

VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK

Registered charity number 1114742

Annual Report and Accounts

1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008



www.vssn.org.uk

Address for official correspondence:

Voluntary Sector Studies Network, Room B010, Eddie Newcombe Student Services
Centre, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL

ANNUAL REPORT

Legal and Constitutional Details

- Name of organisation: Voluntary Sector Studies Network
- Legal form: Unincorporated charitable association governed by Constitution adopted 21 May 2003 (last amended 14 May 2008).
- Charitable status: Registered charity in England & Wales number 1114742
- Correspondent: Louise Cole (Executive Officer)
Voluntary Sector Studies Network
Room B010
Eddie Newcombe Student Services Centre
University of Manchester, Oxford Road
Manchester M13 9PL
- Telephone: 0161 275 8066
- Fax: 0161 275 2036
- Central e-mail: info@vssn.org.uk
- Website: www.vssn.org.uk
- Objects: The objects of VSSN are the advancement of public education concerning the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom:
- (1) by the promotion and diffusion of knowledge; and
 - (2) by the publication of research; and
 - (3) by the encouragement of contact between workers in relevant fields of enquiry; and
 - (4) by undertaking such other activities (being charitable in law) as shall be conducive to the attainment of these objects.
- Trustees: The trustees of VSSN are the Steering Group. The following persons were trustees at 31 July 2008 (all served for the full year unless otherwise indicated). Positions shown are as at 31 July 2008. There were no changes in the trustees between 31 July 2008 and the date of approval of this Annual Report. (Affiliations are given for information only – all Steering Group members serve as individuals.)
- Chair: Prof Peter Halfpenny (University of Manchester)
- Secretary: Dr Angela Ellis Paine (Institute for Volunteering Research)
- Treasurer: Cathy Pharoah (CASS Business School) (*from November 2007*)

Web Officers: Dr Nick Plant (University of the West of England)
Véronique Jochum (NCVO)
Marketing Officer: Dr Rob Macmillan (Sheffield Hallam University)
External Affairs Officers: Prof Peter Alcock (University of Birmingham)
Dr Jeremy Kendall (University of Kent)

Other trustees who served during the year were: Prof Gareth Morgan (*served until 28 November 2007*)

Appointment of trustees: Up until 14 May 2008, the Constitution has allowed for up to 10 trustees, up to 8 of whom are elected by the VSSN members at the Annual General Meeting, and two may be co-opted. All trustees stand down at the AGM but are eligible for reappointment. All of the trustees at 31 July 2008 were elected (or re-elected) at the AGM in November 2007. Following changes to the Constitution, made on 14 May 2008, future arrangements will allow for up to 9 trustees, elected for a maximum three year period, with three elected at each Annual General Meeting. An additional two trustees may be co-opted.

Steering Group Report: VSSN activities during the year ending 31 July 2008

It has been another year of steady progress for VSSN. The Steering Group has continued to be active, working together with members and other partners to develop the Network, consolidating its position as the key organisation serving the UK voluntary sector research community. Key highlights are summarised below.

Changes to our constitution:

Members present at the Special General Meeting in May voted unanimously for the proposed amendments to VSSN's constitution affecting terms of office and elections for Steering Group members. Steering Group members will now serve a three-year term of office, with the possibility of serving a maximum of two consecutive terms. Rather than all steering group members standing down and all being elected each year, there will now be a rolling programme of election to help ensure continuity.

Journal:

The Steering Group has been leading on the development of a new voluntary sector studies journal. Central to this process has been a series of discussions with Policy Press, to whom a proposal has been submitted. Following an external review process, Policy Press has given a positive response. In addition, following a successful application, VSSN has received £5,000 from the Big Lottery Fund to help cover start-up costs for the journal. The next steps for the Steering Group will be to consult with members as to the coverage of the Journal, its editorial board and its pricing structure.

Building partnerships:

Members of the Steering Group have met twice with the Knowledge Transfer Team at the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) to explore areas for potential collaboration. Meanwhile, informal partnership links have been established with ARNOVA and ISTR, and our successful partnership with NCVO continues to grow,

not least through the ongoing success of the annual Research Conference (see below).

Course directory:

A new voluntary sector Course Directory has been launched online, and already contains details of 20 courses offered by universities around the country. We are particularly grateful to Robert Dalziel for his help in compiling this list.

Membership:

VSSN's membership continues to grow. At 31 July 2008 there were 130 individual (2007: 98) and three organisational formal members of VSSN (entitled to vote).

Discussion List:

In addition to the formal membership, a total of 387 (2007:325) persons were registered as subscribers to the VSSN e-mail discussion list, which has continued to provide a space for lively discussion among colleagues and an important point of information sharing. We are grateful for Jill Mordaunt who continues to perform an excellent role as discussion list moderator.

Website:

Regular updates, conference reports, member contact details and links have been added to the www.vssn.org.uk website throughout the year. The site received 4,610 visitors over the year. Alongside the maintenance of the existing site, planning is under way for a new site, which will maximise the use of new technology.

Events:

2007 Annual Conference

VSSN hosted the annual research conference in partnership with NCVO for the fourth time in 2007, on 5 - 6 September, at the University of Warwick. The programme included three keynote speakers, alongside over 50 research papers in approximately 20 sessions and workshops. Delegates included over 140 from 25 universities (including people from Poland, Germany, Italy, USA, Uganda and Japan), around 60 from the voluntary sector, 15 from government agencies and a handful of consultants. We are grateful to colleagues at NCVO for their work on the conference.

Day Seminars

Two successful day conferences were held during the course of the year, continuing to provide learning and networking opportunities. A very successful November Day Conference was held at the University of Birmingham, attended by over 40 members and others and including five stimulating papers. The Day Conference in May 2008 took place at the University of the West of England in Bristol and was well-attended, with 33 participants and lively discussions after each of the five papers. We are grateful to both Universities and our colleagues therein for hosting these events.

Responding to consultations:

The Steering Group have also been active in responding to a number of consultations of behalf of VSSN members, such as for the new Third Sector Research Centre and the ESRC VCS Engagement Strategy.

Steering Group meetings:

The Steering Group has met twice during the year, with both meetings coinciding with the day seminars. The Steering Group has also met virtually via its email discussion list throughout the year, ensuring that communication and work continues effectively between meetings.

The Annual General Meeting of VSSN was this year supplemented by a Special General Meeting in May 2008 called in order to solicit the views of members on a proposed change to the constitution (see above).

Executive Officer:

We are now in the second year of our contract with AUA to provide an Executive Officer function for VSSN. This role was fulfilled over most of the year by Felix Mussell, with Louise Cole taking over in the last month. Felix and Louise have ensured that all enquiries to VSSN are dealt with efficiently, while the main focus of their work has been on handling the membership renewal process and the day conference booking process. The Executive Office post has effectively freed up Steering Group members to concentrate on the strategic development of the network.

Financial Review:

The trustees have elected to prepare the accounts on a receipts and payments basis in accordance with s42(3) of the Charities Act 1993 and applying relevant recommendations issued by the Charity Commission in relation to the presentation of receipts and payments accounts.

The income of VSSN is not sufficient to require audit or independent examination of the accounts, but the trustees have conducted individual checks on the figures before approving the accounts.

The accounts show that the charity has achieved a small surplus of receipts over payments of £547.26, mainly due to increased income from seminar fees and early payment of subscriptions. Total membership income for 2007/08 was down £90 on the previous year, after excluding advance subs. The introduction of an organisational member fee has proved attractive, with 3 organisational subscriptions this year.

It is hoped that membership of VSSN will continue to grow. Although no increase in membership fee is anticipated for 2008/09, the membership fee will be reviewed in the light of membership income in 2008/09 to see if a small increase would be prudent. This will be considered alongside any increase in membership related to the inclusion of a journal as part of the membership package.

VSSN also won a grant of £5,000 from the Big Lottery Fund towards the cost of journal development.

Expenditure was considerably higher than 2006/07 as VSSN successfully absorbed the first full year of the costs of AUA Executive Officer administrative help as well as supporting EO expenses. The Steering Group will set a minimum for EO expenses for 2008/09. A small additional postal cost of £23.04 for AUA services in relation to a

membership mailing was incurred above the agreed fee of £3000 per annum, and within the agreed terms of the contract.

The Steering Group agreed a formal *reserves policy* during the year. Subscriptions are received mainly at the start of the year, but the obligations for the Executive Officer (EO) role arise quarterly and are subject to 3 months notice, so the Steering Group considers that at any time VSSN must have sufficient funds in hand to cover both the current and next quarter for the EO contract. In addition, a small reserve is needed for ad hoc expenses, and until the membership exceeds 100, some of the donations from previous years will be needed to subsidise the costs of the EO contract once it becomes payable for a full year. Taking these factors together, the Steering Group considers that VSSN requires reserves of at least £2500 at year end. As at 31.7.2008 the total balance of the General Fund was £4004.74 in cash terms, but £800 of this relates to advance subscriptions for next year giving an effective balance of £3204.36. The current reserves figure is thus £704.36 more than the Steering Group's minimum requirement. This will allow for some small further investment in development work in the coming year.

We are grateful to Gareth Morgan for providing advice on the accounts.

Approval

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for keeping proper accounting records for the charity, for safeguarding the charity's funds from loss, and for preparing an Annual Report and Annual Accounts to comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 1993.

This Annual Report has been prepared to comply with the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2005, taking advantage of simplifications available to non-auditable charities. It was approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 12 November 2008 and signed on their behalf by:

Angela Ellis Paine

Cathy Pharoah

Angela Ellis Paine (Secretary)

Cathy Pharoah (Treasurer)

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Receipts and Payments Account

01 Aug 06 –
31 July 07

01 Aug 07 –
31 July 08

Receipts

(£)		(£) Unrestricted	(£) Restricted	Total
16.54	Donations	0.00		
690.00	Seminar Fees - members	995.00		
2890.00	Member Subscriptions	2440.00		
175.00	Seminar Fees - non members	175.00		
0.00	Orgn Member Subs	360.00		
0.00	Gift-aid Tax Refunds	0.00		
0.00	Interest Received	0.00		
190.00	Advance Subs for next year	800.00		
	Big Lottery Fund Grant		5000.00	
3961.54	Total Receipts	4770.00	5000.00	9770.00

Payments

384.58	Expenses of VSSN Events	812.40		
269.07	Banner stand purchase	0.00		
0.00	Conf. Fee	0.00		
134.49	Publications Expenses	0.00		
55.46	Website Expenses	80.30		
60.70	Post/Tel. Expenses	0.00		
126.80	Trustees Travel Expenses	0.00		
750.00	Fees – Exec. Officer Services	3023.04		
0.00	Expenses – Exec. Officer	307.00		
22.50	Exec. Officer Recruitment Costs	0.00		
1803.60	Total Payments	4222.74	0.00	
2157.94	Surplus (or deficit)	547.26	5000.00	
1299.16	Balance brought forward 01.08.07	3457.10	0.00	
3457.10	Balance carried forward 31.07.08	4004.36	5000.00	

TOTAL

9004.36

Notes to the Accounts

1. The role of Executive Officer is provided by a contract between VSSN and the Association of University Administrators at a total fee (including VAT) of £3000 per annum. The contract lasts 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2010 ((subject to 3 months notice by either party).

2. Steering Group members or their institutions normally meet their own travel expenses when Steering Group meetings are held on the same day as VSSN seminars, and VSSN appreciates this support.

3. All income and expenses of the NCVO/VSSN Researching the Voluntary Sector Conference are handled by NCVO and do not therefore appear in these accounts.

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

31 July 07		31 July 08
(£)		(£)
	Monetary Assets	
	Cash at Band and In Hand	
3457.10	Unity Trust Bank Current A/c	9004.36
3457.10	Total Monetary Assets	9004.36
	Represented by Funds	
	Restricted Funds	5000.00
3457.1	General Fund	4004.36
3457.10	Total Funds	9004.36
	Non-Monetary Assets & Liabilities	
NONE	Non-Monetary Assets	NONE
	Current Liabilities	
190.00-	Subs Received in Advance	800.00-
1000.00	4 Mths Exec. Officer Commitment*	1000.00-
1190.00	Total Creditors Due Within One Year	1800.00-
1190.00	Total Non-Monetary Assets/Liabilities	1800.00-

*This represents the amount due for July 2008, plus the minimum 3 months notice on the agreement.

These Accounts were approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 12 November 2008 and signed on their behalf by:

Peter Halfpenny

Peter Halfpenny (Chair)

Cathy Pharoah

Cathy Pharoah (Treasurer)