

cultural volunteer ©

issue 11 – NOVEMBER 2004

WELCOME!

cultural volunteer (cv) is a free e-news and information service for arts management professionals. **cv** is published six times a year and comes to you from Lynn Blackadder, arts management consultant, www.lynnblackadder.com. You can choose to read **cv** in email or as a Word attachment. I hope you enjoy **cv**, but if you don't wish to receive future issues, please return this email typing 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

In this issue **cv** looks at **Friends organisations and how to manage them**, and we'll be hearing about volunteering from **cv subscriber, Streetwise Opera**, and the forthcoming **Year of the Volunteer 2005**.

WHY YOU SHOULD READ **cv** ...

cv is for arts management professionals who currently involve volunteers in their organisations, and for those who don't, but would like to find out more about volunteers.

cv aims to raise awareness of the resource cultural volunteers represent, and how to utilise it effectively.

cv actively campaigns for the recognition and progression of volunteers working in arts organisations.

cv can help you to better understand the nature of volunteering and how it relates to your organisation.

cv will regularly bring to your attention useful information, resources and commentary on volunteering in the cultural sector. Experts on volunteer management will feature, and we will explore topics raised by you in future issues.

FEATURE: 'Friends will be Friends, right till the end' – Lynn Blackadder on Friends organisations and how to manage them before they manage you

Friends and volunteers

If memory serves, about seven years ago the British Association of Friends of Museums (BAFM) said – in the preface to their excellent Volunteer Management Handbook – that there was a blurred line between Friends and volunteers. Both had the same aim, that of supporting an organisation they had an affinity with, so it wasn't necessary to make a distinction between the two. BAFM, I think, were probably referring to Friends who also volunteer. As many **cv** readers will have both Friends and other volunteers, I thought it would be useful to look at the roles of the two groups, and why it's important not to confuse them, focusing on the often tricky business of managing Friends who also volunteer.

Time is money

The traditional model is that Friends give their money, whilst volunteers give their time. Of course, many Friends are volunteers too, but not all volunteers will be Friends. Is this distinction important? I think confusing the two can be problematic. First and foremost, Friends pay an annual subscription to support the organisation, for which they receive certain benefits – for example, monthly magazines, private views or performances, or reduced entry to shows. If they also volunteer, giving their time freely has no material connection with the subscription or the benefits received (risking their benefits being taxed). Though, of course, there may be a strong moral connection. Although it will depend on the type and size of organisation – especially if it is an entirely volunteer-run organisation – most Friends probably don't volunteer. Their wish to support their chosen organisation will mainly be about giving to a good cause generally, as well as receiving the benefits. If I'm honest, my now lapsed Tate membership was most valued because of access to the Members' bar!

The fact that Tate has a 'membership' rather than a 'Friends' scheme suggests a more modern approach to engaging supporters, and perhaps a conscious move away from the stigma I find is still often attached to the supporters groups of some of our older, establishment cultural organisations – for example, the British Museum, or the V&A. In institutions such as these we still find Friends helping out in front-of-house roles on information desks and as guides. No doubt, they are also behind the scenes, though probably to a lesser extent. The majority of these Friends will fit into a stereotype that most of us would agree is the traditional profile of 'Friend' – or, more likely, a volunteer. This is because, whilst many of us will be Friends or members of all kinds of institutions, only those of us who have the time (not forgetting the inclination) to volunteer will do so. Thus the visible supporters will mainly be those who are retired – hence the unfortunate, but much used 'twin-set-and-pearls' label that is attached to groups of Friends and / or volunteers. Thankfully, with an increase in awareness of why people volunteer, and a diversification of those who do it, these sorts of stereotypes are being challenged. And cultural organisations are gearing up to manage the range of people who want to give their time for free – as regular readers of *cv* will be aware. However, I have for a long time been aware of the 'influence' enjoyed by many Friends organisations – and particularly those that have an on-site presence, usually through volunteering. It is a phenomenon that I find particularly intriguing, and one that I believe brings unique – but not insurmountable – management challenges.

Feeling the presence

Because money changes hands, Friends are donors. Donors who also give their time (as volunteers) who have a deep-felt affiliation with their chosen organisation sometimes assume that their dual contribution endows them with certain privileges that extend beyond discounts in the shop and monthly glossies. In other words, they believe they are entitled to have a say in how the place is run on a daily basis. Sound familiar? Don't get me wrong. I certainly don't want to make a sweeping generalisation about Friends, members or other supporters who also volunteer. But I am guessing that more than half of those reading this are nodding in acknowledgement. It is simply a fact that some organisations struggle to manage enthusiastic Friends groups – particularly when there is a core group of volunteers within, or leading them – and hence a strong presence in the institution. It can lead to a tail-wagging-the-dog relationship not uncommon in volunteer management that can infuriate (and even terrify) management at the most senior levels.

Senior management who recognise the importance of the contributions of Friends, and the need to keep them involved, might worry that one disaffected Friend could start a ripple effect which is more like a Mexican wave: lose one, and you lose them all. I have more than once been astonished at the response and level of senior management input into sensitive problem-solving situations involving Friends. I heard recently of one organisation that considered automatically admitting Friends volunteers to their new volunteer programme without an interview or a security check, unlike regular volunteers. Management didn't want to rock the boat, and it was thought that Friends wishing to volunteer would refuse to be interviewed ('You're happy to take my money but don't trust me').

Integration of Friends volunteers and other volunteers can be problematic, as can introducing new volunteer management procedures which bring Friends volunteers and other volunteers under the same umbrella. Again, this scenario is often rejected by Friends, who see their role as different. Many Friends groups are as old as the institution they support, so naturally they may have a view of themselves as being in with the bricks and mortar. These groups will probably be harder to influence than those that are just starting out. Whilst these are challenging management scenarios, to try and avoid them is to risk alienating other volunteers and being accused of double standards because of the financial benefits attached to keeping Friends volunteers happy.

Some Friendly advice

The trick is to communicate that everyone who volunteers is of equal importance, and to make clear the different roles that supporters have in the organisation:

- Clarify the purpose of your Friends (members or supporters) organisation as a group, its status (is it a charity in its own right?), its relationship with your organisation (voting rights at AGM?), and any privileges Friends are entitled to.
- Acknowledge that some Friends also volunteer, and in doing so come under the volunteer management function. If there are separate volunteering roles that Friends perform (e.g. guiding) make these clear (it is easier if all roles are open to all volunteers to avoid equal opportunities and 'them and us' situations).
- Publish your organisation's volunteering vision, clearly stating the value to the organisation of people who give their time.
- Clearly state that all volunteers are treated equally and are managed in the organisation in line with best practice.
- Regularly acknowledge the contributions of all your volunteers. Calculate how much time this adds up to each year and put a monetary value on it.
- Make sure there are clear communications channels for individuals (Friends, volunteers or the public) to make comments or suggestions to management about the work of your organisation.

In these challenging financial times, cultural organisations need all the help they can get. However, few things in life are free, and to ensure that this good will continues, we all need to think about the management implications that come with it. If you would like to share your experiences of managing Friends who also volunteer, **cv** would like to hear from you. Email lynn@lynnblackadder.com.

ONE VOICE FOR ARTS VOLUNTEERING

The National Art Collections Fund (Art Fund) has been asked by Volunteering England to join their England Volunteering Development Council (EVDC), representing the arts (the National Trust is representing the Heritage sector). The EVDC is a 'a high-level mechanism through which Volunteering England aims to fulfil its representative function on behalf of its membership, engaging both with government and opposition parties'. The EVDC will work to promote volunteering as an important expression of citizenship in England by:

- Maintaining a strategic overview of volunteering development in England
- Monitoring delivery of the volunteering infrastructure strategy
- Engaging in dialogue with Government, advocating for the appropriate allocation of resources for volunteering
- Influencing the volunteering, social policy and legislative agenda at national level
- Informing and strengthening volunteering policy development and good practice across the country
- Promoting implementation of the Compact Volunteering Code of Good Practice

- Working with Government, together with regional and local government, to promote a dynamic, viable, integrated, sustainable and accountable volunteering infrastructure.

The Art Fund would like to hear from organisations that might wish to be part of a network through which it can properly consult and represent ‘the arts’ – yet to be defined! The purpose and nature of communication with the network would be agreed with members, but the Art Fund would expect its remit to include sharing information about best practice. Expressions of interest should be emailed to lynn@lynnblackadder.com.

Art Fund ‘Save the Psalter’ Appeal

The discovery of the Macclesfield Psalter at Shirburn Castle in Oxfordshire earlier this year was one of the most extraordinary finds of English medieval art in living memory. This small, outwardly unassuming book had lain on the shelves of the library of the Earls of Macclesfield for centuries, and was entirely unknown to scholars before it appeared in the sale of manuscripts from Shirburn at Sotheby’s this June. Once opened, the manuscript reveals an astonishing interior: 252 folios painted in gold and rich colours, depicting a riotous world of beasts, birds, monsters and men. Devotional images appear alongside scenes of bawdy humour and acute observation of the natural world. Of immense artistic and historical importance, the manuscript contributes greatly to our understanding of how some of the finest masterpieces of English medieval illumination were made.

The Art Fund appeal is on behalf of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, which is determined to acquire the richly-illuminated manuscript. If the appeal fails, the Psalter – which has great significance both to the region of East Anglia where it was made in the 14th century, and to the country as a whole – will go to the Getty Museum in California.

One week after the Art Fund launched its ‘Save the Psalter’ appeal, the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) – the Government’s heritage fund of last resort – has given a major grant of £860,000 to the Fitzwilliam Museum. A total of £1,546,859 has now been raised. However £170,476 is still needed by 10 February 2005.

Call 0870 848 2033 or donate online at
http://www.artfund.org/10/10_1_2Donation.asp

CV SUBSCRIBERS MAKE CONTACT

In this issue, two cv subscribers, Streetwise Opera and Regal Theatre, talk about their volunteer programmes.

Streetwise Opera

‘The feelings of elation and accomplishment which I felt standing on the stage at the end of the production were something I will never forget, and played a large part in helping me to overcome my difficulties and start putting my life back into order.’

– *A homeless participant*

Streetwise Opera was founded to help individuals who have experienced homelessness. Through our professional opera productions and year-long programme of music workshops, we provide the opportunity for homeless and formerly homeless people to take part in music-making of the highest standard – where they can stand up in front of the public and say with pride ‘We did this.’ In the short term, this gives homeless people a platform for their ideas and an environment where they can be appreciated, develop their skills and talents and feel proud of themselves. Long-term, it builds their self-esteem, confidence and communication skills, and helps them find the courage to enter into housing, detox programmes, education and employment.

We set up our work placement scheme last year to help homeless people’s chances of employment. The scheme provides short work experience placements with arts organisations, as part of helping our committed and talented participants to take concrete steps towards re-entering employment. It is difficult for the long-term unemployed to gain the skills and experience which will make them competitive with other jobseekers, and our scheme is designed to help combat this problem.

Since the scheme began in July 2003, we have set up placements with many organisations, including the Royal Albert Hall, Oxford Playhouse, Oxford Contemporary Music, Bridewell Theatre and Battersea Arts Centre. For each placement, the right participant is carefully selected by our staff who know them well. We work closely with all of the arts organisations to set up and manage the placements, and to evaluate their success.

We have a number of enthusiastic and talented individuals who are keen to do work placements in several areas – office-based, in the backstage, technical and front-of-house departments. If you would be interested in learning more, or in hosting a placement in your organisation, we would love to hear from you. We work in London, Oxford and Luton at the moment, and will be expanding to Nottingham in 2005. Please contact Kirsten Mason at Streetwise Opera on 020 7924 3131, or km@streetwiseopera.org. Our website is www.streetwiseopera.org.

Regal Theatre, Minehead

The Regal Theatre stands at the heart of Minehead town centre with easy access for the people of West Somerset. It is run by the community for the community and is maintained by the MATA Regal Theatre Company Ltd as a centre for live performance and theatre. The doors are open more than 100 nights a year to provide a mixed programme of high quality professional and community entertainment. The Company is a registered charity, number 105271. We are always keen to hear from other community theatres about the way they work and how they keep going. Contact can be made via our web site www.regaltheatre.co.uk or by contacting the public relations officer Elaine Ross on 01643 702473.

FREE STUFF – Stalking the Elusive Executive: Tips for Getting Top Decision-Makers to Read Volunteer Management Literature

‘If only my boss would understand!’ That is a phrase often heard by Susan J Ellis, president of Energize, Inc, an international training, consulting and publishing firm specialising in volunteering. Volunteer programme managers express their frustrations to her because they know that a successful volunteer programme relies on the highest decision-makers in their agencies being educated on the subject of volunteering. Unfortunately, there are not many places where executives can learn about maximising volunteer involvement and, in some ways, they don’t even ‘know what they don’t know.’ So volunteer programme managers have a key role to play as in-house educators, teaching their immediate managers and onward to the top of the organisation.

Fortunately, Ellis has offered a dozen specific, practical suggestions for encouraging a hard-to-reach executive to read volunteer management literature. The e-publication, 'Stalking the Elusive Executive', is offered *free-of-charge* in the Energize Online Bookstore (www.energizeinc.com/bookstore.html). Susan says, 'I wrote my book *From the Top Down* to help executives who really want to support volunteers and are looking for new and better ways to do so, but I realised that the directors of volunteers needed someone on their side to help teach their bosses about the essentials of a sound volunteer program.' Some of Susan's tips include:

- **The Direct Approach:** Buy a volunteer management book for your executive and ask him or her to read it.
- **The Direct Approach with the Author's Personal Touch:** Buy it for him or her and ask the author to inscribe/autograph it first.
- **The Seize-the Moment Approach:** Be alert when a situation occurs that provides the opportunity to give your executive volunteer-related information at a 'teachable moment'.
- **The 'It's-Harder-to-Say-No-to-a-Volunteer Approach':** Buy a book, but ask a key volunteer to give it to the executive requesting that he/she read it.

To download the free article and full set of tips, go to www.energizeinc.com/bookstore.html.

NEWSFLASH: Year of the Volunteer 2005

2005 is Year of the Volunteer, and the home office has issued the following information to help you understand what they have planned, and how you can get involved.

CSV and Volunteering England have joined forces with the Home Office to organise events and raise awareness about Year of the Volunteer 2005. Community Service Volunteers (CSV) and Volunteering England have both been appointed by the Home Office to run the campaign to promote and support Year of the Volunteer 2005. The Home Office has committed support to CSV to develop the campaign in England in partnership with a new network of agencies involving volunteers including Barnardo's, MENCAP, BTCV and the RSPCA. CSV will be working with the network to establish a year of twelve themed months, as well as creating a programme of activities to generate more opportunities for volunteers. Themes will include:

- Youth and Children
- Justice
- Sport
- Disability
- Citizenship
- Environment
- Animals.

Meanwhile, Volunteering England has formed a consortium comprising the Media Trust, Youthnet UK, TimeBank, Business in the Community and Youth Action Network to deliver their part of the campaign. The focal point for the consortium will be Volunteers' Week 1-7 June. The consortium's programme for the Year is currently being pulled together, but it will include a high-profile media campaign, promotional materials, grants, workshops and DIY kits for people to organise their own volunteering activity.

To find out more go to <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/active/item.asp?ID=84>
<<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/active/item.asp?ID=84&NewsletterDate=10/11/04>

NEXT ISSUE

In January **cv** will be looking at **fundraising volunteers**, and reviewing the **Russell Commission report on the attitudes towards volunteering of young people in England**.

FEEDBACK

cv is keen to respond to your interests and needs. If you would like to forward your news and views, comment on content, or suggest a topic for discussion, please email lynn@lynnblackadder.com.

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Circulation 756