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MA Council News

Steve Garland (Bolton Museums, Art Gallery & Aquarium/ MA NW Regional Councillor/ member of the Professional Development and Equal Opportunities Committee)

As you will have seen, the MA is now happily installed in its new offices. Anyone who knew the old offices will remember that space was somewhat limited. The new place is a big improvement, with cats swinging all over the place!

The new unified Code of Ethics for the profession has just been produced after a lengthy consultation process. It combines the old separate individual and corporate codes.

The MA is now on a sound financial footing and a new Business Plan has been developed and discussed. Some of the elements of this have sprung from the results of the questionnaire completed by members, others from a workshop involving MA Council Members. The Association is aiming to become more market focussed, so the needs of individuals, organisations, partners etc will be paramount. There were lots of interesting figures pulled together as part of the planning process, though much that may have been expected, such as:

- lower paid members are under-represented at MA Conference
- Museum Practice is mostly subscribed to by higher paid and overseas members
- 45% of Conference delegates are not individual members
- between 48 and 92% of Seminar attendees are non-members

Major issues discussed in the Business Plan include:

- the role of the Conference (still attended by mainly higher grade officers, but is that maybe its role?) and the need for more accessible meetings in more locations around the UK
- the need for more events to cater for the specialist, technical and junior elements of the profession (closer working with specialist groups was discussed at the Council meeting)

- further campaigns for recruitment (membership is climbing steadily and healthily, topping 4,600 in 2001, but certain areas and groups within the profession are not well represented)
- Publications, especially the role, future and development of Museum Practice

The MA has commented on the future of the Designation Scheme. We discussed the need for the Designation Challenge Fund to be maintained or increased. Partnership bids were discussed and a number of difficulties were identified around them. Also there was concern that a major increase in new Designated Collections (especially if Libraries and Archives are added) would spread the DCF funding more thinly. An increase in transparency over identification of collections, with a peer review element would be welcomed.

Other hot issues on the agenda at present are Renaissance in the Regions (surprise, surprise!) and the new Freedom of Information Act and its implications for Museums. The latter has major implications for the workings of all public bodies.
Steve Garland

COLLECTIONS MONITORING

Mike Palmer has now stood down from committee after many years hard work, especially his sterling efforts heading up the Collections Monitoring Cell.

The cell monitored threats to Natural History collections, which typically arise when posts are lost, departments or museums closed. This is one of the most important roles of BCG and we are searching for someone to take over Mikes role. The job involves acting as a main contact person for anyone wishing to report or discuss collections at risk, making or organising initial contact and monitoring the situation as it progresses.

Full support is given through the committee and much of the work can be delegated to other committee members. If you would be interested in helping with this position please contact Steve Thompsen on: 01724 843533 e-mail (steve.thompson@northlincs.gov.uk),