

**13th July** 2-3.30pm (Lichfield Arts Festival)

**16th July** 2-3.30pm (Lichfield Arts Festival)

**18th September** 2-3.30pm (Johnson's 296th birthday!)

For full details and ticket prices please visit:

[www.lichfield.gov.uk/simuseum](http://www.lichfield.gov.uk/simuseum)

email: [simuseum@lichfield.gov.uk](mailto:simuseum@lichfield.gov.uk)

**The Royal Mint has also commissioned a commemorative 50p coin - released this April!**

## Learning & Access

### Adults Learners' Week event in Victoria Square on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2005

Birmingham Adult Education Service are very enthusiastic to get partners involved from museums, libraries and archives in Birmingham for this event. They see the involvement of the cultural sector as being a crucial in making the event a success.

The events will be themed around celebrating the cultural diversity of Birmingham and also has sub-themes around language and literacy, numeric and health. The organisers would like see museums, libraries and archives putting on activities in Victoria Square on the day. A small amount of funding (grants of up to £300 each) has been made available to support organisations with exciting proposals who would otherwise struggle to cover costs. Further details of how to apply for these grants have not yet been made available, but can be forwarded to any interested organisations as they become available.

If any organisations would like to get involved or would like further information about the event, please contact Elizabeth Roberts, Learning Development Officer via email:

[elizabeth.roberts@mlawestmidlands.org.uk](mailto:elizabeth.roberts@mlawestmidlands.org.uk)

### Libraries Change Lives Award 20 April 2005

**Benjamin Zephaniah to present the 2005 Libraries Change Lives Award at this year's Library + information Show on Wed 20 April 2005 at The Pavilion, NEC, Birmingham.** This is the 13th year of the national award that recognises innovative and exciting work in libraries and their communities. Benjamin Zephaniah is one of the most popular poets and writers in the country. His first collection of poetry *Pen Rhythm* was published 1980. His work includes writing for children/teenagers and he has produced several music recordings and written plays for stage, TV and radio.

The winning project receives a trophy and £4,000 prize money. The two runners-up both receive a cheque for £1,000. The award is sponsored by the Library + information Show, recently acquired by VNU Exhibitions Europe. It is organised and administered by CILIP and its Community Service Group.

For more information please visit: [www.lishow.co.uk](http://www.lishow.co.uk)

### 30 Places at Top UK Museums for South African Trainees

Up to 30 training places at some of the UK's top museums are to be offered to young South African curators, Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell announced

today. They will help develop management and specialist curatorial skills to preserve the country's priceless heritage.

The places – each of up to six months and costing £300,000 over the next three years – will be paid for by the DCMS, under a unique partnership with the South African Department of Arts and Culture.

Four of the UK's finest museums – the British Museum, The Natural History Museum, The Museum of London and The Horniman Museum in London – have already agreed to provide placements, in most cases for six months.

This decision follows Tessa Jowell's visit to South Africa last summer when she met the country's Culture Minister, Pallo Jordan, to explore how the two nations could work together in the arts field.

**Tessa Jowell, who is visiting South Africa at the moment said: "People working in the UK's museums have a world-class reputation thanks to their skill and expertise. This is a chance for some of that to be passed on to South Africa, to help its museums develop the highest standards as they continue the task of recording and preserving their heritage.**

**"This is a multi-year programme, which I want to see establishing sustainable cultural ties between our countries."**

British Museum Director Neil MacGregor added: *"The British Museum is delighted to participate in this training programme, which highlights the importance of cross-cultural exchanges in promoting international understanding and co-operation. Curatorial exchanges are already underway between the British Museum and museums in Sudan, Egypt, Kenya and Ethiopia, and we look forward to working with our colleagues from South Africa in the near future."*

Press Enquiries: 020 7211 6276

Out of hours telephone pager no: 07699 751153

Public Enquiries: 020 7211 6270

[http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/press\\_notices/archive\\_2005/dcms031\\_05.htm](http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/press_notices/archive_2005/dcms031_05.htm)

## **13 Local Authorities in England to become 'Cultural Pathfinders'**

**Thirteen local authorities have been chosen by the Government to be Cultural Pathfinders, showing how culture and sport can help deliver Government priorities across public life.**

The Government's social, environmental and economic agenda is to be promoted through cultural initiatives at local level.

Government News Network, 18 February

<http://www.gnn.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=146758&NewsAreaID=2>

## **Festival of Muslim Cultures: UK 2006**

**This Festival will be creating a network of partnerships and aiming for long-term outcomes to raise awareness, and celebrate traditional and contemporary Muslim cultures. The patron is HRH the Prince of Wales.** Highlights of the Festival include: public discussion of contemporary issues; muslim films; poetry readings, exhibitions, music and art; food, crafts and fashion; and creation of an Islamic peace garden.

The Festival is at the early planning stage. One area that could be developed with Regional Agencies is the involvement of libraries in the programme of poetry reading; which will involve welcoming Muslim poets from the UK and abroad. These readings are envisaged to be given in a mother-tongue language and translated into English.

If you have any ideas for taking this unique opportunity forward, please contact Laura Lang, International Policy Adviser [laura.lang@mia.gov.uk](mailto:laura.lang@mia.gov.uk) or Isabel Carlisle, Festival Director at [info@muslimcultures.org](mailto:info@muslimcultures.org) or Tel: 020 7609 3734 or 020 7730 4123,

## **Workforce Development**

### **Volunteers within Libraries**

**There is a growing recognition of the contribution that volunteers can make to core objectives such as community involvement, social inclusion and citizenship.** Despite this recognition however, there still appears to be a skills gap in relation to the management of volunteers, and insufficient recognition of the significant legal implications of using volunteers. One of the biggest differences affecting the management of staff and volunteers is motivation. Volunteers need to be made to feel part of the organisation.

With a growing culture of volunteering in libraries and significant government initiatives and funding to promote volunteering in general, there is tremendous scope for service development and enhancing the relevance of library services to local communities.

**MLA West Midlands have their own Volunteers Toolkit which is available on our website. Please note that although it is for museums this toolkit can easily be adapted for both libraries and archives. Please visit:**

<http://www.mlwestmidlands.org.uk/priorities/workforcedevelopment/volunteers/>

## Training Bursary's

Marie Fowler was successful in applying for a £300,000 bursary to attend the ICOM Conference on Intangible Heritage in Korea. Below is a report by Marie to tell us about her experience.

***If you are interested in applying for this Bursary Scheme please see enclosed Bursary Form.***



### ICOM triennial conference: Museums and Intangible Heritage

**What are museums doing and what should they do to preserve intangible cultural heritage?**



**Over 1000 delegates from 100 countries attended the ICOM triennial conference in Seoul where these questions among others were raised.** Jacques Perot (retiring president of ICOM) emphasised that “intangible heritage must survive” and it is up to the museum community to enable this. Mrs Noriko Aikawa (UNESCO representative) discussed how museums have started looking at intangible heritage and that it is “*made up of processes and practices...it is more vulnerable than tangible heritage...often it depends on oral transmission*”.

Should it be a museum's role to collect, document, interpret and exhibit intangible aspects of our culture? In 2003, UNESCO voted for a new International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Dr Richard Kurin's paper discussed whether museums should be the “primary agencies” in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage” and in fact whether they wanted to. It was highlighted that intangible heritage was the social practice itself and that once it was documented in whatever media, then it took on tangible form.

#### Living Human Treasures

The system of designating Living Human Treasures began in Korea in the 1960s and involves recognising a person who has a particular skill or knowledge that is important to national or regional intangible cultural heritage. The person is designated a ‘Living Human Treasure’ and is given financial support to enable them to pass on their skill or knowledge to others. The National Museum of Korea had an exhibition of traditional craft, *Korean Traditional Knots – Aesthetics of Balance and Symmetry*, produced by one of the Living Human Treasures, Kim Hee-Jin. After a lifetime of acquiring her skills, Kim Hee-Jin was given the title of Master of Important Intangible Cultural Property.

***“The term ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ was defined as music, dance, drama, games, ceremonies, martial arts and other related arts and crafts, as well as the production of techniques for food and other kinds of daily needs that historically, academically and artistically had great value, including the products that displayed local colour and intangible culture.”***

Dawnhee Yim  
ICOM 2004 Seoul conference proceedings

What about our own intangible heritage in the UK? If you were to display and interpret an intangible aspect of your own culture, what would you show? If you were to display and interpret football, would you explain football to someone (the museum visitor) by showing them a ball or taking them to a match? There is more to football than just the spherical object you kick about. There are the songs, the chanting, the crowd, the atmosphere, the costume (players and fans), inflatable bananas, the offside rule. Football songs can be found recorded on some club websites, but in reality at a match, the language is more passionate and obscene. Do you censor aspects of intangible cultural heritage, because some people in society will find them offensive? This perhaps raises questions about if we are to encourage the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, how are we selecting what is preserved?

**There are intangible elements that need to be understood to fully appreciate the significance of the tangible object.** If you record the intangible culture connected to the object in documentation, then you can improve its interpretation to future generations. Perhaps more time needs to be given to documenting so that intangible aspects of objects are not lost and consideration be given to how, and whether museums should, preserve and keep alive our intangible heritage.



New National Museum of Korea due to open in 2005



Gyeongbokgung Palace grounds, Seoul

Report and photographs by Marie Fowler, Documentation Officer, Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery

## Funded training tailored to your organisation

**Employer Training Pilots** offer your organisation an ideal opportunity to train your staff to achieve work relevant, nationally recognised qualifications.

Schemes are currently running in **Shropshire, the Black Country and Birmingham and Solihull** offering local employer's funded, flexible training tailored to your organisation, and delivered during working hours. Eligible staff can undertake an NVQ level 2 in a subject relevant to their job role. A wide range of vocational areas are available, from *Customer Service* and *Retail*, through to *Heritage Care and Visitors Services* and *Library Services*.

In addition to the NVQ (or as a stand-alone course), staff can work towards a National Literacy or Numeracy qualification (equivalent to a GCSE grade C). These programmes of study – called **Essential Skills for Business** - can be delivered in a vocational context, linking the underpinning skills to real work situations. Ultimately this could result in improvements in general business communication, accuracy of work and customer service.

**Employer Training Pilots** offer a choice of local colleges and providers; funded, flexible training – usually on site; training is delivered during works time; Information, advice and guidance throughout; a contribution towards wage costs for small and medium sized businesses

**Who can take part?** Companies located within a pilot area; employees aged 19+; employees who do not already hold a level 2 qualification or equivalent (e.g. 5 GCSE's A-C) can undertake an NVQ Level 2. For Essential Skills eligibility conditions can be more flexible.

For more information contact Angela Edwards on 0121 345 4621 or [angela.edwards@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:angela.edwards@lsc.gov.uk)

## Funding



### Increased £5 million for Heroes Return and Home Front Recall schemes

The Heroes Return and Home Front Recall schemes are each receiving an additional £5 million from the Big Lottery Fund in 'good cause's money' for commemoration trips

and events marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WW2.

**Heroes Return** – funds WW2 veterans, their wives/husbands, widows/widowers and, where required, their present day carers to visit the overseas areas where the veterans saw active service. It also

helps to give young people a better understanding of the efforts and sacrifices made by veterans. Since the scheme was launched it has awarded more than 2,800 grants to people in the West Midlands.

**Home Front Recall** – provides grants for regional and local projects across the UK in 2004-05 that commemorate the events of WW2 and the contributions of different groups in society. It includes special community days; reunions and exhibitions; recordings of the experiences of those who lived through the war; plays and pieces of creative artwork.

**The deadline for veterans, widows and widowers to apply for Heroes Return grants has been extended by two months to May 31 2005.**

For more information visit: [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)  
Or telephone: 0845 410 20 30

**Their Past Your Future** - a £10 million education scheme that gives young people the opportunity to learn first-hand about wartime Britain. School pupils will be keeping the memories alive by documenting the



information and research gathered through this programme in many forms such as websites and education packs for other schools and wider communities.

Grants awarded in the West Midlands so far are:

**Birmingham** - Hidden Histories: the role played by Birmingham in WW1. **£38,079**

**Coventry** - Intergeneration Resources Project. **£11,563**

**Dudley** - The Dig For Victory Project. **£11,563**

**Herefordshire** - Wartime Herefordshire – Learning From the Past. **£5,419**

**Solihull** – Their Past, Our Future. **£8,597**

**Staffordshire** – Their Past, Your Future scheme. **£33,608**

**Stoke-on-Trent** – Their Past Your Future Project. **£8,181**

**Wolverhampton** – Bilston – Let Us Go Forward Together. **£9,124**

**Worcestershire** – Their Past Your Future Project. **£22,232**

Photographs of Wylde Green Primary School pupils and a local Veteran in the Back to Backs Birmingham - Courtesy of Big Lottery.

For more information visit: [www.thierpast-yourfuture.org.uk](http://www.thierpast-yourfuture.org.uk)

## ICT Issues and E Society

### Designing Libraries Database expands

A pilot website which give local authorities, planners, architects, interior designers and library specialists an insight into the best new, extended and refurbished public library buildings has been granted funds by MLA Council to go live.

There are currently 32 library projects on the website. The expanded database includes good examples of library design, with fuller descriptions and links to key information, both in UK and overseas, from 1995 to the present. Users can search by authority, county or size and type of library.

The project is led by CILIP as part of Framework for the Future, of which a key element is the need to refresh library spaces so they continue to be relevant and useful in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

[www.designinglibraries.org.uk](http://www.designinglibraries.org.uk)

## National Archives receives Website Award

**The National Archives has received the Internet Crystal Award from the Plain English Campaign for their newly designed web site.** The website was praised for its ease of use, clarity of design, excellent hints for new users and plain English. The Plain English Campaign is an independent pressure group fighting for public information to be written in plain English. It's crystal Mark is a logo showing that the website has passed rigorous testing.

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/internetcrystalmark.html>

## Web Site Visionary Design Awards

The National Library for the Blind (NLB) has recently announced its Visionary Design Awards Winners for 2004. The NLB provides guidance on how to make web sites accessible for blind and partially sighted people. The Visionary Design Awards, supported by Barclay's Community Investment programme, encourage website publishers and designers to consider access technology such as magnification, text to speech and refreshable Braille when they are designing their sites.

<http://visdesign.nlbuk.org/>

## Xrefer and A&C Black team up for Who's Who Online

**The Who's Who 2005 and the full Who Was Who 1897-2004 are now available to search and browse on the xreferplus Specialist Reference platform.**

Institutions whose libraries purchase access to Who's Who 2005 online via xrefer will enable their users to search and browse for anyone whose biography has been included in the latest edition from the 10 volume archive. They contain details of over 100,000 deceased biographees which are no longer available to purchase in print in full.

[www.xrefer.com/ww2005](http://www.xrefer.com/ww2005)

## Looking for Images and Inspiration?

British Library Images Online offers you instant access to thousands of the greatest images from the British Library's historic worldwide collections which include manuscripts, rare books, music scores and maps spanning almost 3000 years.

Images include digital images of drawings, illustrations, paintings and photographs and if you don't see what you are looking on Images Online for we offer Research Services to help you identify the images you need.

Images for purchase can be supplied in digital, transparency or printed format.

Visit us at [www.imagesonline.bl.uk](http://www.imagesonline.bl.uk), call 020 7412 7614 or email [imagesonline@bl.uk](mailto:imagesonline@bl.uk)

## Good Practice Guide - cultural heritage Web resources and service

**The NOF-digitise programme provided lottery funding to support the digitisation and development of 150 Web sites offering access to cultural heritage resources.**

The resources can be accessed from the EnrichUK portal available at <http://www.enrichuk.net/> Technical support for the projects was provided by UKOLN and AHDS, through the NOF-digitise Technical Advisory Service (NOF-TAS), working closely with MLA who provided expert advice to the Big Lottery Fund.

In order to ensure that the resources and experiences are not lost UKOLN are launching a Web site which offers a range of advice to organisations involved in similar development activities. The resources are based on those developed for the NOF-TAS service, and will be complemented with others based on experiences gained in supporting similar work within the cultural heritage and higher and further education sectors.

They intend to continue to maintain and develop these resources in order to support new digital library development work across the sector.

The resources, which are known as the Good Practice Guide, are available at <http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/interop-focus/gpg/>

## Directory of West Midlands newspapers online

Details of all known newspaper titles in the West Midlands region (including Shropshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire) are now available online, together with existing information on titles published in London and the South-East.

Covering some 1100 West Midlands titles dating back to the 18th century, it is possible to search by title,

place and date of publication and find out where copies of titles are held.

The digitisation of this information, previously available only as a printed directory, has been made possible as a result of funding from the British Library and the Laser Foundation to Solihull MBC (acting as a lead on behalf of the Newsplan West Midlands Implementation Committee).

[www.newsplan.co.uk](http://www.newsplan.co.uk)

## Ulverscroft Foundation Supports Gateway Project for Visually Impaired

The Ulverscroft Foundation is delighted to announce that it has given a grant of £50,000 to set up a project to improve services for the two million blind and partially sighted people in the UK. The Gateway project is spearheaded by a Joint Working Group of the Society of Chief Librarians and Share the Vision established in May 2003 to determine how all public libraries and these voluntary sector agencies can work together to provide better services for visually impaired people.

This project seeks to build on existing collaborative work most notably the establishment of Revealweb: the national database of resources in accessible formats. Revealweb is jointly managed by the National Library for the Blind and RNIB, is funded by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, and currently provides details of the publications of over eighty-five different voluntary sector agencies.

For more information: [foundation@ulverscroft.co.uk](mailto:foundation@ulverscroft.co.uk)

## Sea Britain 2005

### Staffordshire At Sea

As part of the national Sea Britain 2005 campaign, the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service will be presenting an online exhibition entitled 'Staffordshire At Sea'.

This exhibition will focus on the work of five men who made significant contributions to England's maritime history between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, whose activities are documented in some of the family and estate collections held by the Staffordshire County Record Office. These are:

- Sir John Leveson (1555-1615), Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, who was responsible for coastal defences during the Spanish Armada.
- George Legge, Baron Dartmouth (c1647-1691), Governor of Portsmouth and Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance, who was responsible for the defence of Portsmouth and the evacuation of Tangier.

- Admiral George Anson (1697-1762), naval officer and politician, who circumnavigated the world, (1740-1744).
- Richard Drakeford (c1709-1757), a ship's purser who later became heavily involved in the administration of prize money.
- John Jervis, Earl St. Vincent (1735-1823) a contemporary of Nelson, who defeated the French at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent, in February 1797.

The exhibition is being produced in cooperation with the Staffordshire Pasttrack, and we hope to have the exhibition on-line by June 2005.

Please contact Joanne Evans for further information or with any queries: tel: 01782 278453; Email: [joanne.evans@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.evans@staffordshire.gov.uk)

## MLA West Midlands

### Staff Announcements



**After 49 years of working in the library sector we say goodbye to Pat Bingham, Contracts Support Assistant.**

Pat first started her career in 1956 when she worked at Aston Library and Birchfield Library. In 1958 she got a post at RLB (Regional Library Bureau) which was later renamed West Midlands Regional Library Bureau. RLB moved into the Central Library in the July of 1973 and here Pat came to work for the next 29 years until the organisation (now MLA West Midlands) merged and moved premises in 2002. She worked through the subsequent changes of RLB becoming WMRLS (West Midlands Regional Library System), then TLP-WM (The Libraries Partnership – West Midlands), and then MLA West Midlands. **We wish her all the best on her retirement.**

#### New appointed staff:

**Laura Robinson** has joined MLA West Midlands as **Cultural Entitlement Officer**. Laura was previously Marketing and Visitor Service Manager for Castle Bromwich Hall & Garden Trust.

**Scott Mitchell** has joined Laura as **Cultural Entitlement Admin Support** on a part time basis. Scott is also a freelance Graphic Designer.

**Rowan Carr** has joined MLA West Midlands as **Access & Social Inclusion Development Officer** on a part time basis. His current experience is as a Vulnerable & Excluded Communities First Aid Training & Development Coordinator. This includes identifying the social communities in order to create and maintain networks with regards to providing first aid services to socially excluded communities.



### **Pay & Power Project Assistants staff announcements:**

**Ivar Romo** has completed the Percy Stallard collection and is now working at Dudley Archives on the records of N Hingley & Sons Ltd - 19<sup>th</sup> Century chair and anchor manufacturers and iron masters. The company produced the anchor for the Titanic.

**Helen Fisher** left the project on 11 March to join the Connecting Histories project at Birmingham City Archives.

**Daisy Cunynghame** who joined the project in August 2004 has completed a catalogue for Warwickshire County Records Office and is currently working on a collection for Worcestershire Records Office while based at Warwickshire County Records Office.

**Andrew MacLead** joined at the end of January and is based at the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick for 12 months, and then at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office for 13 months.

**Sarah Edwards** will be joining the project at the end of April. She will be based at Birmingham City Archives for 13 months, Walsall Local History Centre for 6 months and then the Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives for 6 months.

**For more information on the project please see enclose flyer.**

### **Regional Cultural Research Network Scoping and Options Study**

In the autumn of 2004 West Midlands Life and MLA West Midlands appointed a consultant to identify the most appropriate option for the development of an integrated cultural research and data capability for the West Midlands Region.

The fieldwork involved seeking the views of people who produced, purchased, or acted as brokers of cultural research in the region. Individuals with expertise and knowledge of cultural research and data collection in other regions were also interviewed.

The results of the study revealed that the West Midlands share the same challenges as other regions in relation to cultural research and data collection. However it is lagging well behind other regions in its response to these challenges.

Respondents within the region reported that they wanted an option that would build on the strengths and overcome the weaknesses of cultural research in the region.

The regional interviewees identified priority cultural research issues and were broadly supportive of options developed in other regions.

The report concludes that the West Midlands needs to consider issues around cross-sector, cross-agency and geographic integration when deciding on new approaches to cultural research. It should also

acknowledge the prevailing regional attitudes towards cultural research and readiness of the cultural sector to work together collaboratively.

The full report is now available at:

[http://www.mlwestmidlands.org.uk/priorities/research\\_anddevelopment/projects/index.asp?id=292,280,51,293](http://www.mlwestmidlands.org.uk/priorities/research_anddevelopment/projects/index.asp?id=292,280,51,293)

### **Digital Preservation Preparedness and Needs Assessment**

A small sample of museums, libraries and archives in the West Midlands region recently took part in a digital preservation survey. The survey was funded by MLA Council and the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) and supported by MLA West Midlands. The aim of the survey was to inform long-term digital preservation strategic planning in the UK, with particular reference to the needs of local and / or regional organisations. The objectives were to assess existing provision in such organisations of long-term preservation management facilities for digital resources. In particular to discover what volumes and formats of digital materials they hold; what provision exists for their longer term management; how many of them may be vulnerable to loss; and what support would most help these organisations to manage their digitised materials long-term.

The final report will be published shortly but interim results were presented at a meeting in Birmingham 18 March 2005 and can be found at:

<http://www.mlwestmidlands.org.uk/priorities/esociety/projects/>

### **Sub-Regional Education Networks**

**MLA West Midlands are facilitating the creation of sub-regional cross domain networks for education officers.** The intention is to provide a forum for cultural educators to share initiatives, expertise, problems and practices with each other, resulting in partnerships and support systems. The aim of these networks is to further facilitate and encourage creative education programmes for school-aged children in line with the Cultural Entitlement agenda.

There will be seven sub-regional networks: Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, the Black Country and Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull. The inaugural meetings will be organised by MLA West Midlands for early summer and will then occur quarterly and managed within the sub-region. They are open to all colleagues who are involved with learning in their organisations.

For further information or to register, please contact:  
Laura Robinson, Cultural Entitlement Officer at MLA  
West Midlands. Tel: 0121 631 5811  
Email: [laura.robinson@mlawestmidlands.org.uk](mailto:laura.robinson@mlawestmidlands.org.uk)

## MLA Council

### MLA launches Disability Experts database

A new online tool to help organisations meet their disability access needs provides online access to a database of over 200 disability trainers, auditors and consultants who have an interest or experience in working with museums, galleries, libraries and archives. **Disability Experts** is the first database of its kind in the cultural sector – and the latest step towards reducing access barriers in our heritage organisations.

The database is rich in information to help heritage organisations find support and advice on all disability issues; available at the touch of a button. The listings service gives contact information for the disability experts as well as details of professional experience, type of work undertaken and previous experience. The database can be searched by keyword, region, organisation and project type.

Please visit: <http://disabilitydatabase.mla.gov.uk/>

### Success of Renaissance Scheme Spurs Extension to Museums across England

Museums across the length and breadth of England will be extending and enriching their services as a result of new long-term funding opportunities for the *Renaissance in the Regions* programme managed MLA.

Back in 2002, MLA launched a Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) funded programme worth £30m a year to transform museums in England's regions. The North East, South West and West Midlands received significant levels of Renaissance in the Regions funding and the result has been a resounding success. A thirty percent increase in museum visits by school children has been matched by major improvements in collections display and care resulting in significant increases in the loan of collections from the national museums.

DCMS has now allocated additional funding to bring the long-term investment up to £45 million by 2008. In the light of the successes achieved by the pilot

regions, MLA's Board has agreed that this new funding should be used to raise consistently levels of investment in services in the remaining six English regions.

[www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)

## Events

**E – Learning Projects in Adult and Community Learning. 14 April - Bristol. 21 April - Leeds. FREE.**

This conference, supported by the Learning Skills Council will showcase innovative e-learning projects funded by TrEACL (Technology to enhance learning in ACL) with a stand display from each project.

For more information visit:

<http://www.niace.or.uk/Conferences/Treacl.htm>

Email: [gurjit.kaur@niace.org.uk](mailto:gurjit.kaur@niace.org.uk)

### Box of Acronyms:

<b>CILIP</b>	...	Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals
<b>DCMS</b>	...	Department for Culture, Media & Sport
<b>DfES</b>	...	Department for Education and Skills
<b>EH</b>	...	English Heritage
<b>NIACE</b>	...	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
<b>2wm</b>	...	West Midlands Support Website

Our newsletters, past and current issues can now be viewed via our website at:

<http://www.mlawestmidlands.org.uk/news/mlawestmidlandsnewsletterinsight/>

### MLA West Midlands

Floor 2, Grosvenor House,  
14 Bennetts Hill

Birmingham B2 5RS

Tel: 0121 631 5800 / Fax: 0121 631 5823

Email: [info@mlawestmidlands.org.uk](mailto:info@mlawestmidlands.org.uk)

Website: [www.mlawestmidlands.org.uk](http://www.mlawestmidlands.org.uk)



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