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ARLIS UK & Ireland Volunteering Policy

1. Introduction

This volunteer policy sets out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers and is relevant to all society volunteers. The term 'volunteers' is used in this context to mean any person acting on behalf of the Society, and includes Trustees, Officers, Council members, Committee members, Panel members and members of the Conference Working Party. If at any point the Society should employ any staff members, this policy would also apply to them.

The Policy aims to create a common understanding and to clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure the highest standards are maintained in relation to the management of volunteers.

2. Our commitments

We recognise volunteers as an integral part of the Society.

Their contribution supports our mission and strategic aims.

We aim to encourage and support volunteer involvement to ensure that volunteering benefits the Society and the volunteers themselves.

We are committed to offering a flexible range of opportunities and to encouraging a diversity of people to volunteer with us, including people with diverse abilities and from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

We recognise that there are costs associated with volunteer involvement and will seek to ensure that adequate financial and staffing resources are available for the development and support of our volunteers.

We recognise our responsibility to organise volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

3. Who is a volunteer?

Volunteers are individuals who undertake activity on behalf of our Society, are unpaid and of their own free choice.

All members of the Council including the Trustees are volunteers with the responsibility for governance of the society.

Volunteers may be involved on a one-off, short term or on a longer term, regular basis. They may be involved in many different roles.

Volunteers are valued for:

- bringing additional skills and new perspectives to the Society
- enabling the Society to be more responsive and flexible in our approach
- championing the Society's cause within the wider library, archives and collections community

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding.

There is no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks or for the Society to provide continuing opportunities for voluntary involvement, provision of training or benefits.

However, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability.

Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what the Society expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the Society.

The Society expects volunteers:

- to be reliable and honest
- to uphold the Society's values and comply with organisational policies
- to make the most of opportunities given, e.g. for training
- to contribute positively to the aims of the organisation and avoid bringing the Society into disrepute
- to carry out tasks within agreed guidelines

Volunteers can expect:

- to have clear information about what is and is not expected of them
- to receive adequate support and training
- to volunteer in a safe environment
- to be treated with respect and in a non – discriminatory manner
- to receive out of pocket expenses when agreed with Council
- to have opportunities for personal development
- to be recognised and appreciated
- to be able to say 'no' to anything which they consider to be unrealistic or unreasonable
- to know what to do if something goes wrong

4. Recruitment and selection

Equal opportunities principles will be adhered to in recruiting volunteers.

Opportunities will be widely promoted within the Society so as to attract interest from different sectors of the community.

Information will be made available to those enquiring about volunteering, including written role descriptions which set out the nature and purpose of the volunteering role, key tasks, skills required and benefits.

All volunteers need to be members of the Society either as an individual or as an institutional representative, with the exception of those Committee/Conference Working Party members who are not members of the Society but who have specialist knowledge and skills pertaining to the workings of that Committee.

Depending on the role, recruitment may involve an application form and election process or merely an expression of interest.

5. Induction and training

Volunteers will be given induction and training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken, which in the first instance will include the role description for their role.

6. Support and supervision

Volunteers will be offered support and supervision as appropriate and this is discussed during induction.

At the end of their term of office, volunteers will be offered an exit interview and/or exit questionnaire, in order for the Society to learn from the experience of its volunteers, and to capture and cascade their knowledge and expertise to new/incoming volunteers to the Society.

All Society volunteers are encouraged to feedback on their experience throughout their term of office, including requesting further guidance and training as required for their role.

7. Recognition

Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions with the Society's wider membership at meetings, committees, working groups etc.

Formal recognition of the contribution of volunteers is expressed through annual reports, website articles, social media etc.

8. Dealing with problems

The society aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. It seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly.

We will attempt to deal with any problems informally and at the earliest opportunity in the first instance.

Volunteers will be made aware of the Society's complaints policy and how to use it.

They will also be made aware of how inappropriate behaviour by volunteers will be addressed by the Society.

9. Expenses

Volunteers will be given clear information about what expenses can be claimed and how to make a claim.

Policy revision history

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