

JANUARY 2006

EMF Annual Meeting, Lisbon, 10-13 May
Registration forms for the meeting in Portugal are now available. If a copy is not included with this issue of the *Bulletin* contact the Administrator. The form and other details will soon be available on the EMF website.

Dynasties' Destiny, an EMF preparatory workshop for a Travelling Exhibition Project on the Role of Royalty in Europe's past and present will take place in Tilburg, the Netherlands from 2-5 March 2006. Aimed at museum professionals of various disciplines from different types of museums, the workshop will examine the feasibility of the exhibition project. European monarchies have a long tradition. Almost everywhere the role and function of the monarch has developed from absolute rule (autocracy) towards a more symbolic role and consultative function, characterised by impartiality and independence from any competing interests. Although nowadays the appreciation of the importance of symbols has decreased to such an extent that the word 'symbolic' has become almost synonymous with 'trivial' the role of a king or queen as a unifying factor has now become more significant than ever before. According to this conception the enormous political dynamics, polarisation and increasing cultural diversity would bring about a great need for a common, widely supported symbolic function.

The great diversity in the ways in which constitutional or parliamentary monarchies have been shaped and designed in the course of the centuries and in different countries could be a fascinating subject for a museological approach in a travelling exhibition. The way in which sovereign and people deal with each other and how they are interrelated has always been a theme for fine arts. Also, monarchs have always played a crucial role in the arts as stimulators, commissioners and

Maecenas's, and they still do. So, many museum collections are related in one way or another to kings, queens and emperors. And whatever the relationship between monarch and people has been, vast audiences have always been fascinated by dynasties and their members.

Dynasties' Destiny (the exhibition) can demonstrate how – from the Middle Ages to the 21st century – people and monarchs have adjusted their relationship to the specific demands of their own time. This may include aspects of both love and hatred, as well as the imagination of monarchs and dynasties in modern media and contemporary art. Also, implicitly or explicitly, the following question may be discussed: is there a future for Europe's monarchies and how then will they relate to European unification?

In this workshop, with a number of museum professionals from all European countries who know or knew monarchy as a form of government, the feasibility of this exhibition project will be investigated. The thematic boundaries will also be examined and defined and concrete arrangements will be made about how and by whom this project will be realised.

There is no participation fee. Hotel accommodation and some meals are offered by the organising institutions. If you are interested in participating, please send your personal details (institution, postal address, telephone, fax and e-mail numbers), a relevant CV (maximum two pages) and an accompanying letter explaining your reasons for wishing to attend to EMF, Natuurmuseum Brabant, PO Box 924, 5000 AX Tilburg, Netherlands, or send an e-mail to info@natuurmuseumbrabant.nl

EMF Judging Committee member becomes VII Paper Baroness The Director of the Gösta Serlachius Museum

of Fine Arts in Mänttä, Finland, Maritta Pitkänen, has been awarded the title of Paper Baroness 2005. The title Paper Baroness or Paper Baron is awarded by the Association of Mänttä Entrepreneurs for work benefiting the town's economic life. This is the seventh time that the title has been awarded.

The reason stated by the Association in support of its choice as that Maritta Pitkänen, in her capacity as Director of the Gösta Serlachius Museum of Fine Arts and through her activities in numerous other spheres, has helped make the world aware of Mänttä and its attractions and thereby meritoriously promoted the economy of the town.

The title was ceremonially conferred at a function arranged jointly by the Mänttä Society and the Association of Mänttä Entrepreneurs in conjunction with the opening the panoramic tower on Mäntänvuori hill on 17 September 2005.

The EMF Workshop on the Museum Environment took place in at the University Residential Centre in Bertinoro, Italy on 27-30 October 2005. Held in association with the Socrates Grundtvig Programme 'Lifelong Learning in Museums' and in co-operation with the Istituto Beni Culturali in Bologna, the Cultural Department of the Regione Toscana in Florence and the Museum Office of the Regione Veneto in Venice, it attracted 35 participants from 16 countries.

The shift of focus from the collections to the public, and from curatorial skill to a more comprehensive interpretative and communicative approach to objects and to the museum experience needs to be supported in terms of skills and competencies required of museum staff. The Workshop aimed to offer participants a wide range of innovative examples from all over Europe and from many different areas of interest, an occasion offering in-depth exchange of ideas and experiences, and the opportunity to develop occasions to network at a European level.

Museums all over Europe have been reviewing their role, adding a new facet

to their mission in terms of their relationship with society and the local community and have undertaken significant actions to become agents of social change and social integration, bringing more people into the learning cycle. Nowadays it is recognised that most of what we learn is acquired in informal contexts and that museums are ideal places for learning throughout life, as they offer free choice learning and can address all age ranges.

Participants considered the subject in four groups – Planning and Techniques; Criteria for Success, Communication and Adult Visitors, Internet and Media; and the European Dimension. Their conclusions, as presented to the Council of Europe, can be seen on the EMF website.

Building Audiences, Bridging Museums: a Workshop for Central and Eastern European Museums took place in Budapest on 3-6 November 2005. This was the first EMF Eastern and Central European workshop – a pilot project. As museums in Central and Eastern Europe are looking to the future, and are seeking to build and increase their audiences from both present and potential visitors, this Workshop offered an opportunity for participants from the region to investigate some of the complex activities and issues in finding better ways of involving the public in museums, as well as searching the opportunities and benefits of networking. The challenges and the potential are universal to museums but regional issues were raised and regional solutions were also sought.

29 professionals from 11 countries participated, from the widest variety of museums and related institutions. Four working groups were formed and Conclusions were agreed. These were accepted by the Council of Europe and can be found on the EMF website.

The evaluation (formal and informal) gave very positive feedback. Participants found the experience of an EMF workshop very satisfying. The active, inspiring and personal atmosphere as well as the spiritual support and practical knowledge gained were highly appreciated. Many of

us are looking forward to a next similar meeting, either in Budapest or possibly in Romania. The Workshop was supported by the Hungarian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, organised by the Hungarian Natural History Museum, the programme was organised by EMF, and we used the facility of the Council of Europe's European Youth Centre in Budapest. **Tamás Vásárhelyi, Deputy Director-General, Hungarian Natural History Museum and EMF National Correspondent**

Exhibition venue of the future Swedish Travelling Exhibitions 'is taking touring exhibitions to a new level, with a new mobile gallery that unfolds', writes Jane Morris in a case study on *Riksutställningar* in the Winter 2005 issue of *Museum Practice*.

Over the years *Riksutställningar* has shown a succession of exhibitions on trains, boats, buses and in the organization's own expandable trailer known as the *Expomobile*. In late November 2005 *Riksutställningar* took delivery of its new mobile exhibition space designed by architect Love Arbén in conjunction with a group of constructional engineers at AF-System AB. The unique new space is built in Sweden by Eksjö Truck & Maskin AB. Using this striking new vessel, with its retrievable wings, exhibitions will be able to be shown on streets and squares and will confront people as they go about their daily life. *Riksutställningar* has received a supplementary grant from the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture to enable it to develop the new mobile exhibition venue with some 90m² of floor space. The first exhibition in *Riksutställningar*'s new exhibition trailer is about stories. It is called 'Night-pears and other fables - an exhibition featuring all sorts of stories'. Children will be encouraged to experiment with the language and to try out their own devices for creating their own stories. The building blocks of the exhibition are intended to stimulate children's imagination and encourage them to trust their own ability to see, think and narrate. The exhibition is directed at children from 9 to 12 years of age but will be open to the general public in the evenings and at weekends. This is a joint project involving *Riksutställningar* and

the publishers Rabén & Sjögren and Bonnier Carlsen. The various elements of the project – the travelling exhibition, a book of the same name, educational and other events will complement each other. The exhibition will open and the book will be published in August 2006 during Sweden's Narrative Year and Multicultural Year. It will visit some 15 different places where many languages are spoken. See www.riksutstallningar.se Stella Westerlund, *Riksutställningar*/Swedish Travelling Exhibitions & EMF National Correspondent

Newly established museums in Bulgaria Bulgaria is becoming increasingly attractive to Europeans and others from further afield for its year-round tourism, cheap prices and the opportunities for ecological and cultural tourism. Heartening news about Bulgaria as a preferred tourist destination of the Irish tourist market was seen recently in the on-line edition of *The Sunday Business Post of Ireland*. Numbers of Belgian tourists to Bulgaria have also tripled over the past two years after the active participation of Bulgaria in *Europalia* in Brussels, the Black Sea coast being the most attractive tourist destination. The Museum of Salt in the town of Pomorie (known as Anchialo until 1934 and one of the earliest Hellenic colonies) was created in 2002 thanks to the financial support of the European Union under the Phare Programme, in implementing the projects 'All About Salt (ALAS)' – 2001-2002, and 'Developing the Salt Museum in Pomorie as a Complete Culture Tourism Site' – 2004-2005. This is one of 19 cultural tourism sites selected for Phare financing among 300 applicants from all over Bulgaria. The museum has to utilise 330,000 € under the Phare Programme for improving the infrastructure around it. The money has to be spent on repairing roads to the museum, new acquisitions and research. Museum visitors will be able to see the whole process of salt-making at the only place in Eastern Europe where salt is produced by using 5th century B.C. technology, with authentic tools.

Museums to look out for The Bulgarian conquerors of Everest, Metodi Spasov, Nikolay Petkov and Doychin Boyanov, supported by Aldo Audisio, director of the Turin's Mountaineering Museum, are

among the main lobbyists for the establishment of an Everest Museum in Sofia. The idea comes at the time of the 110th anniversary of Bulgarian tourism, the 75th anniversary of Bulgarian alpinism and 21 years since the first Bulgarian expedition to Mount Everest. The museum itself will be dedicated to the Bulgarians who reached the highest peak in the world.

A modern Thracian museum is expected to be ready by 2007. It will be constructed in the village of Alexandrovo by the Japanese Jayka Foundation. This site has been chosen because it is just 1.5 km away from the Maritsa highway, linking Europe and Asia. A central road will lead to the museum which will exhibit copies of the mound with the frescoes from Alexandrovo, found by Professor Georgi Kitov in 2000, at the moment not seen by visitors. The project includes also a tomb found near Polyanovo village.

Yet another museum is expected to be established in the near future. Andrey Nakov, a well-known Bulgarian curator and art historian, returned to Bulgaria after more than 40 years to assist in setting up a museum of Modern Art in Sofia. He has assisted with the establishment of similar museums in Switzerland and Canada and has worked as a curator at the Tate Gallery in London and in the museums of modern art in Edinburgh, Madrid, Toronto and Tokyo.

With regard to EMF's forthcoming preparatory workshop for a travelling exhibition on the role of royalty in a united Europe, there is a temporary exhibition until January 2006 in the National Historical Museum in Sofia, *The Monarchs' Inheritance in the Bulgarian Museums, Archives and Libraries*. The exposition includes events of the present day. Our former King Simeon returned to Bulgaria to found a political party called the 'National Movement Simeon Sakscobourgotski', won the elections and was Prime Minister for four years until the summer of 2005. He now participates in the ruling coalition with the socialist party and the Movement for Rights and Freedom led by Ahmed Dogan. Simeon lent many objects for the present exhibition in Sofia. **Savena Borisova, New**

Bulgarian University and EMF National Correspondent

Maritime museum saved by grant The National Maritime Museum in Falmouth, U.K. (an EMYA candidate in 2004) has been saved from closure after the granting of an additional £1.45 million from the Lottery Heritage Fund. The £28 million museum, which opened three years ago with the help of £17.3 million from the Fund, faced a cash crisis when visitor numbers dropped below expectations. Daily Telegraph, 03/11/05

After the Tsunami - Children from Sweden and from Southeast Asia remember The giant wave that was generated by an earthquake in the Indian Ocean at Christmastime in 2004 shattered the lives of many people, both in Sweden and in the countries bordering the ocean. Not since the disastrous defeat at the Battle of Poltava in 1709 have so many Swedes died on the same occasion. On 26 December 2005, the anniversary of the catastrophe, Stockholm's Östasiatiska museet (Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities) opened its doors to the public with an exhibition centred on children's reminiscences. The aim is to give children and young people – in Sweden and Southeast Asia – who were hit by the tsunami the opportunity to talk about their experiences in recorded interviews as well as portraying them in pictures and objects. It is hoped that this will promote a sense of solidarity between young people in Sweden and in the rest of the world. During the initial five months in Stockholm the exhibition will grow successively as visitors contribute reminiscences, pictures and objects. Besides the children's narratives there are reflections from scientists, geographers, religious historians, philosophers, anthropologists and others. There is a quiet space for reflection and contemplation. After the Tsunami is a joint project involving Riksställningar, Östasiatiska museet, Etnografiska museet and the aid organizations Rädda Barnen (Sweden's Save the Children Fund) and Diakonia. See www.riksutstallningar.se Stella Westerlund, Riksställningar/Swedish Travelling Exhibitions and EMF National Correspondent

News from the UK In the final month of the UK presidency of the European Union, attention turned to matters cultural. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport – which covers museums and heritage, among other things – picked up a line of work begun by the Netherlands in the previous presidency.

Collections on the Move is a Europe-wide initiative to make it easier for museums and galleries to lend and borrow objects within the EU. The first conference on the subject was held in The Hague in October 2004 followed by a report, *Lending to Europe*. It was drawn up by a working group of museum professionals chaired by Ronald de Leeuw, the director general of the Rijksmuseum. At the end of November last year the Department for Culture followed this with a conference, *Increasing the Mobility of Collections*, to look at three specific areas of work identified by de Leeuw's group. These were:

- the benefits of introducing comprehensive government indemnity schemes and reducing insurance costs
- possible areas of collaboration by museum professionals and member states (including a proposal to create a single, modular loan form; agreed procedures for conditions checking and facilities' reports; improved customs and border procedures)
- ways that trust between professionals might be developed: through networking, sharing training, secondments etc.

Further information from the conference can be found at www.culture.gov/mobility as well as a report to be published online at the end of January, written by EMF judging committee member Jane Morris. The conference, made up of around 100 invited museum professionals from across Europe, agreed to take forward a number of initiatives, largely to be organised by the Network of European Museum Organisations (www.ne-mo.org). The European Museum Forum was mentioned as another organisation that could play a role as an influential European network.

Meanwhile, the issue of museum trustees – who they are, what they are there for and how they behave – came to a head

once again with an apparent 'scandal' involving the Tate. The Freedom of Information Act, which journalists are increasingly using to root out information from public bodies, including museums, was used to investigate the purchase by the Tate of a series of works by one of its trustees, the artist Chris Ofili. The implication in the subsequent articles in the *Telegraph* newspaper was that something fishy was going on: an accusation the Tate angrily denied.

Eventually it emerged that the Tate had purchased the work, *The Upper Room*, consisting of 13 canvases, for around £600,000, considerably less than the asking price and its market value, and that Ofili had not been present for any of the discussions around the acquisition. The Tate also added that it has regularly bought work from trustees in the past, including from Michael Craig-Martin and Bill Woodrow. The trouble is that the public reaction to the acquisition (not the work itself, but the method of the purchase) has been hostile, especially as part of Ofili's role at the time was to encourage fellow artists to donate works to the galleries. Once again question marks have been raised about the role of trustees in British museums and the scrupulous levels of probity and appearance of probity that is now required. Ever since Lord Nolan's enquiry into standards in public life in the 1990s it is no longer good enough to do the right thing, you have to be seen to be doing the right thing, something museums are struggling to face up to.

On a happier note, the Heritage Lottery Fund – a branch of the National Lottery – continues to fund ambitious new museums and museum refurbishments. In October the latest, the £31 million National Waterfront Museum in Swansea, opened only a few months after the multi-million pound refurbishment of World Museum Liverpool (the old Liverpool Museum). A collaboration between the National Museums and Galleries of Wales (and an important part of their strategy to cover Welsh industrial history, begun with projects such as the Slate Museum and Welsh Woollen Museum) and a local authority museum in Swansea, the museum has created interest because of its high-tech presentations. Critic Tom

Flynn, writing in the Winter 2005 edition of *Museum Practice*, had mixed feelings about this approach. Children, he felt, would love it but wasn't sure if sometimes the technology overwhelms the objects. You can see for yourself at www.nmgw.ac.uk.

The autumn is conference season in the UK: all the big political parties hold mammoth events, and traditionally so do museums. In October 2005 the annual Museums Association conference took place in London with the first year of a revamped programme. Around 1,000 people – mostly from Britain's museums and galleries, but with some overseas delegates – attended and most seemed to welcome the changes after years of accusations that the event had stagnated. Further changes are expected in October 2006 when the MA conference goes to the seaside: this time Bournemouth (see www.museumsassociation.org). **Jane Morris, EMF judging committee member**

Calling all museums of water *An article by Jorge D. Tartarini, Director of the Museo del Agua in Buenos Aires, closes with a rallying call for a worldwide network of these museums to be established, and we are happy to quote extracts from his article here.*

Museums of water are generally found in old waterworks or in industrial buildings that are home to ancient, monumental steam engines. Others occupy those elderly water storage towers built at the end of the 19th century to supply the great metropolises with water. The Museo del Agua in Buenos Aires falls within this last category, though it should be noted that this is a water tower with certain peculiarities. One of these is its palatial appearance, an absolute festival of polychromatic ornament covering its exterior made of 350,000 glazed ceramic tiles, imported from Great Britain. Another uncommon characteristic is hidden beneath the architectonic envelope: a cast-iron structure of 180 columns that supports three floors and 12 reserve tanks, also made of riveted iron, with a capacity for 72,700,000 litres of water.

It was conceived as a showpiece, the terracotta exterior made by the English firm of Doulton, while the Belgian foundry

Marcinelle et Coulliet manufactured the metal interior frame, considered one of the most important industrial structures erected at the end of the 19th century outside of Europe.

Built between 1887 and 1894 in the full flush of Argentina's agricultural export development model and in a city that had embarked on a marked process of Europeanisation, today it is one of the most powerful symbols of the importance which governments of the period gave to health and hygiene. The authors of the project, and of the sanitary plan for the Radio Antiquo Buenos Aires were the English engineers Bateman, Parsons and Bateman....

It would be magnificent if all the water museums in different countries could come together and create a network, based on their shared interests and problems, that would enable them to exchange, communicate and debate experiences in the research, conservation and diffusion of this industrial heritage.

Let this text be an invitation to everyone in joining this initial step to set up an International Network for Museums of Water. Please contact the author at: Museo del Patrimonio, Riobamba 750 – 1er. Piso (C1025AAP) Buenos Aires, Argentina. Fax 0054 11 63191104. Jorge_Tartarini@aguasargentinas.com.ar; Museo_Patrimonio@aguasargentinas.com.ar TICCIH, No. 30, Summer 2005

Stonehenge makes it to 'New Seven Wonders of the World' shortlist
Stonehenge is the only UK site on a 21-site shortlist of 'New Seven Wonders of the World' drawn up by a Swiss group which aims to alert the world to the destruction of man-made heritage. The New Seven Wonders Society was launched in 2000 with the aim of agreeing the modern-day equivalents of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. More than 19 million voters have so far taken part in what its organisers call 'the world's first global voting campaign'. After a series of TV specials on each of the sites and a further year of public voting the winners will be announced on 1 January 2007, at an Olympic-style ceremony in a host city which has yet to be selected. Profits from

the project will go to restoring and preserving monuments and buildings around the world, including a planned restoration of the giant Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan.

The other shortlisted sites include the Acropolis in Athens, Angkor Wat temple in Cambodia, China's Great Wall, the Colosseum in Rome, the Inca temple of Machu Picchu in Peru, the Easter Island statues, Moscow's Kremlin, Sydney Opera House, the Taj Mahal in India and New York's Statue of Liberty. Nominated sites that did not make the final list included the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank building in Hong Kong, the Opera House and National Congress in Brazil, and Stari Most, the bridge at Mostar, Bosnia Herzegovina. Of the original Wonders of the Ancient World, only the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt is still standing, and this too has made it on to the new shortlist. The other six ancient wonders were the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Statue of Zeus at Olympia, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the Colossus of Rhodes and the Lighthouse of Alexandria.

2007 - The Year of Industrial Culture in Denmark *This will function as a communicative and administrative framework within which Danish museums and other partners working on the history of industrial society can contribute to a co-ordinated museological effort.*

Industrial Culture 2007 will initiate and finance a number of nationwide activities itself but the prime objective of the project is to co-ordinate activities and projects of Danish museums, universities, archives, industrial companies and other contributors. The majority of the activities marking Year of Industrial Culture 2007 will therefore be planned, executed and financed by local and regional institutions.

The marketing will feature a branded profile that makes all local ventures recognisable as a part of the collective initiative. The activities will be marketed collectively through a printed catalogue and a website.

The National Museum of Denmark *is the host for the Secretariat of the Year of Industrial Culture 2007. Its Secretary,*

Pernille Wahlgren, can be contacted on www.industrikultur07.dk.

A new industrial museum within the realms of The National Museum of Denmark *For several years The National Museum of Denmark has been working on developing a concept for a new part of the museum focusing on the industrial heritage. Within the last year the museum has succeeded in securing the finance for planning new exhibitions to open at Brede Works in the summer of 2009. Brede Works was one of the largest industries in the area based on wool production (spinning and weaving). Production stopped as late as 1957 and The National Museum became owner of the Works in 1959.*

Brede Works is one of the best-preserved industrial monuments in Denmark and a typical example of the patriarchal industrial production encompassing all functions of an industrial society, including care for babies, a school for the children, housing for the workers and their families, and care of sick and old people. The Works are situated along the "Mølleåen" – more or less the cradle of Danish Industry with seven or eight water mills dating back to the Middle Ages.

Exhibitions and related activities will focus on themes showing how industry and industrialisation changed our way of thinking and living over the last 150-200 years. The philosophy behind the exhibitions and activities is the possibility for visitors to construct their own stories about modern society through the introduction to various themes, activities and hands-on arrangements.

Visitors will be encouraged to examine and explore the history of technology and culture from the 1850 to the present day through activities appealing to children as well as adults. It will be possible to follow different 'tracks' through the exhibitions where you can choose different roles such as the textile worker, the engineer, the unskilled worker, the girl sweeping the floors etc. The information given will then depend on which track you choose. The key word is animation and activities appealing to families as well as to schoolchildren. The aim is to establish the connection between technology, history

and culture to clarify the basic conditions for democracy and the welfare society. For more information contact dnt@natmus.dk
Marieke Burgers, The Danish Museum Training Institute and EMF National Correspondent

Don't make me think There is an interesting customer service technique doing the rounds at the moment in which people are encouraged to walk around a building trying to look at it through the eyes of a new customer on their first visit. Once you get into the mindset, it becomes very easy to spot things like illogical signage or distracting visual clutter. Despite the often obvious revelations that such an exercise can generate, it's amazing how few people actually take the time to put themselves in the customer's shoes to work out whether the environment could be better designed. Things get done in particular ways out of laziness or habit, but often small changes can make a big difference to how customers feel about a building.

Ease of use The same principle applies to websites. The science of usability is becoming ever more important as the Internet grows and more and more sites compete for people's attention, but you often don't have to look very far to find examples of sites that do things badly. Fundamentally, it is essential to remember that customers don't visit websites in order simply to admire how pretty they look – they have something they want to do, and they really want the site to make it as easy as possible for them to do this. People come to the websites of arts organisations to do things like find out what's on, book tickets, look up travel directions and so on – they don't come simply to see what the website looks like.

The American writer Steve Krug coined the phrase "don't make me think" to explain his philosophy about making websites work well for their users. When someone looks at a page, he explains, it should be obvious how they can do what they want. If someone has to think about things – even for a moment or two – then you've lost their attention and increased the likelihood that they'll go elsewhere. So what distinguishes a good site from a poor one? Firstly, a site that delivers what

users might want will always be better than one that doesn't. Is information about what's on easily found from the home page? Is it up to date? Is it simple to get directions to the venue?

Good navigation is also very important. It should be absolutely clear to a user how to find their way to the information they want from wherever they are on the site, and they shouldn't have to be confused by finding themselves on a page where it isn't clear what to do next. If you have buttons for searching or online booking, is it clear what these refer to? Have you used technical language instead of clear English (for example, having a button that says 'submit' on an online form instead of one that says 'send')?

Testing times If you are starting to suspect that some of this might apply to your website (and you certainly wouldn't be alone if you did), then what can you do about it? The best way of finding out what needs to be changed is to set up some simple user testing. Ask a few friendly people – existing visitors or people who you know have never used your website before – to sit in front of your site and then give them some scenarios to work through. You may well find that something as simple as moving a button to the top of the page, or changing the text size can make things much easier for users.

If you are about to embark on a revamp of your site, then it's even more important to get users involved at an early stage. www.useit.com, the website of usability guru Jakob Nielsen, is a useful place to start and both Steve Krug's book and the recent Arts Council England 'Practical guide to developing and managing websites' (by Roger Tomlinson and Vicki Allpress, Arts Council England, 2004. ISBN 0728710234) have good sections on how you can manage user-testing yourself. You should also ask prospective web developers what experience they have had of user testing and make sure you choose someone who can demonstrate an understanding of usability issues. However, you can also make a big difference just by trying to step into the shoes of your visitors for a moment (remembering that they're often unlikely to

behave in the same way as someone who works in the arts).

Customer benefit I'm well aware that this is yet another challenge to be faced by an already over-worked organisation – I can see people holding their heads already at the thought of yet more changes. The trouble is that too many organisations have got into the habit of never looking at themselves from the outside. You can see this in the way they describe themselves in print and it is often carried over on the website. I would argue that spending an hour or two taking a step back and trying to look at your site as if it were the first time you'd seen it has the potential to bring huge benefits to customers. If they can find information quicker, it will be much easier for them to engage with what you offer them – whether that be opportunities to attend, participate, donate or whatever – and that ultimately they'll have a better relationship with you all round. **Kieran Cooper, a director of the arts management consultancy Catalyst Arts.** www.catalystarts.com Extracted from an article first published in Arts Professional, issue 111, 12/2005.

Website publication 'Quality Principles for Cultural Websites: a Handbook', has been drawn to our attention. For further information, please consult <http://www.minervaeurope.org/userneeds/qualityprinciples.htm>

IMV hosts buyer/supplier workshop International Meeting Venues, one of the UK's leading representation companies for overseas destinations and conference venues, recently held a buyer/supplier workshop in London for International Association personnel. Held at the prestigious Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster, the workshop was targeted at associations who organise congresses that rotate around the globe on a regular basis. The aim was for IMV to learn more about how these associations choose their conference locations and to introduce them to relevant IMV member destinations to enable an exchange of business information.

IMV currently represents a wide spread of prime conference locations including Ireland, Istanbul (Turkey), Madrid,

Malaysia, Mexico City, Sandton (South Africa), Slovenia and Perth (Australia), most of whom were present at the workshop together with the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre itself. A number of high profile International and European Association buyers attended the event which provided them with one-to-one appointments with the destinations that they were most interested in.

IMV's Director, Mr Tom Hulton, said, "Our member destinations benefit from monthly sales leads for association congresses that have real potential to be held in their countries and we also organise a number of functions throughout the year to highlight their facilities. This workshop was the second of its kind that we have organised, the first being held last April at the IMEX Trade Show in Frankfurt. The IMV members find real benefit in being able to meet association buyers in an informal but business-orientated arena and already some very good contacts have been established".

"IMV is continuing to expand its representation into other countries worldwide and maintains a comprehensive database of associations and their congress requirements. We regularly organise site inspections to destinations of interest and as a result have been able to secure some very important meetings for our members, at the same time ensuring that the associations are provided with the information they require to make their job of organising their event very successful". For further information please contact International Meeting Venues at <http://www.imvenues.com> or telephone 0044 (0)118 934 5542.

Museum Values: interpretation and social realisation In September and October 2005 a series of seminars was held in Russia: in Kaliningrad at the Ocean Museum); in the Leo Tolstoy museum-estate "Yasnaya Polyana"; and in Volgograd at the Regional Local History Museum). The seminars were organised by the Association of Museum Professionals (Tula), the British Council, the non-commercial partnership 'Museum and Promotion' and the international foundation 'Heritage of Leo Tolstoy'.

The seminars were planned as a prelude to a new international partnership programme, whose purpose is to support creative initiatives in museums' exhibition activities. The programme of the seminars was based on the analysis of British and Russian museums' rich experience and it touched upon such important questions as a museum's mission and its expression in exhibition, methods and ways of creating exhibitions (including dialogue method and small-budget creative practices) and social communication in the museum space.

The programme of each seminar included lectures and discussions, and practical group work. The lectures were delivered by Barbara Woroncow, expert adviser for UNESCO, board member of ICOM, author of numerous works on museum activities, and they were based on the experience of British museums in the latest years. During practical sessions conducted by the seminars' co-ordinator Elena Shabourova (co-ordinator of international and interregional programmes of AMR, head of the Cultural Policy Office of the Yasnaya Polyana Museum-Estate), the participants were to find ways of applying that experience in Russian museums in accordance with Russian museum reality.

All in all, about 60 museum professionals took part in the seminars. They represented museums of quite different types (local history, war history, literary and memorial...). Those were museums from both capitals – Moscow and St. Petersburg, from regional centres such as Tula, Yaroslavl, Kazan, Kaliningrad, Orenburg, Volgograd, Kursk, Kaluga, and also smaller municipal museums. Besides, there were participants from Latvia and Kazakhstan.

The three seminars showed clearly that there is need to develop this project further, as was planned from the start.
Elena Petrova, Head of International Relations, Leo Tolstoy Museum and EMF National Correspondent