
International Training Programme

Museums Association Conference Report

4 – 12 October 2025



Supported by the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust

Summary

The British Museum's International Training Programme (ITP) seeks to develop a sustainable global network of inspired museum and heritage professionals, through sharing knowledge, skills and experiences. The ITP alumni now total 393 fellows from 65 countries, and the Museum aims to develop and deliver a wide range of projects and programmes to ensure the Programme thrives in the years ahead.

Philanthropic support for the ITP has enabled the British Museum to plan with added confidence and provide for the programme's growing network of culture and heritage professionals. Having taken part in the ITP Annual Programme, fellows become part of an active network in which they can participate and collaborate in the future. Legacy projects are essential to the objectives of the ITP; finding ways to give our fellows the widest possible opportunities for further training and development is fundamental. In October 2025, with the generous support of the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust, the Museum was able to support six ITP fellows to attend the Museums Association Annual Conference in Cardiff.

This report provides an overview of the scope and delivery of a week-long programme, held in London and Cardiff between 4 – 12 October 2025. The programme was attended by:

- Abdelrehim Moussa, Senior Curator, Museum of Islamic Art (Egypt, ITP 2012)
- Abdulrahman Al-Khafaji, Head of the Database Division, Iraq Museum (Iraq, ITP 2024)
- Marie-Antoinette Al Gemayel, Curator, Ministry of Culture, National Museum of Beirut (Lebanon, ITP 2016)
- Olena Shevchenko, Senior Researcher and Head of the Archaeological, Collections Management & Research Department Odesa Archaeological Museum, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Ukraine, ITP 2025)
- Richard Ohene-Larbi, Museum Educator, Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (Ghana, ITP 2024)
- Sayed Ahmed, Director of the Museum Display, The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (Egypt, ITP 2016)

These 6 fellows were selected from 12 of the ITP alumni through an open application process. For the fellows' full biographies, see Appendix.

At the British Museum

Before travelling to Cardiff, the group spent the morning at the British Museum with a welcome session led by the ITP team, followed by introductions and updates from the fellows. This was accompanied by a discussion on the future direction of ITP legacy projects, during which Amelia, ITP Coordinator (Legacy Projects), presented a proposal for a needs assessment survey designed to gather feedback from the network on current legacy offerings. Fellows contributed

thoughtful and constructive insights, identifying key areas and themes they felt should be priorities in future projects and reflecting on issues relevant the global museum sector.

“A key highlight was discussing the ITP’s future direction. We deliberated on collaboration areas, including digital exchange, mentorship, and regional professional hubs to sustain alumni engagement. These conversations showed how the ITP is evolving as a network for mutual learning and leadership development.”

Richard Ohene-Larbi (Ghana, ITP 2024)

The morning continued with a lunch attended by the ITP team and members of the British Museum’s International Working Group (IWG). The IWG plays a central role in the British Museum’s Masterplan and is currently embarking on a project to develop new curatorial approaches to interpreting the collection and developing the narratives that will underpin a comprehensive redisplay of the galleries. Comprising museum and cultural heritage experts from around the world, the group collaborates with Museum staff through monthly online meetings and workshops in London, contributing specialist knowledge to the development of outline briefs for new suites of permanent galleries at the British Museum.



ITP MA Conference fellows with the British Museum International Working Group.

The IWG represents a significant opportunity for global knowledge exchange, collaboration and co-curation. Nine ITP fellows are active members of the IGW, including:

- Tapunga Nepe, Director, Tairāwhiti Museum (New Zealand, ITP 2017)
- Zulkifli Ishak, Senior Curator, Islamic Arts Museum (Malaysia, ITP 2017)

- Haikun Bo, Curator/Research Fellow, The Palace Museum (China, ITP 2008)
- Aprille P Tijam, Associate Director and Head of Exhibitions and Collections, Ayala Museum (Philippines, ITP 2018)
- Heba Khairy, Senior Curator, Grand Egyptian Museum (Egypt, ITP 2017)
- Catalina Cavelier Adarve, Independent Heritage and Museums Consultant (Colombia, ITP 2019)
- William Nsuiban Gmayi, Head of Communications and Public Relations, Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (Ghana, ITP 2021)
- Pankaj Protim Bordoloi, Deputy Director, Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum (President House) Art Collection and Museum (India, ITP 2018)
- Nelson Abiti Adebo, Curator and Senior Conservator, Uganda National Museum (Uganda, ITP 2013)

Before departing, some fellows also took the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues across the Museum, and to visit the exhibition *Ancient India: living traditions*.

Museums Association Conference

The Museums Association (MA) is a professional membership organisation for museum, gallery and heritage professionals, organisation and companies that work within the sector. The MA aims to share knowledge, develop skills, inspire innovation and provide leadership while advocating for museums, setting ethical standards and running training and professional development programmes.

This year, speakers from across the UK and around the world came together to discuss the latest thinking about museums, galleries and heritage sites. The theme *perthyn* – the Welsh word meaning *to belong* – invited attendees to rethink the role of museums as places of connection and belonging, to re-examine how they engage with communities and to act on the idea that “belonging is not just a principle but a basic human right”.

“The theme of Belonging encouraged me to reflect on my role as a curator: as a connector between people, objects, and stories. Although I work with archaeological material, this theme reminded me that the past is most powerful when it resonates with today’s audiences. It prompted me to rethink how permanent exhibitions are interpreted: whose voices are included, which communities are represented, and how accessible our narratives are.”

Marie-Antoinette Gemayel (Lebanon, ITP 2016)

The conference explored how museums, collections and stories belong to everyone, and how representation, participation and agency form part of the right of communities to feel they belong. At a time marked by global political, social and economic change, the conference highlighted the importance of solidarity, friendship and community-building in museums. Sessions featured practical workshops, thematic talks and networking opportunities designed

to help museum professionals reflect on inclusion, equity and belonging, both within institutions and for the communities they serve.

The conference was hosted by St Fagans National Museum of History and social events organised by the Museums Association were held at the National Museum Cardiff and the Museum of Cardiff. As a result, fellows had the chance to see more museums in Cardiff, each with their varying collections and approaches to display.

Through attending the MA Conference, we were able to provide fellows with valuable additional opportunities for networking and professional development beyond those offered through the ITP annual programme. Our aim was to broaden their exposure to sector-wide discussions by enabling them to attend a diverse range of skills building sessions, hear from international colleagues about emerging practices and current projects, and contribute to debates on the future of museums and their audiences. The conference also created space for fellows to establish new professional connection, extending their networks beyond the scope of the programme's usual activities.



ITP MA Conference fellows outside St Fagans National Museum of History.

“The conference reinforced my belief that museums must be inclusive spaces that represent all voices and experiences. The concept of belonging reminded me that a museum’s true success lies in how it welcomes and involves its audiences – a message that will guide our future work at NMEC.”

Sayed Ahmed (Egypt, ITP 2016)

“The insights from the discussion on “Curriculum change and innovation in Wales” were relevant because of the revisions in Ghana’s primary and junior high school curricula. Learning how Welsh museum professionals are navigating new guidelines gave me ideas for adapting outreach and education programmes to suit school curricula.”

Richard Ohene-Larbi (Ghana, ITP 2024)

Networking

Networking was a key focus of the week, with evening events providing informal yet constructive opportunities for fellows, the ITP team, and wider conference delegates to connect and exchange ideas. We were particularly pleased to re-connect with Beimote Ngozi Etim (Nigeria, ITP 2017) who is currently undertaking studies in the UK and attended both days of the conference. Fellows also met with British Museum colleagues Majeeda Goodall, Dorset Foundation Project Manager: National Programmes and John Stokes, Head of National Programmes, who were also attending this year’s conference. These interactions further strengthened professional relationships and supported meaningful dialogue across the British Museum and the ITP global network.

“One of the most memorable parts of the day was the party at National Museum Cardiff. It was more than a social event – it was an opportunity to connect with colleagues in a relaxed setting and have deeper conversations... I talked about the situation in Ukraine, the challenges we face during the war and the resilience of our museum community. Many colleagues were genuinely interested and supportive. Some offered potential collaboration or simply wanted to stay in touch. This evening confirmed for me how important informal networking is in the museum sector.”

Olena Shevchenko (Ukraine, ITP 2025)

Additional Programming

Complementing participation in the MA Conference, a key aim of the week was to extend opportunities for fellows – and by extension their institutions – to deepen their professional knowledge, gain practical insights, and broaden their networks. To achieve this, the ITP team developed a tailored programme of visits across the South Wales region, enabling participants to engage directly with a diverse range of museum practices, heritage sites, and community focused initiatives.

Big Pit National Coal Museum

The first stop on the programme of visits was to Big Pit National Coal Museum. Located outside the town of Blaenavon, Big Pit is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that works to preserve South Wales’s rich coal mining heritage. Once a fully operational coal mine, Big Pit offers visitors a

powerful insight into the lives of miners and the industry that fuelled South Wales’s economy for over a century.

The group had time to explore the site and visit the Big Pit Mining Galleries which presented an audio-visual experience with exhibitions of modern mining equipment. Set into the hillside above the colliery, the galleries housed simulated underground workings and a multi-media presentation telling the story of how the Welsh mining industry evolved. Restored buildings such as the winding engine house, blacksmith’s forge, and miners’ baths revealed the broader social history of coal communities, bringing to life the stories of the people whose lives were impacted by the mine.

Below ground, the group took part in a ‘Job-A-Knock’ – an underground tour guided by former miners 300 feet below the surface through original tunnels, sharing first-hand stories of mining life and working conditions. It was a great example of how disused industrial heritage can be transformed into an educational experience, appealing to different audience groups including families and schools.



ITP MA Conference fellows and the ITP team ready to head underground.

“These visits enhanced my understanding of how museums interpret complex histories whilst maintaining community engagement. The visit to Big Pit National Coal Museum was an inspiring experience. It demonstrated how industrial heritage can be interpreted through lived experience and storytelling.”

Richard Ohene-Larbi (Ghana, ITP 2024)

Caerleon Roman Baths and Fortress

Located in the historic town of Caerleon near Newport, South Wales, the Caerleon Roman Fortress and Baths are among the best-preserved Roman sites in Britain. The fortress was

established around AD 75 as one of only three permanent legionary bases in Britain. It housed the Second Augustan Legion, a garrison of more than 5,000 soldiers, and played a vital role in securing Roman control over Wales.

The fortress included barracks, workshops, an amphitheatre, and extensive defensive walls, much of which can still be explored today. One of its most remarkable features is the Roman Baths complex, where soldiers relaxed, socialised, and exercised after their duties. The group were able to view the remains of the heated changing rooms, underfloor heating systems, and an open-air swimming pool, as well as coins and other small artefacts that fell into the pool nearly 2,000 years ago. The fellows were impressed by the use atmospheric lighting, audio soundscape, and projected reconstructions to help visitors imagine how the baths once looked. Across the road the group visited the well-preserved amphitheatre where they also had the opportunity to interact informally with local visitors.



ITP MA Conference fellows and the ITP team at Caerleon.

National Roman Legion Museum

Following their visit to the remains of the amphitheatre, the group explored the National Roman Legion Museum. The museum researches, preserves and displays more than half a million objects from the nearby Roman fortresses of Caerleon and Usk, offering insight into the military, domestic, and cultural lives of the soldiers who lived and trained there. Its collections include weapons, armour, tools, pottery, jewellery, and a wide range of everyday objects excavated from the region. For the fellows, the visit provided a valuable opportunity to observe

how a smaller, specialised museum approaches interpretation, display and community engagement, offering an instructive contrast to the national museums visited in Cardiff.

Although no formal meeting had been scheduled, museum staff were very welcoming and generous took time to speak with the fellows. They answered questions and shared details about the museum's education and schools' programmes, contributing to a productive and informative visit.

Outcomes

Clear and immediate results are demonstrated in the fellows' reports, which they each wrote on their time spent on their legacy projects:

- Fellows reported gaining new insights and ideas that they intend to implement within their home institutions.
- New connections were established with international museum professionals, with strong potential for future collaboration.
- Fellows broadened their professional and personal perspectives on the evolving role of museums within society.
- Relationships across different ITP cohorts were strengthened, fostering deeper peer-to-peer support.
- Participants expressed a clear commitment to sharing and disseminating their learning with colleagues upon returning home.
- The programme reinforced and enhanced relationships between The British Museum, the Museums Association and the wider ITP global network.
- The programme provided fellows with valuable support that enabled reflective thinking and reassessment of their career development pathways.
- Fellows contributed to and confirmed the strategic direction of the ITP for 2026-2030, offering meaningful input into future planning.

“I plan to develop more participatory approaches in exhibitions and programmes giving visitors and community members a stronger voice in shaping interpretation and storytelling. Seeing examples of co-curated displays in Cardiff demonstrated how shared ownership can make collections more relevant and engaging.”

Abdelrehim Moussa (Egypt, ITP 2012)

“I learned a great deal from colleagues worldwide, including innovative ways to connect cultural heritage with contemporary audiences, practical methods for exhibition design, and strategies for collaboration across institutions. These insights, combined with what I gained from the ITP 2024 training, will directly inform and enhance my work.”

Abdulrahman Al-Khafaji (Iraq, ITP 2024)

“Throughout the conference, I gained practical knowledge in fundraising, accessibility, digitalisation and inclusive communication. I now plan to improve our exhibition texts, develop clearer reporting for donors, start building a digital catalogue and encourage my colleagues to adopt more visitor-focused practices... The MA Conference gave me confidence, inspiration and concrete strategies for change. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity and believe it will have a lasting impact on my institution and on the wider Ukrainian museum community.”

Olena Shevchenko (Ukraine, ITP 2025)

Conclusion

The International Training Programme’s ninth visit to the Museums Association Conference offered fellows a valuable platform for dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas. Once again, the experience proved both inspiring and energising. Unlike the more structured format of the Annual Programme, the conference introduces a different dynamic enabling fellows to engage more independently with the UK’s cultural sector and to tailor their learning by exploring areas of personal and professional interest.

At its core, the ITP aims to foster a strong, connected global network of museum professionals. This MA legacy project further advances that mission by deepening relationships across the sector, strengthening international partnerships, and contributing to a more resilient and collaborative global museum community.

The British Museum is very grateful to the Marie-Louise Motesiczky Charitable Trust for its involvement and encouragement of the project, and for providing support to enable fellows to attend.

Acknowledgements

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The British Museum remains grateful to the range of trusts, foundations and individuals who support the annual International Training Programme each year.

Special thanks to the following institutions for their invaluable contributions to the MA Conference programme:

The British Museum International Working Group

The Museums Association

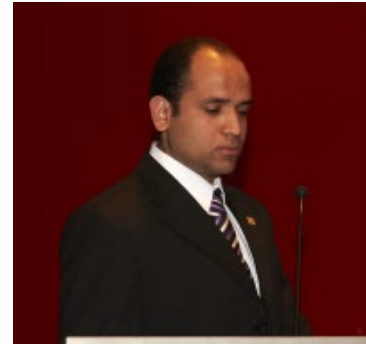
Big Pit National Coal Museum

National Roman Legion Museum

Appendix – fellows’ biographies

Abdelrehim Hanafi Moussa

Senior Curator
Museum of Islamic Art
Egypt
ITP 2012



Abdelrehim Hanafi Moussa is Senior Curator at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, where he oversees the documentation and registration of newly accessioned objects and manages specialist departments responsible for metalwork, ceramics, glass, wood, ivory, jewellery, carpets, stone, and manuscripts. In addition to curatorial responsibilities, he engages directly with visitors, offering expert interpretation of objects, and supports students undertaking research in art, archaeology, and history.

Abdelrehim plays a key role in exhibition planning and delivery. He is currently preparing an international exhibition on the Holy Qur’an and previously contributed to The Direction of Mosque exhibition at the Ithra Museum in Saudi Arabia. His work centres on creating inclusive and participatory museum experiences that reflect the diverse voices and identities of the communities they serve. By prioritising co-creation and shared authority in exhibition development and programming, he aims to challenge traditional power dynamics within museum spaces.

Abdelrehim formerly served as Chief of the Department of Manuscripts at the Museum of Islamic Art. His research interests include sundials and astronomy in Islamic civilizations, and he recently completed a PhD focused on Islamic religious architecture in Mauritania. He was actively involved in the reopening of the Museum of Islamic Art following bomb damage in 2014 and was selected to attend the American Alliance of Museums Conference in Seattle in 2015. His professional development includes training on safeguarding Egyptian cultural heritage with the Levantine Foundation and participation in the DAAD Cairo Akademie workshop Making Museums Matter: How Museums and Exhibitions Can Become More Attractive for Visitors.

Looking to the future, Abdelrehim envisions museums as interactive, dynamic spaces that educate and inspire through immersive experiences. He advocates for integrating digital technologies across the visitor journey – beginning before a museum visit even starts – to transform audiences from passive observers into active participants.

At the British Museum

During his time on the International Training Programme in 2012, Abdelrehim was based in the Department of Egypt and Sudan. His UK Partner Placement was spent at National Museum Wales.

ITP Newsletter Publications

ITP Newsletter Issue 3 (2016), Bulletin Board

Abdulrahman Al-Khafaji

Head of the Database Division and
Coordinator and Focal Point
Iraq Museum
Iraq
ITP 2024



Abdulrahman is the Head of the Database Division at the Iraq Museum and serves as the official coordinator and focal point between the Iraq Museum and all foreign museums and cultural institutions worldwide. His role includes managing and developing the museum's collections database, ensuring accurate documentation of artefacts, and supporting both local and international researchers.

He previously worked in the Department of Ancient Writings and Cuneiforms, which specialises in clay tablets and vessels inscribed in Aramaic, Syriac, and Hebrew. There, he contributed to the documentation and inventory of the department's holdings and participated in committees related to exhibitions, object acquisitions, and the receipt of artefacts from across Iraq and abroad.

During his time at the British Museum as part of the International Training Programme, Abdulrahman was particularly interested in learning about modern techniques in conservation, documentation, and storage. He now aims to implement these methods within the Iraq Museum to enhance the long-term preservation and professional management of collections.

At the British Museum

Abdulrahman was based in the Department of the Middle East, and his UK partner placement was hosted by Tyne & Wear Museums and Archives in Newcastle.

ITP Newsletter Publications

ITP Newsletter Issue 12 (2025), Access and Inclusion

Marie-Antoinette Al Gemayel

Curator
National Museum of Beirut
Lebanon
ITP 2016



Marie-Antoinette Al Gemayel is an Archaeologist and is currently working as a Curator at the National Museum of Beirut. Her research background is in glassmaking in Antiquity and her master's thesis is entitled *La conservation du verre dans les réserves du musée National de Beyrouth* (The conservation of glass in the reserve of National Museum Beirut).

Her work sees her responsible for the management of storehouses, inventory, and collection database, as well as working on the development of exhibitions both nationally and internationally.

Marie-Antoinette is currently working on a project to manage and convert two storehouses in the National Museum into publicly accessible depots, allowing visitors to explore parts of the collection typically kept in storage.

Previously, Marie-Antoinette worked in the Mobile Archaeology Properties team at the National Museum which involved preventive conservation of archaeological artefacts and long-term storage of the excavated artefacts. Her work consisted mainly in finds-processing in the warehouse and the lab, management, inventory, documentation and treatment.

At the British Museum

During her time on the International Training Programme in 2016, Marie-Antoinette was based in the Department of the Middle East. Her UK Partner Museum was The Collection – Art and Archaeology in Lincolnshire.

ITP Newsletter Publications

ITP Newsletter Issue 4 (2017), Your collection in focus: Melted objects at the National Museum of Beirut

Olena Shevchenko

Senior Researcher and Head of the
Archaeological
Collections Management & Research
Department
Odesa Archaeological Museum
National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
Ukraine
ITP 2025



Olena is the Head of the Archaeological Collections Management & Research Department at Odesa Archaeological Museum, where she oversees the curation, preservation, and study of artifacts in the museum's collection.

Currently, Olena is on secondment in London, working on a research project at King's College London's Department of Classics. Her primary task is creating a trilingual version of the Inscriptions of the Northern Black Sea Region (INBS) database, which involves translating inscriptions and developing a database of technical terms using Oxygen XML in Ukrainian. As well as this, Olena is currently researching Sarmatian funerary practices, building on her PhD studies.

Despite being abroad, Olena maintains an active role in supporting the Odesa Archaeological Museum. This includes consulting on new exhibitions, assisting with grant applications, advising on artifact preservation, and supporting colleagues working with catalogues. A significant part of her role involves mentoring junior colleagues in all aspects of museum work, from research methodologies to collection management. This dual position allows Olena to bridge academic research with practical museum operations and gives her the opportunity to foster international collaboration and knowledge exchange in the field of archaeology and museum studies.

During her time on the International Training Programme, Olena built close contacts with museum professionals from around the world, which she hopes will lead to future projects and collaborations. Olena is passionate about disseminating the knowledge gained during the ITP with her colleagues still working in Ukraine under martial law.

At the British Museum

During her time at the British Museum, Olena was based in the Greece and Rome Department and her UK partner placement was spent at Lincoln Museum and University of Nottingham Museum.

Richard Ohene-Larbi

Museum Educator
Ghana Museums and Monuments Board
Ghana
ITP 2024



Richard Ohene-Larbi is a Museum Educator working for the Ghana National Museum, under the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) where he develops and delivers educational programmes, community or public engagement activities, and facilitates guided tours that connect audiences with Ghana's cultural heritage. Richard also collates and analyses visitor statistics and comments to help the education department understand the concerns of their audiences and find ways to mitigate issues in order to improve the visitor experience.

Currently, Richard is completing a PhD in Museum and Heritage Studies at the University of Ghana. His doctoral research investigates the repatriation and loan of looted Asante regalia to the Manhyia Palace Museum in Kumasi, Ghana. It examines the perspectives of local stakeholders on restitution, the rituals associated with repatriation, and the implications of loan conditions on museum practice in Ghana. Richard is passionate about creating space for discussions on the topic of restitution, as he feels there is an absence of museum educators and heritage practitioners from Ghana in the current discourse.

During his time on the International Training Programme, Richard was interested in developing an understanding of museum education programmes from an international perspective. He has since gone on to implement his learning into his own work, developing education programmes around a 2024 British Museum loan of 15 Ghanaian objects to the Manhyia Palace Museum in Kumasi.

At the British Museum

During his time at the British Museum, Richard was based in the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas and his UK partner placement was spent at Norfolk Museum Service.

Sayed Ahmed

Head of Museum Display Department
National Museum of Egyptian Civilization
Egypt
ITP 2016



Sayed is the Director of the Museum Display Department at The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC), where he leads the planning and development of permanent and temporary exhibitions and serves as the official spokesperson for archaeological affairs. With over twenty years of experience in museum curation and heritage management, he has contributed significantly to NMEC's major projects, including the Central Core Exhibition, the Textile Gallery, and the celebrated Royal Mummies Galleries.

Sayed began his career at NMEC in 2004 as a curator, later becoming Senior Curator before assuming his current leadership role. Among his key achievements was overseeing the transfer, documentation and display of twenty royal mummies from the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir to NMEC, a historic project inaugurated in April 2021. His work reflects a strong commitment to preserving Egypt's cultural heritage while making it accessible to diverse audiences.

Academically, Sayed holds a PhD in Heritage and Museum Studies and a Master's degree in Museum Studies from Helwan University, alongside earlier studies in archaeology and museology at Cairo University. His research focuses on the role of university museums in Egypt within a global context, exploring the balance between education, research, and public access.

A board member of ICOM Egypt, Sayed is dedicated to museum education, community engagement, and strengthening the role of museums as spaces for dialogue and cultural connection.

At the British Museum

During his time on the International Training Programme in 2016, Sayed was based in the Department of Egypt and Sudan. His UK Partner Placement was spent at Manchester Museum and Manchester Art Gallery.

Legacy Projects

In October 2018 Sayed attended the ITP+ Course on Interpretation in Aswan. Fellows and colleagues from Egypt, Sudan and around the world listened to interpretation case studies and participated in project work, sessions on label and panel writing and panel discussions on audience surveys and evaluations. The course was hosted by the Nubia Museum.

In 2023 Sayed was awarded an ITP Conference Grant to attend the XIIIth International Congress of Egyptologists at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

ITP Newsletter Publications

ITP Newsletter Issue 4, Bulletin Board