

## **Front of House Day, National Museums Liverpool, 25th March 2004**

The Front of House Day organised by the NW Federation of Museums & Art Galleries was held at National Museums Liverpool on 25th March 2004 and proved to be a great success. This was the second such event to be generously supported by England's Northwest Tourism Skills Network following the successful event held at Norton Priory in September 2003 and, as it was over subscribed for the second time, proves the demand for this networking and training opportunity within the museums and art galleries sector.

The day began with an introduction by the NW Fed's President, Steve Garland who welcomed the delegates from as far afield as Carlisle, Manchester, Buxton, Rochdale, Bolton and Liverpool. Joanne Irvine, Front of House Manager at Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, gave an excellent presentation on "The changing face of front of house services", drawing on recent successes and innovations at Bolton. Next, Andrea Higginson, Merseyside Co-ordinator for England's Northwest Tourism Skills Network, spoke about the Network's role in promoting tourism training, skills and networks in the region as well as reminding delegates of the vast array of skills they draw upon daily as front of house staff! After Andrea's excellent presentation, delegates enjoyed a brilliant lunch and took advantage of the extended lunchtime to network with colleagues and visit NML's wonderful Walker Art Gallery.

After lunch, David Stainton, Access Consultant, gave some timely information on the Disability Discrimination Act and on how museums can best develop as accessible places for visitors. The afternoon was completed with a workshop opportunity for delegates to discuss current issues affecting front of house staff, including issues relating to education, interpretation, security and marketing. The vast range of experiences generated from the workshop groups makes fascinating reading and suggests that further opportunities for front of house staff to meet and exchange best practice ideas would be definitely worth exploring.

Thanks to all who attended and contributed and especially to Paul Khan and Steph Haig at NML for organising the fantastic Rex Makin theatre as the venue. Thanks to Mary Robinson, NW Fed Treasurer & Meetings Secretary who, as always, worked tirelessly on the organising of this event. Thanks to England's Northwest Tourism Skills Network, especially Andrea Higginson and Emma Clarke, without whose valuable support and financial assistance, this second innovative event could not have taken place.

Steve Miller  
NW Federation of Museums & Art Galleries