



SOUTH WESTERN REGIONAL LIBRARY SERVICES

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

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027

1. SWRLS purpose and mission:

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

1. The advancement of education for the benefit of the public by:
 - (a) Promoting cross sector co-operation between members.
 - (b) Promoting access to library collections and specialist knowledge.
 - (c) Providing a framework for the interlending of materials.
 - (d) Advancing the skills and knowledge of the workforce and their stakeholders.
 - (e) Facilitating a collaborative network to share best practice and excellence.

2. The advancement of literature, knowledge and lifelong learning for the benefit of the public by promoting:
 - (a) Access to specialist resources.
 - (b) Cultural activities and partnerships.
 - (c) Access to data and information.

2. The planning process:

The planning process began with a survey to members in 2023, asking for members' views of the importance of SWRLS's activities (e.g. awarding grants, communications); current challenges; what they'd like SWRLS to focus on; training needs. A draft strategic plan in terms of key points going forwards was presented at the 2023 AGM, and the final plan ready for the 2024 AGM.

3. The organisation:

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

The organisation currently has 49 members representing public, university, college, national, school, health and specialist libraries.

SWRLS offer to members:

- Networking: support and expertise and the provision of an information exchange and advice service
- Workforce development: the provision of courses and CPD events
- Grants: to support cross sector initiatives and individual training opportunities
- Interlibrary loans: free access to the rich range of resources held in members' libraries
- Strategic partnerships: seeking out appropriate partnerships to enhance the member offer, bid for funding and contribute to the provision of cost-effective services.

4. Review of SWRLS Strategic Plan, 2021-2024

4.1 Key achievements

- Eight annual networking days were held from 2021 to 2024: each year SWRLS offered a spring/summer members' day and winter AGM/conference.
- The newsletter for members with news from SWRLS and members was sent out every month via MailChimp.
- SWRLS Trustees and Coordinator are active participants in regional networks: CILIP SW, Read SW, and Libraries Connected SW.
- SWRLS Award scheme (launched in 2019) continued making awards through this period, totaling 4 Initiative Grants, and 4 individual training grants.
- SWRLS gave grants in this period to projects including:

- Word Live in Libraries – matched funding for an ACE-funded literature tour in the region’s libraries with Literature Works as delivery partner.
- Peninsula of Sanctuary: Libraries – full funding for a 10-month project led by FX Plus Library.
- SWRLS offered a range of training courses including:
 - Managing Projects in the Library & Information sector (half-day online webinar that ran three times to meet demand)
 - Equality, Equity & Diversity in the Libraries & Information Environment led by John Vincent (2023)
 - The AI Revolution led by Phil Bradbury (2023)
- A member survey in 2023 highlighted member priorities and needs

4.2 Issues/challenges to take forward

- Workforce development – subsidised/affordable training opportunities to meet needs, including in fundraising and AI
- Careers development and opportunities
- Working on joint projects to support the wider community
- Bid writing for public funds e.g. from Arts Council England on behalf of members
- Using the reserves appropriately for the benefit of members
- Advocacy

5. The delivery of the Plan

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

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

6. Goals, actions and tasks 2024 – 2027

High priority

Medium priority

Charitable purpose	Objectives for 21-24	Actions	Timescale	Resources	Lead
1.The advancement of education for the benefit of the public by:					
(a) Promoting cross sector co-operation between members.	Engage in fund-raising opportunities linked with key contemporary themes, e.g. health and wellbeing, regional deprivation.	Support members to apply for SWRLS grants and other bidding opportunities, e.g. ACE. Also undertake to support at least one bid to ACE on behalf of member organisations, with aimed outcomes to include advocacy.	2024-5: new fundraising training offered Ongoing	Time for meetings and expertise	Coordinator/Helen
(b) Promoting access to library collections and specialist knowledge.	Identify and promote “hidden collections” within the region.	Consider organising library web tours to include hidden collections; could follow up with blog post/piece for the newsletter. Could talk in general terms about each library, or a specific project. Consider website feature.		SWRLS Coordinator time and travel expenses	Coordinator/Donna
(c) Providing a framework for the interlending of materials.	Ensure that interlending continues to be a valued benefit of SWRLS membership	Continue to support interlending, to keep website guidance updated and be alert to ways of further improving access.		Funding	Coordinator/Jolanta

(d) Advancing the skills and knowledge of the workforce and their stakeholders.	Develop training and opportunities to support key needs of members, to include focus on frontline skills, digital skills, and leadership.	Offer a consistent, relevant and regularly evaluated training programme. Develop SWRLS/CILIP SW Careers Forum.	Ongoing (8-12 per year)	Coordinator's time, funding	Coordinator/Emma
(e) Facilitating a collaborative network to share best practice and excellence.	Utilise appropriate technologies to connect people and enable effective communications.	Develop the use of Basecamp, Zoom and social media.	Ongoing	Coordinator's and trustees' time, funding	Coordinator/ Frances
2. The advancement of literature, knowledge and lifelong learning for the benefit of the public by promoting:					
(a) Access to specialist resources.	Investigate mutual benefits of strategic alignment with other regional/national groups.	See 1b above, as starting point for identifying potential collaborations.	Ongoing	Time of coordinator, trustees and members	Coordinator
(b) Cultural activities and partnerships.	Develop existing relationship with Literature Works and The Network to promote activities to support members' priorities, e.g. health and wellbeing.	Help to further learning and activities developed through the Word Live in Libraries project.	2024-2025	Time	Coordinator/Helen
(c) Access to data and information.	Ensure data from SWRLS funded projects are shared.	Project evaluations to include relevant data and how it can be re-used/disseminated appropriately	Ongoing	Time of trustees and project leads	Coordinator/Mike