

The future of ARLIS UK & Ireland – 2017 onwards

ARLIS has reached a turning point. The purpose of this document is to alert the wider membership of the current situation in the hope that everyone

- a) will become more engaged in running and contributing to the society.
- b) have sufficient information to enable them to come along to the AGM to vote on proposed changes to membership

ARLIS can no longer function as it has done. The recent departure of the Business Manager through redundancy means that volunteers will have to do all the work of running the Society. There will be a time of rethinking all we do and even of cutting back on some activities until volunteers step forward. It may be necessary to restructure the existing Council and Committee structure to make it more flexible, responsive, and more appealing to would be volunteers. It was apparent from the membership survey feedback and from subsequent discussions at Council that there is a very wide a range of viewpoints as to what constitutes the core business of ARLIS and indeed what our membership demographic actually is and what we would like it to be. There was no obvious single course of action rising out of the feedback, which in any case only came from a relatively small proportion of our membership. Therefore the draft outline plan, below, put together by the membership working group and council members strips things back to basic structures and aims, rather than trying to define too many things or set limits. This is so that we can have a simple structure in place as soon as possible.

Context based on Council discussions and results of membership survey conducted in 2015

The library sector in the UK and Ireland has changed in the last 10 to 15 years and this has adversely affected membership societies and groups that grew up organically (often in a time of expansion in the HE sector) to address specialist areas of the library (museums and archives, as well) sector. These are fee-paying groups whose work is dependent, largely, on the unpaid work and commitment of its membership.

Over time, personal membership has declined as the sector has declined. Many institutions, while supportive of sending staff to some events and in purchasing ARLIS publications, have withdrawn other support, such as providing free venues, on which ARLIS had long relied. This has necessitated charging increased fees for events, most of which remain highly successful, but often do not generate as much income for the Society. As the number of people working in libraries has also reduced, so has their ability to participate actively in the governance of the Society. The need to create and maintain an online presence in a rapidly changing environment has also been a financial drain that has resulted in neither a reliable platform for the Society's activities nor a flexible and easy to maintain tool for the one paid member of staff and the volunteer committee members.

These changes, among others, have resulted in a loss of income at a time of increases in expenditure for running costs. ARLIS Council realised it was no longer viable to have a paid member of staff or an office. The procedures of redundancy were followed and Council members are now in the process of taking on the work formerly undertaken by the paid staff member.

Without a paid staff member and reduced numbers of members and volunteers (the Chair-Elect position has remained vacant since the AGM and the current Chair's term ends at the AGM of 2017), this is a proposal for a reduction of ARLIS UK & Ireland to its core activities. Anything beyond these core activities could arise in the future from a grass-roots movement of enthusiastic volunteers. With this pared-down model, there is no drive to make a profit, just to cover costs. This plan is dependent on current and potential members becoming more involved and taking the Society further into its next 50 years and the scale of activity will depend on the interests and energy of those coming forward to volunteer. It should be noted that there is currently some scepticism amongst Council members whether even the most basic activities can be undertaken with current resources.

Outline plan:

Membership	PROPOSAL: We adopt a single type of Personal membership only. There would be no institutional memberships Members would have a membership number and need to quote it when booking (like with CILIP) Only members can take part in any activities and activities (conference / workshops) [OR members would have priority booking for events] and events would be priced to encourage non-members to join. The membership rate would be kept as low as feasible to encourage joiners.	
Governance	PROPOSAL: Review Council structure. Create new roles such as Membership officer Finance officer to help Hon Treasurer Education/Professional Development officer; National Co-ordination officer Communication/marketing and outreach officer/s	
Committees	PROPOSAL: All committees to be reviewed: Keep committees only if they are necessary for core activities and there are enough people to run them.	
Activities	Conference / annual symposium Annual General Meeting	PROPOSAL: The AGM and Annual Conference to be combined into a single event. Although some members value a three day conference others are unable to take part therefore we should experiment with formats especially ones which are easier and cheaper to run.
	<i>Art libraries journal</i>	PROPOSAL: To be available via subscription only and not be part of the membership package.
	Other publications	PROPOSAL: Publish nothing further unless financial risk to the Society assessed

	Events eg workshops	We can only offer what we have the capacity to undertake.
	Awards	To come from special funds earmarked for this purpose only
	Online activities	PROPOSAL: Review our online presence and find most effective platform and methods of communications
Costs under this plan	Costs of running the Society should be kept to a minimum and the most efficient ways of meeting operating adhered to.	
Income under this plan	Conference Workshops <i>Art Libraries Journal</i> Memberships- subscriptions	

Action

Proposal for change of membership structure to be brought to 2017 AGM

The existing committees and Council will review activities and offer what we realistically can.

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