

VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK

Registered charity number 1114742

Annual Report and Accounts

1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009



www.vssn.org.uk

Address for official correspondence:

Executive Office, Voluntary Sector Studies Network, AUA National Office, 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 AUA National Office 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:	<p>The objects of VSSN are the advancement of public education concerning the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(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:	<p>The trustees of VSSN are the Steering Group. The following persons were trustees at 31 July 2009 (all served for the full year unless otherwise indicated). Positions shown are as at 31 July 2009. 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.</p>
Chair:	Prof Peter Halfpenny (University of Manchester)
Secretary:	Dr Angela Ellis Paine (Institute for Volunteering Research)

Treasurer:	Prof Cathy Pharoah (CASS Business School)
Web Officers:	Dr Nick Plant (University of the West of England) Véronique Jochum (NCVO)
Marketing Officer:	Dr Rob Macmillan (University of Birmingham)
External Affairs Officer:	Prof Chris Cornforth (Open University)
Journal Liaison Officer:	Prof Peter Alcock (University of Birmingham)
Annual Conference Officer:	Colin Rochester (Roehampton University)
Directories Officer:	Dr Mary Corcoran (Keele University)

Other trustees who served during the year were: Dr Jeremy Kendall (*served until 12 November 2008*)

Appointment of trustees: As of 14 May 2008, VSSN members elect up to nine trustees to serve a three-year term of office on a rolling basis, with three elected at each Annual General Meeting. An additional two trustees may be co-opted. All of the trustees at 31 July 2008 were elected (or co-opted in the case of Nick Plant) at the AGM in November 2008. As this was the first year since the introduction of the new voting rules, the initial terms of officer were set according to the results of the Single Transferable Vote, establishing an annual cycle of three members to be elected each year. Trustees may serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms of office.

Steering Group Report: VSSN activities during the year ending 31 July 2009

This year has seen considerable developments within 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.

New Journal: Voluntary Sector Review

The Steering Group has been successful in negotiating with The Policy Press to launch a new journal focusing on the third sector. This is a major development for the Network and for the voluntary sector research community as a whole. The first edition of Voluntary Sector Review will be launched in spring 2010, with three issues to be published per volume each year. For the first year of the Journal the Steering Group has been acting as the Editorial Management Board and the Editorial Team. The two groups have worked together with The Policy Press to: establish the format of the journal (which will include international and UK-focused academic papers, alongside policy and practice sections); develop the governance and pricing structures; recruit an international Editorial Advisory Board of sixteen eminent members; and produce the first issues. Elections for a new Editorial Management Board will take place in November 2009, with nominations sought from across VSSN's membership.

VSSN/NCVO Annual Voluntary Sector Research Conference

The fifth VSSN/NCVO annual research conference held in September 2008 brought together over 100 researchers, policy makers and practitioners all with a interest in the voluntary sector. The conference provided the opportunity to discuss the major themes of interest to researchers, practitioners and policy makers, with thought-

provoking plenary lectures and a wide-ranging set of parallel sessions giving researchers the opportunity to share their ideas and research findings. The conference was kicked off this year with a plenary speech by Justin Davis Smith (Volunteering England) discussing the contribution of research to third sector policy and practice. It finished with a panel discussion including Pete Alcock (Third Sector Research Centre, University of Birmingham) and Jenny Harrow (Centre for Giving and Philanthropy, CASS Business School), both of whom presented plans for their respective research centres and led a discussion on the future of voluntary sector research. We are grateful to colleagues at NCVO for their work on the conference. We are also grateful to Joanna Stuart for her ongoing role in organising the New Researchers' element within the conference, which continues to grow in popularity.

Day seminars

Two successful day conferences were held during the course of the year, continuing to provide learning and networking opportunities. The University of Manchester hosted the November 2008 Day Conference on the specific theme of exploring issues for the voluntary and community sector in rural areas through four paper presentations. Thirty six people took part in what proved to be an interesting and engaging set of discussions around rurality and the sector. The May 2009 Day Conference took place at the University of Ulster in Belfast. More than 40 delegates participated in a packed day of five papers and discussion, focusing on the theme of devolution and its impact on third sector policy. We are grateful to both Universities and our colleagues therein for hosting these events.

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 an average of 390 visitors per month (2008: 4,610 visitors across the whole year), with a peak on 8 June of 108 visitors on the day that the Journal was announced on the discussion list. Furthermore, considerable work has been put in by our web team to planning the future development of VSSN's online services, in particular to the move to web 2.0 technologies – follow this link for a copy of our e-services strategy: <http://www.vssn.org.uk/news/news260709a.htm>

Directories

A new online VSSN Members Research Directory has been developed (and was launched in August 2009, just after the period reviewed in this report), making use of the latest social networking technology. The new format for the Directory gives members direct access to an online profile page which shows information they provide about their organisation, role, events, and research interests. The directory is available to the public as a showcase of members' work, although only paid-up members are able to upload information. It is part of our ongoing work to update the VSSN website and improve services to members.

In addition, we have continued to add to the Course Directory, which contains details of many third sector courses offered by universities around the country. We are particularly grateful to Robert Dalziel for his help in compiling the Course Directory.

Discussion List:

In addition to the formal membership, as of July 2009, a total of 396 (2008:387) persons were registered as subscribers to the VSSN e-mail discussion list, which has

continued to provide a space for lively debate among colleagues and an important point of information sharing. We are grateful to Jill Mordaunt who continues to perform an excellent role as discussion list moderator.

Membership:

VSSN's formal membership also continues to grow. At 31 July 2009 there were 115 individual (2008: 130) and 12 organisational members (2008: 3) covering 48 individuals, so giving a total of 163 formal VSSN members (entitled to vote). A detailed strategy is under development to strengthen and market VSSN's membership package to coincide with the introduction of *Voluntary Sector Review* as a member benefit.

Building partnerships:

Members of the Steering Group have continued to meet with the Knowledge Transfer Team at the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) to strengthen the relationship and to continue to explore areas for potential collaboration. Meanwhile, our successful partnership with NCVO goes from strength to strength, particularly through our collaboration around the Annual Research Conference (see above). Additional networks are being established and maintained with a range of other organisations, both in the UK and overseas.

Steering Group meetings:

The Steering Group has met three times during the year, with two meetings coinciding with the day seminars and a further full day meeting held in the summer. In addition, the Steering Group has also met virtually via its email discussion list throughout the year, ensuring that communication and work continues effectively between meetings.

Executive Officer:

We are now in the third year of our contract with AUA to provide an Executive Officer function for VSSN. This role was fulfilled throughout the year by Louise Cole, who has ensured that all enquiries and membership renewals are handled efficiently and effectively.

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 a surplus of receipts over payments of £1,691.00: of this, £750 is owing to AUA for the final quarter payment in 2008/09. The remaining surplus is due to increased income from seminar fees and early payment of subscriptions. The introduction of an organisational member fee has proved attractive, with organisational subscriptions going up to 8 this year, from 3 last year. A saving was made on the AUA executive officer expenses this year, as the day seminars were serviced by members of the VSSN board, instead of the AUA

executive officer. The service agreement with AUA is being kept under review by the Board. The current contract with AUA expires at 31st March 2010.

It is hoped that membership of VSSN will absorb the higher membership subscriptions being introduced to cover the additional benefit of *Voluntary Sector Review*, the new VSSN journal.

During the year, the Third Sector Research Centre made a grant of £5,000 towards the development costs of the journal, adding to the initial grant of £5,000 from the Big Lottery Fund towards the cost of journal development. This means that a total of £10,000 will be paid to the University of Bristol/ Policy Press (the payment was made shortly after year end).

Expenditure appears lower than in 2007/08, but this is because of late payments to AUA, due to late invoicing on their part.

Reserves policy

VSSN has a formal *reserves policy*. 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 three 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. Taking these factors together, the Steering Group considers that VSSN currently requires reserves of at least £2500 at year end. As at 31.7.2009 the total balance of the General Fund was £5695 in cash terms, but £555 of this relates to advance subscriptions for next year, and £804.28 is due to payments liable in 2008/09, leaving an effective balance of £4336. The current reserves figure is thus somewhat higher than the Steering Group's minimum requirement. The Board has decided to use some of this surplus for a small investment in web development in 2009/2010.

The reserves policy will need to be reviewed this year, in the light of VSSN's contract with Policy Press for *Voluntary Sector Review*, which includes a minimal annual contribution from VSSN of £2,600.

We are very grateful to Gareth Morgan for his continued informal review of our financial reporting.

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 23 November 2009 and signed on their behalf by:



Angela Ellis Paine (Secretary)



Cathy Pharoah (Treasurer)

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Receipts and Payments Account

01 Aug 07 –
31 July 08
All funds

01 Aug 08 –
31 July 09

Receipts

(£)		(£) Unrestricted	(£) Restricted (1)	Total
0.00	Donations	20.00		20.00
995.00	Seminar Fees - members	1126.00		1126.00
2440.00	Member Subscriptions	2360.00		2360.00
175.00	Seminar Fees - non members	-		-
360.00	Orgn Member Subs	960.00		960.00
800.00	Advance Subs for next year	555.00		555.00
5000.00	Grants received (2)		5000.00	5000.00
9770.00	Total Receipts	5021.00	5000.00	10021.00

Payments

812.40	Expenses of VSSN Events	1080.00		1080.00
80.30	Website Expenses	-		-
3023.04	Fees – Exec. Officer Services	2250.00		2250.00
307.00	Expenses – Exec. Officer			
4222.74	Total Payments	3330.00	0.00	3330.00
5547.26	Surplus	1691.00	5000.00	6691.00
3457.10	Balance brought forward 01.08.08	4004.36	5000.00	9004.36
9004.36	Balance carried forward 31.07.09	5695.36	10000.00	15695.36

Notes to the Accounts

(1) This fund is restricted to grants and donations for the purposes of developing *Voluntary Sector Review (VSR)*, the new VSSN Journal.

(2) Grants received from Big Lottery Fund in 2008 and from the Third Sector Research Centre in 2009 towards the development costs of *VSR*.

Further Notes

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 08		31 July 09
(£)		(£)
	Monetary Assets	
	Cash at Bank and In Hand	
9004.36	Unity Trust Bank Current A/c	15695.36
9004.36	Total Monetary Assets	15695.36
	Represented by Funds	
5,000.00	Restricted Funds	10000.00
4,004.36	General Fund	5695.36
9,004.36	Total Funds	15695.36
	Non-Monetary Assets & Liabilities	
	Assets:	
	Debtors	485.00
	<i>Liabilities – Creditors due within one year:</i>	
800.00-	Subs Received in Advance	555.00-
1,800.00-	7 Mths Exec. Officer Commitment*	1750.00-
	Grants payable	10000.00-
	Sundry (Web maintenance)	54.28-
1,800.00-	Total Creditors Due Within One Year	12359.28-
1,800.00-	Net Non-Monetary Liabilities	11874.28-

*This represents the amount due for April, May, June, July 2009, plus the minimum 3 months notice on the agreement.

These Accounts were approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 23 November 2009 and signed on their behalf by:



Peter Halfpenny (Chair)



Cathy Pharoah (Treasurer)