Ffederasiwn Amgueddfeydd ac Orielau Celf Cymru
The Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales
Charity Registration No. 1102270

Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 30th November, Wrexham Museum

The Federation – Where are we now and what next?

NB: These notes are intended as an aide memoir to the session which took place following the business part of the AGM. They are not intended to act as formal minutes.

The Role of the Federation
Chris Delaney gave a presentation 'Wales – Working Together' originally given at the Museums Association Conference in October 2005. He explained that the Federation advocates for museums in Wales, CyMAL's role is to advise the Minister. Chris emphasised that the Federation has established a good relationship with CyMAL. Chris also emphasised the increased workload that the 'new federation' involves and said that the Federation welcomes ideas from people, but would ask them to be prepared to help in a practical way.

Communication
The Federation is aware that communication with its members is difficult. Improved communication between individuals is addressed by smaller groups such as the South Wales Museums group facilitated by Anna Smith. The development of the website we hope will improve communication. Chris invited those with comments on the website to talk to Andrew Deathe. Andrew added that the site will be developed further, including hosting a list of suppliers. There is an email group where people can exchange ideas. It is hosted by Yahoo, which we are aware is problematic for some organisations, we hope to move to another host in time. John Marjoram commented that it was useful to receive emails referring people to the website. We have considered issuing YMAG issued more regularly, however it is very time consuming to produce and it is often not possible to keep up with 'breaking news', hence the increased use of the website and email. We are aware that some people find it difficult to access the web, however mail shots are expensive and time consuming. Carol Whittaker said that small museums can approach CyMAL for help with getting online.

Digihub Equipment
Chris outlined the Digihub project, a project whereby high quality digitisation equipment, which is owned by the Federation is available for loan to museums in Wales. Currently sets are being used by Ceredigion Museum, Carmarthenshire Museum, Cynon Valley Museum, a consortium of museums led by Denbighshire Museums Service, South Wales Museum Group and Newport Museum. A set is about to become available. Please get in touch with Rachael Rogers, 01873 854282, rachaelrogers@monmouthshire.gov.uk if you are interested in borrowing a set.

MDA
The Federation has secured funding to provide every museum in Wales with membership of the MDA (museums who have already joined will be refunded), free

Documentation for Accreditation training sessions will be provided for staff in museums in Wales – 3 before 31st March 2006 in the North, South and West of Wales, and a further six 1st April 2006 and 31st March, 2008.

'What's in Store'
The Federation have been working with RCHM and NMGW on a project addressing the problems of Archaeological storage. We have received funding from CyMAL for a consultant to work on the project.

Welsh Database Project
We are developing the idea of a Welsh database project so we can develop a sense of what is in our dispersed national collection. This is an ambitious long-term project and would require museums to work together. It does raise the possibility of individual museums being nominated to focus on a particular collecting area.

Membership
The membership secretary is to identify independents who haven't joined the Federation, we need to make it clear how they benefit from membership.

Development Officer
We are considering the need for a Development Officer and will apply for funding from CyMAL. This will probably be on a consultancy type basis to avoid the problems of employing staff. The membership is happy for us to pursue this idea.

Other points raised
The Federation hopes to eventually fund projects.

Martin Everett raised that he would like feedback from museums who have gone through accreditation. Perhaps this could be incorporated into training on accreditation. It was suggested that we could include an article in YMAG on the website, or the Federation could organise a day incorporating feedback. The South Wales Museums Group are looking at an accreditation template.

It was brought up that some officers in Local Government were being asked to make cutbacks in mileage and asked whether help towards mileage costs for training sessions, would be available. Chris said we would look at it, but it was more likely we could pay for additional training sessions, which meant mileage was reduced.

Training
We have held the followed sessions, based on specific collection areas:
November 2004 – Agricultural Collections
May 2005 – Archaeological Collections.

In January 2006 we will be holding a workshop 'Dressing up the Past' – working with live interpreters.

Before March 31st 2006 we will be holding three 'Documentation for Accreditation' sessions.

Proposed Training
The following topics are being considered as potential workshops:

- Information about training and training providers – bringing together CyMAL, NVQ's AMA support groups, Creative and Cultural Sector Skills.
- Ethnography – an opportunity for the ethnography group to feed back on their report, possibly to include some identification.
- Contemporary collecting – what is it? Should we collect? How to put together a contemporary collecting policy. (Anna Smith mentioned Special Subject Networks for Contemporary Collecting.)
- Front of House Network – an opportunity for front of house staff to get to know each other and look at topics pertinent to them (this would not include curators etc.). The North West Federation run an event once a year. The British Museum are involved in something similar and Amgueddfa Cymru would be interested in getting involved. The National Trust run events, which may be pertinent to this. (Scott Reid mentioned that Cyfarthfa Castle send staff to museums during the winter on closed days.)

CyMAL Grant Scheme 2006/2007

There are two new areas of grants:

1. Strategic projects – looking at partnerships
2. Sharing the Treasure Scheme – Bi-annual scheme

The amount of money that you can apply for has increased. All schemes have been widened so you can receive up to 100% funding. There is no additional money though so competition will increase. CyMAL will ensure that money is distributed across Wales.

The Challenge Fund will make awards of between £2k and £10k
The Small Grants Scheme will make awards of between £200 and £3k (They may consider awards of under £200)

Limits have been removed on total project costs.
The application form has been restructured to improve quality of applications.

The priority areas in 2006/2006 are:
Accreditation, Access and Public Services including public engagement with collections, Collections Management – which benefit large parts of the collection, e.g. surveys, preventative conservation, emergency planning (remedial conservation remains grant-aidable but is not a priority area), Development of staff and audience. Training will be considered under all areas.

Museums and Galleries Month

CyMAL are encouraging museums to apply for money for Museums and Galleries Month. They will let people know outcome of mid by mid February to enable planning (money to be spent from April). CyMAL are trying to find out what people think about MGM – Are you interested in taking part? If not, why not? Does it do your museum any good? Does it have a role in Wales? Is it anglocentric? Carol Whittaker and John Marjoram are looking for feedback. This is the one area of marketing that CyMAL can get involved in for us. It was pointed out that it was useful to get museums name on national website. Problem in Wales is many small museums, all stretched for time. Is having a theme a problem?

Sharing the Treasures – Steve Grenter.

As part of the afternoon session, Steve outlined the experiences of Wrexham Museums in the Sharing the Treasures Scheme. They were an original partner along with Brecon Museum and Oriel Ynys Mon. Other partners have joined since and projects include The Palace in the Lake exhibition at Brecon Museum and the Glantorfaen Dining Room furniture display at Pontypool. The aim of the scheme is to work in partnership with NMGW to see national collections displayed across Wales. It is not a loans scheme as such.

Wrexham for its initial project had £30k (100% grant over 2yrs). This included £6,100 for new lighting, £13,213 for automatic fire detection and £10,000 for exhibition costs.

The second project looked to secure the Mold Gold Cape for display in North West Wales. They didn't want to show the cape in isolation, so they tied it in with an exhibition NMGW had already done 'Recreations: visualising our past'.
The costs were £20k security, £16k exhibition and education and lots of staff time
75% grant aid was provided over two years

Some pros:
Raised expectations
Improved facilities

Some cons:
Need to ensure you have staff capacity
Need diplomatic and management skills

Visitor figures are up by 300% compared to same period last year. Up to 1000 children have come in organised groups and 600 people came to the re-enactment.