South West Regional Library Service

Fundamental Review

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Contents

Executive summary

The review was undertaken between March and June 2016, by LISU, Loughborough University. Four issues were set out in the scope of the review – SWRLS priorities, the Objects of the Charity, the potential as a regional agency and the Constitution. A fifth issue with implications for the long term sustainability of SWRLS arose during the course of the research - the membership and subscription structure.

Evidence was gathered via individual and group interviews with the Review Sub-committee, members of the SWRLS Management Board and Regional Council, the Director of SWRLS, and selected other stakeholders. A general call for evidence and online questionnaires were distributed to members and non-members of SWRLS by the Director, and via the SWRLS web site. Additional background material was obtained from a variety of documents and relevant websites.

Key findings

Priorities

The participants of this review believe that there is still a use for a cross sector collaborative library organisation and that SWRLS has the potential to become a modern regional service. The four attributes that participants required for such a service are:

- To facilitate co-operation and networking

- To act as an advocate for regional libraries

- To hold a high profile

- To become an information and resource hub

These four attributes should become the priorities of SWRLS. Further, the current financial model is complex and disadvantages certain types of membership. This should be changed, giving clarity over value for money, and a fairer membership structure, suggesting the following fifth priority for SWRLS:

- To ensure to the financial sustainability of SWRLS

Objects of the Charity

Two of the Objects of the Charity were found to be not fit for purpose, and one was partially fit for purpose, in particular:

- Promote co-operation in SW region (Partially fit for purpose)

  Suggestions for improvement include:

  - Place greater emphasis on co-operative activities
  - Broaden the membership
  - Re-word the Object

- Arrange loans between constituent libraries (not fit for purpose)

Members were split over the value of the ILL functions of SWRLS; however there is still a place for a revised Local Interlibrary Lending Scheme. The Management Board should choose to either retain and revise ILL, or remove this aspect as an Object:

- Maintain access to unified catalogue of resources (not fit for purpose)

While there was no support for the reintroduction of a unified catalogue of resources, the production of an online resource and information sharing hub would be valued and should be considered.

Constitution

The spirit of the current constitutional document reflects the overall purpose of SWRLS, which is to "Promote the principal of community education". However, the document does not include certain details required for "the rules of the purpose and legal administration of the charity" as stated by the Charity Commission. In order to update and revise the constitutional document the following steps should be taken:

- The Objects should be revised and reworded

- Missing details should be added to the constitution

- Details irrelevant to the legal aspect of the constitution should be removed.

The details removed from the revised constitution are important to the strategic future of SWRLS so should not be discarded but used as a basis for a set of strategic policies. In addition, mission and vision statements, aims and objectives should be devised in order to bring clarity and communicate the overarching purpose of SWRLS.

Recommendations

A number of options for the future were identified in the review. All have pros and cons; not all would result in cost savings. On balance, the following recommendations are made in order to forward the ideals of co-operation and the promotion of community education which is central to SWRLS:

More strategic emphasis should be placed on activities such as cross-sector collaboration, training and grant funding, and less on interlibrary lending. The development of an online portal with a strong public facing element could replace the defunct union catalogue.

The membership base should be broadened, the constitution revised and a set of policies should be written to bring clarity of purpose to SWRLS.

The method of calculating subscriptions should be reconsidered and made consistent throughout the types of membership. Interlibrary lending charges and credits should be separated from the subscription calculation.

Introduction

SWRLS (The South Western Regional Library Service) is a registered charity working with libraries across all sectors in the South West of England. Funded by subscription, SWRLS enables partnership working, interlending, resource sharing and training. In the present challenging context, it is essential that SWRLS is fit for purpose, and to this end, in March 2016, it commissioned LISU to undertake a fundamental review of its operations and strategy.

Scope

The review was tasked with addressing the following key issues:

- How well do the priorities of the organisation meet the needs of current and future members? How might they be realigned better to meet these needs?

- Are the Objects of the Charity still fit for purpose?

- To remind the sector about SWRLS and its potential as a regional agency;

- To revise the Constitution so that it reflects a modern, forward thinking organisation.

Evidence was gathered from a range of stakeholders. Group interviews were carried out at meetings of SWRLS Regional Council, with members of the Review sub-committee; members of the Management Board, and other members of the Regional Council. Individual interviews were undertaken with the Director, Treasurer, and Chair of SWRLS, and a former member. A call for evidence was distributed to both members and non-members of SWRLS by the Director and via the web site, seeking responses to five specific questions as well as inviting general comments. We would like to thank all those who took the time to be interviewed, complete the survey and send their comments. Additional background material was obtained from a variety of documents and relevant websites.

Current structure

SWRLS was founded in 1937 initially as one of nine regional library services to facilitate inter-library lending within the region, and now acts as an advocate for libraries and promotes cooperation between libraries across all sectors in the South West. It is the only such regional organisation remaining in existence.

SWRLS is a charity, governed by a Regional Council comprising one representative from each member library, which has strategic oversight of SWRLS, including reviewing the Action Plan. Day to day management and decision making are delegated to a Management Board, comprised of four Officers and up to seven Ordinary Members representing the different library sectors, appointed at the Regional Council AGM, and which is responsible for carrying out the Action Plan. The Management Board members are the trustees of the charity.

All library and information services in the region are eligible to join; associate members are from neighbouring regions, pay no subscription and have no voting rights. At the time of the Review, SWRLS had 61 members: 21 public library services, (including four associate members),

12 university libraries, 21 further education colleges, one specialist library, two schools, two health libraries and two national libraries. The constitution[1] was last updated in 2011.

SWRLS does not have mission or vision statements as such, but has a set of objects and priorities which are outlined in its strategic plan. Activity is supported by a part time Director (0.4 FTE), who is employed as a consultant, and one member authority is contracted to handle financial matters.

SWRLS engages in a range of activities. There is a strong strategic focus, although the limited staff resource curtails the amount of time available for activities in this area. The previous Director was employed at 0.6 FTE, which gave scope for more networking and advocacy than the current post holder has been able to achieve. The geography of the region and the lack of pre-existing networks are further factors in this. SWRLS was without a Director for some 15 months before the current appointment was made and during this time the training programme suffered. This activity has now resumed. There is also a grant scheme to which members can apply, initially set up to use some of the charity's reserves. Few grants have been awarded to date as there appears to be a lack of capacity within libraries to prepare applications.

SWRLS subscriptions are calculated per thousand population for public libraries, with a two-tier flat fee for HE libraries and other members. Subscriptions are offset for net lenders within the system, and in some cases this 'net lending credit' has been greater than the subscription due. A fee is paid to the public library authority which is contracted to undertake the financial management of the service. Total subscription income for 2014-15 was £46,123[2]. Additional income amounted to £20,932, of which £15, 920 related to the Reading Passport SW scheme.

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[1] http://www.swrls.org.uk/constitution.html
[2] *Annual Report 2014-15*, p19. Available at
    http://www.swrls.org.uk/assets/files/Annual%20reports/SWRLS%20AR%202014-15%20final%20complete.pdf

Evidence gathering

Evidence was gathered in a number of stages. First, the strategic plan, constitution and risk assessment were examined and a set of interview questions devised. An interview was conducted with the Director in order to establish the nature and reason for the review and as a basis to develop further questions. Group interviews were carried out with the Review Steering Group, Management Board members and Regional Council members. These all took place at the Regional Council meeting on 8th April 2016.

Review Steering Group - Five members of the Review Steering Group took part. The main aim of this interview was to investigate in depth the reasons for commissioning the review, and obtain the committee's view of what were the underlying issues. The group contains a cross section of the membership and included board members and non-board members.

Management Board - Seven members of the Management Board and the Director took part. The management board members represent Higher Education (HE) and Public libraries. The aim of this interview was to understand the background for the review and to gain the views of the board about the future of SWRLS

Regional Council, ordinary members – Eight members not on the Management Board took part including representatives from HE, Further Education (FE), Health Libraries and the Arts. This interview was to gauge the perceptions of the general membership about SWRLS.

The second stage of information gathering was a call for evidence sent out to all members in the form of an online survey. A similar survey was also sent to relevant non-members in library, educational and heritage posts in the region. The findings from the two surveys are summarised below. During the period of the survey, as answers were being gathered, individual interviews were carried out with the SWRLS Chair, Treasurer, and a librarian in a College which had formerly been in membership, but had chosen not to renew their subscription. This third stage of individual interviews pursued lines of enquiry in greater depth, drawing on the expertise and experiences of the individual participants.

Transcriptions of the interviews and the answers to the online surveys were entered into NVivo qualitative analysis software, in order to be analysed. The evidence was collated into conceptual areas which outlined all the participants' perceptions of SWRLS. These conceptual areas were then compared to the objectives of the review, the Charity Objects, SWRLS priorities and other matters of concern. When necessary, the operations of other similar organisations were consulted to ascertain general information about interlibrary lending, and subscription and membership models. This information was compared to the current operation of SWRLS and suggestions for the development of SWRLS emerged.

Feedback from members

A call for evidence was distributed in May 2016 by means of a link on the SWRLS web site and by the Director via email to members, non-members and other stakeholders. A total of 28 responses was received from members, 14 from Higher Education Libraries, eight from public libraries, four from Further Education Colleges, one school library and one health library. These are summarised below, under the five questions which were put to members.

Usefulness

In today's climate of austerity, change, the internet and open information, do you consider that a professional library organisation to promote cross-sector co-operation in the South West is: essential, useful, or a luxury?

Figure 1 shows that 61% of the members consider that SWRLS is relevant to promoting cross sector co-operation in the South West. Only 7% considered that SWRLS was a luxury, with one commenting that it was no longer relevant in a globally connected age. However, 32% of members believed that SWRLS was still essential. Therefore SWRLS membership believes that SWRLS is a useful organisation.

Figure 1   Usefulness of SWRLS
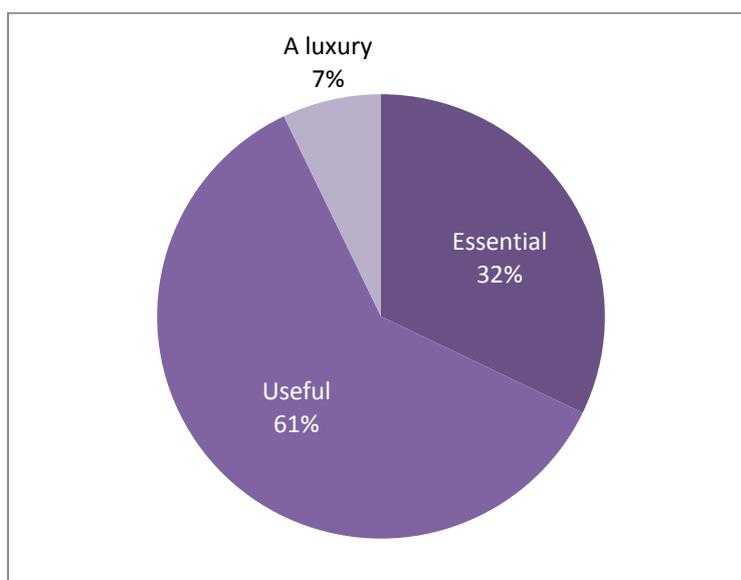
Value

What do you value most about SWRLS as it is currently constituted? What is of least value?

Figure 2 shows the attributes of SWRLS that respondents value the most. Out of the things that members value about SWRLS, Cross sector co-operation scored highest, jointly with ILL, followed by cross sector networking. Sharing ideas and practice was also high. This means that collaboration across the sectors is seen as a valuable out come from being a member of SWRLS.

Figure 2   Value of SWRLS
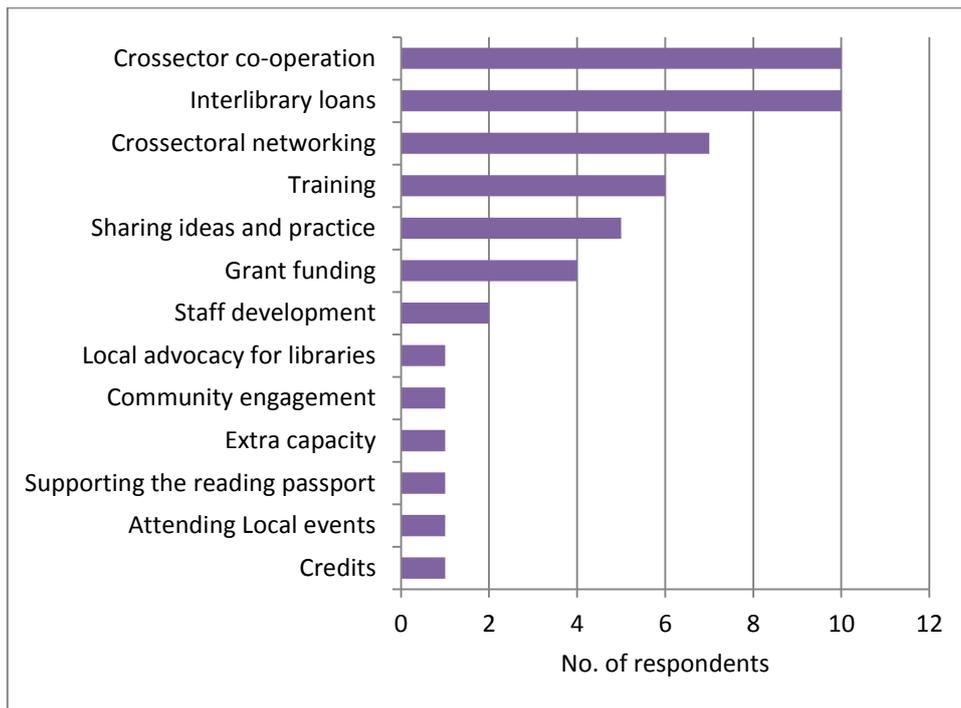
Interestingly, interlibrary lending (ILL) also features in *Figure 3* as being of the least value to eight members. This demonstrates that different libraries have different procedures and arrangements for interlibrary lending, some finding a regional system useful while others do not. The geographical size of the region is a problem for three members, and three members consider that regional council meetings are of low value.

Figure 3   Least Value of SWRLS
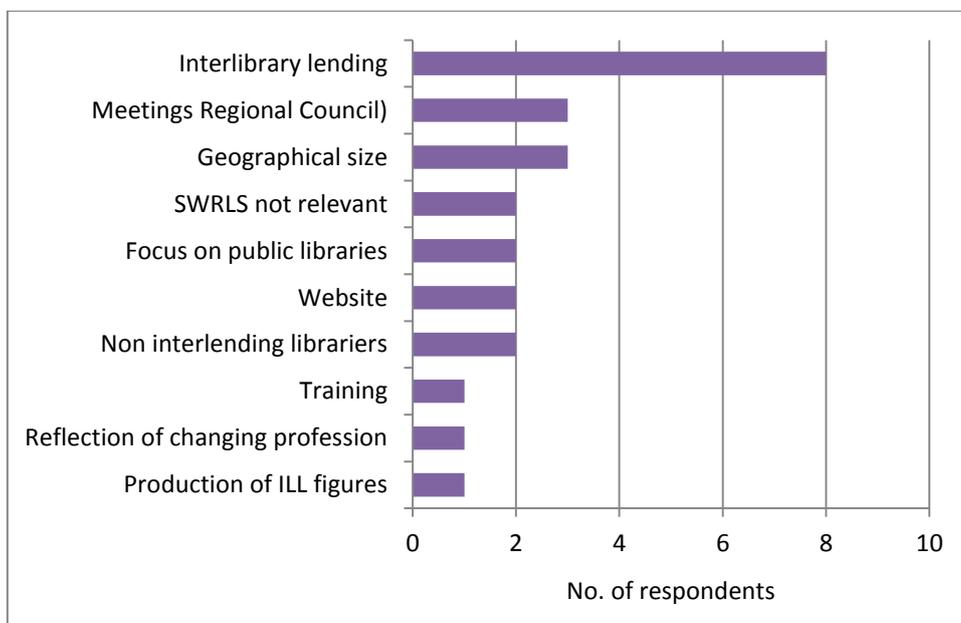
Activities

What activities and services could SWRLS offer that they are not currently providing to support you, your library and its users?

It is quite clear from *Figure 4* that members want SWRLS to organise training to support them and their library. SWRLS has offered training in the past, and has paused that activity only in recent years. A training program has started again since the appointment of the Director.

Figure 4   Activities for SWRLS
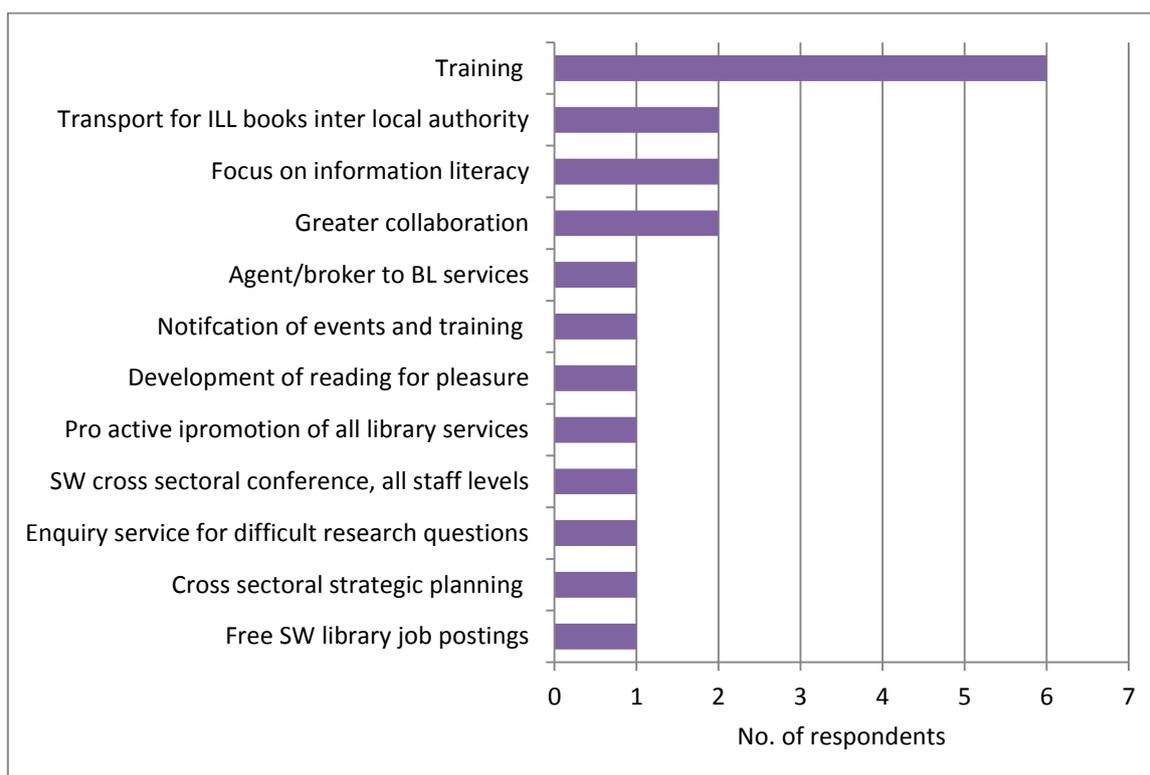
Membership

Should there be different levels of membership?

This proved to be a more contentious question, showing some disagreement between members' opinions. Although nine (out of 24) members considered that there should be different levels of membership, and six that no change was necessary, four thought that there should not be different levels, while five were unsure *(Figure 5).* Representatives from sectors that considered that all organisations should have the same level of membership were FE and HE; representatives from all sectors other than School Libraries preferred different levels of membership; School Libraries, Public Library and HE representatives opted for no change in the membership model, whereas HE and Public Library representatives were unsure.

Figure 5   Membership levels
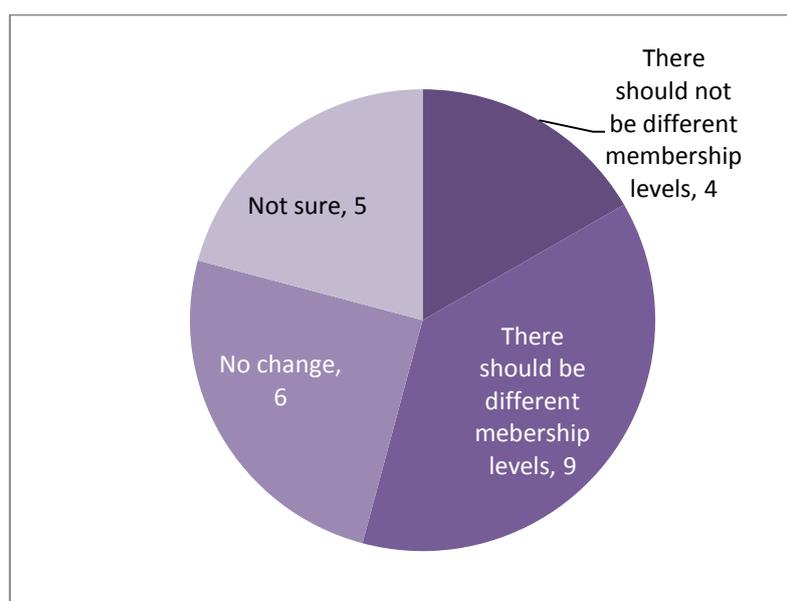
The comments made about membership levels were related to the usage of SWRLS by a library, or ways of determining the subscription fee for membership. For example, two HE sector participants considered that HE subscriptions should be lower because they use SWRLS services less. Another, put forward that the level of membership should be determined by the amount of interlibrary loans. The participants that opted for different levels of subscription proposed that fees should be decided by: the size of workforce; size of organisation; number of library visitors. A broadening of membership to include individual information professionals not based in a library was also suggested by one participant.

Future shape

If SWRLS did not exist would you invent a similar organisation? If so, what would it look like?

Figure 6 shows the responses to the invention of a similar organisation to SWRLS. It can be seen that 14 respondents considered that there should be a modern co-operative regional library organisation; eight thought that there was no need and two participants were not sure. This result demonstrates that more members consider that there is a place for a regional cross sector collaborative organisation than members who see no need. When this result is broken down into sectors, it was noted that six HE respondents and two Public Library respondents saw no need for a regional organisation to promote cross sector working, whereas one School Library, three FE, five HE and five Public Library respondents agreed that there should be such a body.

The reasons given for the decisions can be seen in *Table 1*. Participants in favour of a regional association wanted a pro-active alternative to CILIP which could act as an advocate for libraries, develop collaborative links and retain interlibrary lending. Participants not in favour considered that co-operation should extend more widely than the region in a digital world and that such an organisation would be difficult to sustain in the current library climate.

Figure 6   Should there be a SW Regional organisation for library cross sector working?
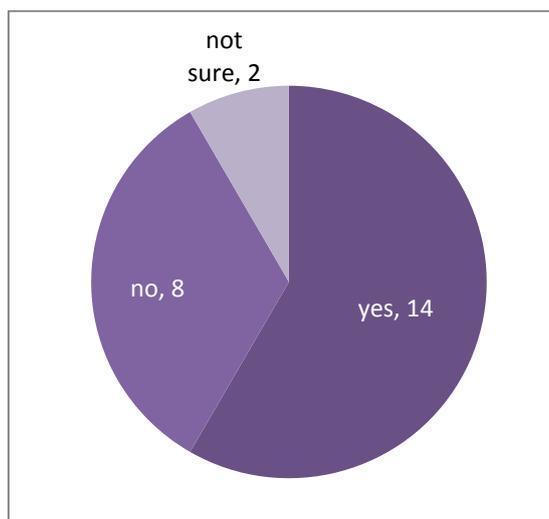
Suggestions for the attributes and activities for a modern co-operative library organisation include themes of collaboratively developing the market for libraries and the products that can be offered, sharing resources and creating stronger links and advocacy *(Table 1).* Suggestions were made to broaden the membership base to include more library and cultural sectors than at present.

Table 1   Attributes for a modern co-operative regional library organisation

Reasons for a Regional Association	**A new regional organisation would**
• An alternative and in addition to CILIP	• Collaborate
• An agency for library promotion	• Work towards common goals
• Pro-active development links and projects	• Develop new audiences
• ILL still useful	• Increase staff capacities
Reasons against a Regional Association	• Enable joint procurement
• Difficult in current library climate	• Have common themed focus groups
• Digital environment	• Have wider membership base
• Regional co-operation no longer relevant	• Include training support
Wider membership base would include	• Have mailing lists
• Public Libraries	• Have buddying
• School libraries	• Share best practice
• Specialist libraries	• Promote content of Public Libraries
• Information professionals in non-library settings	• Promote the region's libraries
	• Increase cross sectoral partnership
	• Still include an interlending element
	• Change its name!
	• Have strong online presence
	• Include web forums
	• Have in person networking opportunities
	• Represent itself at general SW events
	• Provide courses

General comments

Many of the comments that were made were positive in nature considering that SWRLS is a useful asset *(Table 2).* SWRLS provides support for staff and resources for customers. It has the potential to re-invent itself, develop into an advocate for libraries with increased online presence and communication. It should promote cross sector themes, such as information literacy. Negative voices question SWRLS relevance, subscription model and geographic span.

Table 2   General comments made by members

- SWRLS appreciated as an useful asset
- Provides support for specialist staff
- Better use of technology should be made for strategic communication
- Resource to fulfil needs of customers
- Potential for cross boundary development
- Increase role of Director to include advocacy and promotion
- Members want to see value for money
- Networking is important
- Core purpose should be developed
- Focus on Information Literacy
- SWRLS needs greater profile
- Name should reflect its activities
- Subscription disadvantages smaller libraries
- 80 years of working with libraries should be celebrated (2017)
- SWRLS needs greater web and social media presence
- SWRLS needs commitments from individual libraries
- Relevance and value in current times questioned
- Geographical span reduces some member's active engagement

Feedback from non-members and other stakeholders

Non-members from libraries or other interested organisations were asked similar questions to the members but no prior knowledge of SWRLS activities was assumed. Seven responses were received in total; two from Museum and Arts organisations and one each from a school library service, a Further Education college, a Higher Education College, a public library and a literature development agency. As this is a qualitative study which is using the principles of inductive research, although only a low number of replies were received, they are treated as being representative of many more interested individuals. A summary of the questions and answers from non-members can be seen below.

Profile

> *Have you heard of South Western Regional Library Service (SWRLS)*
> *If yes, have you ever considered joining?*
> *If you have considered joining why did you not do so?*

All seven respondents had heard of SWRLS. Three of those have not considered joining whereas four had considered. Three individuals gave a reason for not joining SWRLS; one individual thought that her place of work was a member; another did not know how to join and the third worked for a literary development agency that works closely with SWRLS. Therefore it can be reasoned that the profile of SWRLS is known in the locality by individuals with positions in libraries or related fields, some of which would like to be members if the joining procedure was more evident, or if it were possible that their organisation could be members.

Usefulness

> *Cross-sectoral collaboration between libraries is important to SWRLS. Would you / your organisation consider joining such a collaborative regional library service?*

All seven respondents stated that they would join a regional library service that focused on cross- sector collaboration. One commented on the reason for belonging to such as service:

"SWRLS is unique in the fact that it is a professional library organisation that promotes cross-sector co-operation in the South West and we consider it to be of great benefit and would argue that, particularly in a climate of austerity, it remains essential at a time when many organisations are losing staff and knowledge."

Therefore it appears that SWRLS has the potential to adopt the major role of being a conduit to collaborative working not only between different libraries but also between the library world and Heritage and Literary Development.

Activities

> *SWRLS currently offers these services: a. Interlibrary lending b. Grants for collaborative projects c. Networking opportunities d. Training. Would you / your organisation / your customers find these services of benefit? If you have answered yes, please explain your answer.*

All seven respondents considered that SWRLS' current activities would be of benefit to them, their organisation and their customers. *Figure 7* shows that out of the seven respondents to the non-member's survey five considered that networking was beneficial; four thought that training would be useful, three valued the opportunity for collaborative projects and three understand the benefit of interlibrary loans, especially the college which offers Higher Education courses.

Figure 7   Activities considered beneficial by non-members
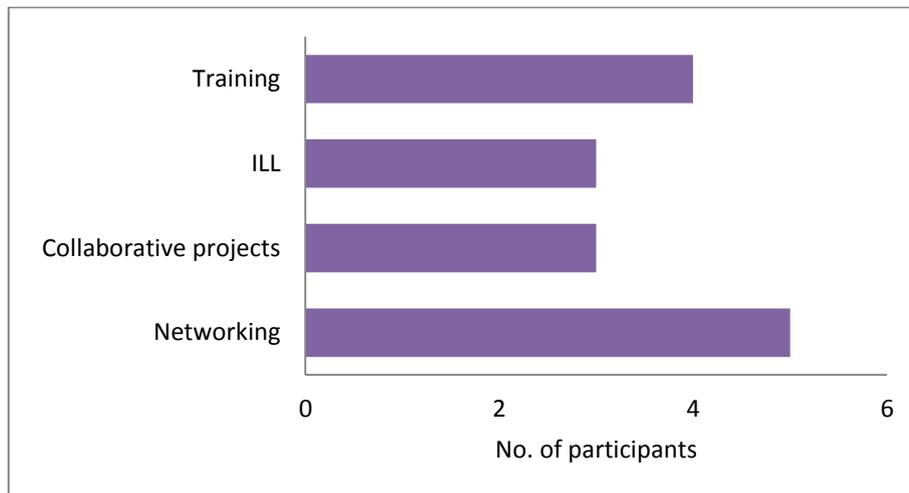
The comments made by respondents include:

"In relatively small local authorities we need to work with others/share resources to be effective".

"SWRLS offers a great network to reach many libraries at one time and understand their needs better".

"Of the most value is the network that crosses the public, private and education sector library services, the reach that it brings and the potential for cooperation and understanding to mutual benefit".

This indicates that SWRLS current main activities are relevant to staff and customers of libraries, Heritage organisations and Literary Development Agencies.

Future shape

If such an organisation was being invented now, what sort of other collaborative/shared services would you / your organisation / your customers find useful and beneficial in the current climate?

The respondents suggested that a newly developed regional, cross-sectoral library service should offer:

- Opportunities for joint working between organisations, such as, "developing schools packages", "working with archives" and "temporary displays in each other's institutions"

- Interlibrary lending between schools

- An information hub for professionals which collects and distributes information about relevant initiatives and responds to regional and national consultations on behalf of its members

- Training on topics relevant to staff of the member institutions

- A centre of expertise, where the knowledge of members in the different sectors can be tapped

- A point of contact for external partners who wish to collaborate

- Support for collaborative projects, including funding

The organisation should have clear guidelines with easy to find information about its activities, for example, funding opportunities and times and place of meetings to make it easier for members to have active engagement with the organisation. Training and collaborative project funding are activities that SWRLS already does so perhaps promotion of these activities to a wider audience is needed.

Further comments

The collaborative nature of SWRLS and its networks was highlighted in respondents' further comments. A representative of South-western Federation of Museums and Galleries stated an interest in exploring collaborative possibilities. The respondent from a regional School Library Service is interested in collaborative projects and specifically developing "sharing between schools". Finally, SWRLS networks were described as a "bridge to communication" across the region and are seen as invaluable to the work of "Literature Works".

Analysis and discussion of findings

This section of the report synthesises the evidence under each of the key issues identified at the start of the project, as well as those which arose during the evidence gathering process. The review objectives are to: re-align the priorities of the organisation; review the Objects of the Charity; explore the potential of SWRLS as a regional agency and revise the constitution.

Priorities

> *How well do the priorities of the organisation meet the needs of current and future members? How might they be realigned better to meet these needs?*

The priorities of SWRLS as stated in its strategic plan are listed below:

- To raise its profile to the wider library sector with clear offer and purpose

- To demonstrate value for money to its members. For example, cheaper than British Library; clear offer of value for money (VFM) and benefits, access to back-stock is Unique Selling Point

- To ensure availability of funds for projects and training

- To encourage co-operation and partnership working - identifying benefits, including a grant process

- To promote resource sharing

- To explore and exploit collaborative collection development

Profile

The profile of SWRLS is perceived in different ways by library, information and heritage organisations in the South West. Individual participants expressed a wide variety of perceptions about the core purpose of SWRLS. It therefore does not clearly communicate its offer and purpose. The views ranged from extreme negativity to a belief that SWRLS is an essential asset which can promote and facilitate collaboration in the library and heritage sector.

SWRLS is perceived as being an old, well established organisation. The historic aspect of SWRLS and it's practically 80 year existence is reflected in a comment by one participant:

"…although we need to reinvent ourselves, I think there should be quite a proud history there that we shouldn't try to lose".

The age of the organisation is seen by some as a negative attribute, for example:

"SWRLS was clearly a valuable and appropriate collaboration in the world it was initiated for… … SWRLS seems like an anachronism now."

But it is also thought of as a positive attribute which benefits all libraries in the region:

"I think that as SWRLS has existed since the 1937 … it is really important that we do not lose this sense of history and importance of libraries to the sector."

Three participants saw SWRLS as primarily a public library organisation and a further three did not understand the relevance of the service to their organisation. On the other hand, a non- member considered that the SWRLS network was essential to the work of their organisation:

"…without SWRLS we would struggle to forge meaningful project work across the whole region as we currently do…"

When members were asked about what they value most about SWRLS the three highest scoring activities were interlibrary lending, cross-sector co-operation and cross sector networking (see above). Its uniqueness is recognised as "one of the few bodies that enables/encourages cross-sector activities" and it is perceived as the only forum for cross sector communication. However, it seems that even Board members find it difficult to articulate "What SWRLS does" as one participant states:

 "…I went to my first SWRLS meeting and I said "well what do you actually do, what is this" and actually everybody looked round …"

Two participants considered that the name of SWRLS should change to "reflect more what the organisation does" and so increase the awareness of SWRLS and raise its profile.

It would therefore appear that a core offer of SWRLS as a cross-sectoral networking, collaborative organisation for Library, Information and Heritage institutions and their staff should be clearly expressed and communicated in order to raise the profile of the organisation. This could be achieved in the first instance by developing mission and vision statements which would guide the strategic development of SWRLS, focus the aims and objective of the organisation and help members to express the benefits of being part of SWRLS.

Value for money

There is a mixed perception amongst members of the value for money of SWRLS to their organisation, with some members considering that it is good value for money whereas others find membership hard to justify. The complicated structure of membership annual subscriptions, the differing amounts of money that public libraries pay to SWRLS and the link with interlibrary lending is one reason for this dichotomy. Public library authorities pay a subscription rate which is calculated per head of their population, whereas other types of library pay a flat fee. Some members consider that membership of SWRLS is cost effective whereas others believe that SWRLS is no longer value for money due to the general decrease in interlibrary lending (as discussed further in *Table 4* below). The SWRLS subscription rate for Public library authorities is considerably different between each authority. For example, one authority pays £2,000 whereas another pays £5,000 per year. This is related to the resident population but is irrespective of the number of libraries that each authority runs.

If the perception of the library is that the subscription is merely to cover the costs of interlibrary lending, and the member does not use that activity to the full, then value for money is poor, as one participant comments:

"Next year our subscription will be £3,714 and if you divide that by the amount of inter-loans we've done, it is more expensive."

However, if the perception of the subscription is that it is merely a joining fee to be part of the organisation, the interlibrary lending can be seen as a "free" asset. For example, one participant

considered that the value of SWRLS membership was "free ILLs from each other". The situation is further complicated by "net lending credits". When a library lends more books than it borrows it pays a discounted subscription in the following year. This leads to some libraries earning money from the "net credits". For example a participant stated that the value of SWLRS membership to them is "Gaining credits (i.e. having our membership subscription fee reduced) for interlending." The unfairness of the situation is highlighted by a participant's comment:

"The pricing structure for inter-library loans seems to disadvantage smaller libraries which both lend and borrow a small number of books".

The confusion of "What SWRLS does" colours the perceptions of value for money especially in a climate of financial stringency when library spending across each sector is being thoroughly examined. As a participant states:

 "Well we pay our subscription and I've got my boss who is going to say "we pay a subscription, what do we get for it?"

Other aspects of the financial benefit of SWRLS membership, such as grants for training and events were mentioned by only a small number of participants. One commented that they thought that receiving SWRLS money for attending external training showed value for money.

"…the training money that's available to go to external training that otherwise would not be available with diminishing budgets … so we are certainly getting a lot."

Another participant "went on quite a few events" through being funded by SWRLS. The perception of value for money is therefore bound up with the members' perception of SWRLS' core offer. If it is considered that SWRLS is merely for interlibrary lending then value for money varies depending on subscription rates, size of library and amount of interlibrary lending transactions. However, should a member take advantage of the full range of activities offered by SWRLS, then SWRLS can be made to be value for money, as a participant put it:

"I think it is very much about individual library's engagement with SWRLS and seeing what they actually offer."

It is certain that in order for members and potential members to see clearly the financial benefits of SWRLS membership the complication of the subscription structure with interlibrary lending credits must be unravelled; separating and restructuring both subscription fees and interlibrary lending charges.

Projects and training

The projects and training activities that are supported and made possible by SWRLS are appreciated by members and non-members and therefore offer a potential area of development. For example a non-member participant would find a grant for "collaborative projects between our secondary schools" useful, and another non-member states that:

"We are often invited to meet with SWRLS and attend training sessions and SWRLS offers a great network to reach many libraries at one time and understand their needs better"

Cross-sector collaborative projects are generally considered a positive aspect of SWRLS, for instance the "Open Doors" project was used by a participant from an FE college who was able to send some of her students to use the resources of the nearby university. Other recent project

activity was met with mixed feelings by the participants. Although some considered that the Reading Passport was useful, others in Higher Education thought that the initiative was too public library focussed and not relevant to their customers. Greater ownership of a shared theme could have solved the lack of engagement.

"…The reading passport would need some kind of collaboration amongst members to decide what topic it should be rather than us coming to a meeting and hearing that the topic is rugby and we get all these passports and no one gets involved despite all the promotion."

However, the opportunity that membership of SWRLS gives not only to help fund collaborative projects, but also to establish contacts for collaboration across the SWRLS network was valued by many of the participants, as expressed by this member's statement.

"SWRLS meetings bring you into contact with organisations/people to work on a collaborative bid for funding opportunities"

SWLRS' role of not only providing funds for training, but also developing training courses was seen by participants as being particularly useful because an informed and well trained staff member enhances their own professional development and provides better service to customers. The topic of training was the fourth most valued aspect of SWRLS in the members' call for evidence, and training was the most mentioned activity in reply to the question "What service or activity could SWRLS offer that they are not currently providing to support you, your library and its users?" *(Figure 4* Activities for SWRLS*p,8.*Training staff in a cost effective manner is becoming increasingly important to library management because information is expanding; methods of dealing with the organisation of such knowledge are changing, and the role and work expectations of a library worker are also different with the increase of automation. Diminishing opportunities for learning about librarianship at a high level with fewer universities offering appropriate courses prompted this statement from a participant:

"Training of professionals has to change in the future to reflect the emerging library service delivery models. We will see a deskilling of professionals as the traditional training opportunities diminish".

The importance of making the training relevant to all sectors was emphasised, several participants stating that they would only participate in training "depending what was offered", specifically if they could understand the relevance of the training to their organisation. Certainly one participant feels that recent courses have not been relevant to their staff:

"The training offer is not significant for … University's staff development needs … they are insufficiently relevant for us to prioritise sending anyone".

On the other hand, another participant praised the latest course, because it directly fills a gap in their provision and also demonstrates the financial benefit of being a SWRLS member:

"The forthcoming training course on 'Overcoming Invisible Barriers' has attracted a lot of interest in our authority. More of these kinds of courses - offering directly relevant skills that are not being catered for at local level - would certainly be seen as value for money."

The topics of training that participants mentioned that they would find useful for their staff include:

- Information literacy

- Digital literacy

- Digital resource discovery

- Interlibrary lending

- Use of emergent technologies

Other suggestions made by participants that would make training more accessible and increase member participation were as follows:

- Bite-sized tips

- Webinars/ online content

- Situated at places easy to reach by public transport

The prospect of SWRLS offering nationally recognised certified courses, such as NVQ or Foundation Degrees, or becoming a training agency for apprenticeships was mooted during two of the interviews. Online courses could also be offered in order to provide libraries with staff trained in the practical aspects of library and information work.

Projects and training are therefore aspects of SWRLS membership that are important to Library, Heritage and Information institutions in the region. The cross sector aspect for training courses was highlighted, and although SWRLS should increase courses of this nature, it does not mean that every course has to be targeted at each and every sector. Training offers a potential area where SWRLS can develop further than offering support through funding and so should become a higher priority for the constitution and Objects of the Charity.

Resource sharing

Of course, it could be argued that pressures of diminishing budgets can be offset by collaborative work and resource sharing. Participants considered some ideas of the resources that could be shared such as:

- Procurement of E-resources

- Joint electronic catalogue

- In house training and presentations

- Knowledge

- Hidden collections

- Facilities

- Online training or guidance

- Skills

Other suggestions included SWRLS acting as a negotiating agent for a regional reduction in fees for electronic resources from the larger companies; a joint searching tool installed "above"

the library or authority catalogues, a task that the Library of Wales has achieved[3]; taking a training package or presentation devised for a member's establishment and repeat it at another; utilising the skills of members to better advantage for SWRLS events.

Participants showed interest in uncovering "hidden collections", for example individual public libraries have a small section of books about their local history. Academic libraries hold special collections built around a subject, or a donated collection. For example, Bristol University "has the theatre collection". Although items in such collections may be for reference only, if their existence is shared it allows easier findability and access for interested individuals.

Many participants were positive about the concept of shared resources and considered that SWRLS could be a central point for promotion and an agency for the distribution and creation of resources. One participant justified the idea by stating "[if] you can remove duplications you remove costs, which is in everybody's interest". Sharing resources maximises their use and the benefit to the public, as pointed out by this participant:

"…there are probably peaks and troughs through the academic year as there are peaks and troughs in our usage in the public libraries and can we make better use of our resources across the city…."

However, there is no tangible resource where this can be achieved. The website was mentioned by six participants, some in a positive way; but others were more critical of its functionality. As the website is new it does offer the potential to become a "portal", where more information and resources can be made available to members.

"We think that, and hopefully with the new website, we can maybe store useful information that we can share."

Overall, SWRLS is seen as a potential hub for collating and distributing resources; participants made suggestions of what could easily be shared and ideas of what could be jointly developed under the auspices of SWRLS. Therefore resource sharing should remain a priority for SWRLS to facilitate and promote pro-actively.

Grants

As can be seen in the previous sections, the availability of SWRLS funding to contribute towards staff training and collaborative projects is a popular aspect of SWRLS which participants perceive as providing value for money and a reason for membership.

"I think it's a real, real benefit because it runs through the year on a rolling programme and it's flexible and allows people to come in with ideas in large scale or small scale so it's scalable and I think it's unique from that point of view."

There are two forms of funding for these purposes; the small grant of between £200 and £2,000 which can be used for individual training needs and large grants for larger projects which start at £2,000 up to £10,000[4]. The popularity of the scheme is borne out by participants' comments on what they value most about SWRLS membership, as one participant commented *"the grant scheme is great…"*

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[3]   https://libraries.wales/find-a-book/
[4]   http://www.swrls.org.uk/assets/files/Grants/Grants/information final v1 April 2015.pdf

The grant scheme is designed to promote collaborative work, not only between SWRLS members but also for SRWLS members taking the lead to collaborate with other organisations. The money comes from the considerable reserves that SWRLS has built up over the years. There is therefore the risk that this reserve will dwindle away and not be available in the future. This poses a problem of how to sustain the income of SWRLS because the grant scheme is so valued by members, as noted by a participant:

"…we've got this pot of money that has accrued over the years so we can do the grants. In the normal state of things, we probably wouldn't be able to do that …"

Currently grants are available at any time of year. Applications are assessed by the board and, for the larger grants, by an assessment panel to ensure that they fit criteria listed in the guidance document. It is possible that SWLRS could offer a service to help libraries with grant bids from other agencies, as suggested by one participant. In order to continue this service thought must be given to methods of generating future funding and formalising the numbers and size of outgoing grants.

Co-operation and partnership

Both member and non-member participants highly value the opportunity that SWRLS gives for cross-sector co-operation. SWRLS is seen as a unique organisation that provides cross sector networking; "one of few bodies that enables/encourages cross sectoral activity" as one participant described it. Another said:

"Of the most value is the network that crosses the public, private and education sector library services, the reach that it brings and the potential for cooperation and understanding to mutual benefit."

Participants see SWRLS as a contact point where libraries as diverse as health libraries and public libraries can "talk". The cross-sectoral aspect is seen to give staff a chance to meet people doing the same role or facing the same issues in other library and information situations, for example:

- Addressing the needs of visually impaired customers

- The commitment to lifelong learning

- Working with the arts

- Strategic management

- Mental Health management

- Best practice

- Bibliography

- Stock procurement

- Access to specialised information sources

- Interlibrary loans

The networking opportunities that membership of SWRLS provides to individuals are valued. Members who regularly attend SWRLS meetings find that they enjoy the simple act of having an

informal conversation with people working in other sectors where they can exchange ideas and thoughts. For example, this enthusiastic comment from a board member:

"…it is incredibly useful to know what other sectors and other universities in the region are up to, what they are buying, what they have rejected and so on with regards to software… yes, it's a huge benefit."

Being part of an organisation enables collaborative working; in fact one participant felt that "the point of SWRLS" membership is to "Collaborate with another library, another person, preferably out of your current sector". Most participants considered that cross sector collaborative working is beneficial because it can; bring "…libraries from across the sector together to deliver shared objectives" and "it's opened up a lot of opportunities for quite a few of our learners without even [having] funding". However there is a realisation that each sector has its separate pressures so the collaboration must fit the local circumstances, as this participant outlines:

"…we've got income generation to consider, customer services, the whole Council services as well. So I think collaborative working is fantastic as long as it meets with what you have to do locally as well".

In fact, another participant felt that, due to the external pressures, there is an increasing gap between academic libraries and other sectors:

"The idea of uniting libraries of all kinds in the South West is appealing in theory but in practice changes in the landscape of academic libraries means that there seems to be less common ground between us."

Despite those notes of caution, in general, participants consider that the existence of SWRLS allows:

- Individual co-operation, building personal knowledge and skills

- Collective co-operation with projects and training, building the knowledge and skills of their workforce

- Wider co-operation with similar agencies, building the skills and knowledge of the region

If this is the case, then cross sector collaboration must be a high priority for SWRLS.

In summary, participants considered that SWRLS has the potential to increase its role as an enabler of cross sector collaboration. This can be achieved by:

- Finding ways to make networking events accessible across the large geographic region

- Continuing to promote and enable collaborative projects across the region

- Developing the website as a tangible resource where information and resources can be shared and accessed

- Increase the membership base of SWRLS to include other regional heritage and educational organisations.

Collaborative collection development

None of the participants mentioned the idea of a collaborative collection. Therefore, this cannot be considered as a priority. However, there was some discussion about a collaborative

catalogue, which will be considered in the next section, as it pertains to the Objects of the Charity.

As can be seen in *Table 3* SWRLS is currently not successfully communicating its profile and value for money to members. In order to achieve this and to realign its priorities it should devise a clear statement that encapsulates SWRLS distinctiveness and reason for being. Once that is decided, one strategic aim should be selected and SWRLS operational objects should be clearly focused on that aim. To clearly demonstrate that subscribing to SWRLS give value for money subscription fees and ILL calculations should be separated. Members consider that projects, training, grants, co-operation and collaborative work are desirable features of SWRLS and made suggestions for their development and relevance. Projects and training should be broadly targeted at cross-sector issues. Grant funding is seen as important to members, therefore ensuring its sustainability is vital. Members expressed a desire to share resources, but not to work together on collaborative collection development. Therefore, the priority of collaborative collection development should be replaced with the potential development of a resource and information hub.

Summary

Table 3   The realignment of SWRLS priorities

Priority	Meet needs of members?	Realignment
Profile	Is not clear to members	Clearly state a mission and vision Cleary communicate SWRLS' unique qualities Choose one strategic aim Focus the objectives to that aim
Value for money	Yes for some, but no for others. Perceptions are clouded by the complicated subscription model.	Separate subscriptions and ILL
Projects and training	Yes, would like more training that cover cross sector issues. Projects general appreciated, but not appropriate for all sectors	Develop the training offer Align projects with cross-sector aims
Grants	Yes	Create a sustainable future for grant funding
Co-operation and partnership	Yes, but would like to develop further links	Increase role of enabling cross sector collaboration
Resource sharing	Not currently	Potential to develop, facilitate and promote a resource and information hub
Collaborative collection development	no	drop

Objects of the Charity

Are the Objects of the Charity still fit for purpose?

The Objects of the Charity are stated in the strategic plan as follows:

- To promote co-operation between libraries in the area of Bath and North East Somerset, Bournemouth, Bristol, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Guernsey, Jersey, North Somerset, Plymouth, Poole, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Swindon, Torbay and Wiltshire

- To arrange loans between constituent libraries

- To maintain access to a unified catalogue of resources as required

The overall purpose of those three objects is then summed up with the phrase "Which, in general terms, promote the principle of community education"[5].

Co-operation

Co-operation has already been shown to be one of the most important and valued activities to SWRLS members and associated organisations. SWRLS is perceived as a forum for networking, collaborative projects and resource sharing. Participants reported that collaboration could include activities such as training; cross sectoral strategic planning; events and importantly, a South Western cross sectoral conference for all levels of staff.

In order for SWRLS to develop cross sector co-operation it has been noted that the membership base should be increased to include heritage and other educational organisations. In contrast, individuals in some library organisations considered that regional co-operation was not relevant to their organisation, feeling that being part of a global network was more important. In some cases this means that an entire organisation may choose not to be a member, limiting access to SWRLS for any members of staff that consider that regional cross sector co-operation is important to their professional development. In such situations, SWRLS could choose to introduce individual membership. Currently, the wording of the Objects of Charity includes the word "libraries", which would not be appropriate should it be decided that the membership base is increased to include individuals and/or other organisations in the arts and cultural sector.

The wording also lists each local authority region. It could be possible that in future these will change or SWRLS may choose to change its boundaries. Cross-sectoral collaboration should remain as an Object of the Charity, but this could be re-worded to encompass a more flexible approach. For example, substitution of the word "libraries" by a more generic term, and being less specific about the names of each local authority. The specific details could then be included in policies which can be revised appropriately at relevant times.

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[5] www.swrls.org.uk/assets/files/SWRLS%20documents/SWRLS%20Strategic%20Plan%20Revision%202014%20V5%20310715.pdf

Inter-library lending

The topic of interlibrary lending has been mentioned above, but as it is the foundation of SWRLS original activities the subject must be discussed in greater depth at this point. SWRLS owes its existence to Interlibrary lending (ILL) because it was formed as an organisation to facilitate inter-library loans between the public libraries in the South Western region of the UK. At its zenith SWRLS employed a bibliographic team to maintain a joint catalogue and process the inter-lending requests as one participant described:

"Bristol library used to house this joint catalogue of all the library services in the South West, which in those days also included Oxfordshire and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, so it was a vast area. Any requests for inter-lending used to go through that bureau so they were very busy; there was a whole team of staff involved in it…"

Therefore, this team provided the infrastructure to efficiently run an ILL service. It was disbanded at some time during the 1990s when card catalogues were superseded by mechanised Library Management Systems. There are also no current transport arrangements or protocols to send and deliver items between libraries. In consequence, there is currently no infrastructure to support the Inter-library lending role presently taken on by SWRLS.

The responses to the survey indicated that while many of the member libraries do not use their membership of SWRLS in order to borrow books from other members, the facility is still highly valued and appreciated by libraries with limited resources, especially in Further Education and for Sixth Form work at a school. For example one participant stated:

"SWRLS has been a fantastic help. I cannot afford to buy books for niche topics that will not be used again and so SWRLS helps me to provide high-quality information to my students without being wasteful."

Specialist collections, for example music libraries, can also benefit, as explained by this participant:

"…we've got the music library service where we are a net lender for the music service … that made money that enabled us to subsidise our inter-library loans".

On the other hand, four of the Higher Education libraries have a different viewpoint. They consider that in the electronically interconnected global world there is less need to share local resources; that public libraries do not contain useful material and "rarely hold the kinds of resources that are required by our researchers"; and that although the capability of borrowing resources from a neighbouring university is useful "there are other mechanisms which could deliver that benefit". Five Higher Education librarians expressed a different view and find the ILL service is still useful. For example, they are "very happy to do that for the community" and " like to be able to provide our materials to other local partners as part of our community engagement commitments" or value "Inter-library loans at a reduced rate".

The issue is further complicated with the increase of digitised and digitally born items, for example e-books. One participant stated that "Our focus has become much more on e-books, digital supply of PDFs and expanding awareness of open access". Certain e-books are difficult to share because of publisher licencing, different e-reading platforms and publisher agreements.

On the other hand, others are readily available online from e-publishing platforms, such as Amazon, or resources such as Gutenberg[6].

This raised the question as to whether there is really a need for a local ILL service. Some members consider that there is, and it is important to them, whilst others believe that national and international ways of finding resources are the best way to source the items that their users want, and a global aspect is better than something introspective and local. However, research commissioned by The Combined Regions (TCR)[7] and undertaken by Sheffield University considers that local inter-lending is still useful specifically for public libraries[8]. The call for evidence from this review revealed that four public library members still appreciated SWRLS interlibrary lending facilitation, although two added that the cost of interlibrary lending had to be justified. Two other public library members put a low value on SWRLS interlending, however, one of those was part of a library consortium. When books and documents are transferred between libraries that are part of a consortium the transfer is not considered as interlibrary lending.

Some libraries are refusing to lend books to other SWRLS libraries as indicated by two participants:

"Public libraries are sometimes unwilling to lend some of their materials to us (eg, children's books)…"

"Some HE libraries borrow many items, but they have a policy of NOT lending"

Another participant observed that SWRLS is not so much an ILL service as a "Reciprocal lending agreement".

The table below outlines the pros and cons of interlibrary lending as expressed by participants either during interviews or in the survey.

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6 https://www.gutenberg.org/
7 http://www.combinedregions.com/
8 Wakeling, S., Rutter, S., Birdi, B and Pinfield, S., (2016) Interlending and resource sharing in UK public libraries: a mixed methods study, Journal of Library and Information Science. http://dy.doi.org/10.1177/0961-0006 accessed 20/06/2016

Table 4   The pros and cons of SWRLS interlibrary lending

	Pro		Con
Positive aspect	- It is useful - Considered an important part of SWRLS - Historically core reason for existence of SWRLS - Forum to discuss ILL is seen as very useful - SWRLS could be agent to ILL resources - Maintenance of ILL network seen as important	**Negative aspect**	- Some libraries do not lend - Resentment of libraries that lend to those that refuse to lend - Reported that SWRLS ILL not used by many members - Not seen as relevant by some members
Cost implications	- Cost effective for some libraries - Can be cheaper than British Library or other ILL costs - ILL costs from other sources are increasing - Net lenders like having "Credit" - ILL seen as "Free", once sub has been paid		- SWRLS Inter-lending decreasing in line with general trend - ILL activity tied in to subscriptions - Some libraries consider that using SWRLS membership for ILL would be financially disadvantageous - Libraries with good budgets buy stock in preference to ILL - SWRLS membership no longer seen as value for money due to decrease in ILL
Community implications	- Good for community engagement between universities and their locality - Some librarians consider that ILL is a statutory and "moral obligation" - Promotes co-operation		- No basic infrastructure to support ILL - Some members do not consider interlibrary lending
Resources	- Provides more than books, also play sets and music sets, magazines - Access to a greater selection of books in order to serve the needs of customers - Access to books that will only be needed once		- Public libraries do not always hold what HE libs want - Issues with sharing electronic resources, eg licensing - Less need because more is done electronically - Consortiums pass books between them, there are more consortiums happening in SWRLS area
Convenience	- Administration at library level not too time consuming (from HE library) - Main reason that some establishments are members - Quicker to borrow locally - Logical because some libraries share a customer base - Full potential of local ILL has not been explored		- Local libraries can inter-lend directly, without an agency - Some members do not know how to do interlibrary lending - Administration of calculating the ILL at library level problematic

It can be seen that the advantages only just outweigh the disadvantages and it is certain that not all member institutions would choose to use their SWRLS membership for interlibrary lending. However, there is a core of smaller libraries that appreciate the ability to borrow locally to fulfil the needs of their customers, and there is a desire amongst a small group of Higher Education librarians to lend locally as part of their community engagement initiatives.

Cost of loans

The costing structure for interlibrary lending through SWRLS membership is not straightforward. As in the case of SWRLS subscription calculations, there is a different system for calculating interlibrary lending for Public Libraries to that of other members. It is stated on SWRLS website that interlibrary lending is "Free" for public libraries, whereas there is a flat rate for "Other Libraries" (£5.30).

It was stated previously that some participants from public libraries calculated the subscription to SWRLS and the number of interlibrary loans that they received for that sum and concluded that the charges made by the British Library (BL) interlibrary loan service per item was cheaper. Logically, had the library borrowed a greater number of books, the resulting amount would be less. It is therefore difficult to accurately calculate the cost of borrowing an item through SWRLS membership. It is far easier to calculate the financial value of lending books, as the net lending credit is set at £2.35. However, the credit is calculated at the end of a subscription year and deducted from the subscription for the forthcoming year. The numbers of books lent against the number of books borrowed is calculated by the libraries themselves, a process which is time consuming and not necessarily accurate. For example a participant commented:

"There is a flaw in this model because there is no way that SWRLS have of knowing that the Interlending returns form each authority is actually accurate. This is because it is very difficult for an authority to calculate what has been borrowed in that way…"

Some libraries in SWRLS recoup the costs of ILL from the individual customer, but as a participant reports, the costs are sometimes subsidised:

"…we've been subsidising our inter-library loans for years now, we still charge £1.50".

There is a desire that should interlibrary lending continue to be part of SWRLS' activities that the system is rationalised, separated from the main subscription, and that the chosen fee is seen to be a cheaper option compared to other interlibrary lending organisations:

"Just going back to inter-library loans, I think that needs to be looked at almost as a separate entity"

"The overall usage rates are dropping but the costs are increasing and I think that's quite interesting because at what point is it worthwhile to go local instead of to go national and is that the value because £15+ for a borrower-book from British Library, if it was £5 to borrow at your library, is that where we start thinking that that would be worth it."

Table 5 shows a comparison of the costs per item of borrowing from another library or organisation. As it currently stands, at a flat rate of £5.30 for libraries other than public libraries, SWRLS undercuts the charges made by other organisations. There is no calculation to support whether this reflects the true costs for each library, for example staff time and postage. The table also shows that a number of leading libraries follow the BL rate, while the CONARLS rate and the Institute of Structural Engineers library offer interlibrary loans at less than half that sum.

The figures shown are for interlending in the UK, apart from the SHARES rate, which allows libraries to borrow from other libraries globally. The figures shown do not include theses, photocopying or digitisation, which are available at differing rates for each library. In many cases, membership of the organisation is necessary and annual subscriptions must also be added to the calculation.

Table 5   Comparisons of ILL charges per item

Organisation	Charges in UK, for physical books	Notes
SWRLS	£5.30	For "Other Libraries"
	"Free"	For Public Libraries
British Library	£15.35 (one item by mail)	From latest charges page
	£13.30	As reported by Academic Librarians
Trinity College Dublin	As BL	Library of last resort
Bodleian	As BL	To be read in Library only
Wellcome Library	£11+VAT	Library of Last resort, to libraries outside London only
Institute of Structural Engineers	£6.50	For members only, UK and Ireland
OCLC, SHARES	$30 (£20.43)	For worldwide interlending
OCLC, Worldshare	Set by library	ILL software available
		Net lending credit available
Courtauld Inst.	As BL	Library of Last resort
General academic libraries, when asked	As BL	Libraries outside London only
Inter-Regional Unit (IRU) Cost Scheme for the Supply of Inter-Library Loans	£6.00	From the CONARLS group of The Combined Regions

Net Lending Credit

The only other interlibrary lending organisation mentioned in *Table 5* which uses a net lending credit scheme similar to SWRLS is OCLC, which invoices libraries monthly and the credit goes towards their running total[9]. Other libraries, such as the Bodleian, use IFLA (International

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9   http://www.oclc.org/worldshare-ill/features/ill-fee-management.en.html

Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) vouchers[10]. These are plastic vouchers that can be purchased from IFLA and "spent" at any participating library around the world. Vouchers can be redeemed by the receiving library. Such a voucher system is a direct transaction for interlending and does not impinge on any subscription rates. As other interlibrary lending organisations have separated the fees for interlibrary lending from any membership subscriptions it would be possible for SWRLS to do the same.

Summary

In summary, therefore, although interlibrary lending is waning generally and the SWRLS service is not used or appreciated by a certain group of its members, the service is still wanted by the smaller libraries because it allows them to serve their customers well. Similarly, certain members believe that there is a moral obligation for them to engage with the wider community and that it is important for them to lend their stock to other libraries. This suggests that SWRLS should include interlibrary lending as one of the Objects of the Charity.

However, SWRLS originated as a public library organisation with the main purpose of interlibrary lending and the subscription structure was devised accordingly. With the addition of libraries from other sectors, and the development of other activities, the subscription rate and interlending credit has become difficult to manage. The original infra-structure for interlibrary lending, that is, the SWRLS shared catalogue, no longer exists. This means that should SWRLS choose to include Interlibrary lending as a charity object, the method by which the service is delivered should be revised.

Unified catalogue of resources

As it stands as at the moment SWRLS has no fundamental infrastructure for interlibrary lending. There is no common catalogue of the stock of member libraries only, although SWRLS does encourage the use of Unity UK, the Union Catalogue for libraries in the UK which is hosted by OCLC[11]. There are no transport arrangements to get books from one place to another. The paper catalogue that was part of the SWRLS service was not updated to an electronic version, and the department that dealt with that was disbanded at some point in the 1990s. This indicates that at that time, it was considered that local interlibrary lending was not important, or perhaps that modernisation to an electronic catalogue was beyond SWRLS's means. However, the service has been continuing on an ad hoc basis since then.

The British Library is being used for ILL extensively these days, frequently by HE libraries, because they find it easier, although it may be quicker and cheaper for the user to obtain items locally[12]. It saves library staff time and effort. This is because BL has an infrastructure and set procedures[13]. There are also other ways of getting resources, for example, through OCLC, SHARES and Worldshare (*Table 5*). On the other hand, participants were very interested in SWRLS becoming a hub for shared information and resources. It would therefore be a logical extension to offer some sort of database to indicate which resources could be shared. One participant suggested the possibility of a resource that "…looks like a catalogue that sits over [library catalogues]". The participant foresaw that there may be technical issues with such a

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[10] http://www.ifla.org/voucher-scheme
[11] https://www.oclc.org/en-UK/unityuk/overview.html
[12] Private communication, Celia Hudson to Marianne Bamkin, 02/06/2016
[13] http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/atyourdesk/docsupply/productsservices/index.html

resource, "…but then there are examples in the country where they have bypassed that barrier…" One example of a regional shared resource is the Welsh Libraries website which is described as a "one stop portal for all Welsh Libraries" and contains online resources, including e-books and audio books, as well as a function for searching the catalogues of Welsh Public, Academic and Further Education libraries simultaneously[14].

As the SWRLS unified catalogue of resources no longer exists, it is questionable whether "to promote access to a unified catalogue of resources" is a valid statement for SWRLS Objects of the Charity. Although the SWRLS website has links to Unity UK, and can therefore be seen to be promoting access, it is a resource that can be used by any Unity UK member. Access to a unified catalogue could also be provided to members by SWRLS becoming a member and gaining access to resources such as Worldshare, SHARES or Copac[15] for libraries that are not already members of these. However, participants of the study valued the concept of sharing resources locally and it would be possible to devise a shared catalogue, or to produce a resource sharing portal, as exemplified by the Welsh Libraries.

Summary

The major question to answer in this section is "Are the Objects of the Charity fit for purpose?" Taken overall, the three objects should lead to "the promotion of community education". In this case, the concept of community education is that of a well-informed population which has access to the information it requires in order to advance knowledge. The importance of the work of SWRLS is that the population of the South Western Region is given the opportunity to become informed citizens. The objects have been examined in detail and it has been found that essentially the spirit of the objects still hold true and would benefit the people of the South West, although some adjustment is needed.

Co-operation between libraries is as important as it was when SWRLS was founded, if not more so, as libraries from more sectors have joined and still find the organisation useful to their customers. Similar, closely aligned heritage, information and educational organisations believe that membership of SWRLS benefits their end users. The object of promoting cross-sector co-operation should remain, but could be re-worded to become more inclusive of such organisations.

Arranging of loans between constituent libraries is not as important as a means of providing information to the population and promoting community education as it was 80 years ago. Information can be gathered through more channels and is more accessible. However, a key group of the participants of this study consider that the ability to borrow items from local libraries is of great advantage to their end-user, enabling them to educate their community. The object of arranging loans should remain, but the mechanism of fulfilling that object should be examined and revised.

The object of maintaining access to a unified catalogue has become difficult to sustain with the disbanding of the card catalogue in the 1990s. SWRLS encourages the use of Unity UK, a union catalogue for all the UK, but it is difficult to judge whether it specifically benefits the population of the South Western Region. Participants of this study considered that sharing

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[14] https://libraries.wales/about-us/
[15] http://copac.jisc.ac.uk/

resources is a useful regional activity and that SWRLS should be an information hub. Library users have the facility of searching the online catalogue of the library of which they are members. Welsh Libraries have set a precedent of a unified website to offer a full set of online services to their population, including searching of public, academic and FE libraries in their region, thereby enabling the education of their community. Therefore, the object of access to a unified catalogue should be replaced with an object that reflects community access to information.

Table 6   Changes to the Objects of Charity

	Object	Fit for purpose?	Change
1	Promote co-operation in SW region	Partially	Place greater emphasis on co-operative activities Broaden the membership Re-word the Object
2	Arrange loans between constituent libraries	No	Choose to either abolish or retain as an Object If retained then revise the service accordingly
3	Maintain access to unified catalogue of resources	No	Consider the development of a resource sharing portal to replace this Object

Table 6 clearly shows that two of the three Objects of Charity are no longer fit for purpose, and one is partially fit for purpose. It is proposed that Object one should be reworded; a clear decision must be made to abolish Object 2 or to revise ILL; and Object three should be changed from maintaining a unified catalogue to developing a resource sharing portal.

Potential

> *Remind the sector about SWRLS and its potential as a regional agency*

All but two participants could see a potential for SWRLS as a regional agency, although many individuals recognised that in order for SWRLS to continue changes should be made to the service.

Table 7 below shows a set of attributes that is desirable for a modern regional library service, and a range of related activities which participants suggested.

Table 7   Attributes for a Regional Library Service

Attribute	Activity

Facilitate co-operation and networking	Grant giver and bidding agency
	Increase cross sectoral partnership
	    Organise in-person networking opportunities
	    External representatives on interview panels
	    Library "Buddying"
	Collaborate
	    Provide cross sector courses and training support
	    Work towards common goals
	    Share best practice and advice

Advocacy	Promote content and services of Public Libraries Promote the region's libraries Develop new audiences
High Profile	Have wider membership base Represent itself at general SW events Have strong online presence
Information and resource hub	Have mailing lists Have common themed focus groups Include web forums Enable joint procurement Increase staff capacities Include an interlending element Access to "Hidden" collections

Participants also commented that interlibrary lending should change to become "more robust and tight" with a "new charging mechanism" and speculated that the membership base could be broadened to include museums, archives and record management. Alternatively, the membership model could be more restricted in order to scale down the service and therefore become more focussed and may increase value for money. There is more evidence to support the idea of broadening the membership, as non-members considered that membership of SWRLS could be very important to them. Changing the name to "Libraries South West" was also suggested, by one participant, in order to be "relevant to the modern day library sector but retain gravitas of the association".

Summary

In summary, participants believe that there is still a use for a cross sector collaborative library organisation and that SWRLS has the potential to become a modern regional service. *Table 7* shows that the four attributes required for such a service are:

1. To facilitate co-operation and networking
2. To act as an advocate for regional libraries
3. To hold a high profile
4. To become an information and resource hub

Therefore, these four attributes should become priorities of the organisation

Constitution

> *To revise the Constitution so that it reflects a modern, forward thinking organisation*

SWRLS is a registered charity (no. 284072) and is therefore required by the Charity Commission to hold a governing document which is a legal document that sets out the rules of the purpose and legal administration of the charity[16] that is, its constitution. The Charity Commission webpage lays out the requirements for setting up a charity as can be seen in Table 8When compared with this table, the current constitutional document for SWRLS does not include all of these details and therefore should be revised to match the most up to date version of a charity commission model policy[17] .

The details omitted from the current SWRLS constitution (2011) are as follows:

- All the objects of the charity: Only the promotion of co-operation within the geographical area is specifically stated

- The powers of the trustees: In the section headed "powers", the current constitution deals with the activities of the service, not the powers of the trustees.

- Financial details: The details of the daily financial management and role of the honorary treasurer are not stated

- Trustee benefits: It does not state whether members of the Management Board (trustees) may or may not financially benefit from the charity

- Amendments: The current SWRLS constitution does not set out a procedure for making amendments to the constitution

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[16] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-write-your-charitys-governing-document
[17] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/517016/GD3.pdf

Table 8   Details that the governing document must contain

Section	What it needs to contain	Current constitution
Name	Your charity's name and (in the case of a trust or an unincorporated association) power to amend the name	✓
Objects	What your charity is set up to achieve (its purposes must all be charitable for the public benefit)	Partially
Powers	What the trustees can do to carry out its purposes (for example, raising funds, buying and selling property, borrowing money, working with other organisations)	✗
Charity trustees	How many trustees there are, who can be a trustee, how they are appointed, how long they can hold office and if they can be reappointed	✓
Charity meetings and voting	How many meetings are needed, how they are arranged, how a chair is appointed, how votes are made and counted (including minimum numbers for this)	✓
Membership (if applicable)	Who can be a member, age restrictions, ending someone's membership, how membership meetings are called	✓
Financial	How the charity meets its legal accounting requirements, who controls the bank account, who can sign cheques and if two signatures are needed, other internal financial controls	Partially
Trustee benefit	How trustees must not benefit from the charity (excluding reasonable expenses) without commission approval or unless it is authorised in the governing document	✗
Amendments (if applicable)	How the trustees can change the charity's governing document, when commission approval is needed, how amendments are recorded	✗
Dissolution	When the charity can be closed, what happens to any remaining assets (charitable assets can only be used for charitable purposes)	✓

The constitution is a document that basically deals with the legal aspects of a charity. The constitution is not a descriptive and clear list of the charity's full activities and policies. The current document includes details such as:

"The service will arrange and facilitate training opportunities for members, as demands arise, to support workforce development"

Such statements are important in order to focus SWRLS activities, but it would be more appropriate to list them in a set of strategic policies rather than in the constitution. Policies should be derived from the Objects and priorities of SWRLS, for example:

- Co-operation: Policies on projects, training, partnership working, membership

- Value for money: Policies on subscriptions, interlending fees, grants

- Resource sharing: Policies on interlibrary lending, forums and mailing lists, online resources

As well as introducing policies, in order to be an effective high profile advocate for Libraries in the South Western Region mission and vision statements should be produced. These changes will take time and effort to achieve and, should SWRLS choose to undertake the task, two points should be clarified.

- The role and tasks for the Director and Committee should be made clear, with direction and vision

- The current decision making process is lengthy and time consuming, that is, sending emails and waiting for replies. Other means should be considered, for example, electronic polling.

To summarise this section, the present constitution is not written to the requirements of the Charity Commission. It should be re-written with the inclusion of a revised set of objects, taking a Charity Commission model document as a basis. Other essential information that describes the reason and purpose of SWRLS should be laid out in the forms of Mission and Vision statements and policies.

Financial model

Whilst the financial model was not specifically identified as an issue at the outset, it became apparent at an early stage in the research that this was an issue for many members. It has already been noted that there is confusion in some member's minds between the subscription and interlibrary lending, with the conclusion that interlibrary lending should be administered separately from the annual subscription fee. This would mean that net lending credits will not be deducted from the subscription, but dealt with in another way. In that case, the basis for subscription fees and a new subscription model should be considered.

Subscription model

The annual membership subscription must cover annual outgoings in an organisation and therefore careful consideration is needed to set the fee and recruit members. The financial analysis of income and outgoings is outside the remit of this study, therefore possible subscription models are only discussed in theory. The subscription models of seven similar organisations were examined and *Table 9* lists the organisation, the type of membership subscription and the range of services offered to members. Out of the seven, six organisations allow personal membership and five allow institutional membership. Four of the seven organisations accept personal and institutional membership. The types of personal membership are further divided into personal, for an employed member, retired, unwaged or student. The membership rates for these differ slightly. Four out of the seven offer a flat rate of membership for the type of member whereas three of the seven scale the personal membership according to the member's salary.

Table 9   Subscription models of similar organisations

Organisation		School Library Ass'n	ASCEL	Library of Royal College Nursing	Forum For Interlending and Information Delivery (FIL)	Library of Institution of Mechanical Engineers	Archives and Records Ass'n	Ass'n of British Theological and Philosophical libraries
Subscription model	Personal membership	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Institutional membership	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✗	✓	✓
	Scaled	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
	Flat rate	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
Membership benefits	Member only web provision	✓	✓	?	✓	✗	✓	✓
	Lending	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
	Advice/ guidance	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
	In house publications	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
	Training/ CPD	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
	Resources	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
	Networking	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
	Member Only Deals	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓

The current subscription model for SWRLS is based on institutional membership with a scaled fee for public library authorities and a flat fee for all other individual libraries. It has already been mentioned that situation puts some local authorities at a disadvantage as the fee is charged per head of population and not per library. A fairer system for calculating institutional fees should be considered and made simpler by choosing to either charge a flat fee for every institution or a scaled fee for every institution. Four out of the five organisations which accept institutional membership charge a flat rate. SWRLS could consider doing the same, but once again this could unduly disadvantage smaller organisations. A scaled rate for an institution could be based on (for example):

- Population

- Users

- Income

- Staff

Setting the fee by population is not considered satisfactory as the population bases vary across the different sectors. Calculating the number of users for each library is possible, but that relies on each individual library to calculate and report on their members. Similarly a fee set on a library's income could be considered fair. However, the benefit of joining SWRLS goes primarily to staff, who benefit from training, CPD, networking, and collaborative resources, and then in consequence benefit the users of the libraries. Basing the fee on the staff employed, and therefore the number of people that would benefit from SWRLS activities could be considered a reasonable method giving a direct comparison of value for money. This would also allow a simple structure for an individual membership rate.

To demonstrate that public money is used wisely is an important issue to managers of public and educational library services, therefore the activities that SWRLS offers for the subscription must be clearly stated. Table 9 sets out the range of membership benefits for the organisations listed and SWRLS would do well to identify, promote and visibly list the services that it can offer. The potential for additional income generation (e.g. from training courses offered at increased rates to non-members) should also be investigated.

Membership criteria

It has also been noted that should an institution leave SWRLS, staff of that library may still want to benefit from SWRLS membership or a retired staff member may want to continue involvement with SWRLS. Four out of the seven organisations above accept individuals as members. SWRLS subscriptions should change to cover individual membership as well as institutional membership.

It has also been stated that the membership base could be broadened to include other institutions, such as; archives, museums, arts and creative bodies, cultural organisations, school librarians. Worries were voiced about members becoming consortia, and some organisations becoming trusts (for example, South West Heritage Trust), therefore creating one membership. Using staffing numbers to guide the subscription should overcome this difficulty to some extent, presuming that staffing would not change dramatically when the authorities start working together. It was suggested that individual membership could be offered to people with information or librarianship qualifications who work in other organisations, but want to keep their links with the library world. This, could balance out any imbalance from changing the subscription model and provide networking and collaboration.

SWRLS currently accepts associate members, some from interested organisations, which could become full members should the membership be broadened. Other associates are outside the already large geographic area, and the benefits of these members to SWRLS are not clear as there is no associated subscription. Generalising the regional criteria for membership would allow them to become full members, if they so wished, and so generate additional income for SWRLS.

Changes to the membership subscription and membership base would have consequences for the potential income, and would need to be costed in detail, but it could provide clarity and future sustainability although potentially at a different level of income.

Options appraisal

Based on the evidence outlined above, a number of options for the future are identified. One driver for this review has been the current economic climate, and the difficulties facing public libraries in particular. Not all the options outlined below would result in significant savings, while some would require an initial investment.. There are also many nuances of these options, and ways they could be combined or adjusted to suit particular circumstances.

Initially, there is the option is to carry on and change nothing. SWRLS has a membership and despite some negativity in the region, the work of SWRLS is appreciated by members and non-members alike, who believe that a cross sector, collaborative regional library association is still useful. The organisation holds funds and is not facing bankruptcy. However as this review has been commissioned, as well as there being a will for SWRLS to continue there is a will for change, and some options for what could be changed are listed below:

Interlibrary lending:

Option 1

Drop interlibrary lending entirely. There is currently no real infrastructure to support regional interlibrary lending and most of this activity is between libraries which are happy to work with each other. The complex nature of calculating borrowing and net lending is time consuming and likely to be inaccurate.

Option 2

Become an agent for other means of interlibrary lending (OCLC, Worldshares) instead of being a regional facilitator. This would allow smaller libraries who currently cannot afford to subscribe to such interlending systems to find the right items for their customers.

Option 3

Create a local interlending infrastructure. There is an opportunity for a better local ILL system to be developed. This should include a good delivery mechanism as well as a joint catalogue. Such catalogues have been tried in the past and have been difficult to achieve[18]. To do so would be time consuming, take effort and possibly be expensive but it is not impossible.

Option 4

Develop a regional online information and resource hub, similar to the Welsh Libraries website, which would act like a joint catalogue. This website could have a significant section aimed directly to the population of the region which would include any of the resources that each of the members would like to offer to the people of the South West as well as member only pages devoted to collaborative work, resources and information. It would take time, money and effort, but would be the modern equivalent of sharing resources for the good of the regional community, as interlibrary lending was in 1937, and uphold the ideals of community education.

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[18] Wakeling, S., Rutter, S., Birdi, B and Pinfield, S., (2016) Interlending and resource sharing in UK public libraries: a mixed methods study, Journal of Library and Information Science. http://dy.doi.org/10.1177/0961-0006 accessed 20/06/2016

Financial model

It is important to separate the interlibrary lending concept from the subscription model and the "Net Lending allowance" should be abolished for a simpler and fairer system. This means that choices have to be made about interlending payments and the subscription calculation.

Interlending payments

If ILL is continued, for example under options 2 or 3 above, two potential new models of charging could be considered:

Option 1

Introduce fixed charges, with no net lending credit, but a small part of the fee goes towards the lending library

Option 2

Introduce SWRLS own version of "IFLA vouchers". A certain number may be provided "Free" to each member, and then extras would be paid for. Libraries that lend more than they borrow can have funds reimbursed from vouchers that exceed the normal "Free" allowance.

Subscriptions

Option 1

Introduce a flat rate subscription for each institution. This would be seen as disadvantaging the smaller members.

Option 2

Introduce a scaled subscription for each institution. This could be based on the size of the organisation, the income of the organisation, or (recommended) the number of staff employed.

Membership

The majority of the evidence collected suggests a clear call to broaden membership to allow enthusiastic organisations and individuals to be part of SWRLS and bring in extra income. This could mean that all members are full members, and there will be no associate membership. This encourages cross sector working.

The objects of charity and the constitution would need to be revised accordingly.

Recommendations

There was no call for SWRLS to be wound up, and this is not recommended.

Recommendation 1: Constitution and membership

a) The constitution must be revised at least to update it to charity commission guidelines, and at most to change the objects of charity and revise the priorities.

b) Mission and Vision statements should be developed and a set of policies should be written, ratified and published to raise the profile and promote SWRLS.

c) The regional council should consider all possibilities for broadening the membership base and select and identify membership criteria.

Recommendation 2: Finance

a) The subscription model should be reviewed and ILL separated from the calculation.

b) The honorary treasurer and consultant accountant should explore the viability of different subscription models with cost benefit analysis and present their findings to the regional committee.

c) Should SWRLS choose to continue with interlibrary lending it should be carried out on a separate financial basis to the subscription and the net lending credit should cease.

d) In that case, interlending charges should be set at a competitive rate, and the idea of "SWRLS" vouchers, or similar should be considered.

Recommendation 3: Activities and operations

a) Greater emphasis should be given to training, grant funding and cross sector collaboration.

b) The regional council should consider ways of producing a training programme that covers common issues in information and librarianship across sectors. This could include online courses.

c) Thought should be given to the possibilities of SWRLS becoming an agent for apprenticeships and qualifications in order to supplement the shortfall of training for practical skills in library and information work.

d) The regional council should seriously consider SWRLS involvement with interlibrary lending and choose whether to forge an infrastructure for a regional service or to cease all interlibrary lending activity.

e) In order to become a forward thinking and relevant regional cross sectoral service it should consider the development of an information and resource sharing portal in preference to a unified catalogue of resources.

f) As these decisions are made it is essential that the relationship, responsibilities and tasks of the Director, the Management Board and the Regional Council should be made clearer.

Objectives of the review

The scope of the Fundamental Review comprised: the examination of the constitution, priorities and Objects of Charity of SWRLS; as well as reminding the library sector of the potential of SWRLS. It became clear at the outset that the scope should also include a brief examination of SWRLS' financial model. The review has inspected SWRLS priorities and suggested new priorities to meet the future needs of members. The Objects of the Charity were studied to establish their fitness for purpose and revisions were recommended that would update SWRLS

and promote its original purpose. The survey to members and non-members served as a reminder about SWRLS and its potential as a regional agency, and suggestions have been made for ways that SWRLS could promote and develop its potential.

The current constitution was scrutinised and recommendations were made for its revision so that it reflects a modern, forward thinking organisation. In addition the financial model of SWRLS was investigated, compared with that of similar organisations and changes to the financial model are proposed. Therefore, the objectives of SWRLS Fundament review have all been completed.