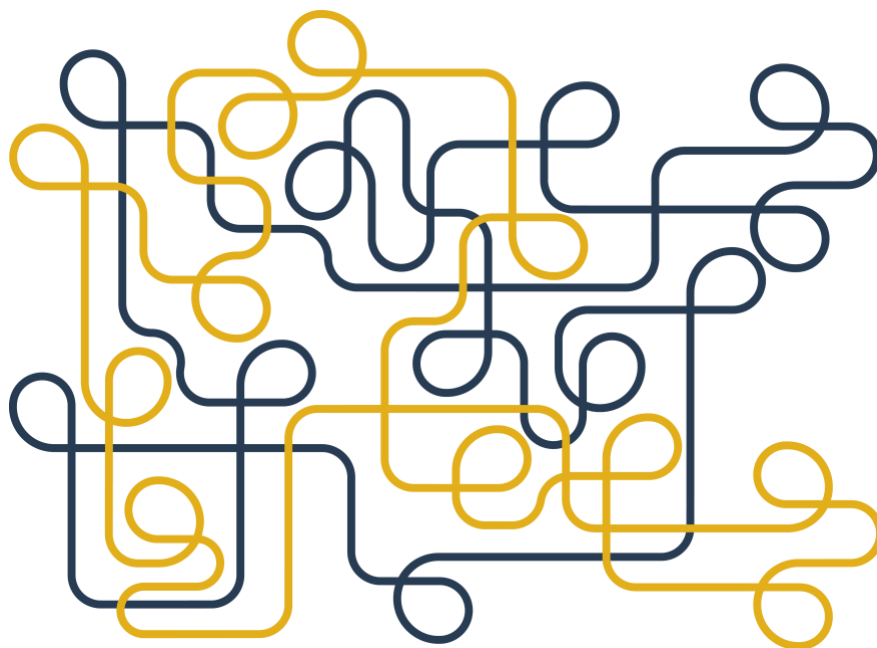


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Overview

2023 is the 50th Anniversary of the SAI. The Association is in a strong position in terms of finances, membership level and activity and the future looks bright. Membership has increased from 85 in 2019, to 120 in 2020, to 164 in 2021, to 200 in 2022 and to 220 in 2023. The Association is in a financially healthy position, with Current Assets rising from €23,000 in 2020 ,to €33,750 in 2023. However, the Association made a loss of €1500 in the last year. While this is not an immediate concern considering the level of Current Assets, it points to a need to consider fees, which have not risen in at least 5 years, and the provision of print copies of the IJS, which is a considerable cost.

The anniversary, the upward trajectory of the association and the fact that several long-standing members of the committee are leaving their roles means that the upcoming AGM and the conference will be a moment to reflect on the future. A question that the sociological community can ask in this moment is what it wants from the Association. The mission of the SAI is to promote the development of sociology in Ireland; seeking and maintaining high standards of scholarship and responsibility in research; encouraging publication, discussion and debate on issues of interest to the discipline of sociology; and acting as a professional association. It is doing several things to achieve this mission, such as a selection of conferences every year, producing the Irish Journal of Sociology, maintaining a website with a range of resources for members, regular communication with members, mentorship, and study groups for subject-specific networks. All of these activities persist through volunteering from members, and so it is important that while the SAI walks, talks and delivers like the professional association it is, members will offer their time and abilities to keep it running. We call on members offer their time, and will be delighted to chat with you about how you can contribute.



Officers' Reports

President's Report

My four-year term will be completed at the AGM, and according to the Constitution I must stand down having served two 2-year terms. I am very proud of the direction that the SAI has taken, with it on a strong upward curve, as is evident from the membership increase from 85 to 220 over the period. I had the privilege of working with a committee that were not only very capable and committed, but also extremely pleasant to work with.

Committee volunteers drive the Association.

The strong position of the Association is due to a number of things. First and foremost is the contribution that many people have collaboratively made through serving on and contributing to the committee.

- We were fortunate to have excellent Treasurers, in Amy Healy and Ciara Bradley, who have managed the practical financial side of the Association and the annual audit and production of the company accounts very professionally.
- The Vice President's over my terms were Jacqui O'Toole who was a great support in running conferences and administrative matters, and Lisa Moran who introduced several important initiatives such as the Mentorship Scheme and who contributed to many activities behind the scenes.
- Hazel O'Brien served as Membership Secretary over the entire four years. She acted as the face of the association to members, addressing any questions they had with prompt responses, and maintaining excellent records, as well as running various membership drives.
- The Communications Officer is a new role that was created. Newsletters, updating the website, social media, and design work is a major part of the work of the Association. In the first term it took up much of my time. Melissa Meyer took over this role, and has been very proactive in shaping it, and energetic in communicating with the membership.
- The IJS representative is Lisa Smyth, who is editor-in-chief alongside John Nagle. The IJS is the journal of the association and an essential forum for general sociological research. The association has been very fortunate to have them as editors as it has developed greatly under their stewardship. The previous editorial team, based in UCD, of Mathew Creighton, Sara O'Sullivan Aogán Mulcahy and Thomas Grund were very helpful in the transition.
- There were a number of Postgraduate Representatives over the 4 years. Some of the best work of the association has taken place in the postgraduate space. Anne Burke served one term and was highly energetic in driving initiatives to build a sociological community. This continued under Melissa Meyer and now Daniel Guigui. Each of the PG Representatives have not only been the primary organisers of the postgraduate conference but have been creative in thinking of ways to engage with the postgraduate community, and our large proportion of postgraduate members shows that this has been notably successful.

- The Study Group Officer position was created so that there would be a contact person for the Study Group convenors. We were fortunate that Robert Hamm volunteered for this position. He has liaised with and provided oversight over the study groups. The study group concept is still finding its feet, and it has been very positive to have dedicated person to oversee its development.
- The Secretary position was held initially by Lorcan Byrne. It was fortuitous that he held this position, as beyond the tasks of the role, such as scheduling meetings, writing minutes, administering the AGM, he offered support across activities, giving a lot of additional help.

Lorcan was succeeded by the current Secretary, Tanya Watson, who has been an enormous help in administering the association and maintaining a regular schedule of meetings.

- The Second Level Sociology Officer was a new addition to the committee. One of the main logics for this was the suggestion to restart the Young Sociologist of the Year award, an essay competition for secondary school students. UCD was generous enough to partner with the SAI in this. UCC subsequently has agreed to partner with the SAI. The competition is a significant amount of work. There was also a desire to contribute to sociology in second-level education with the introduction of the Politics and Society subject to the Leaving Certificate. The first Second-Level Officer was Lisa Moran, who together with her successor, Aimie Brennan, ran a successful SAI conference on Sociology in Schools.
- A new position of Conferences Officer was created last year. Lorcan Byrne took this role and was critical in the planning and running of the postgraduate conferences, and ran the very successful 2022 Annual Conference in TUS.
- The ordinary members of the SAI Committee have contributed greatly, offering flexible support to various activities, from conference organising to running competitions. Egle Gusciute, Gerry Boucher, Kieran Keohane, Susan McDonnell, Amin Sharifi Isaloo, Mathew Creighton have been very helpful.

The committee operates entirely through volunteering. In truth there have been no perks to membership at all, in terms of travel, meals, discounts, free conference attendance for committee members, with them giving their time purely out of goodwill toward the discipline and association. The positives of this are the healthy finances of the association and its good reputation. The downside is a lack of informal recognition of the time and effort committee members have put in. The committee could consider free conference membership and a meal at the conference as a minimal gesture of thanks in the future.

There is quite a lot of goodwill toward the Association, with offers to help its activities. For the SAI to flourish there is a constant need for volunteers to serve on the committee, to take on the editorship of the SAI, offer to host the Annual and Postgrad conference, and to support its other smaller activities. Such willingness to help derives from members who have a longstanding positive experience with or commitment to the SAI, or people eager to get involved in sociology in Ireland. A weakness is the scale of sociology in Ireland, as those with a longstanding commitment to the SAI have likely already held important roles.

Good relationships with sociology schools/departments makes SAI activities possible

We have been reliant on departments and key people within departments to host the conferences and activities we have run.

- In 2020 the Postgraduate Conference was hosted by the University of Galway and run by Anne Burke with generous help by Katherine Powell and Anne Byrne.
- In 2020 an excellent Annual Conference had been designed by Institute of Technology Sligo, planned by Jacqui O'Toole and Susan McDonnell. Sadly, due to the Covid-19 pandemic this had to be run online. We were fortunate that the organisers were so alert to seriousness of the situation, and as a result we were able to adapt swiftly.
- In 2021 the Postgraduate Conference was online, and anchored by Lorcan Byrne
- In 2021 the Annual Conference was online, and the committee stepped into the breach to organise it themselves.
- The 2022 Postgraduate Conference was again online, and run by Melissa Meyer, with generous help from Committee Members.
- In 2022 Technological University of the Shannon ran a very successful Annual Conference, with the majority of the organising done by Lorcan Byrne.

- In 2023 the Postgraduate Conference was hosted by UCD, and masterminded by Daniel Guigui.
- In 2023 the Annual Conference will be hosted by UCD, with Iarfhlaith Watson, Gerard Boucher, and a local organising committee of School staff managing the event.

Several Sociology Departments made a number of financial contributions to the SAI, which has provided it with financial security through contributing to its reserve.

How to engage established sociologists who do not engage with the SAI or its activities

There are a large number of established sociologists in Ireland who are not members and who do not engage with the Association. There are two universities with a particularly weak relationship with the SAI, though who have shown goodwill about building stronger links. Increasing the relevance of the Association and making the IJS and Annual Conference essential fora for sociologists in Ireland and further afield is the way to encourage their engagement. Nothing succeeds like success and if people can be encouraged to participate, a virtuous circle will intensify. It is natural that researchers will become more specialised as they progress and look to international networks and conferences. To attract these individuals the quality of the Association and its offer has to continue to improve so that it appears on their radar.

Initiatives that were introduced to improve the offer of the Association

The Annual Conference, Postgraduate Conference and Irish Journal of Sociology are the core activities of the SAI. A highlight over the past four years was the 30th Anniversary issue of the IJS, with a Forward and Article by President Michael D. Higgins.

One-off, subject specific conferences were held. These were:

- SAI Biographic Narrative and Life Course Study group online Conference 'Reimagining Voices and Identities in Uncertain Times: Social Transformation'.
- Sociology in Schools Conference

In 2022 a Mentoring Scheme was launched

The constitution has been updated at various AGMs to reflect the current functioning of the association.

The SAI was rebranded in 2022 to create a more contemporary image, with a full portfolio of design material now available.

A professional web designer was engaged to create a new website to provide a more professional face of the Association in 2022.

The SAI Study Groups were launched in 2020. There are currently seven, and it can be considered largely successful in providing forums for research and networking on subject specific areas. They have been a success in organising high quality panels for the annual conference.

The SAI Salon, was run in 2019 and 2020. This was based on a meeting with a prominent international sociologist. This was reliant on a particular committee member who generously gave their time and network to arrange it. Since they have left the committee, the initiative has lapsed. It would be positive

if it could be relaunched. It is worth noting that this committee was the most senior and the only professor on the committee, indicating the importance of the involvement of established sociologists.

A number of prizes were created as a way of giving recognition to excellent work done from early career to established to renowned sociologists. The Young Sociologist for Leaving Certificate students studying Politics and Society, the IJS Article of the Year Prize, the Postgraduate Prize recognising early career researchers, and the Distinguished Member award recognising lifetime contributions to sociology and the SAI were introduced. The Honorary Member award, recognising non-academics who have made a great contribution to society was created has not been used yet.

The SAI podcast, Irish Society was launched in 2020. It has 2000 downloads, though no new episodes have been created in the previous years due the time-consuming nature of producing episodes. A dedicated role in the Association for creating episodes is necessary for it to work.

The Sociological Observer has continued as a magazine showcasing long-form articles on current issues. 2021-2 saw issues on Black Lives Matter, the Biographical Narrative Method, Unemployment and Welfare. This too has proved time consuming and so the initiative has lapsed. It would be advisable that, as with the podcast a dedicated person take on responsibility for it. It should also become more of a magazine giving updates on sociology in Ireland, so that it operates more as a community building institution, rather than a place to publish academic pieces.

We have received material for an SAI Archive. This is in a filing cabinet in John O'Brien's Office in UCC. This could provide material for a project on the history of the SAI at some point.

Training of Committee Members could be considered in the future to support them in carrying out their roles.

Discussions were held at various times about hosting the ESA Annual Conference. Discussion took place with the President of the ESA on this matter and with potential hosts in Ireland. It is an enormous undertaking, but one that is possible. Bids are currently open to host ESA 2026.

How the SAI has represented the discipline of sociology

The SAI has played an active part in the Council of National Associations of the European Sociological Association, attending all of its meetings over the past number of years.

Submissions were made to Government of Ireland public consultations on National Science Advice and National Research Classification Schemes, so that the voice and interests of sociology was heard.

It is time to think about the SAI's Finances

There has been a small loss of €1,465 in 2022. This is in part due to the non-recurrent expense of website development. However, a significant factor is that membership fees and conference prices have not increased for at least five years. In addition, the majority of members are now Postgraduate/Low Wage members, and each of these members produces a loss. Each member received three paper copies of the IJS per year, which amounts to €30. Postgraduate/Low Wage Membership is €25, with a consequent immediate €5 loss. Membership fees contribute to paying for

other activities also for which there is no charge (for example mentoring, or Study Group subvention, travel subvention). Costs in general have of course increased over the period also.

How to address this matter so that the healthy assets of the SAI (€33,750) are not slowly worn down should be discussed at the AGM and a decision made. My recommendation is that we should cease providing paper copies of the IJS and offer only electronic access. This would bring a saving in the region of €6,300. In this way we could return to a surplus, without increasing fees.

John O'Brien.

Vice President's Report

The main output from the VP role from May 2022 to May 2023 was initiating phase II of a mentoring scheme for the SAI. The mentoring organising team comprised Lisa Moran, John O'Brien and Aimie Brennan. For the second year running, we enlisted the help of Dr Anna Bussu (Edge Hill University, UK) who is due to run training for mentors and mentees in June 2023. This pilot, which ran from the summer of 2022 to December 2022, was a huge success in terms of numbers and engagement, and we decided to run this initiative again for the coming year. It was however labour intensive in setting it up in year 1 but applying the same template in year II rendered the load easier to manage. The various institutions across Ireland were well represented in year one of the scheme as mentors and mentees, including SETU, UCC, MIE, NUI Galway, DCU, UCD, and TCD. In year II, we had applications from outside of Ireland (e.g. The University of Liverpool, the University of Nottingham) which indicates that this scheme is gathering traction outside of Ireland. We did however have lower numbers of mentors who enrolled for the scheme. Similar to year one, people asked to be mentees who were post-PhD, as well as others who are starting their PhD journeys and others who are almost finished/mid-way through. The challenge for next year (if this runs) is to complete a small research project and to recruit late career researchers as mentors.

Membership Officer's Report

Current Membership stands at 220 members (as of 2/6/23). 123 of these are Postgrad/Low Wage memberships. To compare, in May 2019 we had 85 recorded members. To have the membership increase this much in the four years of my tenure as membership secretary is something I am very proud of.

However, much of these gains have been made through offering members more for their money through innovative initiatives created by the President and other committee members, and through the very hard work of successive PG officers including Ann Burke, Melissa Meyer, and Daniel Guigui. I am thankful to them for their efforts in creating a strong membership for our national association.

Asides from this, the report is much the same as usual. Throughout the year I have continued to focus on:

- Maintaining systematic processes for recording memberships to simplify managing increasing numbers.
- Drawing up a template for the membership process for future Membership Secretaries. I hope this that will contribute to a smooth handover.
- Contacting members with a reminder email in the month their membership is due to expire, and again soon afterwards to warn members their membership has lapsed. This has been successful in gaining us some renewals which perhaps people may have overlooked otherwise.

Some points I think are relevant for the incoming membership secretary and for the committee more generally is that our PG/low wage members make up 56% of our total members. This raises a number of issues which the committee may want to discuss and bring to AGM in the future.

- One is in relation to how to offer those members a compelling experience as an SAI member. The PG Conference is excellent for this, and perhaps there are other PG/precarious work specific initiatives that could focus on this group.

- Another is the financial aspect. Increases in reduced-fee memberships means that we are not off-setting the costs associated with membership to the same degree (specifically regarding access to the hard copies of the IJS). Committee may want to consider if this is an issue, and if so, how best to mitigate it, in the years going forward.
- The final issue here is how to make the SAI attractive to permanent/non-Postgrad sociologists. A membership drive in recent years targeted at universities that typically have less SAI membership was relatively unsuccessful at recruiting new members. These challenges are experienced in most associations, I know, but it is nonetheless something to be conscious of.

Finally, this is the end of my term as membership secretary, and I am also stepping down from the exec committee for the time being. I would like to thank all my colleagues from the exec committee past and present for their collegiality, and I would like to wish the new membership secretary all the best in their endeavours.

Communications Officer

In the past year, the SAI underwent a major rebranding and moved to a new website host. The role of the communications officer included but was not limited to: designing an updated template for newsletters, compiling and sending newsletters as needed, implementing the new branding on social media and updating the new website with all the essential information from the old website. On occasion, the communications officer also assisted in marketing and promoting SAI-related events. The SAI Twitter account, arguably the platform with the most engagement, has also made itself available to promote sociology-related job opportunities, publications, events, and news. This has led to new followers and more interest from early career academics. The goal of the SAI communications position is to elevate and amplify the voices of the sociology community in Ireland.

Treasurer's Report (Summary) – The Annual Accounts are attached separately

The finances of the SAI continue to be strong in 2022 with €33,756 in the bank at 31/12/2022.

The Income for 2023 was € 21,002 which was an increase of €4,597 on 2021 (2021 was also an increase of €7,274 on 2020).

Income includes sale of journals, membership and conference fees including the Annual SAI Postgraduate Conference in February, the SAI Biographic Narrative and Life Course Study group online Conference 'Reimagining Voices and Identities in Uncertain Times: Social Transformation' in March 2022 and the SAI Annual Conference in Technological University of the Shannon, Moylish Campus in May 2022, as well as support from the UCD, School of Sociology and NUI Galway, School of Political Science and Sociology Contribution which we very much appreciate.

Expenses for the year amount to €22, 467. This was up €9, 475 on 2021 due in part to significant website redesign costs, and increased journal costs.

Overall there was a small deficit of €1,465 for the year.

Significant expenses not currently shown in the accounts due to their recent occurrence. These include the annual conference (circa €9500). Significant income is not reflected in the accounts either, including income from the annual conference (€8680).

IJS Representative's Report

The current Editorial Team's tenure comes to an end in November 2023. The Team has very much enjoyed the opportunity to work closely with colleagues across the island of Ireland and beyond.

We have sought to develop the publication of Special Issues, and have recently published Vol 31(1) [Special Issue on Walking Methods in Social Research](#) (Guest Edited by Maggie O'Neill and Colleagues). A number of future Special Issues, drawing papers together from Seminars, Workshops and Symposia, are at the planning stage, including on Decolonizing Academia and on the Frankfurt School.

The Editorial Team welcomes [full paper submissions](#) and [proposals for Special Issues](#). Debate and Book Review contributions are by invitation only. Contact the Editors with suggestions: irishjsoc@qub.ac.uk

The IJS **Distinguished Article Award 2022** Volume 30 was awarded to:

Pembroke, S., Bobek, A., & Wickham, J. (2022). Accessing healthcare services as a precarious worker in Ireland. *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 30(3), 225–243.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/07916035221126695>

Second Level Sociology Officer's Report

The major targets of this office for 2022/2023 were achieved from May 2022 to May 2023. The points below summarise the main achievements during this period.

- Aimie led the organisation of the Young Sociologist of the Year Essay competition in collaboration with UCC. The judging, which was led by Aimie in collaboration with other SAI colleagues (Lorcan Byrne, John O'Brien), took place in May and the final results will be released on the UCC and SAI website in June.
- Aimie, Lisa and John are leading on a co-edited special issue of a journal based on the findings of the *Sociology in Schools* conference.
- An issue of the Sociological Observer on Sociology in Schools is under production. Articles have been submitted and formatting is currently underway. The issue will be available on the SAI website by end June.
- Aimie, Lorcan and John met to discuss potential collaboration with the ESA on the topic of Sociology in Schools.

Postgraduate Representative Report

The overall membership number of postgraduate students in the SAI has increased since the end of 2022, with slowing growth expected over the rest of 2023.

The SAI annual Postgraduate Conference took place 25th February 2023. The event recorded 30 guests (not including SAI members that joined the event), of which 13 people were newly registered SAI members. We received 24 abstracts for papers and PhD research to present from postgraduate students from all over Ireland. The keynote speaker was the former head of the SAI and former head of the Sociology department at UCD, Iarfhlaith Watson. Feedback received for the event was mostly positive. The UCD catering for an estimated 40 people for the event was 1.200 euros, with other expenses like room rental or printing covered in-kind. In addition, a travel bursary was given to students that applied for it before the conference, which came to another 200 euros putting the total costs at 1.400 euros.

In response to the desires voiced by some of the postgraduate student members of the SAI to be more involved in the organisation, we called for postgraduate student volunteers for the upcoming 50th-anniversary conference in Dublin with success and found four volunteers that will support the SAI on that day.

After two years of Covid-related restrictions, many postgraduate students appreciate the opportunity to meet in person for these events. The hybrid format was also appreciated during the postgrad conference, with eight people presenting online (from abroad) and many more watching from UCD rooms. However, we did not receive a single application for the postgraduate student price 2023 through our Google Drive form. Therefore, future efforts will be made to enhance the SAI postgraduate members' online and offline communication and interactions.

Conference Officer

Support was offered to the convenors of conferences. This position was particularly important in supporting The Postgraduate Representative in organising events. While it is important to have a person on the committee with expertise in managing events the particulars of the role are still being worked out as it can be a bit awkward to liaise with people organising events in institutions that that the officer is not an employee of. Nonetheless this role will develop going forward as it can take work off of the plate of the President.

Study Group Officer

During the year 2022/23 seven study groups were in existence. The character of these groups differs according to the convenors' conceptual ideas and the resources [time/logistics] they can put into the organisation of the study groups' activities (e.g. informal reflective group meeting; publicly accessible online debate; day conference/symposium).

The study groups are promoted on a separate section of the SAI-webpage (under 'Activities'). A document describing the concepts and procedures in relation to the study groups has been designed; it is also available via the webpage.

The SAI committee reserved an amount of €500 per study group to subsidise their activities (with possibilities for transfers between groups). Subsidies are accessible via a claim submitted to the SAI committee; decisions about granting subsidies are made by a sub-committee in support of the study group secretary. In 2022/23 the money reserved for the study groups was not claimed fully.

From the perspective of SAI, the different conceptual ideas of convenors can easily fit under the umbrella of the study groups. Questions of success or failure of a particular study group then are not for SAI (or the SAI committee) to decide, they need to be answered by the convenors themselves. SAI however provides a space to experiment with the chosen format/s, and for the convenors to find out what works best for them.

The only requirement for study groups within SAI is that they contribute to the annual conference. This requirement was met in 2023 by five of the seven study groups. From the perspective of SAI the result of this requirement is rather positive, it adds substantially to the profile of the conference.