

## IfA GROUPS FORUM Minutes

Tuesday 28 February 2012, 11am

Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham

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**Present:** Amanda Forster, Teresa Gilmore, John Latham, Rob Read

**Apologies:** Karen Averby, Beverley Ballin-Smith (Groups Liaison Officer and Chair), Peter Barker, Alison Bennett, Duncan Brown, Lesley Collett, Kate Geary, Birgitta Hoffman, Geoff Morley, Jesse Ransley, Barrie Simpson, Suzie Thomas, Kathryn Whittington

NB all associated documentation has been circulated with this email.

### **Introductions and plan for the meeting** **Actions**

AF The minutes for the Groups Forum from Edinburgh are included in the minutes for this meeting. Any documentation provided through the meeting would also be circulated digitally around the full group, especially as numbers were significantly down.

RR Rob Read highlighted the short notice of the Agenda for the meeting. It was suggested that, in order to ensure that the Groups Forum is able to discuss issues of common interest along with agenda items driven by staff members, a call for agenda items should be made when the date is confirmed and the final agenda circulated with 2 weeks' notice.

**AF & KW  
(ensure  
notice for  
agenda is  
adequate)**

### **Disciplinary update** **Actions**

AF The disciplinary meeting which was held in January 2012, provided a useful breakdown of the problems and issues surrounding disciplinary topics experience by both Group members and IfA staff.

Formal minutes are included in this mailing, but actions recorded are summarised here;

- Kirsten Collins is now looking into the provision of case study examples of complaints. Although it was emphasised that any real example would have to remain confidential, the Groups Forum felt it would be helpful to have some more general guidance to demonstrate how the process worked.
- Attention was also drawn to the updated web-pages covered complaints and disciplinary procedures. Greater clarification on the process was highlighted in the Edinburgh Groups Forum and changes were made to the pages in January 2012.

**KW  
(circulate  
disciplinary  
meeting  
minutes)**

### **Current issues**

RR **Communication and operations (Rob Read, GAG)**

Rob Read outlined a number of issues he felt needed to be addressed regarding communications between groups and their members, and with IfA office staff.

- Groups Forum needed to work as a partnership between IfA staff and all the regional and special interest groups. Current process seems to be clunky, take time, and subsequently inhibit the Forum.
- Sense that Groups are 'censored', and not trusted to communicate directly with members. Use of terminology such as 'on message' suggests IfA staff may filter messages, though it is not clear how and why.
- There is a need for Groups to really understand their membership. Tools such as skills audits and member surveys would provide additional data which could help target skills gaps and training needs. Having direct and personal contact with members would help facilitate this.

- AF AF acknowledged the difficulties which had been experienced with communications, especially where significant response time had been evident from IfA staff. In direct response:
- The development of the Forum should help dissolve some of these issues. AF to clarify the process of communication, including response time, and provide explanation of terminology such as 'on message'
  - Groups should not feel censored. The need to route emails via the office is to ensure that they get to the right people (as contact lists change regularly). 'On message' simply refers to whether information pertaining to IfA operations, Council decisions, formal processes is correct and up to date.
  - With regards to promoting the idea of partnership, AF proposed the instigation of a **Groups Forum discussion list** to facilitate direct communication between Groups chairs and secretaries. It was agreed this would be a useful action.
  - The idea of undertaking member surveys and targeting CPD is great. Any communication on this level needs to go to Group members via the IfA office.
  - AF suggested any contact with IfA office staff would have a response time of one week, and asked if those on the Forum would copy her in to any contact – amanda.forster@archaeologists.net
- AF (provide communications process document)**
- AF/ KW (instigate GF discussion list)**

### **Forthcoming meetings**

### **Actions**

- AF During email exchange regarding the current Forum meeting, a forthcoming meeting schedule was requested to help people plan ahead more effectively and economically.

AF suggested the Forum should officially meet twice a year – once in late May/ early June and once in December. The Forum discussion list should enable any issues to be aired and discussed in-between Forum meetings, and there is the possibility of holding a special meeting if appropriate (eg such as the Disciplinary meeting in January). Although we have already had one meeting this year, it was agreed the Forum should go ahead and meet in both May and December in 2012. Meeting dates for May/ June would be arranged after conference.

### **Development of the Groups: plans for 2012**

### **Actions**

- AF Over the next 18 months, there would be a strategic development of IfA Groups in the following areas (and outlined in more detail below):
- Strategy and business planning
  - Standards & Guidance
  - Practice papers
  - Training and CPD
  - Group Toolkits

### **Strategy and business planning**

### **Actions**

- AF Both these areas will see changes over the coming months, specifically with regards to Group mission statements and aims, and how they tie in with IfA's Strategic Plan (<http://www.archaeologists.net/mission>).

The development of the Groups Toolkit (see below), will facilitate this. The toolkit will include the Strategic Plan alongside relevant templates and examples of appropriate business plans.

### **Standards & Guidance**

AF	<p>One of the functions of Groups which could be better utilised in terms of expertise is input into S&amp;G. The need for review was highlighted which would identify where groups feel S&amp;G should be fully reviewed, updated and amended, or replaced entirely. This would be seen as a project in conjunction with the MSP Committee and Professional Development &amp; Practice Committee (PD&amp;P), with a specific timetable for the review.</p> <p>AF outlined the remit of the new Member Services and Promotions Committee (MSP Comm) and welcomed interest from Group Committee members. The MSP Committee replaces the Editorial Board and will be undertaking a review of all member benefits.</p> <p><i>Discussion:</i> those present supported the idea of a review of S&amp;G, and of Practice Papers (see below), but in the meantime felt that greater clarification on how Groups can propose new S&amp;G/ papers, would be useful. A working party which includes representatives from MSP Comm and PD&amp;P Comm, and Groups Forum, might be a useful starting point for a review.</p>	<p><b>AF</b> <b>(investigate terms for S&amp;G review with Kate Geary, and propose setting up a working party)</b></p> <p><b>AF/ KW</b> <b>(circulate process of proposal for new S&amp;G) and see above</b></p>
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### **Practice papers**

### **Actions**

AF	<p>As above, the development of new practice papers, and review of older ones, is a key objective for this year. IfA are keen to offer valuable and useful documentation to their members. Practice papers will also be on the agenda for the MSP Committee &amp; PD&amp;P Committee.</p> <p>The newest of the IfA Practice Papers will be an updated and reprinted publication of the AAI&amp;S <i>An Introduction to Drawing Archaeological Pottery</i> which should be published by conference (mid April 2012).</p> <p><i>Discussion:</i> JL suggested consolidating other practice papers via the website, eg with a links page. This would not only encourage the use of appropriate guidance which IfA is unlikely to duplicate, but would increase traffic to the website.</p>	<p><b>AF</b> <b>(discuss, write and circulate terms for Practice papers review)</b></p> <p><b>AF (to investigate)</b></p>
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### **CPD events**

### **Actions**

AF	<p><i>Professional training and IfA</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currently the IfA calendar training looks very sparse with the conference dominating the annual cycle. This is a false impression as we know Groups are running good quality training sessions which aren't being promoted as part of a cycle of CPD opportunities with IfA (through no fault of the groups!). We also know that Groups are keen to develop training sessions in this area outside of the conference and feel there is a genuine need for training activities.</li> </ul> <p><i>Designing CPD workshops with NOS</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In order to fully promote the CPD opportunities of training courses, Kate Geary, with Amanda Forster, is developing documentation to help Groups design courses and learning outcomes to provide delegates with recordable CPD hours.</li> <li>- Using National Occupation Standards for archaeology (NOS), courses can easily identify the nature of training available on courses, and how that training translates into skills development.</li> </ul> <p><i>Delegate packs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In order to help provide a professional product for training workshops, IfA can also supply Groups with delegate packs containing a training folder for papers, certificates, and information on CPD logs.</li> <li>- Guidance will also be available for how to put together supporting documentation, what to include in packs, and how to present it.</li> <li>- We are keen to develop a CPD brand for IfA Workshops which is recognisable and which supports and promotes Group activities.</li> </ul> <p><i>Budgets and costs</i></p>	
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- A cost outline was provided as an idea of what this might involve, although this is subject to change on the development of the Groups Toolkit.
- Costing templates will be available for Groups to put together budgets for running workshops.
- Guidelines would be in place for day delegate rates in order to keep what is being offered consistent (as far as possible).

*Staff support for workshops*

- A CPD Workshop proposal form was discussed which will help identify early on how IfA staff can help with the preparation and administration of workshops.
- The website and monthly eBulletin can be used for promotion of workshops, and if we have enough notice, there will be a forthcoming CPD workshops section in *The Archaeologist*.
- We can provide an online booking facility via the website (with PayPal) for delegates, and can send out joining instructions if desired.

*Proposing a CPD course*

- The proposal form was circulated. A long run in has been requested (6 months), as desirable but this is flexible. The form is designed in three parts to allow Groups to proposed a general idea, followed by more details once discussed.
- It was emphasised that Groups were not being asked to run workshops entirely in this format (eg for CPD and with NOS), and that smaller and more informal workshops were still a desirable activity.

*Discussion.* Agreement to trial the proposal form, though with some flexibility to the timing of proposals (eg may not be six months in advance). Those present felt it would be useful to help facilitate the communication between groups regarding development of training and CPD, and conference sessions. AF referred to the proposed Groups Forum discussion list as a means of communicating between groups, and perhaps sending a representative to discuss such items during committee meetings.

**Groups toolkit development**

AF The majority of what is minuted above will be undertaken as part of the development of a Groups Toolkit.

This toolkit would provide all the background and operational information needed for committee members, along with any templates and forms which help Groups run activities etc.

A list of what is proposed to be included in the toolkit was circulated, and a timetable proposed:

- May 2012 Toolkit documents which are currently in existence should be collated and circulated prior to the May Groups Forum meeting.
- December 2012 Remaining documents should be produced and circulated for the December Forum meeting.

*Discussion.* Those present supported the idea of the toolkit, and asked specifically for templates for fliers, newsletters and banners available in different formats. An IfA house style document should be included in the toolkit.

**AF/ KW  
(collate  
current  
documentat  
ion and  
circulate)**

**AF/ KW  
(develop  
remaining  
documents  
and  
circulate)**

**AOB**

AF *Validation review*

The current review of the individual member validation was highlighted with two specific items of relevance to groups:

- Specialist validation matrices; an example was circulated of the Forensic Group validation skills matrix. These are skills based identifiers for corporate grade membership and intended to provide Validation Committee with an indication of appropriate skills and the kind of evidence that can be provided. The production and maintenance of a validation skills matrix is seen one of the key priorities for groups over the coming 12 months. To date, Forensics

**AF/ KW  
(add to  
information  
on this on  
the website,  
circulate)**

- and Graphics have both prepared a matrix.
- Specialist assessors; IfA Validation Committee is keen to develop a list of specialist assessors to aid in the validation of new members. As with matrices, this is seen as a key area of development for Groups and would urge the encouragement of Group members to apply as specialist assessors via email to [kathryn.whittington@archaeologists.net](mailto:kathryn.whittington@archaeologists.net).

**more widely  
information  
on how to  
develop  
matrices)**