OCTOBER 2005

An important date for your diary **The 2006 EMF Annual Meeting will take place in Lisbon on 10-13 May. The programme will begin on the evening of Wednesday 10 May and will end with the Gala Dinner on Saturday 13 May, which follows the announcement of the 2006 European Museum of the Year Awards. Participants are then free to leave on Sunday 14 May or extend their visit with a short holiday in Portugal. The meeting will be organised jointly by the Museum of Water (EPAL) and the Pharmacy Museum in Lisbon and registration details will be circulated with the January 2006 issue of the *Bulletin*. They will also be available on the EMF website.**

The 2007 European Museum of the Year Awards *will mark 30 years of the competition, a true cause for celebration. Application forms are now available from the Administrator, Judging Committee members and National Correspondents and will shortly be available on the EMF website.*

The EMF Meeting, 'Museum on Islands' was held on Madeira, 15/16 September 2005 in association with EPAL and the Museu da Aqua, Lisbon. 25 Museum professionals working in museums on islands gathered in the Museum de Electricidade 'Casa da Luz' in Funchal. Among the participants were representatives from Jersey, the Isle of Man (both U.K.), Milos (Greece), Aland (Finland), The Azores, Berlenga and Madeira (Portugal).

The goal of the meeting was to identify the specific role of museums on islands. It dealt with such crucial questions as:

- Are island inhabitants less European? And if so, do island-museums reflect this particular position?
- What is common among island-museums and what is not?
- Are island-museums focussed on their inhabitants or on tourists? Does the high number of tourists (often a multiple of the locals) affect the policy of the museum or not?
- Do island-museums feel inferior or superior to continental museums?

and with practical issues such as:

- is collaboration with continental museums problematic (exchange of objects, travelling exhibitions, transportation, climate conditions, etc)?
- should sharing experiences between island-museums become common practice (creating a network, maybe)?
- has a 'hibernating' senior tourism impact on the policy of museums?

The objectives were:

- To investigate the need for a common strategy for island–museums
- To reflect on the social responsibility of island museums towards the island community
- To define the role of island-museums in the tourist industry
- To set up a network for the exchange of best practices.

After the official opening of the meeting by the Regional Secretary of State of Tourism and Culture, Dr. João Carlos Abreu, the subject was presented by six speakers.

Their contributions covered many aspects of the problems and opportunities of island museums. It became quite clear that island communities differ from continental communities. From generation to generation the natives have fostered and mostly still foster their cultural heritage, their traditions, customs and habits. They love their island. The kinship between families is kept alive, even when members emigrate. The isolated position of islands has stimulated the strong feelings of the indigenous populations, in places as far apart as the Azores to Cyprus and from Malta to Iceland.

Almost all island-museums concentrate on the uniqueness of their own island. They do this by offering the visitor an overview of the political, social and religious history, the arts, agriculture, fishing, tourist and other industries, whatever was or is the main source of income. The museum focuses on how the island sees itself, and how it is perceived abroad.

But it became clear as well that island museums show a variety and diversity as museums on the "mainland" do. The situation at the Isle of Man, for instance, is not the same as the one at Madeira. The composition of the population, the climate, the history, the geological and geographical conditions are incomparable. Nevertheless, it was agreed that all museums are showcases of the identity of an island. Notwithstanding the great differences the participants concluded that island museums have a lot in common thanks to or due to the isolated position. First of all they claim to be more creative, because they are smaller! (Judge for yourself whether it is true or not!).

It was unanimously felt that island-museums should develop a common strategy, for three reasons:

- Social responsibility towards the locals.
- Overall policy towards the patrimony (the museums consider themselves to be mini laboratories in the sustainability of heritage. Manx Heritage calls itself the 580 km ² museum).
- Tourist industry. Tourists are indispensable to survive. The blessing and the curse of island tourism must be balanced.

Certainly, one and a half days was just a first try out to find out the necessity of continuing research of the subject. As such, the Madeira meeting can be seen as preliminary to a workshop, in which the three main items can be investigated in depth. This will happen in September next year in Milos, Greece. (Most probably 14-17). (If you are interested in participating, please let us know). It was a pleasure to chair the meeting.

Keynote speakers in alphabetical order:
Dr Luisa Garrido, Director Museum of Electricity, Casa da Luz, Madeira
Dr Stephen Harrison, Director Manx Heritage, Isle of Man)
Prof Rui Sousa Martins, Azores
Dra. Teresa Pais, Director Museu da Quinta das Cruzes, Madeira
Dr. António Teixeira, President of the Natural Reservation of Berlenga Island, Portugal.

Wim van der Weiden, EMF Chairman

Hudson's Grandchildren **is the unusual name of a cultural association formed in 2002 by a group of university students following a course of industrial archaeology at the University of Genoa in Italy. The group shared with Kenneth Hudson, EMF's first Director, his open-minded approach to cultural heritage problems and his anti-academic way of developing original research on a variety of subjects which were quite often new for the European cultural milieu.**

The association has evolved into a so-called 'junior enterprise', the first one in the Liguria region, that is to say, a non-profit organisation whose aim is to carry on studies and researches in order to integrate the academic curriculum and offering services to public and private bodies, within any Italian university. This is an innovation in the Italian landscape, which is producing its first fruits, organising seminars and conferences, developing a cataloguing project in historic archives and museums, and organising small exhibitions.

This is something which Kenneth would probably have encouraged with his always generous attitude towards new initiatives, especially if carried on by young people. **Massimo Negri**

Unizone exhibition unites Norway and Sweden *2005 is the centenary of the dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden. Riksutstillinger (National Touring Exhibitions) in Norway and Riksutställningar (Swedish Travelling Exhibitions) have produced Unizone, a joint art exhibition that has travelled along and across the Norwegian-Swedish border in Riksutställningar's Expomobile (an articulated trailer) during the summer, stopping at 17 places.*

The common border, 1400 km in length, was the starting point for Unizone. The travelling exhibition was an artistic zigzag from south to north and back again, seeking to bind the countries together, culturally and artistically. 12 artists who work in various ways with the nature of boundaries took part. There were five Norwegians, five Swedes, one artist from Denmark and one from the U.K., together with a Norwegian theatre ensemble and a Swedish voluntary association. The themes treated by the artists were tourism, national and international identity, being *an outsider, border trade, isolation and travel.*

The aim was to create encounters between the public in local situations along the border in the wake of the centenary celebrations of the union's dissolution and to be represented at summer events. The tour started in Oslo and ended in Stockholm and was arranged to coincide with local festivals,and visited camping sites, public art galleries, town squares and entertainment parks. The exhibition area of the Expomobile is 50 m², and outside it there were tents and parasols, also designed by two of the artists. Unizone spent 2-5 days at each venue and two travelling education specialists met and talked with the visitors, both young people and adults. See www.riksutstallningar.se

Norway´s Riksutstillinger, a national institution whose main aim is to promote an interest in and understanding of visual art, applied art, design and architecture in Norway has existed since 1953, at that time known as Riksgalleriet, The National Touring Gallery. Since July 2005 the national touring programme is integrated with the new National Museum for Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo.
Stella Westerlund, Riksutställningar/Swedish Travelling Exhibitions and EMF National Correspondent.

Gallery hit by thirst for art An exhibit may have been drunk by a thirsty art lover. American sculptor Wayne Hill's missing work, a two-litre plastic bottle full of water from the south polar ice cap, was on display in Dartington, Devon in the U.K. He admitted it looked like ordinary water, although it was on a plinth and labelled. **Daily Mail, 27/07/05**

EAZA Education Award goes to Emmen
For a zoo that is widely acknowledged, in zoo circles as well as among the general public, to be one of the finest in Europe – if not the world – it is a bit surprising that over the years it has made surprisingly little effort to present its strengths to the peer community.

Emmen Zoo was effectively rebuilt during the 1970s and 1980s. And it was rebuilt with a purpose: to make sure that every visitor was informed, in a visually pleasing and biologically sound manner, about the wild animals that inhabit our planet. Emmen Zoo was also determined to place animals in different contexts: in nature, in time, and their relationship with mankind, rather than just exhibits. This resulted in geographically themed areas, exhibitions on exotic cultures, the for its time exceptionally innovative Biochron where the origin of life was explained, and educational signs that provide interesting information on the species, rather than just their name and distribution. The dedication to education is visible in every part of Emmen Zoo. Everything is done with a purpose and the visitors appear to appreciate this clear purpose. Making a zoo with the purpose to educate the visitor means that the visitor becomes the centre of the zoo's thinking, rather than the animal collection. There is no doubt that Emmen was ahead of its time in this, which is now

commonplace in many Western zoos, and therefore one can argue that Emmen was trendsetting and a model for all of us. Many zoos have much improved their education over the past two decades, but the quality of Emmen Zoo's education is still superb compared to most. Because of this, because of how it has inspired a whole generation of new zoo people, it should be awarded for its entire educational oeuvre. **EAZA, European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, 10.09.05**
Editorial note: *In 1981 Emmen won the Bank of Ireland Special Exhibitions Award within the EMYA competition, for its exhibitions on 'Flowers and Colours' and 'Locomotion'.*

Albert Einstein is back in Switzerland
2005 is Einstein Year, an anniversary being celebrated all over the world of 100 years of the theory of relativity – formulated in Bern in 1905. In Bern the great scientist is being honoured in the place of his most significant achievement. Commemorative events include a special exhibition in the Historical Museum as well as in the Einstein house. 1905 is regarded as an *annus mirabilis* for natural science, a wonder year for physics. At the time, Albert Einstein was working in Bern at the Swiss Patent Office. In his free time, he drew up the theory of relativity, discovered the formula $E=mc^2$, provided the first proof of the existence of the atom and laid the foundations for the quantum theory, all in the space of a few months. Never before had a single human being so completely redefined the nature of the world in such a short time. Be it laser technology, the use of atomic energy or accurate navigation by means of GPS, a large extent of modern technology is based on Einstein's theories.

'Albert Einstein (1879-1955)', the exhibition being shown in the Historical Museum of Bern, is one of the most lavish historico-cultural exhibitions that has ever been produced in Switzerland. Until 17 April 2006 the public can learn more about Einstein as a person, through original objects, replicas and installations covering 2,500 m^2 of exhibition space. In the historical section of the exhibition, it will be possible to follow Einstein's life in the context of world history. In the second part, devoted to physics, Einstein's theories are explained with the help of visual aids. Highlights of the visit include a virtual bicycle ride through Bern at up to 99% of the speed of light, and a cosmological theatre featuring a journey from the earth through space and time, taking visitors back to the Big Bang. Over 30 animated short films help make Einstein's physics fun. All the exhibition displays are in German, English and French.

A physics theme park has been set up around the museum castle in the Helvetiaplatz to give the public a clearer picture of the most important discoveries and inventions of mankind from the Stone Age up until the 'wonder year of 1905'. Patrons of the project by the Historical Museum of Bern are the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Horst Köhler, the current President of the Swiss Confederation, Samuel Schmid and Swiss Foreign Minister, Micheline Calmy-Rey. The exhibition came about as a joint production with the town hall of Ulm, where the 125th anniversary of Einstein's birth was commemorated last summer. However, the event in Bern is even more comprehensive. **Historical Museum of Bern, Helvetiaplatz 5, CH-3000 Bern 6. www.bhm.ch**

The Einstein house: Einstein rented the apartment at 49 Kramgasse in Bern from 1903 to 1905. Now designed as a living museum, it is documented and furnished in period style to represent the very important time Einstein spent in Bern. The house has been restored and the exhibition reorganised especially for Einstein Year 2005. The approach for visitors is both factual and emotional. How did Einstein live and in what kind of surroundings did he accomplish his most important scientific work? Guided tours of the Einstein house can be arranged in English, French and Spanish**. The Einstein house, Kramgasse 49, CH-3000 Bern 8. www.einstein-bern.ch**

Additional activities in Einstein year 2005 and later in Switzerland (from October 2005) include: 'Einstein in Zurich' (1-29 October). Exhibition in the ETH main building: 'The moving observer' www.phys.ethz.ch; 'Dürrenmatt and Einstein' (19 October-25 January 2006), Swiss National Library, Bern

www.snl.admin.ch; 'Birthday party for E=mc^{2}' (whole of Switzerland). The physics formula E=mc2 will be celebrating its 100th birthday on 21 November. On this occasion, the Swiss Physical Society (SPG) is offering a prize for the most innovative birthday party for the best known formula in the world. All Swiss high schools and technical schools are invited to take part in the competition.www.einstein-jahr.ch **Susann Bosshard-Kälin EMF National Correspondent,** www.museumspass.ch, www.susann-bosshard-pr.ch

Vital piece of Mary Rose jigsaw to be recovered *Endangered items uncovered at the seabed wreck site of the Mary Rose, including the bow stern, are to be brought to the surface thanks to funding from the Ministry of Defence. The Mary Rose was Henry VIII's favourite warship and rates alongside Nelson's Victory as one of Britain's most famous ships. Although it sank in the Solent off Portsmouth in 1545, its hull was successfully recovered in 1982 and is now displayed at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.*

Some sections of the vessel still remain on the seabed, however, and a new archaeological dive has been announced which plans to recover items in danger of decay. The dive is funded by the Ministry of Defence in consultation with English Heritage and will begin on 23 September, continuing until 14 October 2005. The ship's stem, the major timber in its bow at the front of the vessel, will be brought to the surface for conservation, along with an anchor uncovered during previous dives. 'The stem timber is a particularly significant timber in a ship as it defines the shape of the hull at the bow', said Christopher Dobbs, Maritime Archaeologist at the Mary Rose Trust. 'This is a vital piece in the Mary Rose jigsaw that has been lost until now.' www.24hourmuseum.org.uk

Le Conseil Bruxellois des Musées (CBM), **the host of EMF's very successful Annual Meeting in Brussels last May, is organising for the fifth time its 'Nocturnes des Musées Bruxellois', with 50 museums taking part (29 September-15 December, every Thursday evening between 17 and 22). Having attracted more than 15,000 visitors in 2004, these nights have become part of Brussels' autumn cultural scene. The theme for this year is 'Les Musées, carrefours de cultures' and a number of museums will be offering musical and theatre events and tastings of food from particular cultures. The general programme includes many attractions, including guided visits, some by torchlight, concerts, films, and children's events. The main attraction this year will be focussed on the area around the Grand-Place, with the participation of the Musée de la Ville de Bruxelles, Maison du Roi, Bruxella 1238, the Musée du Costume et de la Dentelle, the Musée des Brasseurs belges and the Scientastic Museum. The Hôtel de Ville will also be open for guided visits. For the first time all these institutions will be open simultaneously and without charge during the evenings. CMB and Danièle van den Abeelen, EMF National Correspondent.**

Stars for Danish museums and tourist attractions 29 Danish attractions have been awarded stars for providing tourists with high quality experiences. The award is the first of its kind in the world, and it will highlight the best Danish attractions. Over 70 attractions are in the process of gaining star classifications. The classification scheme is voluntary, and the attractions can apply for a quality classification or for a classification under the star scheme, where from one to five stars are awarded. One star indicates to the visitor that the attraction has a high value at local level, while five stars indicate unique experiences at international level. A star guarantees a good experience - and not all attractions survive the comprehensive evaluation process on which the classification is based. The Danish standards association DS with the assistance of professional experts, and user surveys are included in order to judge whether the attraction provides a high quality experience assesses each attraction. The focus in the evaluation is the actual experience. This scheme thus differs from hotel star classifications, for example, where the classification is based on the facilities. The Open Air Museum 'Den Gamle By' in Aarhus received five stars and four went to the Workers' Museum in Copenhagen.

Free entrance to 140 museums 140 Danish museums will have free entrance for under-18s from January 2006, announces the conservative Minister of Culture. The scheme will include all permanent exhibitions of the National Museum and the National Gallery of Art and will cover the whole country, including Den Gamle By and ARoS in Aarhus and Louisiana at Humlebaek. Museums will receive full compensation for lost admission fees and to cover any extra costs incurred by the increase in visitor numbers. The proposal is expected to cost an extra 260 million DKK and will be negotiated for in next year's State budget. Visitors will still have to pay for special exhibitions. **Marieke Burgers, Acting Director, The Danish Museum Training Institute in Denmark and EMF National Correspondent.**

Taking flight once more *It is perhaps the most bizarre mass movement of species since Noah's Ark. From fragile butterflies to dragonflies, spiders, wasps, locusts and rare beetles, the remains of 28 million insects which have lain motionless in dusty cases for up to 300 years are once more taking flight. Experts from London's Natural History Museum are transporting the collection into safekeeping before they are returned for the opening of a new £66 million building in 2008. Many of these amazing creatures were found by the great names of entomological and evolutionary science: Charles Darwin, who circumnavigated the globe aboard HMS Beagle, Joseph Banks, who sailed with Cook to the South Pacific and Alfred Russel Wallace, who travelled the world in search of new species.*

The exodus of dried and pinned specimens – some the first of their type to be identified – will take more than 18 weeks. The insects are being sent to eight temporary storage locations, packed in 450 supermarket bread trolleys, 500 plastic packing crates and 10,000 pieces of foam. The largest single piece is a metre-tall hornet's nest which was discovered in China, while the smallest is the Alaptus magnanimus*, a fairy fly which is barely visible to the naked eye with a wingspan of less than 8/1,000 of an inch. Previously at risk from pests, humidity and fire, the insects will be permanently housed in the state-of-the-art Darwin Centre – the first phase of which was opened in 2002. There, the rare creatures will once more shine in their true glory, colonising an environmentally controlled 'cocoon' seven storeys high.* **Daily Mail, 19 August 2005.**

www.museumsbund.de is the German Museums Association's new internet gate, a new design and an improved service. Launched in September 2005, the German Museums Association offers museum professionals and others interested in museums newly designed and detailed information to many aspects relating to museums.

Detailed answers can be found to questions such as standard practice and ethics for museums, minimum standards of professional practice and performance, provenance research, conservation and restoration, museum education, documentation and technical matters. There are also numerous documents, commented links and literature on many topics. The new service also includes references to German and international support programmes and a database information on education or training in the museum field. Users have access to information on federal as well as cultural and educational policy in Germany and in Europe. The translation of all information into English is in progress.

The German Museums Association (founded 1917) is the nationwide interest group for all types of museums (historical and cultural history museums, museums of technology, museums of natural history, art museums as well as other museum categories) and for museum staff. The Association acts as a contact point for individuals who are committed to and support the manifold spectrum of museums. The Association publishes 'Museumskunde' (biannual), and the quarterly newsletter 'Bulletin' including up-to-date news, views and analysis of the museum sector as well as 'Einkaufsführer für Museen' (directory of suppliers and consultants, including contact details). With the German

Museums Association's card members enjoy free access to more than 400 museums all over the country.

Future major museum for Lausanne *Under the aegis of the Canton of Vaud and the City of Lausanne, an international architecture competition has been launched to create a new cantonal museum of fine arts. More than 250 projects from 13 countries have been received before the deadline. Planned for construction at Bellerive on the lake shore, this project will constitute an important step for the cultural life of Lausanne, which aleady has a rich and diverse collection of 23 museums*. www.beaux-arts.vd.ch

Initial evaluations of the PDA tour Gradually museums are replacing their traditional audio-tours by multi-media tours. Such a change compels museums to make choices about how to deliver the contents of their information, and this includes the intended response of the public. In the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller the visitor can be introduced to 15 masterpieces of the collection by means of hand computers (personal digital assistants, PDAs) supplemented by fragments of films, but also by relevant restoration history, if any. The Limburg Museum, on the other hand, works with a larger tablet pc (laptop with touch screen) for changing exhibitions. The visitor to the Treasure Chamber of the Amsterdam Municipal Archives traverses it with a robust hand computer. If required, you store information, print it or send it to your own e-mail box to have a closer and more extensive look at it in the reading room of the Archives or at home on your own computer.

By interlinking databases of museum, archive and library, as is done in the Coda in Apeldoorn, you can tap even more information. The logical conclusion is that institutions will have to establish an even clearer image of themselves to the visitor. **Tessa Haan, English summary of article in Museumvisie, No. 3, 2005.**

Finnish-Russian Museum Days *The Creative Union of Museum Workers of St Petersburg, the Union of Museums in Russia, the South Karelia Museum in Lappeenranta, Imatra City and the Finnish Museums Association organized the first Finnish-Russian Museum Days in the Imatra State Hotel in June 2005. The theme was 'Finland-St Petersburg – Common History as a Resource for Cultural Tourism and Museums'.*

Speakers came from Finland and Russia. One of the main subjects was the activity of General A. V. Suvorov, who fortified Lappeenranta, Eastern Finland in the 1790s, covered by Alexander Kuzmin, director of the State Memorial Suvorov Museum. Contributions included cultural contacts between Finland and St Petersburg and the tradition of Finnish-Russian art. One interesting historical fact connected with the actual place was that the Russian painter, Wassily Kandinsky married Nina von Andreyevski in 1917 and they spent their honeymoon in Imatra, famous for its rapids. A small work from this journey portrays two women, separated by a mountain and rapids. The Imatra State Hotel (1903), greatly magnified and dramatised, can be seen on top of the mountain.

A visit to the Lappeenranta fortress and museusm included the exhibition 'Art Treasures from Pavlovsk Palace' in St Petersburg, while the meeting closed with a tour of Viborg and a visit to the Castle Museum. Reaction from the meeting was very positive and the next museum day will take place in St Petersburg in 2008. **Marja-Liisa Pohjanvirta, Finnish Museums Association and EMF National Correspondent.**

Guides to the cultural heritage via mobile phones **The Nordic museums have been running a development project called Nordic Handscape, funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The purpose is to study the potential for communicating cultural heritage via mobile phones. Nordic Handscape is a collaboration involving the Museum of National Antiquities in Sweden, ABM-utvikling (archives, libraries and museums) in Norway, the National Board of Antiquities in Finland, the National Museum in Denmark and the National Gallery in Iceland.**

Possible future services could include

an audio-guide service by mobile phone about a Viking burial site, or access to different cultural history databases depending on where you are.

The national pilots which started at the beginning of the summer are: in Iceland an art exhibition of young artists. Finland has archaeological sites and the Louhisaari Park which is specially meant for children hunting treasures. In Denmark you can use the mobile in the industrial surroundings of Brede, while in Norway it is available in the cathedral at Trondheim. In Stockholm you can follow history when walking in the streets of the old town, or you can follow in the footsteps of Arni, the knight from Jan Guillou's novels in W. Götaland. www.nordichandscape.net

The preservation jam There used to be an assumption that museums had secret holdings of hidden treasures too good for the public to be allowed to see in case they were harmed in some way, and it was pooh-poohed. Now it seems that not only are museums being over-protective of their collections, museum curators often have no idea of the importance of what they hold and how the objects could be used to attract visitors.

The Museums Association's startling report, *Collections for the Future*, is the second to challenge museums with searing indictments of their management. Last month, the National Heritage survey of museums showed that while finance and earning was at the top of a list of 20 priorities for directors and the boards, the visitor experience was at the bottom.

Jan Glaister, director of arts, heritage and leisure for Bradford, sums up the MA case as chair of the inquiry steering group: "Too many museums are underused – not displayed, published, used for research or even understood by the institutions that care for them", she says. "If an objects sits in a store for 10 years, without anyone looking at it, and if it is not published or made available on the Internet, can that museum be realising its responsibilities towards the object and towards the public?"

It is a rhetorical question, but one that is having to be asked of too many museums now, and one which prompts Sara Selwood, professor of cultural policy and management at the City University, to wonder whether we should actually be taking collections away from some museums and redistributing them to those better capable of making the best use of them. The MA's deputy director, Maurice Davies, agrees that too much of an emphasis on preservation has developed and that the depth of knowledge of staff curators about their own collections is not only inadequate, it is hampering the development of their museums.

Despite the government's bullishness in giving the heritage sector the lion's charge of the grant for the next three years, the truth is that fewer and fewer people are visiting museums in this country. Although London shows a steep increase, this is almost wholly because of the abolition of admission charges for national museums and galleries. Elsewhere in the country, visits are falling away, and the National Heritage report shows that museum managements are seeing their visitors as earning fodder who need to be provided with shops and cafés, but whose intellectual interest in the displays is limited.

The MA's report concurs. There should be more loans, on the lines of the long-established scheme of [the city of] Reading Museums who, rather than leave objects languishing hidden away in stores, organise them into themes which are sent to schools, and who also hire objects out to local businesses to display in their foyers and public areas.

But almost more alarming is the understanding of museums' own expertise of what they have. "There are not enough staff with a focus on developing collections' potential and many museums do not have access to the expertise they need", the report says. "Many museum staff are trapped in roles that do not draw on their skills and potential. Much talent is wasted, and energetic and committed people leave the sector." It adds: "Low pay remains a serious factor."

Davies enlarges, saying that not only do museums themselves not know fully the potential of their collections, they don't know where to go to find it, and that is down to a lack of collaboration and communciation amongst institutions. Funding is a major factor, and many museums have given up on hopes of adding significantly to their holdings because of lack of funding. "Collections are kept alive with new acquisitions, and it may be that changes in collection management that allow items to be dispersed among other museums and galleries, perhaps like the maritime collections are, might be necessary", Davies said.

In summary, the MA finds that collections are not being championed enough as the selling point for museums, that we need to forget the competition between conservation and access, and that "the common goal of museums must be to help everyone explore, understand and value their heritage". **Artsindustry, 17 June 2005.**

Dutch ecomuseum project *Steven de Clercq sent the following article to Interactions-Online.com with the aim of starting discussions with colleagues, either directly or through this Internet site. We have permission from the author and the editor to reprint his article here.*

Let me briefly introduce myself: trained as a geologist, I worked at the faculty, where I was also engaged in the construction of a new building (1975-79). Cuts in money led to leaving collections behind and the birth of my – ongoing – engagement with the academic and scientific heritage. Without any museological training I was appointed director of Utrecht University Museum in 1982. Planning to set up a museum quarter in Utrecht, I helped organise in 1993 the Museum Quarter Workshop. In 1996 'my' museum (www.museum.uu.nl) was moved to its new premises of what is now called the 'Museum Quarter'. In 1998, after 16 years as director, I handed over the directorship and became adviser to the five old Dutch universities on their academic heritage. In that capacity I was also co-founder of UMAC, ICOM's International Committee for University Museums and Collections, of which I am today vice-chair.

So I am one of those 'museum professionals' with a non-museological training. And I fully agree that it may well be an advantage. But fortunately in Holland we do not have a museum training of sufficient level and quality that such a degree is required, definitively not for curators and directors.

30 years ago my wife (a sculptor) and I bought, together with another family, one of those 'maison de plaisance' 'Herteveld' (see the painting by Jan van der Heyden as it was around 1670, now in the Louvre) along the river Vecht, built c. 1630 by the rich Amsterdam merchants. Ever since, the natural and cultural history biography of the area has caught my imagination. I became a member of the Vechtplassencommissie, the oldest action group in the Netherlands (1936) – www.vecht.nl – covering the entire Vecht area, some 250 sq. km.

Being almost retired gives me time to work on that 'ecomuseum project', as an initiative of the Vechtplassencommissie. As such, we are linked to Maurizio Maggi's network. We call ourselves 'ecomuseum Vechtstreek'. The idea has been embraced by a more or less formalised collaborative between all communities and both provinces along the river. One of the aldermen has agreed to act as formal chair. Apart from a working group with myself and the museum councillors from both provinces, there is so far no other structure. We have agreed a two-step approach:

1. start as a pilot with six museums putting up a temporary exhibition on a related theme that together gives a larger picture of the entire region. I think it is essential that each of these museums retains its own identity within its own community, but realises that the added value of participating lies in the fact that it gets an essential position in a larger context, that participation is both a contribution to something with a wider horizon, but at the same time an enrichment of its own story.

2. develop a longer-term vision. What I have in mind is actually that the natural- and cultural history biography of the area

is the collection; that the entire physical landscape itself is the exhibition; that the existing museums in the area act as 'crystallisation points'; and that there is a very small staff (like Bergslagen).

My agenda can be summarised as seeing (and wanting) the ecomuseum as interpreter and binding element, with the aim to reveal the natural and cultural *biography of the Vechtplassen landscape; and as such, a contribution to a viable Vecht-area; development of a long-term vision;reinforcement of local identity and cohesion; sustainable economic development; cultural tourism*

The question is whether this is still a museum. Not in the traditional way, of course, and also in the Netherlands any word with 'eco….' does not have a positive image. For me, the telling of the story of the landscape, the understanding of how it was shaped in the interaction between the inhabitants and their natural environment, is crucial. We need that understanding to achieve a viable area, which is under much pressure, as it is located in the centre of the country, with roaring prices for land and an agriculture which is more or less declared bankrupt. You will not be surprised that the organisation is perhaps the thing that puzzles me most.

A related project in which we are engaged that might interest you results from an invitation by the Department of Information and Computing Sciences at the University of Utrecht to participate in setting up a generic model for digital accessibility to a cultural landscape, integrating the wide range of already digitalised information on cultural heritage and linking that to GIS (Geographic Information System), again with the aim to allow a better understanding of the processes that led to the current landscape and infrastructure, and providing tools for decision-making based on cultural heritage. A demo is found on http://contemtlab.cs.uu.nl/vecht/ username: vecht. Password: vechtstreek. We would also be interested to know – preferably in Europe – of comparable initiatives. Steven de Clercq, Vechtplassencommissie, vice-voorzitter, Straatweg 17, 3606 CV Maarssen. Tel +31 346 567.573. ***declercq@vecht.nl***. ***www.vecht.nl***