

# cultural volunteer ©

issue 14 – JUNE 2005

## 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](http://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 of **cv** we hear about the new **volunteer programme at the Egypt Centre, University of Wales, Swansea**, **what cultural volunteering has to say for itself in the Year of the Volunteer 2005**, and **two new free volunteering reports**.

## 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.

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## SPECIAL NOTICE

In the last issue of **cv** we looked at the range of roles for fundraising volunteers and how to manage them. There was a section entitled 'legal stuff', based on the Institute of Fundraising Code of Practice, which aimed to introduce readers to some of the legal issues that need to be considered, and on which they should seek professional (i.e. legal) advice. A subscriber from the US got in touch to say that she was worried that organisations outside the UK would have taken my comments as relevant in their countries – not realising that **cv** was primarily for a UK audience. This was a very good

point, and has prompted me to include the following paragraph at the start of every newsletter:

*Cultural Volunteer is a free e-newsletter that aims to promote best practice in volunteer management in cultural organisations. It is written primarily for a UK audience, but readers from other countries may also find it useful. The information contained is the opinion of Lynn Blackadder only, and is not given, or should be read as legal advice.*

### **FEATURE: Lynn Blackadder asks ‘Where is CULTURAL VOLUNTEERING in the Year of the Volunteer 2005?’**

Early in 2004, Chancellor Gordon Brown designated 2005 as the Year of the Volunteer (YOVO5). The Home Office, as the government department with responsibility for encouraging active citizenship, is working in partnership with volunteering organisations – Volunteering England and CSV – to coordinate the Year. The main aims are to:

- Increase the number of volunteers, particularly individuals from marginalised groups and young people.
- Open up more volunteering opportunities in the public and voluntary sectors.
- Raise the profile of the work volunteers are doing nationwide.
- Thank volunteers everywhere for their time and commitment.

#### **Spot the missing theme ...**

There are twelve themed months in YOVO5: Health, Youth and Children, Older People, Justice, Environment, Recognition, Veterans, Sport, Disability, Citizenship and Community, Europe, Animals. Why is there no month for culture, the arts, or heritage? There could be a variety of reasons: there aren't enough months; culture is represented in some of these themes; cultural organisations are not yet (or not yet perceived to be) big enough players in volunteering. I think that this last explanation is the most likely, and it needs to be addressed.

#### **Where is cultural volunteering in 2005?**

Volunteers are active across the cultural sub sectors. In 2004, the DCMS' *Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy* (2004) provided a brief overview of the work that was happening in the sector in volunteering and volunteering development. It recognised that many of DCMS' sub sectors are heavily dependent on the work of volunteers, and that volunteering not only helps towards achieving the Department's objective of increasing participation in cultural and leisure activities, it can also play an important role in promoting social inclusion, developing talent, and providing work experience as a route into employment. Some key points in the strategy were:

##### *The arts*

There are no current figures indicating the extent of volunteering in the arts, but anecdotal evidence and participation surveys suggest that arts organisations rely heavily on volunteers to support their work. For example:

- *An Economic Impact Study of UK Theatre*, conducted by Dominic Shellard, University of Sheffield (2004) estimated that there are at least 16,000 volunteers working in the UK theatre sector.

- The 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey found that the arts are one of the most popular ways to engage in volunteering (both formal and informal) and community activity.
- The Voluntary Arts Network (VAN), the UK development agency for the voluntary arts, supports over 300 national and regional umbrella bodies, and through them, their member groups of local voluntary arts practitioners. VAN has estimated that there could be more than a million volunteers supporting arts and crafts activities.
- Arts Council England (ACE) indirectly provides opportunities for volunteering through their regularly funded organisations.

### *The built heritage*

Nearly 40,000 people undertake 2.4 million hours of voluntary work for the National Trust each year. Volunteers are active in the work of both national and local heritage societies and contribute to the process of historic building restoration through building preservation trusts. One of the biggest volunteering events in England is Heritage Open Days, attracting some 800,000 people every year. More than 25,000 volunteers work throughout the year to organise the opening of the properties to the public for four days each September.

### *Libraries*

DCMS and the Active Community Unit at the Home Office jointly funded a three year project delivered by Community Service Volunteers (CSV) with funding of £800,000 which ended in March 2004. The project was made up of five pilots around England looking at different ways in which volunteers can be involved in adding value to library services.

### *Museums*

It has been estimated that there may be as many as 30,000 volunteers in the museums sector. Many museums and galleries rely heavily on the contribution of people working as volunteers in everyday activities, using specialist skills, on management committees and boards of trustees. DCMS and the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) have recently funded research on museum volunteers.

### *National Lottery*

The Community Fund has awarded over 2,000 grants with a total value of over £145 million to projects that directly support volunteering.

### *Sport*

Sport in the UK functions with the support of over 5.8 million volunteers. Research published by the Institute for Volunteer Research also states that sport and exercise, at 26%, is the largest single sector for voluntary activity.

## *Volunteer Development*

SkillsActive, the new Sector Skills Council for Active Leisure and Learning, is focusing on five key challenges including: more engagement and commitment by employers and employees, including volunteers; a better evidence base including baseline estimates of numbers, skills needs, training providers, types of training, gaps and future requirements; and more consistent approaches to learning and skills supply applicable to both paid and unpaid workers. The Action Plan recognises that 'the success of many initiatives in the community depends on the contribution of unpaid volunteers. Their ability to respond to professional intervention and, in many cases to lead the community's involvement is essential to sustainability'.

### **And more recently ...**

In 2005, great things continue to be done in the sector via various (usually unconnected) initiatives. Time Bank's annual Big Arts Week invites artists into classrooms across the country to encourage and inspire young people to be creative. For a week each year a host of activities are arranged between volunteer artists and schools which allow young people to explore an array of creative disciplines through project work. Big Arts Week was launched in 2002 and was a huge success with over 7,000 artists and schools coming together to encourage young people to get involved with the arts. Artists from all creative disciplines spend between one hour and one week sharing their artistic skills and passions. A more localised project is Sutton House, a Tudor property in Hackney, which is the focus of an article in *Volunteering Magazine* (March 2005, No.105) called "Opening the door to new volunteers – lessons from the heritage sector". It tells the story of how a National Trust property in the east end of London is trying to make itself as accessible as possible to its local community. As part of this work, the Trust commissioned some research into why black and ethnic minority people, particularly older people, are less likely to volunteer at the property.

### **Still more work to be done**

The DCMS' 2005 consultation report – *A Giving Culture: Getting the best out of the relationship between the voluntary and community sector and DCMS* (2005) – is a very interesting read. It recognises the importance of promoting and supporting voluntary action across its sub sectors, and that action is required to develop volunteering strategy. Here are a few snippets (full references to data sources are given in the report – see web link below):

- In 2001, the sector's contribution (labour value) to formal voluntary activity was higher than any other Government Department – £12.7 billion.
- In the period 2001 – 2003 hobbies / recreation / arts / social clubs recorded the greatest increase in formal volunteering of any sector.
- In some circumstances, volunteers decrease total costs in the medium-term.

### *But it's not all good news ...*

- Whilst DCMS sub sectors are important for formal volunteering activity, this masks considerable differences in participation.
- In general those who volunteer tend to be better educated and better off than others.
- Many larger VCOs in the sub sectors do not run volunteering programmes. Many that do are only open to work experience candidates.
- Smaller organisations cannot easily afford volunteer managers.

- There is a significant lack of robust data and research that examines volunteering in the sub sectors.
- There is a danger that an indiscriminate attempt to increase volunteering may further entrench disadvantage.
- To gain the full benefits for society from voluntary action there is a need to focus on under-represented groups and better understand volunteers' motivations.
- Despite a fundamental dependence on skilled volunteers, few heritage organisations have an explicit strategy for volunteer recruitment and deployment, and few are aware of best practice in the voluntary sector.
- Very few organisations make comprehensive records of their volunteers.
- While 75% of museums, libraries and archives involve volunteers, only 3% have a dedicated volunteer manager.
- 97% of volunteers in museums, libraries and archives are white.
- Unless we encourage younger people, volunteering in the arts is likely to decline in archives, heritage and the arts.

The report recommends avoiding one-size-fits-all solutions, and argues for a focus on:

- Understanding the motivations for volunteering in the sub sectors.
- Understanding the barriers to volunteering in the sub sectors.
- Developing programmes that address these needs.

We will have to wait for the results of the consultation process to hear how the DCMS intends to tackle these important issues. However, in the meantime, how can we raise our collective profile in the world of volunteering and beyond?

### **Some suggestions**

It is reassuring that Volunteering England's Volunteering Development Council has both the National Trust and the Art Fund as members (representing Heritage and the Arts respectively). And understanding and developing volunteering is obviously important to the DCMS in achieving its objectives, including working more effectively with the voluntary and community sector. However, the evidence suggests that we need:

- More research: quantitative and qualitative. Specifically, we need more detailed information on the impact on people from all walks of life of cultural volunteering.
- To identify ways of working together more effectively and learning from each other – across cultural organisations, but also with other sectors, e.g. arts and health projects, and internationally.
- A one-stop-shop – probably the DCMS – for all the information you'll ever need on cultural volunteering.

### **The benefits**

More research and statistics about volunteering will provide a clearer picture of volunteering activity, trends, and impact. It will help organisations reach and persuade audiences. And it will help volunteers learn about opportunities and understand the importance of their roles. Access to new reports, case studies, best practice, and funding sources will also help organisations learn from each other and develop new, improved programmes and new partnerships. Links need to be made, and relationships facilitated between cultural organisations, and with other sector groups. For example, can volunteering in sport learn from heritage volunteering, and vice versa? What can lessons learned in hospice volunteering teach us?

Obviously the Home Office's Active Community Unit has overall responsibility for all things to do with volunteering, but with volunteering being a cross-departmental priority for the DCMS, should it be a Department in its own right? (Currently, the Director of Arts and Culture has responsibility for Volunteers and the Voluntary Sector Campaign.) This post could be supported by web pages on the DCMS or a special linked site.

Perhaps with a bit more focus and coordination, research and publicity, cultural volunteering will continue to go from strength to strength, and gain the recognition it deserves.

You can access the DCMS reports at <http://www.culture.gov.uk>. For a copy of the National Trust report on Sutton House email [emily.mealey@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:emily.mealey@nationaltrust.org.uk). For more information on YO05 log onto [www.yearofthevolunteer.org](http://www.yearofthevolunteer.org).

### **FREE RESOURCES: *Volunteering in Retirement and Attracting Students***

*Active ageing in active communities: Volunteering and the transition to retirement* by Justin Davis Smith and Pat Gay, was published in March by The Policy Press for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. It claims that volunteering can play a significant role in people's lives as they move from work to retirement, but that institutional and attitudinal barriers appear to be deterring people from volunteering later in life. You can download the report for free from [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk).

Student Volunteering England (SVE) has published a booklet called *Making it Happen!* on how to attract students to small organisations and how to keep them interested. To receive a copy contact [info@studentvolunteering.org.uk](mailto:info@studentvolunteering.org.uk) or 0800 0182 146.

### **NEWSFLASH: Nominate an outstanding volunteer**

The Year of the Volunteer Awards has been created to acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of volunteers across England. 2005 outstanding volunteers will be recognised with a Royal Mint Year of the Volunteer medal. The medals will be handed out at regional ceremonies in October/November 2005.

Volunteers can be nominated in one of five Award categories: Innovation, Commitment, Impact, Inspiration and Partnership. Arts organisations are being encouraged to nominate volunteers, in order to highlight and reward the contributions that volunteers are making to the arts.

If you would like hard copies of the nomination form please call 020 7812 0034. Alternatively, you can download the form from either <http://www.csv.org.uk/yv05> or <http://www.yearofthevolunteer.org>. The deadline for nominations is the 18 July.

## **CASE STUDY: Stuart Williams on how the Barings Foundation is supporting volunteers at the EGYPT CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF WALES, SWANSEA**

In 2003 the Egypt Centre was awarded a Baring Foundation grant of £15,000 to start an innovative volunteer programme to run alongside its existing highly successful programmes. The project was launched in April 2004 and aims to widen participation with the local community by enabling volunteers to take a more active role in the museum.

### **What we're doing**

Volunteers are encouraged to give their own views on objects held by the museum, and to help in selecting and interpreting objects for visitors to see. The objects chosen by the volunteers are signposted throughout the galleries by their specially coloured labels. Volunteers are encouraged to interpret their object however they wish. This gives volunteers who don't follow a strictly 'Egyptological' line to explore their objects even further and produce information on them that would not usually be displayed. Special open storage display drawers were purchased which enable volunteers to display their chosen object, labels and information sheets. A large plasma screen was purchased for the museum entrance on which visitors can see the volunteers talking about their favourite object. The screen is also used to advertise volunteer vacancies at the museum and to give information on the volunteer programmes there. Travelling exhibition displays have been bought so that wherever Egypt Centre staff are giving presentations, the audience sees the work volunteers do and the opportunities available.

### **Training**

Volunteers attended many training days to help them with the project. They were given training on Powerpoint presentations for the plasma screen, and on how to write a museum label. They were also shown how their objects had been stored in the past and how they were going to be displayed in the future. The needs of many disabled groups have been addressed with new Egypt Centre information sheets now produced in large print format and Braille, and at present work is being undertaken to produce audiotape guides. The information given out on the guides has been written and spoken by the volunteers. Many different regional accents are going to be used on the audio guides so that visitors can choose who they would like to 'show them around'.

### **Benefits**

The Egypt Centre values its volunteers immensely: they do a great job, and without them the museum could not function. The museum currently has 72 registered volunteers who help welcome visitors and school groups, answer enquiries, give guided tours and hands-on demonstrations, make props, pilot new activities, and ensure that the gallery is a safe and clean environment and that all equipment is working.

To date, over 30 volunteers have selected their object for display and have produced their labels and presentations for the plasma screen. A volunteer newsletter was set up and is now in its fifth month. It is written entirely by volunteers and edited by a single volunteer. The biggest impact is the increased self esteem that volunteers feel. Their confidence has been built as they have been empowered to freely interpret objects on display, which is a rare occurrence in the museum sector.

The project forms part of a study by the Barings Group which will publish its findings on our project and the other two British museums given an award, from which it is hoped other museums can learn.

*To find out more about The Egypt Centre's volunteer programmes, contact Stuart Williams, Volunteer Liaison Officer at [s.j.Williams@swan.ac.uk](mailto:s.j.Williams@swan.ac.uk), or check out the website at [www.swan.ac.uk/egypt](http://www.swan.ac.uk/egypt).*

## **VOLUNTEERS working in THEATRES and FESTIVALS**

**CV** is keen to hear from, and share information about, theatres and festivals that are supported by volunteers. Please get in touch and let us know about your programme. Contact [lynn@lynnblackadder.com](mailto:lynn@lynnblackadder.com). Or if there is a particular subject that you would like to know more about, please let us know.

## **SPAM!**

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## **NEXT ISSUE**

In August **cv** will be weighing up the pros and cons of **online volunteering**.

## **FEEDBACK**

**cv** is keen to respond 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](mailto:lynn@lynnblackadder.com).

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Circulation 815