

Development Studies Association

President's Report 1st Feb 2014 to date

Professor Geof Wood
Development Studies Association



connecting and promoting the development research community

DSA – Sustainability Challenge

- Withdrawal of DFID funding during year end Jan 2013 after 9 years
- Fees artificially low during external funding period
- Recession: membership fees often first to suffer
- Cafbank high interest rate plummeted
- Secretariat costs to run an organisation of this scope have increased over the years
- Membership fees alone are too low to sustain the current model

DSA Activity

Activities centre around three pillars:

1. To mobilise collective capacity and knowledge on development to accelerate development
2. The nurturing of the next generation of development professionals
3. To invest in the infrastructure necessary for world-leading development studies research and teaching

DSA – Core Functions

Current Activities

- Annual Conference
- Heads of Centres meeting
- Publications
 - JID
 - Bulletin
- Study Groups
- Student Activities

DSA - rationale

- Professional recognition
- Common lobbying for sector resources
- Neutral space for agenda-setting and establishing new initiatives (eg: with Research Councils)
- Nurturing the next generation
- Showcase for research dissemination: argument and evidence
- Sharing information for opportunities and collaborations
- Lobbying for policy commitments
- Convening a wider community linking academics to other stakeholders
- Supporting formation of international collaborations
- Representation with other international organisations
- Offering a 'matrix' service through study groups
- Linking DS community to other professional associations through joint activity (including regional hubs)
- Branding a publication series



Core activities since 1st Feb to date

- Significant core time is spent preparing for the Annual Conference;
 - Call for papers / panels
 - Organisation of standalone papers into coherent panels
 - Grouping panels into overarching workstreams
 - Shaping the Plenary sessions
 - Logistics and administration of the event
- Heads of Centres meeting convened in September 2014 to discuss sustainability options for the DSA
- Monthly DSA Bulletin
- Restructuring the Study Group webpages
- Increased engagement with student membership
- DSA registered formally with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator

Revenue generating activities

1st Feb to date

- Membership fees increased 1st Jan 2014 by 33%
- Compiled a list of Consultancy companies and mailed 'DSA in Focus' to them and asking them to join the DSA
- Started scoping Trusts and Foundations
- Initiated discussions with ESRC and Bond to work more closely together
- Explored a more commercially beneficial relationship with JID and Wiley
- Stricter about charging non-Members to advertise (less of a public good)
- Further proposal developed for fee increases, plus the introduction of a new Premium Membership category
- Abolishing the one year free student trial

Cost cutting activities

1st Feb to date

- Cut back Secretariat costs – both core and Conference
- Findings Research absorbing rental, communications and travel costs
- External auditors have agreed to reduce fee slightly
- Council members absorbing many of their travel costs

Where we are now

- Projected deficit for year end stands at £25,000
- Current reserves = £53,000
- Hiatus with mass emailing list system has severely hampered publicity outreach for the Conference
 - List reduced from just under 10,000 to just 4,000
- Subscribed to DSC Trusts and Foundations database with a long list of 86 to investigate further
- Conference registrations significantly lower than previous years so no contribution to core costs

DSA – Future Aspirations

- Development Innovation Fund
- Regional Chapters
- Global Network of Development Studies Associations
- Publications – book series (underway)
- Enhanced Student Services such as Careers Fair

Key Questions

- Do members want/need a vehicle through which it acts collectively?
- What are those collective interests?
- Is the collective interest sufficient to engage members in a contributory funding model, with appropriate governance beyond present 'subscription' levels?
- Should the DSA be more commercially viable via 'selling' services?
- Is it OK to seek Foundation and CSR funding?
Are there avenues again with DFID or other IOs?