

cultural volunteer ©

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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 ...

This month **cv** investigates the **benefits of online volunteering**, highlights **Make A Difference Day on 29 October**, and offers some **new free volunteer management resources**.

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.

***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 – and should not be read as – legal advice.*

FEATURE: Lynn Blackadder on ONLINE VOLUNTEERING

Online volunteering – also called virtual volunteering – is where volunteers give their time freely to organisations via the Internet, rather than the more traditional face-to-face forms of volunteering. Online volunteering won't be a practical option for every volunteer-involving organisation or every volunteer, but a closer look at how it works in practice will help you establish whether your organisation might benefit from this form of volunteering.

What do online volunteers do?

The United Nation's Online Volunteering web site (see below) describes online volunteers as 'volunteers without frontiers': for the UN, volunteers from all over the world help organisations serve communities in developing countries without leaving their own communities. These online volunteers translate documents, write articles, research data, build web sites, mentor young people, design logos, and engage in many other projects.

How can cultural organisations and the people they serve benefit from online volunteering programmes?

Cultural organisations can recruit volunteers to help in a variety of practical ways as listed above, or for special projects. The Theatre as Digital Activity (TADA) programme at San José Children's Musical Theatre (SJCMT) in the US is a good example of an organisation which successfully integrates virtual volunteering and online service delivery into what it already does well. SJCMT was already committed to providing excellent, accessible musical theatre training for young people with high-quality performances for families and the entire community, and the TADA project was an extension of this aim. As a new, virtual component of its artistic programme, the project allowed the theatre to be even more inclusive, welcoming children who were isolated by sickness or geographic distance and sharing the magic of theatre with them.

The first TADA project took place over one year: 45 young people throughout the US with serious illnesses and disabilities shared their fears and frustrations online with creative staff and young actors in SJCMT. The result was 'Pulse, the Rhythm of Life', an original musical which premiered in May 1998, with young actors portraying characters who were described in a review as "a mosaic of wounded, hurting kids whose loneliness is lessened by a keyboard and the knowledge that other children similarly suffer". This is only one of several similar projects organised by SJCMT which offer children the opportunity to contribute ideas to original musicals via the internet, email and live chats.

SJCMT also involves volunteers virtually in HTML programming (one online volunteer designs and produces all of the theatre's performance programmes), and uses its web site to recruit volunteers for offline tasks. The theatre is also exploring how parents whose work prevents them from volunteering onsite can volunteer virtually.

What are the benefits?

As in the TADA example, it is unlikely that organisations will offer online volunteering as the only kind of volunteering available or required. And online volunteering doesn't need to replace face-to-face volunteering, though it might supplement and enhance it. The benefits for organisations can be practical – helping to overcome some of the familiar volunteer management issues such as lack of office space or funds for travel expenses –

or it can open up a whole new aspect to the organisation's service, as demonstrated by TADA. Other benefits can include:

- Fewer people required to manage volunteers
- Additional remote support to volunteers and staff on the ground
- Environmentally friendly volunteering (e.g. no travel).

For volunteers it can be more convenient – attracting people who might not have the time to travel to a volunteering venue, e.g. those working full-time, looking after children, or without transport. People who are physically unable to volunteer at a volunteering venue due to mobility or geographical barriers might also be attracted by this kind of home-based volunteering.

What are the challenges?

Organisations wishing to involve volunteers online must be aware of the potential downsides which range from technological issues to the difficulties of remote management. For example:

- A lack of control over what volunteers do and how they do it
- Volunteers becoming isolated
- Remote provision of technical and other specialist volunteer training
- Remote provision of ongoing technical support
- Possible exclusion of volunteers who don't have equipment.

Other possible effects are volunteer managers becoming de-motivated as a result of a lack of face-to-face contact, and lack of contact and therefore understanding between volunteers and the beneficiaries of the volunteering activity. However, none of these potential barriers is insurmountable, and it's a good starting point to think about online volunteering as a way of making volunteering more inclusive or enhancing service provision.

Find out more

For more information on TADA visit www.serviceleader.org/old/vv/orgs/tada.html. Thanks to Jayne Cravens for bringing TADA to my attention. You can visit Jane's web site 'Myths About Online Volunteering (Virtual Volunteering)' at www.coyotecomunications.com/volunteer/ovmyths.html. The UN's Online Volunteering web site is at www.onlinevolunteering.org and offers a range of useful free resources. cv would be interested to hear from any organisations in the UK that offer online volunteering opportunities.

FORTHCOMING EVENT: [CSV Make a Difference Day](#) – 29 October 2005

[CSV Make a Difference Day is the UK's largest day of hands-on volunteering. This year 100,000 people](#) are expected to get involved in around 5,000 activities and share their skills with their local community.

2005 is the tenth anniversary of CSV MD Day and this year it will take [place on Saturday 29 October, although activities can also take place a week either side](#). CSV MD Day is open to anyone: individuals, voluntary organisations, companies, schools, faith groups, and youth groups – all are welcome.

For arts [groups](#) CSV MD Day is a good way to [make or develop valuable partnerships with your local community and to publicise the work](#) you already do. [MD Day is also a chance to bring greater media and public attention to any existing initiatives](#) you may have. [In 2004, 74% of projects who contacted their local media were featured](#) in local media, including [TV, radio](#) and [newspapers](#).

Arts groups have key skills and knowledge which, if shared, could benefit a whole range of people. [Examples of activities that arts groups have organised in the past include](#) an intergenerational music workshop and different areas of the community coming together to share artistic skills and renovate a community building.

Anyone who [wants to organise an activity](#) will receive [a free Action Pack which contains helpful information on organising an event, and advice on getting press coverage, t-shirts and thank you certificates for volunteers](#). Other materials are also available to help you organise and publicise your event. To find out more, email kmiddleton@csv.org.uk, call 0207 643 1391, or visit www.csv.org.uk/difference.

FREE REPORT: 12 Key Actions of Volunteer Programme Champions: CEOs Who Lead the Way

Get a copy of this free report which is an advance preview of a new book (to be published by Energize in 2006) written primarily for CEOs about why investing in volunteer programmes brings huge dividends to an organisation. This new free booklet highlights the words of real-life executives and lays it on the line as to what it really takes for CEOs to successfully support volunteer programmes. To download the PDF go to http://energizeinc.com/xml/Ei/solo.php?fzg_navGrpBtn=5-219-E-1.

RECRUITMENT: Opportunities for Volunteer Board Members

The Charity Commission has launched a new campaign in a drive to encourage members of the public to become charity trustees – particularly targeting younger people and those from black and minority ethnic groups. Get on Board will raise awareness of trusteeship, aim to increase diversity across trustee boards and help to increase the number of people volunteering to be charity trustees. To find out more visit www.getonboard.org.uk.

‘VOLUNTEERING MAGAZINE’ goes online – October 2005

Volunteering England’s magazine ‘Volunteering’ has just gone online but is only available to members. To find out about subscription rates contact membership@volunteeringengland.org. Here are a couple of snippets from their volunteering news section.

Amateur Theatre Week, which is due to get under way on 23 October, is the UK’s biggest celebration of non-professional, community and youth theatre. It will see 39,000 people volunteer their time to put on a week of theatre productions for their local communities. This year more than 200 groups are expected to take part, performing to audiences of over 660,000. Top names supporting Amateur Theatre Week include Andrew Lloyd Webber and award-winning actor Matthew Kelly.

The National Trust has been celebrating the Year of the Volunteer’s Disability Month. Just over 11% of the Trust’s 43,000 volunteers identify themselves as having some kind of disability. Replanting famous historic garden designs, protecting fragile wildlife habitats, rebuilding garden ponds and sharing stories from the past were among just some of the amazing things contributed by disabled volunteers for the National Trust during the month of September. “To see people’s lives turned around in ways they never dreamed of is very rewarding for the volunteer and for Trust staff and other volunteers too,” said Heather Smith, the NT’s Access for All Advisor.

There is also a feature article on volunteering at the Natural History Museum in London.

NEXT ISSUE

In the next issue **cv** will be looking at the issue of **age limits in 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.

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