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**SOUTH WESTERN REGIONAL LIBRARY SERVICES**

**Uniting, inspiring and collaborating across libraries, information services and cultural organisations in the South West.**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-24**

1. **SWRLS purpose and mission:**

South Western Regional Library Services is a sector support, charitable incorporated organisation. It acts as an advocate for libraries and promotes co-operation across all sectors in the south west. Its mission is: taking a strategic and partnership approach to serving our communities by developing staff, services and resources that are inclusive, sustainable and enhance learning. SWRLS charitable objects are:

1. The advancement of education for the benefit of the public by:
   * + - 1. Promoting cross sector co-operation between members.
         2. Promoting access to library collections and specialist knowledge.
         3. Providing a framework for the interlending of materials.
         4. Advancing the skills and knowledge of the workforce and their stakeholders.
         5. Facilitating a collaborative network to share best practice and excellence.
2. The advancement of literature, knowledge and lifelong learning for the benefit of the public by promoting:
   * + - 1. Access to specialist resources.
         2. Cultural activities and partnerships.
         3. Access to data and information.
3. **The planning process:**

The planning process began at the 2020 AGM and conference in November. Break out groups were asked to consider SWRLS’ charitable purposes, its key offering and both current and proposed activities. Members then suggested ideas and priorities relating to these that they felt were important to consider for the future. A subgroup of the Board then worked on these ideas at a meeting in February 2021 and then considered an initial draft at the March board meeting.

1. **The organisation:**

SWRLS was originally founded, as one of a network of regional library systems, in 1937. It is the only original regional system still in existence. It became a charity in May 1982 and is managed by a Board of eight Trustees to whom day to day operation is delegated by the membership. The work of the organisation is governed by a Constitution. A part time, paid Coordinator post provides strategic and administrative support to the Board.

The organisation currently has 55 members representing public, university, college, national, school, health and specialist libraries.

**SWRLS offer to members:**

• Networking: support and expertise and the provision of an information exchange and advice service

• Workforce development: the provision of courses and CPD events

• Grants: to support cross sector initiatives and individual training opportunities

• Interlibrary loans: free access to the rich range of resources held in members’ libraries

• Strategic partnerships: seeking out appropriate partnerships to enhance the member offer, bid for funding and contribute to the provision of cost-effective services.

1. **Review of SWRLS Strategic Plan, 2017-2020**
   1. **Key achievements**

* The SWRLS Interlending Forum (SIL) was held annually 2017 - 2019
* Two annual networking days (Spring members’ day and winter AGM/conference) were held in both 2018 and 2019.
* A new offer to members was launched in March 2018
* SWRLS CIO was constituted in 2018
* In 2019 SWRLS was invited by Arts Council England to co-ordinate a national seminar on the provision of performing arts collections in public libraries, Keeping Performance Live: the Future of Performing Arts Collections in Public Libraries. 30 delegates representing 22 libraries attended.
* SWRLS Award scheme launched in 2019 and made first awards in 2020, to Gloucestershire Libraries in the initiative category and Kay Ecclestone in the individual achievement category.
* SWRLS trustees and Coordinator active participants in regional networks: SW Fed, CILIP SW, Read SW, South West Higher Education Librarians and Libraries Connected SW.
* SWRLS gave grants in this period to various projects including:
  + - Word on Tour, a live literature tour in the region’s libraries led by Literature Works.
    - Dream and Deliver, a workforce development day led by Libraries Unlimited.
    - Young People, Mental Health and Reading, a one day course led by CILIP SW.
* SWRLS offered a range of training courses including:

The Art of Bibliotherapy (one day)

Introduction to Grantseeking (one day)

Inspiring Leadership (six days over six months)

* SWRLS supported the ACE funded *A South West Region of Readers* project.
* A student intern was taken on in 2019 to investigate the potential for a project to catalogue hidden collections in the region’s libraries.
* To support academic member libraries during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, SWRLS set up a scheme to enable returns through public libraries.
* A popular newsletter for members was launched, initially via email and later through MailChimp.
* An extensive member survey in 2020 highlighted member priorities and needs
* The summer interlibrary loans meeting was held online in 2020 which led to a decision to run these twice yearly and to set up an email list to facilitate exchange of practice and materials
  1. **Issues/challenges to take forward**

• Marketing and advocacy - raising SWRLS profile.

• Developing and sustaining effective partnerships

• Widening workforce development opportunities

* Supporting members through Covid-19 recovery and helping to address deficits to learning and literacy.
* Engaging in changes to ways of working in order to ensure relevance to the membership.
* Increasing the membership.
* Using the reserves appropriately for the benefit of members.

1. **The delivery of the Plan**

The Trustees will aim to achieve the Plan by being mindful of the following:

* Maintaining a risk management log to identify risks and ways of mitigating them. The log will be reviewed at Board meetings at least twice a year.
* Developing annual action plans, if appropriate, to provide further details as the Plan progresses.
* Reviewing the Plan at Board meetings and reporting progress to members.
* Reviewing the financial health of the organisation at Board meetings and taking appropriate action to ensure it is financially secure and sustainable.
* Continuing to advocate for libraries in the South West.
* Seeking out partnerships to provide value for money and efficient services.
* A commitment to ensure equality and inclusion, particularly in the promotion of cultural events.
* Allocating responsibility for specific aspects of the Plan to individual Board members and the Coordinator.

1. **Executive summary**
2. **Goals, actions and tasks 2021 – 2024**

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| **High priority** |
| **Medium priority** |

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| **Charitable purpose** | **Objectives for 21-24** | **Actions** | **Timescale** | **Resources** | **Lead** |
| 1.The advancement of education for the benefit of the public by: | | | | | |
| (a) Promoting cross sector co-operation between members. | Engage in fund-raising opportunities linked with key contemporary themes, e.g. health and wellbeing, regional deprivation. | Support members to apply for SWRLS grants and other bidding opportunities, e.g. ACE. | Ongoing | Time for meetings and expertise | Coordinator/  Jackie |
| (b) Promoting access to library collections and specialist knowledge. | Identify and promote “hidden collections” within the region. | Undertake a small pilot to test feasibility, benefit and scalability. | By Spring 2022 | SWRLS Coordinator time and travel expenses | Coordinator/Donna |
| (c) Providing a framework for the interlending of materials. | Establish a one-stop online access point to member catalogues. | Complete catalogue portal pilot and take project forward. | By Nov 2021 to complete pilot and decide how to go forward | Funding | Coordinator/  Jolanta |
| (d) Advancing the skills and knowledge of the workforce and their stakeholders. | Develop training and opportunities to support key needs of members, e.g. from new entrants in the LIS profession to succession-planning. | Offer a consistent, relevant and regularly evaluated training programme that supports and utilises digital skills, supplemented by opportunities for mentoring, job shadowing, etc. | Ongoing (8-12 per year) | Coordinator's time, DCC time, funding | Coordinator/Emma |
| (e) Facilitating a collaborative network to share best practice and excellence. | Utilise appropriate (new) technologies to connect people and enable effective communications. | Investigate and evaluate Basecamp, Zoom and appropriate social media. | By December 2021 | Coordinator's and trustees' time, funding | Coordinator/  Frances |
| 2. The advancement of literature, knowledge and lifelong learning for the benefit of the public by promoting: | | | | | |
| (a) Access to specialist resources. | Investigate mutual benefits of strategic alignment with other regional/national groups. | Support initiatives in relation to sharing/lending music, including performance sets | Ongoing | Time of trustees and members | Coordinator/  Jackie |
| (b) Cultural activities and partnerships. | Develop existing relationship with Literature Works and The Network to promote activities to support members' priorities, e.g. health and wellbeing. | Help to further learning and activities developed through the Word on Tour project | September to December 2021 | Time | Coordinator/Helen |
| (c) Access to data and information. | Ensure data from SWRLS funded projects are shared. | Project evaluations to include relevant data and how it can be re-used/disseminated appropriately | Ongoing | Time of trustees and project leads | Coordinator/Mike |