

The Society of Recorder Players

**Report of the
2020 Working Group**

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Report of the 2020 Working Group

1. Introduction

Members of the 2020 Working Group

The members of the working group were Enid Holmes, Steve Marshall, Tessa Rolph and Naomi Wellings.

Terms of reference

Our terms of reference were:

The Working Group will consider how the Society should serve its members and the wider community and support the continuation and development of recorder playing in the UK up to 2020. No constraints should be assumed other than that the Society remains a charitable organisation.

We were also asked to look at the specific issue of “the possible long-term effects of the current global economic downturn, and the continuing increases in the price of energy which are likely to persist for at least the next decade”.

Overall conclusion

The main conclusion of our work is that although the SRP is successful in many ways, if it continues to operate in the same way as it does today then changes to the environment in which we find ourselves will accelerate the recent trend of reducing society membership. By 2020 we will have a smaller (possibly a much smaller) organisation, which will severely restrict our ability either to serve our members or non-members, or to promote the recorder.

Scope of our work

Once the detail we were gathering became obvious to the many people we communicated with for this exercise, it was perhaps inevitable that expectations began to be raised about what we would say in our report. Long-standing concerns were aired, on all aspects of the SRP, and the hope expressed that we would ‘sort them out’. This was clearly impossible, as any one of these (often politically-charged) issues would have absorbed all of our available time just on its own. We have therefore been very careful to restrict our work to those matters directly and significantly relevant to what we were asked to look at. Even so, this is a very long report. We have tried to make it readable, clear and (where required) blunt, and we hope that its length will not put you off reading it. We believe that the ground it covers is of great importance to the future of our society.

Structure of the report

For each section we will review the existing situation, discuss any apparent trends, then describe our view of the situation in 2020. We will describe the SRP's involvement in the area under discussion, then discuss whether that situation seems satisfactory or otherwise; finally we will make recommendations for improvement.

The sections concern:

- Opportunities for playing the recorder in the UK (in this report 'the UK' is always deemed to include the activities of the branches in the Republic of Ireland and the Isle of Man).
- How the SRP serves its members, and how the members regard the service they receive.
- How the SRP supports the development of recorder playing.
- How the SRP serves the wider community.

We then devote a section to how we can achieve real and lasting change, rather than merely agreeing that something is a good idea or initiating short-term activity that may be quickly forgotten. We believe that failure to secure such real change could have very serious consequences for the SRP.

Acknowledgement

We would like to express our gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this report in any way. Without their interest and enthusiasm, it would not have been possible.

2. The society and its involvement with recorder playing in the UK

There are many opportunities for recorder playing in the UK. A comprehensive survey of all possible areas would not be feasible, or even useful. We have restricted ourselves to seven headings, which we believe encompass a very large part of recorder playing in the UK.

2.1 SCHOOLS

2012 SITUATION. In **primary schools**, pupils play (usually) the descant recorder in unison for a term or a year depending on what other instruments are being offered. Teachers are not necessarily recorder players - they often have had no recorder training, do not teach well, and treat the instrument as a stepping stone to a 'proper instrument'. The new Government initiatives into whole class instrumental tuition have proved more successful than perhaps might have been imagined, even on brass and other woodwind instruments, so there are fewer children even beginning on the recorder. A few schools buy in recorder tuition, and then the pupils may reach a higher level (and also play treble) but when the teacher is not a member of the staff it tends to lose its impetus as teaching staff may resent children being withdrawn from their class. At **secondary level** there are isolated pockets of recorder playing in state schools, although recorder is taught in some independent schools and, to a greater extent, the specialist music schools, such as Chetham's. Recorders are not necessarily encouraged within school orchestras.

The Government's Wider Opportunities initiative is enabling instruments to be taught to whole classes. The recorder is being taught in some schools in most counties.

Music service provision of recorder lessons varies, whether county or city based, depending on whether the person responsible appreciates the instrument. Some music services have specialist recorder teachers, but many do not.

2020 SITUATION. The recorder situation today in the schools system is a poor one. Not only that, but it is worse than, say twenty years ago, and there is no evidence that the situation will differ with the advent of the 'hubs' under the New Music Initiative. If we do nothing it is a reasonable assumption that the situation in 2020 will be no better than today, and quite possibly worse.

SRP INVOLVEMENT. The surveys of members that we carried out (see appendix for details) showed that there is some activity by SRP branches in liaising with schools. This mainly takes the form of going into schools (usually, but not always primary) to play concerts. This is the only significant SRP involvement in the schools system that we are aware of, although some members may also teach the recorder within primary schools.

SRP ACTIONS. In our survey of members, we asked "What else, if anything, do you think that the SRP, including its branches, could (or should) provide to support the wider community?". A full half of responses to that question concerned encouraging schoolchildren to play, including by giving concerts and workshops in schools and helping their teachers to be better on the recorder. But having such thoughts and taking action are not the same.

- » There is a 'Teachers Guide', produced by the SRP. This is not easy to find on the SRP website, and cannot be downloaded (it must be sent by post). **Recommendation 1. The SRP Teachers Guide should be downloadable from the website, a reminder of its existence should be communicated to the branches and a further supply should be sent to each branch, so that they can distribute them to local school contacts.**
- » There is a need to communicate with different players in the education system. This includes forging links with Education authorities as they are just about to bring in the National Plan for Music Education. Recorder teachers are in short supply in many places, and there may be SRP members who could help to fill the gap (although being able to play the recorder and the ability to teach it effectively do not necessarily go hand in hand). Music Services, although stretched financially, also have a wide reach in terms of music education in schools. **Recommendation 2. A person should be identified to lead the initiative to forge links within the education system, and tasked with making the necessary contacts.**
- » **Recommendation 3. Workshops should be devised to introduce non-playing teachers to the basics and good practice of teaching the recorder, and to develop the existing skills of playing teachers.** One branch has previously organised such a training day for local classroom teachers (see 4.2) and the SRP could draw on their experience.

2.2 HIGHER EDUCATION

This section refers to recorder playing in music colleges and universities.

2012 SITUATION. A generation ago it was not possible to study recorder as first study, but today that is possible at many (but not all) music colleges. Also many of the UK's university music departments offer recorder lessons to students, either 'in-house' or through the nearest music college.

2020 SITUATION. There is no reason to believe that the recorder-playing situation in higher education will change significantly between now and 2020.

SRP INVOLVEMENT. There is a reduced rate for student members of the SRP, although there are currently very few student members (other than National Youth Recorder Orchestras (NYRO)) players, who are given free membership for one year). There is also a page on the SRP website, listing institutions where the recorder can be studied. The only other SRP involvement with higher education that we are aware of is one branch that sometimes invites students to conduct the branch, and that has run a student competition for recorder composition.

SRP ACTIONS

- » **Recommendation 4. We should market the SRP's Country and Overseas (COS) membership to music students (and non-music students playing the recorder) as a way of receiving the Recorder Magazine and of being in touch with other players. This might be achieved via teachers and music departments.**
- » **Recommendation 5. We should put more information on the SRP website concerning studying the recorder at university level. Such additional content might include**

information on teachers and specialisms. It should also address those who are not studying music, in terms of how to get involved in playing the recorder whilst at university by, for example, contacting local SRP branches and fellow recorder players.

2.3 SOLO PLAYING

2012 SITUATION

Some **children** have the opportunity at school to progress on the recorder and take small group or solo lessons thus enabling them to experience solo repertoire on the recorder. Some (not all) of the Saturday music schools have recorder teachers. Many UK festivals/competitions have solo classes. Some summer schools accept children, and the Woodhouse course is specifically designed for young players. All of the major exam boards have a recorder syllabus from pre-grade 1 to post grade 8 and diploma level.

There are opportunities for solo playing by **adult amateurs** in solo playing classes at some summer schools, courses and festivals. Some adults take lessons, and this can be from private tutors or by means of tuition from a conservatoire; the above recorder exams often play a part in that. The SRP membership list shows members who are willing to teach. In addition to these learning opportunities, our survey of members revealed that there is some solo playing by members in such as folk groups and church bands.

Opportunities for **professionals** include performances at major concert halls (for example the Wigmore Hall), at universities and colleges, or at privately-organised events. Such opportunities are currently not numerous. In addition the National Rural Touring Forum provides a network of rural venues and promoters for solo performers (as well as for ensembles). There is also a major two-yearly competition – the Moeck/SRP recorder competition.

2020 SITUATION. If we do nothing differently, there is no reason to believe that the situation for solo playing eight years hence will be very different from that of today. It may be slightly better – it is the opinion of the outgoing competitions administrator (Andrew Collis) that the Moeck/SRP competition is constantly improving and acquiring a ‘positive reputation in the recorder world’.

SRP INVOLVEMENT. The SRP administers, and contributes financially to, the Moeck/SRP recorder competition. The SRP also includes details of some concerts and classes on the SRP website.

SRP ACTIONS. We will discuss later in our report the fact that only half of SRP members ever use the SRP website, a large proportion because they do not have access to a computer. We have noted a common belief that the solution to many SRP problems is to improve the website, but the inconvenient truth is that this does not work well when we need to communicate with *all* of our members. So although most of the recommendations below do involve the website, we discuss in the section ‘Implementation of this report’ what needs to be done for those who do not (or cannot) use it.

- » There is considerable solo playing activity, but information about it is not well disseminated.
Recommendation 6. The SRP website should include a great deal more information.

Information specific to solo playing includes that related to (in no particular order) festivals, competitions, teachers (and how to choose one), where to buy instruments (and how to choose one), exam syllabuses, choosing repertoire and concerts.

- » It is not clear in all quarters that the SRP website is for the benefit of members and non-members alike, despite the website being a stated element in satisfying our charitable objectives. **Recommendation 7. The SRP Committee should clarify to all concerned that the SRP website is for the use of everyone, and that the content on it should reflect equally both SRP and non-SRP events and activities.**
- » **Recommendation 8. The SRP website should include material about the breadth of solo recorder playing, illustrating what different types of activity take place.**
- » Although we believe that the Moeck/SRP competition has a reasonably high profile, we believe that this profile could be used to better effect. **Recommendation 9. The SRP Committee should task someone to investigate how the good reputation of the Moeck/SRP competition could be used further to the society's advantage.** For example, perhaps the winner could be approached to run a master class for recorder players, as well as giving a concert.
- » **Recommendation 10. The SRP Committee should investigate the possibility of including on the SRP website a forum in which professionals could advertise their skills as soloists, and potential users of those skills (concert organisers, for example) could advertise what they are looking for.**

2.4 CONSORT PLAYING

Consort playing is not precisely defined, but in this report we take it to mean one-to-a-part playing, ranging from two players up where it becomes large group playing. As an example, in this report we do not regard a chamber recorder orchestra (eleven one-to-a-part players) as consort playing. We have the impression that the majority of consorts comprise four or five players.

2012 SITUATION. There is a great deal of consort playing by **adult amateurs**. Our survey of members suggested that over 75% of SRP members play in consorts, either with other SRP members, University of the Third Age (U3A) members or with other friends. Contacts are typically made at SRP branch meetings, courses and early music forums and can lead to members leaving the SRP when branch playing no longer meets their playing needs. Most of this playing seems to be of conventional recorder repertoire, but at least some takes place in the context of folk groups or morris dancing, for example. There are some competitive classes for amateur consorts at various UK music festivals. There are also some consort groups within **schools** and colleges, and within some music services. There are a very few **professional (or semi-professional)** consorts. They typically form while at music college. Most, if not all of these professional consorts supplement their income with teaching and other performance work. Some music students find that their consort playing lapses after leaving college, due to the lack of suitable contacts and the need to earn a living.

2020 SITUATION. If the SRP does nothing different, we see no reason to assume that the situation with respect to consort playing in 2020 will be significantly different from the

situation today. The impact of increased fuel prices has been mentioned to us as a possible issue, but this is very unlikely to be of importance, as will be discussed at more length later.

SRP INVOLVEMENT. The SRP branch network greatly facilitates networking with other recorder players (and players of other instruments), leading to the formation of ad hoc consort groups. The membership list indicates those members who are interested in consort playing, whilst the SRP website has a (little used) ‘Players Wanted’ page, and also listings of forthcoming concerts by all types of ensemble. The Recorder Magazine also lists concerts, and includes concert reviews.

SRP ACTIONS

- » Given the success of the Moeck/SRP recorder solo competition and, especially as the cost to the society is modest, on the face of it there is a case for a similar competition for consorts. **Recommendation 11. The SRP Committee should consider the possibility of creating a Moeck/SRP-style competition for recorder consorts.**
- » We gained the impression that amateur consorts welcome the intimate nature of the playing (often in a private house), and that they like to ‘do their own thing’. But the suggestion was made that branches might like to facilitate the playing of higher-level consorts, possibly prior to the normal branch meeting. Any additional cost (for room hire, for example) could be borne by the individual consort players, rather than the branch. The branch music library could also be made readily available for consort players to draw on. **Recommendation 12. Branches should be made aware (if they are not already) that practical support for consort playing is desirable, and that they should give that support if their circumstances allow.**
- » **Recommendation 13. The SRP website should include a forum facility so that consort players (SRP and non-SRP) could better communicate with one another. Such interaction would, in particular, ease the problem of trying to identify players of a similar playing standard.** It could be that the present ‘Players Wanted’ page would be superseded.

2.5 LARGE GROUP PLAYING

Playing in SRP branches is so fundamental to our report that it is not covered in this section, but under ‘The society’s members and how the society serves them’. Large group playing at courses and festivals is similarly dealt with elsewhere in our report. This section deals with all other types of large-group playing, including recorder orchestras.

2012 SITUATION

There is a lot of recorder playing in large groups. Perhaps the most obvious of these are the ‘classic’ **recorder orchestras**, which tend to rehearse and perform regularly, play at a good technical standard and organise themselves in the ‘standard’ eleven orchestral parts. They typically have thirty or more members, and have ‘recorder orchestra’ in their name. There are currently about 15 such orchestras, and so total strength may be about 500 (although quite a number play in more than one orchestra).

There is also a variety of other ensembles that are variations on the recorder orchestra theme – including one-to-a-part **chamber recorder orchestras**, **‘easy’ recorder orchestras**, and (so far) one-of-a-kind groups such as the Arden Recorder Orchestra and Zero Gravity. These are not always as visible as the ‘classic’ orchestras, but total strength may be another 200 (some of whom, again, also play with other orchestras).

In addition there are ensembles whose members are drawn from SRP branches and U3A recorder groups (and sometimes a mixture); technical standards and instrumentation varies greatly, but their objective is usually to play in public. Other than locally, these groups are the least visible of all, and estimating numbers is largely speculation, but it seems very likely that there are some hundreds of people involved.

It seems perfectly possible, therefore, that in total there are something like a thousand different people regularly rehearsing and performing in large groups. Virtually all of these players are amateur.

2020 SITUATION. Playing the recorder in large groups is a growth area. Fifteen years ago there were only four ‘classic’ recorder orchestras, and the ‘variations’ (such as chamber and easy orchestras) are a very recent invention. At the moment new groups are springing up everywhere, supported by related sessions on courses and festivals, and new repertoire. All of the signs are, therefore, that in 2020 there will be even more orchestras (however called) and that there will be an even greater variety of type of group.

SRP INVOLVEMENT. How many people involved with playing in large groups are SRP members? Although it is impossible to answer this question precisely, there are some clues. Our survey of members suggested that 18% play in a recorder orchestra. This represents about 250 people, and if our estimate above of 1,000 large-group players is reasonable, then the majority of such members are *not* in the SRP. This is hardly surprising, when not only are some of the groups U3A-related ensembles, but also recorder orchestras are one reason why stronger players are leaving the SRP (to be discussed later).

We noted that a significant number of the conductors of large groups are SRP members.

Some large groups are listed on the SRP website.

Orchestras can be affiliated to the SRP; most of the ‘classic’ orchestras and some of the ‘variant’ orchestras have done this. The only benefit, however, appears to be that the orchestras are then covered by the society’s public liability insurance.

SRP ACTIONS. Playing in large groups is one of the few obvious growth areas in the recorder world, and this growth has taken place with little involvement by the SRP. As the growth seems set to continue, we believe that it is particularly important for the SRP to become more involved with large group playing.

- » At present there is no clear mechanism for large groups to exchange information about, as examples, repertoire or substitutes (players or conductors) needed in case of sudden illness. **Recommendation 14. The SRP website should include a forum facility so that large groups (SRP and non-SRP) could better communicate with one another.**

- » Visibility of ‘classic’ recorder orchestras is reasonably good, but much less good for other large ensembles (just as one example, the Berkshire Recorder Consort). **Recommendation 15. A more comprehensive list of large groups should be produced, included on the SRP website, and an article on the subject written for the Recorder Magazine.** Such a list would be very long, but it would be all the more valuable for that, so that the extent of such playing activity will be widely publicised.
- » **Recommendation 16. Branch secretaries should be sent a regular ‘what’s on’ of regional and national recorder events, so that their members are better informed about forthcoming performances.** The ‘what’s on’ would include all performances, not only those by large groups.

2.6 RECORDER COURSES AND NON-COMPETITIVE FESTIVALS

This section covers events primarily designed to teach something, as well as events primarily designed to give people a fun musical experience; in reality these types increasingly tend to blur into one another. What an event is called is not always a good guide to the type of event it is. What all of the events in this section have in common, however, is that there is no element of musical competition (such events are dealt with in the next section).

2012 SITUATION. There are a large number of courses and festivals, lasting from a single day to more than a week. **Long-established and large events** include the Recorder Summer School, the SRP Annual Festival and the Northern Recorder Course. **Newer (large) arrivals** include the Cheltenham Recorder Festival and the Hothorpe Hall Recorder Orchestra Weekend. **Smaller and newer events** include courses at Lyme Regis and The Rural Recorder Course. But these are only examples – there are many more.

2020 SITUATION. In recent years courses and festivals have been created constantly, while old favourites endure. These events vary enormously in size, the people for whom they are intended, and the price, but most of them (even the recent arrivals) seem to have done well. A small number seem not to have read the market very well (for example they have charged more than the market will bear), and have disappeared, but generally there seems to be a big demand for courses and festivals, which can be profitably satisfied. As there is some money to be made by providers of these events and (so far) limited competition, we believe that the positive trend will continue, and that there will be even more courses and festivals in 2020 than there are today. Perhaps beyond that the positive trend will weaken because of reducing demand caused by people retiring later and on smaller pensions.

SRP INVOLVEMENT. There is a widespread (erroneous) belief that the Recorder Summer School is part of the SRP (this has not been the case for about 50 years). In fact direct SRP involvement in courses and festivals seems to be limited to one day workshops, the SRP Annual Festival and NYRO ‘taster days’ and residential courses. Events are listed on the SRP website, and appear (together with occasional reviews) in the Recorder Magazine.

SRP ACTIONS. We believe that the development and running of commercial courses is best left to individuals and organisations other than the society.

- » **Recommendation 17. All UK recorder courses should be freely publicised on the SRP website. All course organisers should be provided with publicity about the SRP (for example in the form of a general flyer), and requested to make this publicity available to their course members.**

2.7 MUSIC FESTIVALS AND MUSIC COMPETITIONS

2012 SITUATION. There are over 200 **music festivals** held annually in the UK, many of which are members of the British and International Federation of Festivals (BIFF). Most of these festivals include recorder classes, and adjudicators are active in encouraging recorder playing as an important and serious instrument. There are Young Musician of the Year **competitions** run both by the BBC and by the Rotary Club. Some secondary schools (both state and independent) hold their own internal music competitions.

2020 SITUATION. Although there are some fine recorder performances, most (but not all) festivals have seen a significant decline in recorder entrants, unsurprising given the decline of the recorder in the school system, discussed earlier in this report. For those same reasons it seems likely that the trend will continue, and that the recorder will be something of a rarity in the festivals of 2020.

SRP INVOLVEMENT. Some festival adjudicators are SRP members, but otherwise very few festivals currently have any links with the SRP. There are no known links with the Rotary or BBC competitions, other than SRP members who are recorder teachers in schools who enter pupils for the local Rotary competition. To help with preparation of this report, Colin Touchin communicated with the Chief Executive of BIFF, who carried out a survey of festival secretaries on our behalf, receiving 75 responses. This shows considerable interest in the recorder within the festival movement.

SRP ACTIONS.

- » As there are few links between the SRP and festivals at present, it seems useful to explore what possibilities there may be, building on the interest that may have been generated by the contact with the Chief Executive of BIFF and his survey of festival secretaries.
Recommendation 18. Further contact should be made with the Chief Executive of BIFF, to explore ways of stimulating interest in the recorder in music festivals. However, although festival secretaries indicated an interest in the possibility of putting forward entrants to a national recorder prize of some sort, we must be cautious about spending money on this activity. It may be that some expenditure might result in playing excellence of a few, but the current situation in schools seems destined to prevent any significant improvement.

3. The society's members and how the society serves them

INTRODUCTION

Peak membership of the SRP was about 1,700, and that was in 1997. Since then numbers have reduced steadily (on average by about 20 a year), so we now have about 1,400. These members are organised in 51 'geographical branches' and the Country and Overseas (COS) branch, and since 1997 three branches have disappeared and six have been created. In a way it is unfortunate that the reduction in membership has been so gradual, because every year things have been slightly disappointing, but not enough to provoke urgent action. We believe that ever-more opportunities for recorder playing will accelerate our decline in membership, and that we now need to take urgent action to address the most obvious explanation for the decline – that the benefits of being a SRP member are insufficient for many players.

This section of our report is therefore by far the longest, and by far the most important.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

This section discusses several specific and major issues that have a direct impact on what the society will look like in 2020, if we carry on doing exactly what we are doing now.

3.1 THE BALANCE BETWEEN BEING A CHARITY AND SERVING OUR MEMBERS

On occasions we were told that the primary objective of the SRP is not to play the recorder, but to educate the public. In a very formal sense this is true - our annual filing with the Charity Commission summarises our objects as "The education of the public in the study, practice, and appreciation of the art of music and the allied arts and in particular ... the promotion of the education of the public in the study, practice and appreciation of the recorder and its repertoire".

As part of our survey of members we asked "Were you aware that, as a registered charity, the SRP is obliged to spend money on education in the study, practice and appreciation of the recorder – for the benefit both of its members *and* of the wider community?" Only 35% of respondents said yes. We therefore have an immediate communication problem – two-thirds of our members do not understand that we have charitable obligations to fulfil, and indeed the survey of members suggested confusion (at least) about why money was being spent, where there was no direct benefit to the members. Apart from anything else, other than the presence of our charity registration number, there is no suggestion of our charitable obligations on the application form to join the society.

- » **Recommendation 19. Effective communication should be made to all members, explaining our charitable objectives in non-technical terms.**
- » **Recommendation 20. When people join the society, it should be made clear to them, in non-technical terms, that they are joining a charity, with corresponding obligations.**

The Arthur Ingram Fund is discussed more fully later, but we will record here an even greater lack of knowledge about that fund than that concerning our charitable objectives - only one in eight respondents had even heard of the Arthur Ingram Fund.

In our terms of reference, we were specifically instructed to assume that the Society remains a charitable organisation. We would record, however, that without that constraint we would have recommended that a review be carried out to assess the costs and benefits of retaining our charitable status, in the light of our 30 years experience as a charity.

3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A LARGE NUMBER OF MEMBERS

We were also advised that fulfilling our charitable objectives is paramount, over and above building up membership. We do not agree – the SRP needs member numbers so that it can be seen to be truly representative of the needs and aspirations of recorder players and hence have a voice in the music world. Additionally money is needed to fulfil charitable objectives, and (barring something like a windfall bequest) the biggest source of money is our members. If our members are dissatisfied and leave, then our money supply dries up, and we will not be able to fulfil charitable objectives. The first priority is therefore to satisfy existing members, and attract new ones; fulfilling our charitable objectives then becomes possible. The more members, the more we can do, and the more influence we can have.

It has also been suggested to us that a smaller society with a higher subscription would also be satisfactory, but again we do not agree. This merely invites a downward spiral where numbers shrink, subscriptions go up, so numbers shrink again.

Membership is hence extremely important, and we believe that addressing the large reduction in membership lies at the heart of what we have been asked to do, and we take it as a given that the SRP accepts that increasing membership is essential. If we do not reverse the trend of falling membership, it will severely restrict our ability to serve ‘the wider community and support the continuation and development of recorder playing in the UK up to 2020’.

3.3 HOW THE BRANCHES OPERATE

The 52 branches are effectively the SRP (although in this report ‘branches’ usually means the 51 geographical branches, unless COS is mentioned specifically). Our surveys of members and of branch secretaries revealed that the branches are remarkably different – 51 ‘tribes’ with their own different cultures, objectives, ‘governments’, inclination to be told what to do, abilities and tastes. Whatever their branch is like, however, members are usually loyal to it: in our survey of members 81% said that they attend branch sessions ‘regularly’.

Diversity of the branches

It is difficult to generalise about the branches. Some major differences between branches are:

1. Some branches have no focus other than gathering together eleven times a year for an afternoon of friendly sight-reading and music-making; some focus on improving playing ability; some focus on preparing for local concerts.
2. Some branches pay nothing for their conductors; some pay significant sums.
3. Some branches have the same conductor for nearly every meeting; some have several different conductors every year.
4. Some branches have a lot of visitors; some have none at all.
5. We received 32 survey responses from branch secretaries, In 24 cases the branch plays once a month, one every three weeks, five every fortnight and two every week. Some branches play during the day; some play in the evening.

It became clear during our work that information on what branches do and how they do it usually goes no further than the branch itself - branches can hence believe that their way is 'the way'. It seems reasonable that other branches could benefit from hearing about the experiences of other branches, even if their situation is not identical.

- » **Recommendation 21. There should be a mechanism whereby branches share information about how they operate, including things they think work well (including things that do *not* work well would be useful, but probably asking too much). In this way there would be a transfer of information and ideas to other branches, which they would be free to experiment with, if they so wished.** Perhaps such a mechanism could be by branch profiles in the Recorder Magazine, or on the SRP website (perhaps by means of a web forum for branch secretaries).

Members' satisfaction with the branches

The survey of members included the question "How could SRP branch playing sessions be improved to make them more appealing, to you or to visitors?" Key results were:

1. 29% said they were totally satisfied.
 2. A large number (37%) - raised points with us that were obviously entirely a domestic branch matter (as examples, the branch should be more welcoming, or the venue should be warmer). This suggests that those branches do not have an effective mechanism for knowing what their members want.
- » We heard from one branch that they have regular branch surveys in which their members can give their opinions on what the branch is doing. **Recommendation 22. Branches should be made aware of the potential benefits of a regular (possibly anonymous) survey of their members.**
3. 8% wanted easier music or help for weaker players. 6% wanted harder music or some more technical instruction; their conclusion often was that there should be differentiation between weaker and stronger players (for example different playing sessions); only a very small number of branches manage to achieve this, presumably because of the administrative and financial problems it can involve. It is merely a matter of statistics that fairly small numbers of people will always want things that are not 'average', but this is still worth investigating further, because a significant number of ex-members cited this as a reason that they had left the society (see section 'Why do people leave the SRP?').

Conductors

REGULAR CONDUCTORS.

In general members seemed satisfied with their own regular conductors, sometimes called ‘musical directors’ (‘visiting’ conductors are dealt with later in our report). Nevertheless the survey of members revealed that 6% wanted better or less “scary” conductors, and another 6% wanted more variety of conductors. These are not very large numbers, but they nevertheless suggest there are over a hundred members who are sufficiently dissatisfied with their regular conductors to make that clear in a survey that is not even anonymous. We will see later that a significant number of ex-members cite dissatisfaction with their regular conductors as a reason for leaving the society. This may be a difficult ‘people problem’ to address, but it underlines the importance of our above recommendation concerning a regular branch survey.

IN-HOUSE CONDUCTORS.

Some branches have ‘in-house conductors’ (described in various ways), who conduct the branch at meetings other than those that involve the regular branch conductor or visiting conductors. Typically these in-house conductors would not be a sufficient attraction to sustain the branch on their own, but they are perfectly acceptable now and then, and have the advantage of being free of charge. They may also acquire enough experience to take over if the regular conductor leaves, which can be highly significant – three branches suggested that if their regular conductor were to leave, that would threaten the very existence of the branch. If no-one of sufficient ability is evident, then branches can develop in-house conductors with the aid of the SRP conducting workshops, which are an under-used resource at present (see section ‘Workshops’).

- » **Recommendation 23. Branches should be made aware of the advantages (including cost advantages) of developing in-house conductors, and how the SRP conducting workshops could help.**

Branch visitors

The attitude of branches towards visitors may seem like a minor matter, but we were surprised by the result of our survey of ex-members that revealed that the most common reason by far for leaving the SRP was an inability to attend enough branch meetings to make it worthwhile paying the subscription. Some of these ex-members said that they now attended their branch as visitors, and all seemed unaware that they could be a COS member instead. The problem arises if such a leaver belongs to a branch that does not encourage visitors, in which case that leaver might stop playing with the society altogether (large parts of the country do not have another convenient SRP branch to go to).

The **formal situation** is clear: because the SRP is a charity, branches are obliged to accept anyone who turns up to play at any meeting, as long as they pay the required fee. But **in reality** branches have very different attitudes to visitors; as examples:

1. Some branches make no mention on the SRP website of the possibility of being a visitor, while others clearly state that visitors are welcome.
2. Of those branches that *do* admit the possibility of playing as a visitor, only some indicate the cost. Some visitor fees are low (even free); some are high.

3. Some branches have no restrictions on visitors; some require (or strongly encourage) membership after a certain number of visits.
4. Some branches make it clear that being an occasional visitor does not fit in with their way of working. This can happen at those branches that focus on improving playing ability (often via a set programme of works studied throughout the year), or at those branches that focus on preparing for local concerts.

The result of these informal means of discouraging visitors can be seen in the amount of income that each branch receives from visitors. In the year 2010/2011 more than half of the branches (28) received less than £50 from visitors in the year, of which nine received nothing at all.

- » The question of policy on visitors is a complicated one, especially as it involves the whole way in which each branch wants to organise itself. Nevertheless we are concerned that this policy may have important repercussions on membership numbers, quite apart from the way in which we satisfy our requirements as a charity. **Recommendation 24. A working group should be established to study SRP visitor policy. This should include how (or if at all) a uniform policy should be adopted by all branches.**
- » A specific difficulty of visitor policy is how much to charge - not so low that everyone wants to be a permanent visitor, not so high that nobody visits. There is also the issue that no part of the income from visitors is remitted to SRP central (and so cannot be used to fund the centre's work on fulfilling our charitable objectives). **Recommendation 25. The amount that should be charged as a visitor fee should form part of the work of the above working group.**
- » In any case we see no reason not to state on the SRP website that visitors are welcome, and what a visitor must pay. **Recommendation 26. Irrespective of the above recommendations on SRP visitor policy, each branch page should state that visitors are welcome, and what the visitor fee is.**

Membership renewal

In our survey of ex-members, a significant number (14%) said that they were not aware that their membership had lapsed, and another 4% had missed the deadline for subscriptions or had just forgotten. Four respondents said that they did not know how to renew their membership, and asked us to send them the relevant forms. While this seems like a minor operational matter, if people are unsure whether or not to remain in the society, if the system for renewing membership is not clear to them, they may well leave by default.

- » **Recommendation 27. The system of renewal of membership at branch level should be reviewed, so that those people who have not renewed are followed up.**

3.4 THE NUMBER OF SRP MEMBERS

We have already seen that current SRP membership stands at about 1,400, and that it has reduced – on average – by about 20 a year for the last 15 years. During our work we did, however, identify an interesting new perspective (and thanks to Mike Wilkinson for the work he has put into this for us). In fact, although it is true that numbers have reduced by only a modest number every year, that masks the fact that every year a large number of people leave the society, but that we have nearly (but not quite) that number of joiners. In the last year, for example, nearly 200 people left (about 15% of our membership), and about 160 joined.

To put it crudely we are quite good at attracting new members, but once we have them we are quite poor at keeping them. This is a very important finding, because rather than being mildly concerned that every year we are losing only 1% of our membership, we see that we need to be very interested in how we manage to attract so many new members, and very concerned about why, every year, we lose 15% of our entire membership. Because of this, the next two sections of our report concentrate on each element separately. Obviously if our inflow of new members stayed the same, and we could stem the exodus from the society, we would grow very quickly, and by 2020 the SRP would be bigger than it has ever been before.

- » **Recommendation 28. In addition to the regular analysis of branch strength, there should be regular analysis of joiners and leavers at each branch.**

We have heard (usually from branches that are in decline) that all branches are suffering from declining numbers. In fact this is not true. Since our peak membership in 1997 membership of 40% of the branches has stayed the same or grown (sometimes quite dramatically). Even more growth has taken place in the last five years, where a half of all branches have swelled their numbers.

It would be excellent to be able to say *why* some branches have grown and some have shrunk. Unfortunately we could detect no obvious pattern in this, and it is a matter of identifying and addressing a large number of issues, and trusting that all of these actions will lead to growth. That is one reason that our report is very long. We do, however, reiterate our recommendation (in the section ‘How the branches operate’) that there should be a mechanism whereby branches share information about how they operate, in order to share ideas.

3.4.1 WHY DO PEOPLE JOIN THE SRP?

We are not aware of any systematic means of finding out why people have joined the society - perhaps because a more obvious concern has always been why people *leave*.

- » **Recommendation 29. A simple enquiry of new members should be made, perhaps integrated with their application form, to find out how they heard of the SRP, and what attracted them to it. The results of this enquiry should be made available to SRP Central, who should distribute a summary to the branches. Branches who are particularly successful at attracting new members should be invited to share their experiences.**

We did not carry out a survey of new joiners, but we believe that some factors that encourage new joiners include:

1. The branch extends a very warm welcome.
2. The branch has members who are teachers and who run recorder groups in their schools.
3. The branch has members who are in U3A groups.
4. The branch has offshoot groups, who play in the community.

Branches sometimes look at others that are growing and believe that the growth is because of proximity to a high-population area. We do *not* believe that that is an important factor – perhaps counter-intuitively there seems little or no relationship between branch growth and nearness to a big city.

3.4.2 WHY DO PEOPLE LEAVE THE SRP?

We carried out a survey of people who had left the SRP within the last year. We were not optimistic that we would get a good (or any) response, but in fact 48% of those approached responded – nearly as good as the response rate by current members. We believe that this information is very valuable, and deserves our close attention, and this section of our report is heavily based on what the ex-members told us. Apart from anything else, it was not a matter of wading through bitter criticism – in fact the ex-members were overwhelmingly in favour of the SRP, some wrote at length about how they had enjoyed it, and several made constructive suggestions

- » **Recommendation 30. The SRP should carry out a regular survey of people who have left, to learn more about why they left.** We believe that one of the reasons for the success of our survey was the non-judgemental tenor of the questions, and future surveys should take care to emulate this.

Insufficient time to be a member

Easily the most common reason for leaving the SRP, given by 40% of respondents, was that they were unable to go to enough branch meetings to make it worthwhile paying the subscription. Many of these said that they now attended their branch as visitors. This was discussed above (see sub-section ‘Branch visitors’). A further 10% said that they had switched allegiance to another instrument; we had the impression that these people no longer played with the SRP, even as visitors.

The lack of time was also reflected in the survey of *current* members, where 15% were concerned about the conflict with other areas of their lives, such as family commitments.

Apart from the people who could no longer attend enough branch meetings, 8% said that cost had been a factor (more than half of those citing the cost of the magazine). Cost was hence only a modestly important factor. The issue of cost is, however, quite complicated, and it is discussed below (see section ‘To what extent are members concerned about cost?’).

Music played

The **style of music** played generally did not seem to have been a major factor in leaving the society. 3% of ex-members said they had wanted more early music, and 2% said they had wanted more modern music.

The **difficulty of the music** was more significant. 5% of ex-members said the music had been too difficult for them. On the other hand 7% said the music had been too easy and an additional 7% said that they had left to play one-to-a-part music. The subject of consort playing was discussed earlier, and it may be difficult for SRP branches to facilitate such activity. In any case the ex-members did not seem to be criticising the society for failing to provide one-to-a-part playing, but they were instead saying that they had ‘grown out of the society’ (this phrase being used on several occasions).

Such matters may be best addressed by means of a branch survey, as recommended earlier.

- » **Recommendation 31. COS membership should be promoted to people who are about to leave (or who have left) the society. It may be attractive to players no longer interested in group branch playing, as the subscription is lower, and they would still be entitled to the Recorder Magazine. They would, however, still be supporting the general aims of the society.**

Conductor

The survey of ex-members revealed that 7% had left because the regular conductor at their branches was unsatisfactory, sometimes in terms of ability, sometimes in terms of personality.

Again, at least in theory, such matters could be addressed by means of a branch survey, although most people would probably try to avoid ‘unpleasantness’, preferring to leave.

Age

There will be a number of members who will not renew their membership each year, because of the effects of age on their playing ability, transport difficulties or through death. Statistics suggest that we should expect to lose something of the order of 50 people in total every year in this way.

Branch exits from the society

There is a view that when an entire branch leaves the SRP, then some (or many) of its members merely transfer to other branches. Our analysis of branch numbers showed no evidence for this, but rather suggested that when a branch leaves, the total number of SRP members reduces by approximately the number who were in that branch. That would seem logical, given the geographical isolation of many branches, as described earlier. So the imminent departure of a branch is very significant to the society.

There are certain signs that a branch may be in trouble, such as reducing number of members or bank balance. At present such branches are left to their own devices, but offering advice to such a branch may make the difference between collapse and survival.

- » **Recommendation 32. The SRP should make an annual review of branch health, using simple statistics. Those which show ‘danger signs’ should be approached at an early stage with an offer of help and advice.**

From feedback we have had from a branch that left the SRP, we have the impression that the departure of a branch can involve some degree of denial and recriminations on the part of SRP central. This is a pity, because understanding why a whole branch wants to leave the society is valuable information. One explanation that is not tenable is that it is always because of falling numbers – the last three branches that left had 57 members in total at the time of leaving (not much smaller than the average SRP branch size).

- » **Recommendation 33. The SRP should carry out a survey of branch members of branches that are about to leave (or which have recently left) the SRP, to ascertain the reasons.**

3.5 TO WHAT EXTENT ARE MEMBERS CONCERNED ABOUT COST?

As noted in the previous section, few ex-members said that they had left because of the cost of being an SRP member. This may be very surprising, because cost is often a cause of complaint in the society. It is important to know where the truth lies here, especially because this report discusses many issues with a cost implication, and successful implementation may depend on the acceptability of any costs to the membership. We will review those things that suggest that members are concerned about cost, then those things that suggest the opposite.

Things that suggest that members are concerned about cost

At the 2006 Annual Conference there was considerable disagreement about a proposed increase of £3.50 in the SRP element of the subscription. Often society votes are unanimous, or nearly so, but in this case there were 26 in favour and 16 against, and the decision was later declared null and void because the majority was insufficient under the society’s rules.

Our survey of members suggested concern about future costs - 21% of respondents said that the level of future SRP subscriptions could be a factor in their continuing membership. But against that 5% said that the SRP subscription was good value.

In our survey of branch secretaries, 16% cited cost as a concern about the future of the branch.

In our survey of members, there was some interest expressed in what was being spent from the Arthur Ingram Fund. Members do not necessarily make a distinction between what is spent directly from their annual subscription and what is spent from the Arthur Ingram Fund. We believe that it would be unwise to try to insist on the fine distinction between the two when explaining issues to the members (see section ‘Financial matters’).

There is some statistical evidence that branches that charge higher subscriptions have fewer members. This is not an exact relationship, because some branches meet more often than others, but two facts were noted:

1. The four biggest branches charge less than £30 a year (i.e. less than £10 a year for their branch subscription).

2. Branches that charge more than £50 a year do not have more than 20 members.

Although not at all conclusive, this does suggest that there is some resistance to higher subscriptions by SRP members.

Things that suggest that members are less concerned about cost

Our survey of members revealed that almost nobody (in fact only 2%) thought that their branch was too expensive.

As an interesting case study, one branch is much more expensive than any other, and four times higher than the average. Despite that, the two responses to our survey from members of that branch had no criticism of the cost involved (although one did suggest that the SRP could introduce bursaries for people who could not afford to go to their local branch). However, despite the apparent satisfaction of members of that branch, it has a small number of members, and that number has dropped significantly in the last few years.

Conclusions on cost concerns

Our interpretation of the above is that people are only a little concerned about cost, but become much more concerned when their money is being spent on something for which they cannot see value for their money – for example payments to SRP central. **We believe that it is of great importance in satisfying our members to demonstrate that they are receiving value for money.** Two examples from other organisations are:

1. A recent newsletter of the American Recorder Society states as an objective “Make membership worth the money – more free music; online training; searchable members list; scholarships, chapter grants”.

2. To play in a U3A recorder group often costs more than playing in an SRP branch, but nobody seems concerned about what they are spending, possibly because the element that goes to U3A central is tiny, and U3A members can see exactly what their money is being spent on.

» It is important for members to be convinced that they are receiving value for money.

Recommendation 34. The SRP should make regular explanations to its membership of what the society’s money is spent on, and how members are being given value for money. It is particularly important that these explanations should be easy to understand for a non-financial readership, and this is addressed later.

We also believe that it is dangerous to appeal to people’s altruism, especially in the present situation in which many members are unaware of the wider remit of the society. We have seen several examples where someone proposes expenditure, but people cannot see that it represents value to them for their money and they are unwilling to fund it. The argument then goes “surely these people can see the more general benefit?”. Obtaining value for money is a powerful drive and, although some people can be altruistic, it is unwise to rely on it. **Giving all members clear value for money – and convincing them that they are receiving it - must be the first priority, and this is a theme to which we return often in this report.**

Impact of economic deterioration and use of remote playing technology

We were specifically asked to address the issue of: “the possible long-term effects of the current global economic downturn, and the continuing increases in the price of energy which are likely to persist for at least the next decade”. We were also asked to consider the potential advantages of remote playing, using Skype for example.

This is a relatively technical matter, and we have prepared a paper on the subject. Because of its length and content, that paper is included as an appendix to this report. A summary is as follows:

1. Forecasts of the world economy are uniformly gloomy for the next few years, and hence energy costs are forecast to fall, not rise.
 2. Even if fuel prices did rise, recent experience suggests that the behaviour of SRP members would not change significantly, although there might be more attempts to share transport.
 3. Deterioration of living standards might make remote playing desirable. This would be by means of many computers linked together via the internet (‘Skype’ is the name for one such current system).
 4. The technology to achieve this is far from mature, and using it for a recorder ensemble is currently impossible.
 5. We believe that the technology required for recorder ensemble playing may *possibly* be available by 2020, but even in that case, we do not believe that the SRP membership will be technologically able to take advantage of it by that time.
 6. In any case the social aspects of recorder playing would be severely compromised.
- » Although very far from ensemble playing, Skype is currently being used to give online one-to-one recorder lessons in the USA (at least). **Recommendation 35. Someone with access to technological expertise should be tasked with carrying out a pilot study, to investigate the current possibilities, beginning with one-to-one lessons. An article in the Recorder Magazine might be a useful way of informing people about the possibilities of this technology.**

3.6 FUN OR TECHNIQUE?

We have seen that branches have different objectives and different ways of doing things. In order to understand how these interact, we have used the analogy of two different worlds within the SRP:

1. One ‘world’ comprises players who, primarily, want to play the recorder for fun, in a non-threatening and sociable atmosphere. For want of a better term, we have called this the ‘**fun world**’.
2. The other ‘world’ comprises players who, primarily, are keen to improve their recorder technique; they derive satisfaction from becoming better players, and from being able to play more difficult music. For want of a better term, we have called this the ‘**technique world**’.

Of course these two worlds are gross simplifications, and probably most people live in both worlds, at least to some extent. But the evidence suggests that recorder players who are *primarily* in the ‘fun world’ are more numerous than those who are *primarily* in the ‘technique world’. We believe, however, that there is a tendency for SRP decisions to be made more with the ‘technique world’ in mind, and that this could have serious repercussions

on our future membership numbers. One reason is that there is a fast-growing competitor that is almost entirely in the ‘fun world’, and that is U3A recorder playing.

In this section we will therefore make the case that a large number of SRP members (and prospective members) inhabit the ‘fun world’, that SRP decisions should be made to reflect that preponderance, and the nature of the threat from the U3A if we do not.

3.6.1 HOW MANY SRP MEMBERS ARE IN THE ‘FUN WORLD’?

It is impossible to identify and count members who primarily want to play the recorder for fun. But there are clues that we can use to build up a picture:

A large number of SRP musical directors and conductors are paid little or nothing. In general those conductors who offer a more ‘technical’ experience charge for their services, whereas those providing some ‘fun’ do not. Analysis of the branch accounts shows that 35 branches (70% of them) pay their conductors £100 or less for the year (which includes travel costs) and, of those, 14 branches pay their conductors nothing at all. These latter conductors are hence even paying for the privilege of leading the music-making, because they fund their own travel costs.

We analysed the ‘**pastoral visits**’ made in the last five years, and found that the conductors invited most often tended to be those who offered a more informal and ‘fun’ experience. On the other hand, those conductors who offered an experience more slanted towards improvement of technique tended to be invited less often.

There has been a very limited uptake of **SRP technique workshops**. On average there has been only slightly more than one a year throughout the country.

Courses that offer technical instruction tend to be smaller ‘niche’ courses. Also, the overtly technical content at larger courses (such as the Recorder Summer School) is reducing.

Our **survey of members** found that about 8% of respondents wanted easier music or help for weaker players.

3.6.2 MAKING SRP DECISIONS TO REFLECT THE LARGE NUMBER OF ‘FUN WORLD’ MEMBERS

In a way, the statements in the previous section are obvious. There are always fewer skilled people than less skilled people in any human activity, so there must be more weak recorder players than strong recorder players. But the statements also suggest that those weaker players are not motivated to improve their playing by, for example, engaging conductors who specialise in helping them to do that. They prefer to make music with the ability that they already have.

Despite this large number of ‘fun world’ players, we have noted a general trend towards requiring payment for professional services, which tends to work to the disadvantage of those in the ‘fun world’, because those players do not usually wish to pay significant sums for their

conductors (see above). The trend can often be seen in the emphasis placed on high-quality technical tuition (that has to be paid for) within the society, but as two more concrete examples:

1. The (fairly recent) policy of allowing pastoral visitors to charge for their services (see section 'Pastoral visits'). This may explain the otherwise puzzling fact that, despite being eligible for one, about a quarter of branches do not make use of a pastoral visitor. Presumably this is because those branches do not feel that the additional fee they would have to pay to the conductor represents value for money for their branch members.
2. The amount that branches have spent on conductors (including those pastoral visitor costs that cannot be reimbursed from SRP central) has increased by 38% in the last three years.

We do not suggest for a moment that the entire activity of the SRP should comprise fun playing, with no teaching of technique. Neither do we suggest that those who teach that technique should be required to do so free of charge. But while we continue to satisfy the needs of people who want technical guidance, we must be careful that we also satisfy the needs of the (majority) 'fun world' players, including giving them excellent value for money. It is plausible that failure to satisfy those needs has been at least a part of the reason for our membership decline over the last few years, and further significant loss of those members would be very serious for the SRP. We believe that such an exodus is more likely than ever, now that – as we have seen - there are so many competing activities, not least the U3A movement (see below).

- » At present it is not possible to know what sort of recorder experience is offered by a branch, other than by educated guesswork. **Recommendation 36. Each branch should state on their part of the SRP website what it is trying to achieve, in terms of entertainment and technical improvement. It should include details of the general standard, range of music played at meetings, regular playing days and workshops, and what opportunities there are for consort and concert playing.**

3.6.3 OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U3A

There seem to be some misconceptions in parts of the SRP about U3A recorder playing. Given that U3A represents a real threat to future SRP membership, it is important to correct these misconceptions.

Misconception: U3A members are all very elderly. In fact the U3A is open to anyone no longer in full-time work, and without dependent relatives. In theory this could apply to people of any age, although in practice very few members are younger than 50. The age profile of U3A and SRP members is probably similar, in that it is predominantly older players.

Misconception: There is little U3A recorder playing to speak of. The U3A has a total of 275,000 members, organised into 840 local U3As (in other words, branches). Details of local activities are not collected centrally, but a recent estimate was that there are about 200 U3A recorder groups, and perhaps 4,000 recorder players within them. Hence there are well over twice as many U3A recorder players as in the SRP

Misconception: U3A recorder playing is of a very poor standard. Some U3A recorder groups are specifically for beginners, and some have both ensemble and one-to-a-part groups.

Many U3A groups play the same pieces as are played on any Saturday at a middle-of-the-range SRP branch.

To summarise so far, in playing standard, repertoire used, and age of members some U3A recorder groups are indistinguishable from some SRP branches.

Misconception: We only have to publicise the SRP within the U3A and we will have a large number of new members. This is very unlikely and, to understand why, we need to know more about how the U3A operates:

1. U3A recorder groups exist in order to provide entertainment for their members. Improvement of their technique is a low priority, but they instead want to be guided toward playing music with their existing technique. In the terms we have used above, they are overwhelmingly in the ‘fun world’.
2. The U3A works according to certain guiding principles (the ‘Laslett Principles’), observance of which is fiercely protected. One is “To encourage and enable older people no longer in full-time paid employment to help each other to share their knowledge, skills, interests and experience”. This is amplified by “By sharing their learning, U3A members help one another to develop their knowledge, skills and experience”. The effect of this is that people who lead U3A recorder groups are not allowed to receive payment of any sort.
3. Another attraction of being in a U3A recorder group is that it gives immediate access to the other activities in that local U3A. Even the smallest local U3A offers a few such activities (favourites are walking and local history), while large local U3As can offer forty or more activities.

The threat of U3A recorder playing to the SRP

Far from the U3A being a ready source of new SRP members, it is the other way round. Because U3A recorder playing is entirely in the ‘fun world’, if there are SRP players in the ‘fun world’ who do not feel happy in the SRP, then it is easy to join the U3A instead. And with 840 local U3As that is much easier than with the SRPs 50 branches; in any case it is straightforward to set up a new recorder group if one does not already exist. The U3A offers minimal bureaucracy and considerable support to those who want to expand the organisation.

For this report we discussed the attractions of the SRP for U3A members with the conductors of three U3A recorder groups. In broad summary they did not think that the SRP could match the U3A in terms of being (in the words of one) “friendly, welcoming and fun”. Another described at some length how the local U3A branch had formed a recorder group in the same town as an SRP branch, and within two years the SRP branch had lost half of its members.

As if this were not worrying enough, 2012 sees the first U3A recorder summer school.

We consider that U3A recorder playing is a serious threat to the SRP, and that by 2020, if we do nothing differently, the SRP may have shrunk dramatically to a society serving a small number of stronger players, many of the rest having joined a U3A recorder group. There is anecdotal evidence that other organisations are experiencing similar competition from the U3A in other U3A interest areas. For example walking (the Ramblers), bridge (the English Bridge Union), and choral societies.

- » **Recommendation 37. The SRP should set up a working group to address our relationship with the U3A, to identify the reasons why members find it useful to belong to both organisations, and to propose ways in which the SRP could make itself more attractive to typical U3A players and/or ways in which the two organisations could collaborate.** It is important that this working group approaches the task with awareness of the principles on which the U3A operates. SRP members with good knowledge of the U3A are given below.

SRP members with good knowledge of the U3A

- Our survey of members suggests that 19% of SRP members (perhaps 200 people) are already U3A members.
- We know of many U3A recorder groups whose conductor is an SRP member. It is not known how many there are in total.
- An SRP member is the U3A's National Subject Adviser (Recorders), a new appointment, made to develop recorder playing within the organisation.

3.6.4 THE WEA (Workers' Educational Association)

The WEA is another large national organisation, with 110,000 students and 400 branches. The WEA runs 10,000 part-time adult education courses every year, but it seems that not a single one involves recorder playing. We had a brief discussion with an official at WEA headquarters, and her immediate reaction was that some SRP/WEA collaboration could work. In the same way as for the U3A, branches are almost autonomous, and so discussions might have to take place at a local level.

- » **Recommendation 38. The SRP should nominate someone to make contact with the WEA organisation, to investigate whether some sort of collaboration is feasible.** This is an area where, perhaps, the chances of success are low, but the potential benefits are high.
- » There are almost certainly SRP branch members who would be happy to share their recorder playing knowledge but lack the initial confidence to run a WEA (or U3A) recorder class from scratch. **Recommendation 39. An SRP course/workshop should be devised for would-be teachers of the recorder, including suggested repertoire.**

3.7 SPECIFIC CATEGORIES OF MEMBER

We have considered four categories of member – younger members, ‘inbetweeners’ members, older members and professional members. These are not formal types of SRP membership, but they are useful groupings to consider, because each grouping has its own problems in terms of attracting and retaining members.

3.7.1 YOUNGER MEMBERS

Our survey of branch secretaries suggested that only 2% of SRP members (about 25 people) are younger than 21. Our own experience of many branches suggests that those in their 20s and 30s are something of a rarity also.

Our surveys of members and branch secretaries revealed a wide insistence that attracting young people into the society was extremely important, and our survey of ex-members showed that 10% cited the elderly membership profile as one reason they had left. But there were virtually no suggestions from anyone as to how this might be achieved. In addition, because (1) this issue has been actively discussed by the SRP Committee almost since the SRP was formed, and (2) old photographs of SRP events reveal a similar lack of young people, it is obvious that there is no simple answer to this (or possibly no answer at all). Probably this is because it is bound up with the public perception of our instrument, and the slippery notion of what is 'cool'.

We have looked at three initiatives that, at some time or other, have been put forward as a way of drawing young people into the SRP - the National Youth Recorder Orchestras (NYRO), Stockport Recorder College (SRC) and the experiences of a particular SRP branch

NATIONAL YOUTH RECORDER ORCHESTRAS (NYRO)

A NYRO report to the SRP Committee in February 2003 said "It is also proposed to make players members of the SRP for a year when they hopefully will attend branch meetings and subsequently join". The giving of a year's SRP membership to NYRO players has continued, but the hope that they will take a part in the SRP, as members or otherwise, has not come to pass to any significant extent. This may well be due to competing and/or more challenging activities at weekends, with people more of their own age.

Andrew Short's opinion now is that NYRO players may return, and "never mind if that is 20 or more years after they are too old to continue with NYRO". A return in later life seems realistic (although after 30 or 40 years may be more likely), and a good thing if it happens. By that time, however, they would probably not qualify as 'younger members', but as 'inbetweeners' (see later).

STOCKPORT RECORDER COLLEGE (SRC)

Although the SRC is totally independent of our society, in other ways it is like NYRO, but 30 years on. It has now been in existence for 42 years, and meets every Saturday during term time. SRC students are aged from 9 to 18. Unlike NYRO, they are progressed from grade 1 up to grade 8 (and beyond), but in the same way as NYRO very few SRC 'graduates' go to SRP branches. If they do continue at all, they tend to join the local recorder orchestra, attracted by the higher playing standard. Some do return to the SRC after university, to do some teaching. The advantage of the SRC, for the purposes of our exercise, is that some SRC alumni are now in their 50s, and we are able to see whether they gravitated to SRP.

There is no systematic way of identifying SRC alumni, but we were made aware of some individuals, in their 30s, 40s and 50s. Some are now full-time tutors at the SRC, some play in recorder orchestras, one conducts and one is a recorder teacher. As far as we know, however, none of these alumni is currently an SRP member. They are all strong players, and so perhaps

have followed the route of other players who are too good to get satisfaction from an SRP branch meeting, but who are nevertheless contributing to the world of recorders.

The subject of the SRC is discussed further in section 6.3.2.

SRP BRANCH

Thirty two branch secretaries replied to our survey, and of those only a quarter reported any members at all younger than 21. And of those eight branches all had one or two, except for a single branch that had five. We therefore discussed further with that branch, to see if lessons could be learned from what they were doing.

The branch has a new regular conductor, and she is a young music teacher at a local school, who brings several of her pupils to each SRP meeting. There are usually several more young players than the five who have actually joined the society. This has worked so well that the branch has now started a junior section, where the juniors (and some of their parents) play for an hour before the normal SRP meeting. One result of this influx is that the overall playing standard of the branch has risen, but without resentment on the part of the older players. The positive experience in this branch has, therefore, come about because of a teacher who has seen an opportunity to benefit from the local SRP branch.

We have already recommended that there should be a mechanism whereby branches share information about how they operate, including things they think work well. The experience of this branch is an excellent example – another branch may not be able to emulate it (for example there may be no similar teacher), but it may be possible to learn from at least *some* of the other branch's experiences.

- » While individual branches may be lucky enough to find themselves in a situation where there is an influx of younger players, we believe that there is probably no action we can take to achieve this to any significant degree. If the SRP *could* solve the problem of attracting young members, we would be the envy of nearly all societies, everywhere. We believe that it is not a good use of our energies and resources to chase this mirage. **Recommendation 40. The SRP should address other ways of increasing membership as a higher priority than working on how to attract younger members.**

3.7.2 'INBETWEENER' MEMBERS

Our survey of branch secretaries recorded that 16% of members were between the ages of 21 and 50. As the SRP does not collect information about the age of members, we were obliged to rely on estimates by the branch secretaries, and we detected some embarrassment on the part of the branch secretaries about whether to place members on the 'right or 'wrong' side of 50. We suspect, therefore, that the 16% should be lower, and the number for over-50s higher. This is supported by discussion with conductors who attend many branches, whose consensus view was that there are few members in their 20s, 30s or 40s; we would speculate that there are possibly 100 in total. For convenience we will call those 21-50 year-old members 'inbetweeners'.

We believe that focussing on inbetweeners is a promising way of attracting people to the SRP, for the following two reasons.

Inbetweeners, especially at the younger and older ends of the range, are more likely to have available time. They will tend to have either no family commitments pre-children or fewer family commitments as their children become older (but not yet the duties of looking after grandchildren).

Inbetweeners are quite likely to have played the recorder when they were younger. The severe reduction of recorder playing in schools, discussed earlier, would not have affected people now in middle age. In the further future this will, of course, no longer be the case - there may come a time when hardly any prospective SRP members will have played at school. But with the 2020 time horizon of our exercise there will still be a large number of inbetweeners who will have previously played the recorder.

These points closely reflect the experience in the USA. The January 2012 newsletter of the American Recorder Society said that while programmes to teach children were fading, their society “seems to be drawing newcomers in their 40s, 50s and 60s: people who may have played recorder in the past but want to return to the instrument now that they have more time and disposable income”.

- » **Recommendation 41. A working group should be set up to investigate how we can attract inbetweeners into the society. We believe that this is a promising area, on which it is worth expending time and resources.** It may be possible to link with local charitable music organisations which have had considerable success in attracting adults to ‘blow the dust off their (orchestral) instruments’ – for example ‘Music For Everyone’ in the East Midlands.
- » The use of social media (Facebook and Twitter) is of increasing importance to some SRP members, including inbetweeners. Although there is an existing personal Facebook account concerning SRP matters, it is not an official SRP presence, and it is not part of the society’s website. **Recommendation 42. The SRP should investigate the potential of using social media, both to attract new members and for networking.**
- » The U3A organisation has had great success in attracting inbetweeners (albeit at the older end of the scale). **Recommendation 43. The SRP should investigate how the U3A has been so successful in attracting inbetweeners, probably beginning with the resource we described earlier – SRP members who are also U3A members.**
- » As we have seen, it is unlikely that any significant increase in membership could come from recruiting younger people. It is much more likely that inbetweeners will be attracted to the SRP. **Recommendation 44. The use of images of so many young people on the SRP website should be considerably reduced, and replaced by images of inbetweeners.** Images of young people on the website may ‘feel’ like a good idea to a website designer, but does not reflect our target audience.

3.7.3 OLDER MEMBERS

Our survey of branch secretaries recorded that 82% of our members are over 50 years old (although as discussed earlier, we suspect that this figure is somewhat understated). There was some suggestion in our surveys that the problem (if problem it is) of an ageing membership is getting worse. We are not sure about this - evidence such as old photographs and SRP committee minutes concerning the need to attract younger people suggest that membership has always tended to be dominated by older adults.

Doubts about recruiting older members

We are not aware of any initiatives to target older people to join the SRP. Recruiting more older members certainly does nothing for any youthful and dynamic image that the society might like to present. In our survey of members we asked the question “What might affect your continuing SRP membership between now and 2020?” and, although only looking ahead eight years, 62% of respondents were concerned about ageing and failing health, including its impact on their ability to drive. One ex-member said that members tend to be “mainly older people, rather set in their ways and habits, and rather a funny old lot!”

Certainly recruiting more older members cuts across the frequent SRP emphasis on attracting young people – we have already seen that many of our members believe that attracting young people into the society is important and that some ex-members cited the elderly membership profile as one reason they had left. We have said above, however, that we do not believe that focussing on recruiting young people is a reasonable focus to retain.

Why we should recruit older members

On a purely formal point, we are obliged to accept anyone into the SRP, so there is no question of rejecting an older applicant. But there is a powerful reason why we might make a conscious effort to recruit older people to the SRP, and that is that if we do *not*, we are surrendering the entire age range of 50 and above to the U3A organisation.

- » **Recommendation 45. The SRP should decide whether or not it is committed to the idea of recruiting older members.** Such a policy might be unpopular in certain quarters, but if the decision is ‘yes’ then the SRP will need to do things rather differently than it has to date (just as one small example, the SRP website should include images of genuinely elderly people, in the same way as U3A publicity material does).
- » If the SRP *does* embrace the idea of targeting older members, new methods of recruitment should be sought. **Recommendation 46. A working group should investigate how we can attract older members into the society.** While some ideas would apply equally well to inbetweeners and older people, other avenues might suggest themselves for the latter. For example, our existing (largely older) members presumably tend to have friends of a similar age, and suitable publicity passed via our members to those friends might result in new joiners.

3.7.4 PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS

Our surveys of current members, ex-members and branch secretaries included virtually no mention of professionals among SRP members - there were just two appearances of the word in all of the surveys of members we carried out. Nevertheless we are aware that the need to have more professionals in the society has been raised at the SRP Committee over many years, and this reflects the desire for the society to represent (and be seen to represent) all aspects of the recorder world. Consequently we have looked at the professionals who are currently in the society, what they get out of it, why more do not join, and what the SRP might want to do to encourage more to join. At least in principle the introduction of more professionals into the society might make it more attractive to potential new members and might encourage existing members to stay.

In order to find out more about professionals in the recorder world we carried out a small survey of twelve people. They were all professional players, who were active in other areas, such as teaching (probably in common with almost all professional players). We received seven responses to this survey.

WHAT ARE ‘PROFESSIONALS’?

The term ‘professional’ is often used, but is difficult to define. We have the impression that it is often used in the SRP for someone of high status and obvious talent. This is not a useful definition, because it does not follow that such people support themselves financially by virtue of their recorder activities, which would be a more usual definition of a ‘professional’. **We have therefore considered someone a ‘professional’ if they derive a significant part of their income from the recorder in some way.**

We have also noticed that the term ‘young professional’ is often used (usually in the context that we need more of them), but we can see no reason for concentrating on a specific age of professional.

Professionals in the recorder world may be performers, teachers, conductors, composers, course organisers, and often several of these at once. Using our definition of ‘professional’, we believe that there are a large number of professionals in the SRP. Quite apart from anything else, there are a hundred people in COS many of whom are professional, more on the panel of visiting conductors, a considerable number in the main membership list with ‘T’ (i.e. teacher) next to their name, often accompanied by qualifications. We estimate that the total might be 150 - about 10% of the SRP membership. That is a high figure, and we hence believe that the often-expressed opinion that the SRP is an amateur organisation is inaccurate.

We have restricted our comments to professional performers, teachers and conductors, because they are more numerous than composers and course organisers.

WHY THE SRP MAY BE ATTRACTIVE TO PROFESSIONALS

Of the seven professionals who responded to our survey, five were existing members of the SRP. Positive reasons given for membership included: general support for the society and its work, receipt of the Recorder Magazine, being a branch conductor, eligibility for the panel of

visiting conductors and/or role of musical adviser, the promotion of courses and concerts, and opportunities for meeting and networking with people with similar interests. Even a non-member noted “the SRP’s lovely work, which I do think is valuable”.

Quite apart from many professionals’ desire to support the society’s work in general, we believe that there are potentially significant financial advantages to a professional resulting from SRP membership. For a small membership fee (especially of COS), over 50 branches and 1,400 members are made aware of a professional member’s services via the membership list, and these are not people who are presently overwhelmed with professional help. There is a real shortage of (and lack of knowledge about) available desirable conductors for branches, orchestras and courses, of recorder teachers for adults, of instrument suppliers/repairers and of suitable music.

Professionals have the opportunity to make a name for themselves with the SRP as a platform - for example in the area of conducting, albeit for potentially limited financial reward at the outset. There could then be additional financial opportunities, both in areas of the SRP that require greater expertise and also in non-SRP areas where SRP members are involved - for example at the growing number of non-SRP events.

In addition, the SRP membership listing is a particularly convenient method for branch members to readily identify local professional teachers (possibly for the first time), especially if they are unable to access that information on the internet for whatever reason.

A versatile recorder professional with the right personal qualities and the right prices can benefit greatly from membership of the SRP, and many have.

WHY THE SRP MAY *NOT* BE ATTRACTIVE TO PROFESSIONALS

The two responses of non-members to our survey of professionals were rather vague (one stating that they “couldn’t see any benefit”). A problem for some professionals wanting to work within the SRP network may be one of competition in certain areas. The SRP includes many talented, popular and altruistic amateurs or semi-professionals, many of whom are happy to put their conducting talents to use free of charge, because they have retired, or otherwise. We have seen, for example, that 14 branches pay their conductors nothing at all. So, in some areas of the SRP, for example general branch conducting, any professional trying to sell their services will have difficulties where there is someone who comes free of charge – especially when the players in question are largely in the ‘fun world’, not the ‘technique world’. However where opportunities arise in areas where greater expertise is expected, such as playing days or workshops, there may be ample opportunities for professionals to benefit financially, should they wish to do so.

WHY DO MORE PROFESSIONALS NOT JOIN THE SRP?

We have heard anecdotal evidence that when other professionals have been asked why they do not join the SRP, they have been somewhat dismissive of the society in general – perhaps believing that the society is for amateur members only, and that it can have no relevance for them.

Perhaps the most obvious answer is that many professionals have never even heard of the SRP. Perhaps, also, they may not have realised the opportunities (not necessarily financial) that can exist or doors that may be opened, partly as a result of membership

WHAT MORE COULD WE DO TO ATTRACT PROFESSIONALS?

In a way the key elements are already in place – the SRP needs services and there are professionals who want to provide those services. All that seems to be necessary to make everything work effectively is to put everyone in touch with one another.

- » **Recommendation 47. The SRP should prepare an information sheet about what opportunities the SRP can offer to a recorder professional, and the relevant services that could be offered by such a professional (probably with some idea of the range of fees that could be expected).** Perhaps the information sheet could also provide some case studies of what some professionals already within the SRP have achieved. The information sheet should then be widely disseminated to music schools, teachers, etc. The suggestion should be made that the ‘new’ professionals should join the society, at which time further help would be given in terms of (for example) how to contact the possible sources of work.
- » **Recommendation 48. The SRP could make the task of the professionals easier by, for example, providing SRP members with lists of professionals who can supply such events as branch workshops (other than the SRP-subsidised workshops), together with fees.** The two-way communication would then be in place.
- » **Recommendation 49. The SRP website should have a list of teachers, with links to further details, such as fees.**

We have also seen suggestions (including in our survey of professionals) that the SRP should pay for projects. One example was that a professional could be engaged by the SRP to give a master class. Another example was the SRP could do more to help outstanding players, by providing financial help to ensembles and soloists. These (and several other suggestions for ways of spending money) represent a different notion altogether – that members would be content to see the SRP pay for activities to support excellence in the recorder world, even though those activities may not benefit them personally. We have already concluded in this report that it is of great importance in satisfying our members to demonstrate that they are receiving value for money, and the sort of projects noted above are excellent examples of where members would need to be convinced that what is being spent is indeed a good use of the SRP’s money (applying equally to payments from the Arthur Ingram Fund).

- » **Recommendation 50. The SRP committee should decide whether it wants to spend significant money to develop the activities of professionals inside (or even outside) the SRP.** Our view is that such expenditure is unnecessary at present, and that the above recommendations to help the market work better are sufficient.
- » **Recommendation 51. If the SRP committee *does* decide to spend money to develop the activities of professionals inside (or outside) the SRP, possible uses of SRP money should be collated and costed. A budget should be fixed for total expenditure, and projects approved up to that limit.** This care with budgeting recognises the fact that if

money is available, there is never a shortage of superficially attractive proposals for how to spend it.

Finally we received a suggestion that high-profile professionals (such as Piers Adams) could be made Honorary Members, and could promote the recorder on behalf of the SRP. This could conceivably be cost effective, even though the benefits would be very hard to identify.

- » **Recommendation 52. The SRP committee should consider the virtue of creating Honorary Members, to act as ambassadors for the SRP.**

ERTA

We record here that we have not considered the SRP's relationship with ERTA (European Recorder Teachers Association). ERTA is an organisation with about 40 members in the UK, which provides information, primarily for teachers. It has been suggested to us that the SRP should absorb ERTA, but we understand that this is a long-running debate, and we believe that we would have spent considerable time on it, out of all proportion to its relevance to the task the working party was set.

SPECIFIC SERVICES

This section discusses several specific services that the SRP provides to its members. We discuss these matters from the perspective of how satisfied the membership appears to be with these services, because satisfied members are more likely to stay in the society. We have omitted matters where the membership seems to be content (as examples, distribution of the membership list, and provision of public liability insurance), and so the reader should be aware that, unfortunately, the report rather accentuates the negative.

3.8 THE RECORDER MAGAZINE

Our survey of members included the question "What do you like (or dislike) about the Recorder Magazine, and what else would you like to see in it?". 60% of those surveyed responded to the question, which was a high response rate, given that people had to write their answer, rather than just select a number. As a broad overview those who were generally critical of the magazine outnumbered those who were generally in favour by about two to one (58% v 33%). There were, however, very strong opinions voiced at the two extremes.

A questionnaire about the magazine was sent out in 1986. In addition, an analysis was carried out in 1991 (when members could still opt out of taking the magazine). The 1986 questionnaire seemed to be rather more positive about the magazine than today, and the 1991 analysis showed that only 38% of members did not take the magazine. It seems therefore that sentiment has moved against the magazine over the last 20 years or so.

POSITIVES

The magazine has some very strong supporters (as has always been the case). Several people said that they found most (even all) of it interesting.

Our survey of members suggested that 68% of members read the magazine regularly, with a further 22% saying they read it sometimes. Only 10% said they read it rarely or never. So although the comments can be scathing, the magazine seems to have a role to play, and people believe it is worth investigating it every quarter, even though they are often disappointed in the content.

At the 1993 Annual Conference the decision was made that the magazine would henceforth be obligatory for all members. A year later it was reported that obligatory receipt of the magazine had not resulted in reduced membership. This is weak evidence that feelings about the magazine did not run as high as had been supposed.

NEGATIVES

Our survey of members included many criticisms that the magazine was over-technical, erudite, obscure, highbrow and boring. This is very similar to criticisms that have been levelled at it (especially in Annual Conferences) for a generation. Unfortunately concrete suggestions for improvement were few, except five people suggested advice on with how weak players could improve, and three wanted something about recorder care.

This negative picture is, however, complicated. Even people who are critical may still like certain elements of the magazine. Easily the most popular element, for both magazine supporters and detractors alike is the 'centre spread' feature of free-to-photocopy music. In our survey of members 40% of respondents said that they liked this. Other than that, every element in the magazine had some supporters. Even 'technical articles' were liked by 10% of respondents, although sometimes qualified with a plea that they should not be 'too' technical.

Only three people in our survey of members criticised the cost of the magazine, although those three people expressed themselves very strongly (one citing it as a reason why his branch was thinking of leaving the SRP). This was echoed by the branch secretary of another branch.

In our survey of ex-members 5% said that the cost of the magazine had been a factor in their leaving.

CONCLUSION

It is easy to take the view that we can leave the magazine alone, because it has *always* had a very mixed press, but it does seem to be getting less popular, and may well be less popular again in 2020. The problem lies in satisfying a readership with a wide range of recorder playing abilities and interests. Any magazine (not just the Recorder Magazine) will contain certain articles that are only of interest to some people. However, against a background of reducing membership we believe it is now important to take some action to improve the members' view of the Recorder Magazine.

- » **Recommendation 53. In the light of continuing decline in support for the Recorder Magazine, the SRP should once more review the future of the magazine.** We have heard that the existence of the magazine is a given, because it is the means of communicating with the membership, but in our opinion that is no longer convincing - the SRP has only four pages in each issue, and those pages are usually given over to news from the branches and a list of branch secretaries. In addition it may be possible to fulfil the function of communicating with branches at lower cost than by subsidising the magazine – by means of, for example, a simple newsletter.

On the assumption that the magazine does continue:

- » **Recommendation 54. The editorial policy should be reviewed, with a view to limiting the length of articles.** Common observations in the survey of members were that articles were too long, and that technical articles could be tolerated if only they were short.
- » **Recommendation 55. The magazine should contain more articles of interest to the ‘ordinary’ SRP member.** For example five people in the survey of members suggested advice on how weaker players could improve.
- » **Recommendation 56. The magazine should proactively solicit articles for the ‘ordinary’ SRP member.** The reason for this recommendation is that it is well-established that the magazine will generally publish anything it receives, so at present if it receives nothing of interest for the ‘ordinary’ SRP member, then the magazine cannot contain it.
- » **Recommendation 57. An editorial in the magazine should clarify that it is an independent publication.** At present there is a common (erroneous) belief among SRP members that the SRP controls the entire content of the magazine. Members are therefore puzzled (even annoyed) that the magazine does not reflect exactly what they want to see in it.
- » **Recommendation 58. The cover of the magazine should clarify that the cover price applies only to third-party sales.** At present there is a perception by some SRP members that somehow the magazine costs them £6 every issue, because that is the price shown on the cover. In fact SRP members pay, via their subscriptions, just over £2 per issue; clarifying that fact might immediately reduce discontent with the magazine.

3.9 THE SRP WEBSITE

Our survey of members revealed that, of those giving an email address, 14% said they regularly used the website, 52% said they used it occasionally, and 34% said they never used it. Three of the latter said they did not know that the website even existed. Some people who do not provide the SRP with an email address seem to have a computer because 19% of such people said that they used the website occasionally.

Translating this information into numbers of members suggests that only about 150 people use the SRP website regularly, 600 use it occasionally, and 650 never use it at all. This finding is of great importance, because the 650 people who never use the website represent nearly half of the SRP membership, and so we must be aware that whenever a solution to a problem is to ‘put it on the website’ (and it often is, including in this report) that this is not

yet effective communication with the SRP's membership. This situation is considered further, later in the report.

The survey of members gave little information about what people thought about the website. We included the question "What do you like (or dislike) about the SRP website and what else would you like to see on it?", but only a quarter of respondents wrote anything on the subject, and most of those said – very briefly - that the website was generally good. We interpret this as an unwillingness to engage with such a 'technical area', rather than any ringing endorsement of the site.

We have seen some suggestions of what the website could include, either from the survey of members or from other sources. These included:

1. Recorder Magazine music 'centre spreads' and other public domain music, as downloadable pdfs.
2. Entire back issues of the Recorder Magazine.
3. Lists of shops selling recorders, recorder music, etc.
4. Videos teaching basic recorder playing (this is already done on the website of the American Recorder Society).
5. A list of recorder teachers.

Each of these entails its own difficulties (relating, for example, to copyright).

- » We believe that the SRP website should be a 'one-stop shop' for people seeking information on recorder playing in the UK. **Recommendation 59. The SRP should review the content of the SRP website. This should include the matters referred to above, as well as content related to the large number of recommendations we make in this report. There is also scope for a members-only section of the website, which would give additional benefits exclusively for members, for example back issues of the Recorder Magazine.** We believe that we are fortunate in having a competent webmaster, and we should therefore probably not appoint a committee-type body to do this task. Such bodies tend to be slow-moving, and produce the answer 'no'.
- » **Recommendation 60. An SRP Facebook account and Twitter should be incorporated into the SRP website.**

The principles to be observed in putting content on the website should be:

- 1. If there is any doubt about the usefulness of the content, we should err on the side of including it.**
- 2. If there is a problem involved in putting material on the website, we should work to overcome the problem, rather than quickly abandon the idea.** As examples, we understand that the ideas of putting lists of recorder teachers and downloadable public domain music on the website were suggested some years ago, but rejected. Both of these are commonplace features on other websites, and these matters (and others) should be revisited, with a clear focus on doing it, rather than not doing it.
- 3. Content should be seamless between that related to the SRP and that not related to the SRP.** The current website, in places, shows content segregated between SRP and non-SRP (for example about recorder orchestras), and this is merely confusing for people seeking information.

- » An expanded website is desirable, but makes it more difficult for a user to find what he or she is looking for. **Recommendation 61. The structure of the SRP website should be reviewed in order to make things easier to find.**
- » Although the current website is reasonably up-to-date, a greatly expanded site would bring added problems in this regard. **Recommendation 62. The SRP webmaster should allocate responsibility to individuals to keep the content of specific parts of the site up-to-date.**

3.10 PASTORAL VISITS

Our survey of members included the question “The SRP helps to provide branches with visits by conductors on the Visiting Conductors list. Do you think that such visits are a good thing?”. Most people responded to this question and, without exception, those respondents said that they were a good thing; many were full of praise for the idea. One did say that they were a bit daunting.

Before continuing, and as something of a side-issue, we have noted considerable confusion about the terms ‘visiting conductor’, ‘pastoral visitor’ and ‘playing day’. We believe that, officially, the term ‘pastoral visitor’ is obsolete, but in fact it is still commonly used by branches. This is almost inevitable, because they tend to use the term ‘visiting conductor’ for any conductor other than one of their own branch conductors – someone who might come from a nearby branch for no fee. Some respondents to our survey ‘corrected’ us, implying that we should have used the term ‘pastoral visitor’. This may be a communication problem that needs to be addressed. In this report, we have ourselves used the term ‘pastoral visitor’, in order to conveniently make the distinction between different types of visit to branches.

COST OF PASTORAL VISITS

While pastoral visits are appreciated and well-regarded, one problem area is their cost. At one time a pastoral visit was quite clearly free to a branch, because the SRP paid for the conductor’s travel expenses, and the conductor did not (and was not allowed to) charge a fee. More recently pastoral visitors have been allowed to charge a fee. Extra cost in the system can only mean that members have to pay more, and we have already seen that members need to receive value for money in order to feel content.

We must emphasise that we are *not* recommending a return to a system where all payments to conductors are forbidden. Apart from anything else, that system led to anomalous situations, which was part of the reason it was abandoned. We believe that anyone is perfectly entitled to propose a fee for anything they want to do, and the market will then decide whether that offers value for money.

PROBLEMS IN THE MARKET FOR PASTORAL VISITORS

At present the market does not work properly, and this makes it difficult for members to get value for their money.

1. The fees of potential pastoral visitors are not transparent. There is no indication of fees in the pastoral visitor booklet that is supplied to branches. Instead branch secretaries have to

contact the conductor and ask what the fee might be. This is not a comfortable process for some branch secretaries, many of whom are rather diffident people of the ‘old school’.

2. We discussed the subject of fees with some pastoral visitors, and found that some do not want to charge a fee, despite being able to. They prefer to work altruistically, in the traditional SRP manner. Because there is no indication of fees in the pastoral visitor booklet, they currently are unable to identify themselves.

3. The pastoral visitor booklet gives no indication of the particular skills or musical interests of each conductor, other than in the form of a (sometimes uninformative) descriptive paragraph.

4. There are occasional moves to restrict the list of pastoral visitors to those who are formally qualified, or of a high technical playing standard. These moves have not yet led to action, and neither should they. Some conductors are skilled at satisfying the ‘technique world’ players, and others at satisfying the ‘fun world’ players, and it is essential that we retain the ability to satisfy both – especially at a time of increased competition from the U3A.

- » **Recommendation 63. The content of the booklet of pastoral visitors (or, to use the official title ‘Panel of Visiting Conductors’) should be reviewed. We suggest the content should include biographies, information about fees charged, what the conductor attempts to do in a session (for example entertain or educate), and what musical styles they are likely to explore.** We understand that the issue of including fees in the booklet was addressed some years ago, but we believe it should now be re-addressed against the background of an increased need to satisfy our members.

3.11 WORKSHOPS

The term ‘workshops’ is another ambiguous one, variously used by members to mean pastoral visits, out-of-the-ordinary playing sessions (with a guest soloist for example), or even normal branch playing sessions. For this report we have taken ‘workshops’ to mean those sessions organised by the SRP’s Training Co-ordinator (currently Moira Usher).

Since the workshops began in 2003 there have been about 20 workshops instigated by branches. The 2020 working group did not see how this level of activity would impact significantly on the SRP of 2020, although an additional workshop for would-be recorder teachers could be useful, as previously discussed. But we did consider the workshops on conducting, because they are relevant to the training of in-house conductors (see section ‘How the branches operate’).

Despite the clear advantages of having in-house conductors (cost advantages if nothing else), there has been a very poor take-up of these SRP courses, despite the low (SRP-subsidised) cost. There have been just five between 2003 and 2011. Feedback about the courses has been positive, and at least two attendees are now regular SRP branch conductors. The courses have been well-advertised, so the low uptake is a little puzzling. One possible reason advanced was that the existing regular branch conductors did not relish competition, which is plausible, if not rather depressing.

We have already suggested (under ‘How the branches operate’) that pointing out to branches the cost advantages of developing in-house conductors might stimulate take-up of these workshops. We have nothing to add to that.

3.12 BRANCH LIBRARIES

Branches tend to consider that their libraries belong to the members of the branch but, strictly speaking, they belong to the SRP (and have to be returned to the SRP if the branch leaves the organisation). The subject is therefore dealt with in this part of our report, as a service provided to members.

Our survey of branch secretaries revealed that of the 32 branches who responded, all except three have branch libraries. But of the 29 that do, only 13 reported that they use them frequently. Four said that they never use them. Our survey was inconclusive on the extent to which branch members used the libraries for their private use; it seems to vary between branches. Additionally, it is unclear how many branches have catalogued their music libraries.

Use of the branch library varies greatly. At the extremes:

1. Some branches use music entirely drawn from the library for most (or all) of their playing sessions (and even when a pastoral visitor comes), and
2. Some branches never use the library for reasons such as conductors always bring their own music, or there are not enough parts for the size of the branch .

- » We heard the view that branch music libraries, and their availability to members, make up a very valuable SRP resource. The libraries could potentially be a reason for more able recorder players to belong to SRP even though they may not want to attend branch meetings. **Recommendation 64. Branches should be made aware of the potential benefit of wider use of their branch libraries.**

There is a system whereby branches can borrow music from other branches and, to facilitate that, a few branch libraries (currently eight) are available on the SRP website. We do not know to what extent this inter-branch system is used.

- » **Recommendation 65. The SRP should find out what use is made of the inter-branch borrowing system, and the potential for extending the idea (perhaps to non-SRP members). If there is little use made of it, and little potential, terminating the service should be considered, by reviewing the costs and benefits.**

Two possible problems involved in using the branch libraries are:

1. It involves considerable effort by the branch. Indeed one branch secretary said that the branch had “sold it off as it was too difficult to manage”.
2. Branches may be very reluctant for their libraries to be used widely if, as examples, they contain photocopies, or if there is a history of music being returned incomplete.

3.13 THE SRP ANNUAL FESTIVAL

Our survey of members revealed that 5% attend the annual festival regularly, 35% sometimes and 60% never. Generally those who had never attended cited distance, cost, dependence on public transport, and lack of on-site accommodation. 6% said they had never heard of the annual festival, and one person said that their understanding was that the weekend was one huge AGM-type meeting.

Those who had attended annual festivals were mainly very positive about them.

In a report that has few lighter moments, we should also say that one person insisted that all SRP annual festivals should be held in London; looking up her postcode revealed – inevitably perhaps – that she lives all of 20 miles from central London.

- » **Recommendation 66. As the festival is held annually in different parts of the country, it should be used as an opportunity to showcase to members the wider side of the SRP's work.**

3.14 OTHER SERVICES THE MEMBERS WOULD LIKE

In our survey of members we asked “What additional facilities or benefits to SRP members would you like to see the SRP provide?” Direct feedback from the members is such a rarity that we have described what members wanted below, without filtering out the less practical suggestions.

THINGS THAT WOULD COST NOTHING

Advice. Of responses received to this question, 25% wanted advice. The most (11%) wanted advice on buying an instrument, and several more wanted advice on suitable teachers, suitable (graded) ensemble music for the use of branches, choosing an instrument and instrument insurance.

- » **Recommendation 67. The SRP should develop help sheets on various topics, including those mentioned in our survey of members. It should decide on the best method of communicating that such advice is available, for example in the Recorder Magazine, or on the SRP website.** It is possible that such advice is already available somewhere in the SRP, but in that case, its existence should be more widely communicated.

Free Music. There was significant demand for suitable music (15% of respondents), a demand possibly stimulated by the ‘centre spread’ in the Recorder Magazine. Demand was for either free downloads, or the provision of copyright-free SRP publications. Probably the latter is not practical, but we have already recommended that the idea of free downloads should be pursued (see section ‘The SRP website’).

THINGS THAT WOULD COST MONEY

Although we are presenting suggestions by members, we do not believe that the following requests by members could be implemented, either because they would be very expensive, or because they would favour particular branches.

Discounts. A large number of people wanted discounts, on music and instruments. To give people some clues as to what the question meant, we mentioned discounts, and so it is impossible to be sure how much of the reaction was because we had put it into their heads. We suspect, in any case, that given the very small number of suppliers and instruments and music in the recorder world, achieving SRP-wide discounts might be difficult to achieve.

Insurance. A few people wondered whether it would be possible to extend the society's insurance to members' instruments.

Large instruments. There was a demand for financial support by the SRP to enable branches to buy bigger instruments, or at least to be able to borrow such instruments. In fact bigger instruments can be borrowed - from NYRO.

- » **Recommendation 68. The SRP should make branches aware of the facility for borrowing the larger instruments held by NYRO, outside the summer residential course period.**

4. The way the society supports the continuation and development of recorder playing in the UK

Our terms of reference asked us to look at:

1. How the society should support the continuation and development of recorder playing in the UK, and
2. How the society should serve the wider community.

Neither of these things is specifically mentioned in the formal objects of the society (see appendix 4), and so we have decided how best to differentiate between the above two elements of our terms of reference, as follows:

1. We have taken ‘How the society should support the continuation and development of recorder playing in the UK’ to refer to anything relating to those people who are playing (or attempting to play) the recorder – for example learning, playing and improving at all levels of proficiency. We have excluded the normal activities undertaken to develop the skills of our own members (such activities have been covered elsewhere in our report).
2. We have taken ‘How the society should serve the wider community’ to refer to anything relating to the non-playing public – for example concerts and education about the recorder in general.

4.1 ACTIONS BY INDIVIDUAL SRP MEMBERS

Our survey of members revealed a large range of activities by SRP members that support recorder playing in the UK. These activities include:

1. Teaching the instrument, either privately or in schools.
2. Running recorder groups at evening classes, local U3As or Saturday groups (including the Stockport Recorder College).
3. Playing in small ensembles in institutions such as schools.
4. Giving talks and demonstrations about recorders.

Many of these activities are undertaken by ordinary SRP members (by which we mean people of modest technique) and, with the exception of the teachers, they are very often unpaid for these activities. In 2011 the SRP committee said “there are advantages to having adult beginner classes and it is essential to have a cohort of excellent teachers”. However, in order to be accessible to the broadest range of adult beginners, it is unlikely that such teachers would be able to charge the level of fees that would be normal for a teacher with high technical proficiency giving one to one lessons. As mentioned previously, there is scope for the training of aspiring teachers by the SRP, for the purposes of adult beginner classes.

4.2 ACTIONS AT SRP BRANCH LEVEL

Activity taken at branch level to support UK recorder playing is more limited than that carried out by individuals. This is not surprising, because the branch can only call on the resources of its branch members, while individuals can call on the resources of all of their friends and other outside contacts. These activities include:

1. Including visitors who are not SRP members in branch playing sessions. Such visitors may include players who can only attend infrequently (and hence it is not cost effective for them to become a member) and others who just ‘come in off the street’. We suspect that the latter is exceptional.
2. Lending larger instruments and music to individuals, schools and adult education groups. This does happen, but not often.

Our surveys of members and branch secretaries also revealed a few isolated initiatives around the branches. As examples, one branch organised a training day for local classroom teachers, and another hosted a playing day for non-members.

We have already recommended that there should be a mechanism whereby branches can share with other branches information and ideas, which they would be free to experiment with, if they so wished. This is another area where such a mechanism would be useful.

4.3 ACTIONS AT SRP CENTRAL LEVEL

Activities at the level of SRP central, designed to support UK recorder playing include:

1. Support for the Recorder Magazine.
2. Maintenance of the SRP website.
3. Grants from the Walter Bergmann Fund to young people in financial need, in order to support their development as recorder players. Grants are also made to younger groups for educational activities promoting recorder playing.
4. Support for NYRO. Apart from benefits to the NYRO players themselves, NYRO offers ‘taster’ playing days and residential courses for other young players.
5. The biennial Moeck/SRP solo recorder competition for young players, with a winner’s recital.

4.4 HOW OUR SUPPORT FOR RECORDER PLAYING COULD CHANGE BY 2020

Music making is becoming ever more popular, often attributed to an ageing population and increasing leisure time. All of the signs are that there will be increasing demand for our support of recorder playing, and hence for the activities listed in this section. The question is will the SRP – at all levels – be able to satisfy that demand? We have two observations here:

1. We see no reason why many activities, such as a branch member playing in a small ensemble visiting a school, should not happen more and more, especially if they cost nothing. As these things are currently done willingly and altruistically, they seem likely to continue in the same vein.
2. Some support activities, especially at the level of SRP central, cost money (sometimes considerable sums on money). Whether specific activities continue or not will depend on policy decisions about whether these activities continue to be worth doing. But even if an activity is stopped, we can assume that another – judged to be a better activity – will take its place. We make that assumption because the money that the SRP committee has decided to make available for charitable purposes continues to be substantial. The Arthur Ingram bequest (received in 2002/03) originally totalled £170,000, and today the size of the fund is

virtually unchanged. Current policy on the use of that fund suggests that that stable balance will continue.

We therefore believe that the way the society supports “the continuation and development of recorder playing in the UK” is good today, and will continue to be good in the year 2020. We have made recommendations in other parts of this report about what might be done to help development of several of the activities identified in this section.

5. The way the society serves the wider community

As noted above, we have taken this section to refer to anything relating to the non-playing public – for example concerts and education about the recorder in general.

5.1 ACTIONS BY INDIVIDUAL SRP MEMBERS

There is a great deal in common between what members do to support the development of recorder playing and what they do to serve the wider community. For example, playing in public can achieve both, if the audience contains both players and non-players. Many of our comments in section 4.1 hence apply equally here. We would also add activities such as playing to groups of non-players in institutions such as nursing homes, and giving talks to Women's Institute groups.

5.2 ACTIONS AT SRP BRANCH LEVEL

Our surveys of members and of branch secretaries showed that SRP branches often play in public, either in their own name, or as an ensemble (primarily of branch members) under another name. We heard from branches about such performances at (as examples) local festivals, fetes, weddings, museums, stately homes, or simply for friends and family. Also popular were joint concerts with other instrumental forces, such as choirs, school bands, handbell 'teams' and mandolin ensembles. Performances are usually for charity, or as fundraisers.

5.3 ACTIONS AT SRP CENTRAL LEVEL

Again the distinction between sections 4 and 5 can be subtle; restating some of the activities listed as supporting recorder playing, but emphasising how they also serve the wider community yields the following:

1. The SRP website can be a source of information for the wider community, who may (for example) be interested in attending a concert. It also includes information about the recorder family and its history.
2. NYRO gives concerts, which may be attended by non-players.
3. The biennial Moeck/SRP solo recorder competition has a winner's recital, which may be attended by non-players.

In addition, the SRP commissions compositions from composers who do not usually write for the recorder, in order to raise the profile of the instrument in the wider community. There were some comments in our survey of members (about 10% of responses) that these compositions were not idiomatically-written for the recorder, and were unsuitable for SRP branches. In fact these compositions, primarily being a means of raising the profile of the recorder, are paid for out of the Arthur Ingram Fund as a charitable project. This suggests that the objective of these commissions is not clear.

- » **Recommendation 69.** The SRP should make clear the purpose of the compositions that they are currently commissioning through, for example, an article in the Recorder Magazine.

5.4 HOW THE WAY THE SOCIETY SERVES THE WIDER COMMUNITY COULD CHANGE BY 2020

Our survey of members included the question “What else, if anything, do you think that the SRP, including its branches, could (or should) provide to support the wider community?” 54 people (70% of surveys received) responded to the question. We did provide examples of what ‘wider community’ meant, but many responses suggested that they were thinking more about how to increase SRP membership. This seems to be consistent with the finding noted earlier that two-thirds of our members do not understand that we have charitable obligations to fulfil, and we made a recommendation to address that. If the majority of the society does not even know that we have any obligation to serve the community, then it makes it very difficult to achieve any change in that direction.

WHAT MORE COULD WE DO?

As we have seen in this report, the SRP already does a lot to present the recorder in a good light throughout the wider community. Examples are the activities listed in this section, and the excellent reception usually accorded to concerts by recorder orchestras. Of course more could always be done, but we are limited by practicalities, as follows:

The public perception of the recorder. There is always an uphill struggle against the widespread (probably worldwide) perception that the recorder is a rather irritating toy for children and, if it has a use, it is to introduce children to music so that they can graduate to a ‘proper’ instrument. Old documents show that this perception has existed for at least half a century.

The SRP is a very small organisation. Those who are heavily involved in the society may believe that it is a significant force in the world. In fact it is a small organisation, similar in size to the British Harpsichord Society and dwarfed, for example, by the 4,000 members of the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain. Small organisations tend to have little influence. However, even though relatively small in membership, if the organisation were to represent a true cross-section of recorder players, it could have an influence on the development of recorder playing in the UK.

Serving the community involves action by branches, and they often have very limited resources. Some branches have difficulty just in running their regular meetings, and express concern that they are run by a small number of people and, if one of those people were to stop, it would cause the branch a serious problem. As one person said in our survey of members, on the subject of further branch initiatives “The main problem is finding the committed people to carry out the work (especially if it is voluntary)”. This was echoed by one ex-member who said “Finding the volunteers to take on these roles is always a major struggle, because of the cost in miles, in time and commitment, so we should be grateful for all those who do so much”. On the other hand, some other branches do seem to have sufficient help, and are actively interested in pursuing initiatives.

Our conclusion is that the SRP does an adequate job of serving the wider community, and that what it does seems likely to continue to 2020. If we want to do more, then we need a major review of how that would be possible **in reality**. We emphasise ‘in reality’, because there has always been a tendency in the SRP to:

1. Express things in terms of ‘noble objectives’, such as to say that ‘we need to improve the public perception of the recorder’, or
2. Use the word ‘encourage’, such as to say that ‘we must encourage the branches to play more concerts in the community’.

Without a clear and achievable action plan, nothing is likely to result from such things, and indeed many SRP initiatives over the years have petered out accordingly.

In the case of serving the wider community better, we believe that we must be aware of the practicalities discussed above, and in particular what can realistically be achieved by a small organisation, needing to change a widespread problem of perception, where most actions would need to be taken by hard-pressed people, some of whom are not very interested anyway. We must be particularly wary of spending significant money on something that has very little prospect of success.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS

Perhaps the only prospect of a large increase in the way the society serves the wider community by 2020 would be a large increase in membership. We have made many recommendations in this report with that aim in mind. We have three other specific recommendations:

- » We have heard the suggestion that it would be beneficial to appoint an SRP publicity officer. While this seems to be an obviously good idea, there was an SRP publicity officer from 1995 until as recently as 2004, and the relevant minutes seem to suggest that the position was discontinued because of low levels of activity. So although the position may be worth reviving, it is by no means an instant solution. **Recommendation 70. The SRP should consider re-creating the position of SRP publicity officer, perhaps with a list of specific objectives.**
- » **Recommendation 71. The SRP should produce, and distribute to branches, advertising for the SRP. This could be used at, for example, branch concerts.** If such material already exists, it should be updated where necessary and ‘re-launched’. Other resources and tools should also be created and made readily available to branches, for example the Teachers Guide, as previously mentioned.
- » **Recommendation 72. The SRP should clearly specify the minimum expectations of an SRP branch - for example the holding of regular branch meetings, open to visitors (both players and non-players).** Branches are not always clear about what is or isn’t ‘allowed’ being, for example, concerned about the insurance implications of having visitors. A list of ‘expectations’ could be included in a branch handbook, and would help to ensure a consistent standard amongst SRP branches.

6. Financial matters

The 2020 working group included two qualified accountants, so for professional reasons we record here that we have not investigated the operation or accuracy of the financial affairs of the society in this exercise, and we are expressing no opinion on them.

This section comprises a review of certain financial matters. Many people shrink from talk of finance, but we urge you to read this section. We have tried hard to make it readable for non-specialists.

6.1 VALUE FOR MONEY

We have already discussed the great importance of giving our members value for money, and of communicating to them the way in which they are receiving that value for money (see section ‘To what extent are members concerned about cost?’).

We saw earlier that SRP members whose priority is having some fun seem to be more numerous than those whose priority is to improve their technique. Hence giving the membership value for money should usually give precedence to the needs of that majority. We received a comment that “SRP members are gradually realising that they have to pay for expertise (this is a *major* leap forward!)”, and that comment typifies the drive we have observed - away from altruism, and towards payment for professional services. But such a drive tends to run against the requirement to give priority to the needs of the majority.

Yet again we must emphasise that we are **not** suggesting that all SRP activity (for example workshops) should be free of charge, but we **are** suggesting that the SRP keeps clearly in mind that activities that are paid for tend to be for those relatively few people in the ‘technique world’. We must be at least as energetic about ensuring that the membership benefits provided by the basic membership fee cater for the needs of people in the ‘fun world’, and that we benefit from the altruism of talented members to the full. This is well illustrated by a comment from another member: “Given that the vast majority are not very good, it would be unfair to ask them to subsidise the (necessarily) expensive tuition of a few very good players”. This is also highly relevant to the content of the Recorder Magazine.

- » **Recommendation 73. The SRP committee should discuss the principle of providing value for money for *all* members, and how that relates to any provision of professional services. The conclusions should be widely communicated within the society.** At present some people assume that it is only right and proper that professionals should always be paid at an appropriate professional rate. Others believe that the increasing move towards payment is a big problem within the society, because it could put basic membership beyond what some people are willing, or able, to pay. The society is hence pulling in two different directions at once, which we believe is not a healthy situation.

6.2 THE ARTHUR INGRAM FUND

Our survey of members did not include questions designed to explore whether members thought that expenditure made from the Arthur Ingram Fund represented ‘value for money’.

We judged that putting too many detailed financially-orientated questions in an already lengthy survey would have reduced the response rate too much. Respondents generally thought, however, that the nature of the projects funded from the Arthur Ingram Fund represented good use of the legacy and we noted some interest in what was being spent from the fund. We gained the impression that in matters of financial communication, members are interested in all sums spent by the society (including, for example, from the Arthur Ingram Fund) and not just those items apparently funded by ‘their sub’.

- » The Arthur Ingram Fund stands at about £170,000 (almost unchanged from when the bequest was made, ten years ago). **Recommendation 74. The SRP committee should review the policy (if, indeed, that is a conscious policy) of maintaining the capital of the Arthur Ingram Fund.** We believe that we are entering a critical phase for the society, and that there could be few more important projects to spend our money on than those that will arrest the society’s decline.

We do re-iterate, however, that careful financial review of potential projects is important, recognising the fact that if money is available, there is never a shortage of superficially attractive proposals for how to spend it. The importance of this was again illustrated to us in our survey of members, when we asked the question “Are there other things you think the Arthur Ingram Fund should support as well, and if so, what?” Some potentially expensive projects were suggested in response to this.

As noted elsewhere, there was a frequently-expressed view by members that it was important to promote the take-up of the recorder both at primary school level and by younger adults.

Our working group was urged to consider the future fundraising strategy of the SRP but, quite apart from the fact that fundraising is very time consuming, frustrating and often unsuccessful (even with expensive professional help), we are loathe to place too much emphasis on spending money. Generally the SRP is not short of money - it is short of members, and specifically members with the time, commitment and ability to get things done. In fact many projects and initiatives may require minimal financial investment.

6.3 YOUTH RECORDER ORGANISATIONS

6.3.1 NATIONAL YOUTH RECORDER ORCHESTRAS (NYRO)

We are aware that NYRO is something of a political hot potato, and that the assumption in some quarters was that we would produce a hard-hitting critique of the organisation. In fact, in the context of our very wide brief, NYRO is not a major issue. Like everything else in our review the issues are what is NYRO doing now, what will it be doing in 2020, and do we therefore need to do anything different?

Later we have comments concerning how information about the finances of NYRO should be better communicated, but we also have comments about how satisfied SRP members are that they are receiving value for money for NYRO, as follows:

As already noted, our survey of members did not include questions designed to explore what members thought in detail about individual items of expenditure made from the Arthur

Ingram Fund, and that included information on NYRO. There seemed, however, to be generalised approval of NYRO, consistent with the feeling in the society that more young people can only be a good thing. A few comments were made that although supporting NYRO was a good thing, we should not forget supporting young people who are not already good players, and nor should we forget supporting adults.

Value for money from NYRO

As we have remarked several times already in this report, members like to receive value for money, and we should now be more concerned than ever that our members are satisfied. Therefore NYRO should be seen to provide value for money, either to members or in satisfying our charitable objectives, as much as any other SRP activity. Being satisfied that NYRO is providing value for money is very difficult, however, because of understanding both the ‘value’ and ‘money’ sides:

NYRO ‘value’ side

1. It is not possible to see what NYRO is trying to achieve, because it does not publish a document setting out its objectives. There is material about what NYRO *does*, but that is not the same thing, because it makes no comparison with any measurable longer-term objectives.
2. Members do not ordinarily see what NYRO has achieved because it is very uncommon to see a NYRO player (or ex-player) at a branch, and nothing is published about what ex-NYRO players have achieved in the recorder world, or how NYRO has helped to satisfy our charitable objectives.

NYRO ‘money’ side

Some money concerning NYRO is spent from NYRO’s own account, some is spent from the Arthur Ingram Fund, and there are occasional transfers of money between the two. Reporting of NYRO expenditure is often confined to the money spent from NYRO’s own account. In theory members can access financial information about the Arthur Ingram Fund, but communication of this information seems not to be working well because, as we noted earlier, only one in eight members had even heard of the Arthur Ingram Fund, let alone knew details of its finances. There is no reference at all to the Arthur Ingram Fund on the SRP website. We offer no opinion about whether all of these things are best done in the way they are, but what is certain is that it is effectively impossible for an ordinary SRP member to know what the society is – in total – spending on the NYRO project.

Conclusion

Members know little about the value of NYRO or the total cost of it. They therefore have no basis for having an opinion on the value for money that NYRO gives, other than a general feeling that helping young people is a good thing.

- » **Recommendation 75. A detailed study should be made, and subsequently publicised, looking at what NYRO has achieved since it was created, and what – in total – it has cost.** This study will begin to answer the question of in what way NYRO is providing value for money. This study should be carried out by someone both with a financial background and who is not associated with NYRO. This latter is important, because people who work on

NYRO tend to be fiercely supportive of the organisation, and we do not believe that somebody within NYRO could produce the required independent view.

We believe that absence of such an overview of NYRO explains much of the dissatisfaction with NYRO, and that an overview will help to clarify where NYRO is likely to be heading until 2020.

6.3.2 STOCKPORT RECORDER COLLEGE (SRC)

We saw earlier that the SRC is another organisation that provides specialist recorder tuition to children, and it has been doing so for 42 years. We raise the issue of SRC not only because it is a substantial and successful organisation, but also because it has been brought to our notice - we are not aware of similar organisations elsewhere, but they may exist.

- » **Recommendation 76. The SRP should try to identify other organisations similar to the SRC.**

The SRC is different from NYRO in that it has no formal relationship with the SRP, although some of the tutors are SRP members. It receives no funding from the SRP; in fact it receives no funding at all, but it is (just) viable because the pupils pay a modest fee, and the tutors take no fee at all.

The SRC is a different model from NYRO and, while we do not attempt here the thankless task of *comparing* the value for money of these two organisations, it is clear that both make a considerable contribution to recorder playing by young people, but that the SRC does it much more cheaply, thanks to the altruism of those who run it.

- » **Recommendation 77. The SRP should look closely at the SRC model and consider the feasibility of helping to set up and support similar initiatives in other places, as part of the SRP's remit to support the development of recorder playing. Perhaps such initiatives could be in collaboration with, for example, county music services.** We believe that this has the potential to be an attractive investment, because SRC costs are very low, and a small amount of funding could have a significant effect.

6.4 OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS

Bequests. There seems to be a growing trend for organisations to make it very easy for people to make a bequest via their website. There is no information on this subject on the SRP website, perhaps surprisingly given the age profile of our membership. In fact, coincidentally, one respondent to our survey of members said that she was thinking of making a bequest, and could we help?

- » **Recommendation 78. The SRP website, as well as and suitably designed leaflets for general and branch use, should give information about how to make a bequest to the society. The same is true for donations, whether for the Walter Bergmann Fund, NYRO or donations for general purposes.**

Joining the society. There is no information on the SRP website about how to join the society, other than the email address of the membership secretary.

- » **Recommendation 79. The SRP website should give information about how to join the society, and about the different classes of membership.** The SRP does have a particular problem in that people (other than COS members) join the society via membership at their local SRP branch, but we need to find a way of working around that problem.

7. Implementation of this report

We believe that the SRP now needs to take action in order to avoid a significant downturn in the number of members by 2020, and with that downturn an inevitable reduction in what the society can do to support development of recorder playing, and to serve the wider community through the efforts of its members.

Some of the actions that are necessary can be decided on and implemented at SRP central. But many cannot, because they are things that must happen entirely at local level, such as playing concerts in local schools. This means that actions must be taken by branches or individuals – and making that happen can be very difficult. We have seen in the past that SRP central has tried to achieve action at the level of branches and individuals by ‘urging’ them or ‘encouraging’ them, but in general we do not believe that these work (or have worked) very well. Instead, we believe that the way to convince the branches and individuals that they have the ability and support to do something is by means of excellent communication. In this way they have the necessary tools and resources and understand for themselves why something is so important.

Unfortunately the SRP is a difficult organisation in which to achieve good communications, for the following reasons:

1. To use the language of companies, there are ‘two layers of management’ – branches and SRP central. A layer of management usually inhibits communications.
2. The branches operate in different ways; as we remarked earlier, they are 52 ‘tribes’ with their own different cultures, objectives, ‘governments’, abilities, tastes and wariness of being told what to do by ‘Head Office’.
3. The branches are often quite bureaucratic. They all have committees, and it is common for the committee to comprise a third of branch members, or even more.
4. Branch secretaries, with the best of intentions, can see it as part of their role to be a ‘spam filter’ for information that is passed to them, so as not to burden their members.
5. Branches are often hard pressed just to find the people willing to carry out the basic administrative tasks of the branch. As we have seen, several branches worry for their future in case one of the present ‘key players’ leaves.

We will therefore look at what needs to be communicated, and then at how to achieve that communication in this difficult situation.

7.1 WHAT NEEDS TO BE COMMUNICATED

Before looking at specifics, we have a broad recommendation.

- » **Recommendation 80. The SRP should carry out a regular survey of all members.** As detailed in an appendix, we have carried out surveys of our members in order to prepare this report. We hope you agree that a large number of interesting, useful and, at times, unexpected views emerged from these surveys. We believe that similar surveys, possibly with larger sample sizes (or even of the entire membership) should be carried out regularly. These surveys would reveal new issues and would confirm or otherwise that actions that the SRP was taking were working. Once more, we emphasise that a large element of our membership

is not IT-literate, and so a completely online survey, however convenient, would not be appropriate.

What we believe needs to be communicated falls into three areas: the SRP ‘facts of life’, financial information, and actions identified in this report.

7.1.1 THE SRP ‘FACTS OF LIFE’

We have seen throughout this report that basic facts about the SRP are unknown, or misunderstood, by many members. Of course not everyone can know everything, but when two-thirds of the membership does not know that the SRP has charitable obligations to fulfil, then this is a significant communication problem which can become unhelpful. For example we had feedback from several people doubting the wisdom of expenditure from the Arthur Ingram Fund on the basis that they did not benefit from it themselves (for example expenditure on NYRO, the Moeck/SRP competition and the SRP-commissioned works) .

- » **Recommendation 81. The SRP should identify the basic SRP ‘facts of life’ and communicate them to the membership.** How this communication should take place is discussed later.

Examples of SRP ‘facts of life’ include (in no particular order):

1. As a charity, the SRP is obliged to spend some money on things that do not benefit the members.
2. When the Arthur Ingram bequest was received, there was no stipulation about how the fund should be spent, but the SRP committee decided that it should be spent on charitable activities.
3. The Recorder Magazine is not owned by the SRP to do with as they wish, but is published by Peacock Press, who allocate just four pages every issue for SRP use.
4. The Recorder Summer School is not part of the SRP, and has not been for 50 years.
5. Members of the SRP committee are not paid for their services.
6. Because of the SRP’s charitable status, branches are obliged to welcome any visitors to their branch meetings, as long as they pay the required fee.

7.1.2 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

We have emphasised the importance not just of giving members value for money, but also of convincing the members that they have indeed received value for money. In order to do this the members need an ability to understand what they are being told, and *that* requires that they are given simple, clear and readily-understandable financial information. It is essential that the information is accurate, but that is not enough – it also has to be presented so that a non-specialist reader can digest it. A generation ago such a task was generally considered to be impossible, but nowadays a large number of businesses across all sectors do this very well, and they believe that it is valuable in helping their relationship with the people in their organisations.

- » **Recommendation 82. The SRP should regularly publish a document that gives members clear and readily-understandable financial information.** It is essential to use someone with some experience of such work, because merely presenting the financial accounts will

merely serve to confuse – financial accounts are designed to present correct technical information to other specialists, not to communicate to the general reader. Again, *how* this communication should take place is discussed later.

The example of NYRO is a good one. As we saw above, it is effectively impossible for an ordinary SRP member to see the totality of what is spent on NYRO, and hence to form a view on whether it gives value for money. In the absence of clear information, it is easy for people to assume that the position is bad, and is being hidden from them, and they can therefore become much more critical than if they knew the true situation. Clear financial information is often a very good PR tool, not the reverse.

We should have no fear, incidentally, that we are disclosing confidential information to the outside world. Under the rules governing charities we are in any case obliged to put all financial information in the public domain.

7.1.3 ACTIONS IN THIS REPORT

There is an appendix to this report, which lists all recommendations that we have made. Some of these follow a format such as: “Branches should be made aware of the potential benefit of wider use of their branch libraries”. This, and those in a similar vein, are also matters that need to be communicated. Once again, how this communication should take place is discussed below.

7.2 HOW WE SHOULD COMMUNICATE

Information can conveniently be sent to branch secretaries. While this is suitable for requests such as information about membership, it is not suitable for most of what we have discussed above. That information should be for all members, and not susceptible to being filtered out (again, for the best intentions). As one example, we heard that the information about SRP conducting workshops that was sent to branches was, at one branch (and at how many others?) considered by the branch secretary to be a committee matter, and the information was not distributed to all branch members. We prefer, therefore, that communication should – if at all possible - be readily available to all members. Current avenues for communication, and future possibilities, are now discussed.

7.2.1 THE MAGAZINE

We have seen that, although a majority of members do look at the magazine, it is not generally well-regarded. In any case, under the current agreement with Peacock Press, only four pages are available to the SRP in every issue (something that it may be worthwhile trying to change). Whatever the problems, communication via the magazine is nevertheless an attractive option – every member receives it, direct to their home address, and it might become more popular if it contained more things that members want (see section ‘The Recorder Magazine’).

7.2.2 THE SRP WEBSITE

As we have remarked several times in this report, using the website is often thought of as a panacea (probably by those who are computer-literate) but for the SRP of today it is not. The inconvenient truth is that only 150 people use the SRP website regularly, 600 use it occasionally, and 650 never use it at all. Even if we were to take the view that those who do not use it regularly would do so if useful content was not available in any other way, there are still 410 people who do not declare an email address, and we estimated that a large number of those simply do not have a computer. Finally the number of people not declaring an email is reducing, but not very quickly (two years ago it was 580).

One technique, which we have seen at some local U3As is to put everything on the website, discontinue all paper communications, then say that if you know someone without a computer, why not do them a favour and print a document for them? This has the clear virtue of being cheap, and we have not heard that it is particularly unpopular, but we are unsure whether the SRP membership would accept such a thing.

7.2.3 COMMUNICATION BY ANOTHER MEANS – A NEWSLETTER?

Some organisations put a regular and downloadable newsletter on their websites. This obviously does not solve our communications problems if we are concerned about the large number of members without a computer. But there is a ‘half-way house’: the American Recorder Society includes a newsletter as an insert in every issue of the American Recorder magazine. The newsletter includes official society material, as well as topical announcements. This may be a cheap solution, which recognises the members without a computer, and which avoids a (possibly costly) re-negotiation with Peacock Press.

7.2.4 COMMUNICATION BY ANOTHER MEANS – A LEAFLET OR HANDBOOK?

Regular communication is very important, but we also see a need for communication as soon as someone joins the society – a friendly orientation for new members. We have seen several examples in our work that suggest such orientation would have been useful. As examples (in no particular order):

1. It is common for people not to know when their first magazine should be delivered.
2. Some people had never heard of the SRP National Festival.
3. Some people did not know the society had a website.
4. Some people did not know where there were other SRP branches.
5. Many people did not know that the SRP was a charity, or the implications of being a charity.

In addition one could imagine other useful information, such as:

6. Names of people in the branch.
7. Recorder courses available.

8. Names of well-known people in the recorder world (past and present) . Some people are often known by their first name only ('Theo' for example), which can make a new arrival feel very out of touch.

9. A glossary of terms (terms such as eight-foot pitch, NYRO, multi-choir, Arthur Ingram Fund)

None of these is a particularly serious thing of which to be ignorant, and people would probably find them out sooner or later (especially if they had a computer), but having some method of orientation is one element of a warm welcome – and first impressions count.

The orientation could take various forms, for example a single A4 sheet, or a handbook. Both of these would need to be kept up to date, and the handbook would need to be reissued occasionally.

A handbook for branch secretaries (again suitably updated) giving the necessary requirements and tips for running a branch could also prove useful - especially so where there is a change in the person fulfilling the role.

CONCLUSION ON COMMUNICATION WITH OUR MEMBERS

We have discussed what should be communicated with our members, and how it might be done. We recognise that formulating and implementing such a 'communications strategy' is a major task, which may (for example) involve renegotiating arrangements on the Recorder Magazine, and a separate working group may be necessary in order to make progress. Our recommendation is therefore a simple one.

- » **Recommendation 83. The SRP should decide how it should communicate to the society, to ensure that information reaches all members.**

8. Conclusions

There is a clear long-term trend of reducing SRP membership, which will affect the ability of the society to carry out its objectives. We believe that the best chance of attracting new members to the society is to target ‘inbetweeners’, rather than young people but, whoever is attracted into the society, we believe that there is an important new SRP imperative. That is to ensure that as many members as possible are satisfied with what they get from their membership, so that they remain members for many years.

We need to recognise that the priority of a large number of our members is to enjoy playing the recorder as a ‘fun’ experience, rather than to improve their technique, and we need to make sure that those members (as well as the technique-seeking members) are given what they want. Otherwise the new opportunities for ‘fun’ playing outside the society (such as the U3A movement) will drain our members away, possibly very quickly.

We found that our members do not seem overly concerned with cost as such, but they *are* concerned about receiving value for money. Hence one important element of satisfying our members is to give them value for money. We also need to convince our members that they are indeed receiving value for money, and this is unlikely to happen without considerable improvement in what and how we communicate with our members.

It is by no means all doom and gloom. SRP members (and ex-members for that matter) are generally very supportive of the society, fun is had and technique is improved, and significant activity goes on in local communities to promote our instrument. But we believe that there are considerable new threats to the society in the next eight years and - to reiterate what we wrote in the introduction to this report – if we continue to operate in the same way as we do today then changes to the environment in which we find ourselves will accelerate the recent trend of reducing society membership. By 2020 we will have a smaller (possibly a much smaller) organisation, which will severely restrict our ability either to serve our members or non-members, or to serve the wider community. We therefore believe that real change, on a scale the SRP has probably never seen before, is necessary – but perfectly possible.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

“The possible long-term effects of the current global economic downturn, and the continuing increases in the price of energy which are likely to persist for at least the next decade”

We were specifically asked to address the issue of: “the possible long-term effects of the current global economic downturn, and the continuing increases in the price of energy which are likely to persist for at least the next decade”.

Although the newspapers may like to give the shocking news that everything is getting worse, and petrol prices will continue to rise, in fact it is an economic truth that one effect of an economic downturn is that energy prices reduce. That is because a downturn means less demand for energy, and lower demand leads immediately to lower prices. And so, **because official forecasts of the world economy are uniformly gloomy for the next few years, official forecasts of energy costs uniformly show a reduction, not an increase.**

Even with the rise of petrol prices in recent years, it is difficult to detect any changes in behaviour of SRP members resulting from these rises. Total branch income from visitor fees has gradually increased over the last five years (even in real terms), and while there may be other explanations, it seems very unlikely that there has been a reduction of people making the journey to other branches. This is consistent with government statistics which show, until very recently, little change in UK road travel, despite the rising cost of fuel. The reduction in the last year has been small (about 2%). In addition, while fuel prices have increased, there has been a big upsurge in the popularity of recorder orchestras (discussed elsewhere), and these orchestras typically have a large catchment area, and require a great deal of travel (the Scottish Recorder Orchestra is an excellent example). Work in the USA suggests that **rising fuel prices tends to lead to other behaviours, such as car sharing, and going to more local activities, rather than simply not travelling.** So at the moment we do not believe that fuel prices have adversely affected SRP activity. And even if there was a surprise economic boom, and petrol prices were to rise, we do not believe those prices would adversely affect SRP activity in the future, or at least not to the eight-year time horizon to which we are looking.

Nevertheless it is prudent to consider how a severe deterioration in living standards (because of high fuel costs or otherwise) might impact the SRP. **The SRP committee (on 17 April 2011) discussed the potential advantages of remote playing, using Skype for example, and the working group was asked to consider this possibility.** Skype is a system whereby two or more computers are linked via the internet, and users are able to talk and make video calls at no cost, assuming that the users do not have to pay for their time online. Using Skype it would hence be possible – in principle – to play music together over long distances. If each player had a microphone attached to their computer, and a means of hearing sound, a Skype ensemble could be made to work. Again, in principle. **At the moment, however, the technology for such playing is not mature** – the ability to videoconference was only introduced five years ago (for just two people), and in 2010 this was extended to five people, and later to up to 10. But to achieve the latter costs £60 a year, and Skype nevertheless suggests that five people is the maximum in order to achieve acceptable quality – and that is acceptable quality for speech, not music. Like much high technology, quality will increase

and costs will fall, but **it seems very unlikely to us that the technology will be able to support recorder ensemble playing within the timeframe of our review** (i.e. before 2020).

Even if Skype (or a competitor) was technically able to support ensemble playing, we have serious doubts whether SRP members now, or even eight years hence, would be able to operate the system. It requires installation of software, and an ability to make a computer microphone and sound system work. A Google search with the words ‘problems’, ‘Skype’ and ‘sound’ produces nearly 70,000,000 hits, which speaks volumes. And these technical issues would be inflicted on a membership of which 30% [40% in 2009] do not declare an email address (and we have seen that that is usually because they simply do not have a computer), and many of those that do have email seem to find it a considerable technical challenge to use. **We would have the situation where those members unable to afford a computer, or without the ability to use one in order to use Skype, would be unable to participate in the society’s main activity.**

Finally, quite apart from the technical issues, playing over Skype would seriously damage the social experience of playing music together, which is so important to many members. Indeed most of the people who seem to be experimenting with virtual ensembles at the moment are a few rock bands, and they report a serious lack of inter-personal communication and reduction of fun. Overall we believe that virtual recorder ensembles for most players are very many years in the future, and certainly beyond our ‘review limit’ of 2020. **It would, however, be a good idea for some technologically literate players to experiment, perhaps reporting back in the Recorder Magazine.**

Appendix 2

The surveys we carried out

Survey of members

The survey included people with and without email. We chose people at random from all branches, excluding COS. We sent surveys to 144 members, of whom 78 (54%) responded.

Survey of branch secretaries

We sent the survey to all branch secretaries, including the two who do not use email. Of the 52 secretaries, 32 (61%) responded.

Survey of ex-members

We sent the survey to people who had not renewed their subscription this year. We excluded those without email, reasoning that those people were more likely to be older, and hence more likely to have died. We wanted to minimise the upset for relatives who might receive correspondence addressed to a recently-deceased partner. We sent the survey to 126 ex-members, and received 60 responses (48%).

Survey of professional recorder players

We sent this survey to 12 people, of whom 7 (58%) responded.

Survey of music festival secretaries

The Chief Executive of BIFF carried out a survey of festival secretaries on our behalf, receiving 75 responses. We do not know how many surveys were sent out.

For those unfamiliar with surveys and responses to them, for a typical survey a response rate of 25% is regarded as perfectly normal. Even for a survey where pressure is applied to respond (for example an 'obligatory' survey of employees), 60% is good. We were therefore delighted with the response to all of our surveys. Without going into higher mathematics, the response rates are such that we can have good confidence that the picture they give are representative of the membership as a whole.

Appendix 3

Recommendations in this report

(In this appendix some minor amendments have been made to the wording of the recommendations as they appear in the body of the report. This is to ensure that they are understandable in this appendix, where they are devoid of their context).

Recommendation 1 (page 7). The SRP Teachers Guide should be downloadable from the website, a reminder of its existence should be communicated to the branches and a further supply should be sent to each branch, so that they can distribute them to local school contacts.

Recommendation 2 (page 7). A person should be identified to lead the initiative to forge links within the education system, and tasked with making the necessary contacts.

Recommendation 3 (page 7). Workshops should be devised to introduce non-playing teachers to the basics and good practice of teaching the recorder, and to develop the existing skills of playing teachers.

Recommendation 4 (page 7). We should market the SRP's Country and Overseas (COS) membership to music students (and non-music students playing the recorder) as a way of receiving the Recorder Magazine and of being in touch with other players. This might be achieved via teachers and music departments.

Recommendation 5 (page 7). We should put more information on the SRP website concerning studying the recorder at university level. Such additional content might include information on teachers and specialisms. It should also address those who are not studying music, in terms of how to get involved in playing the recorder whilst at university by, for example, contacting local SRP branches and fellow recorder players.

Recommendation 6 (page 8). The SRP website should include a great deal more information relating to solo playing. Such information includes that related to (in no particular order) festivals, competitions, teachers (and how to choose one), where to buy instruments (and how to choose one), exam syllabuses, choosing repertoire and concerts.

Recommendation 7 (page 9). The SRP Committee should clarify to all concerned that the SRP website is for the use of both members and non-members, and that the content on it should reflect equally both SRP and non-SRP events and activities.

Recommendation 8 (page 9). The SRP website should include material about the breadth of solo recorder playing, illustrating what different types of activity take place.

Recommendation 9 (page 9). The SRP Committee should task someone to investigate how the good reputation of the Moeck/SRP competition could be used further to the society's advantage.

Recommendation 10 (page 9). The SRP Committee should investigate the possibility of including on the SRP website a forum in which professionals could advertise their skills as soloists, and potential users of those skills (concert organisers, for example) could advertise what they are looking for.

Recommendation 11 (page 10). The SRP Committee should consider the possibility of creating a Moeck/SRP-style competition for recorder consorts.

Recommendation 12 (page 10). Branches should be made aware (if they are not already) that practical support for consort playing is desirable, and that they should give that support if their circumstances allow.

Recommendation 13 (page 10). The SRP website should include a forum facility so that consort players (SRP and non-SRP) could better communicate with one another. Such interaction would, in particular, ease the problem of trying to identify players of a similar playing standard.

Recommendation 14 (page 11). The SRP website should include a forum facility so that large groups such as recorder orchestras (SRP and non-SRP) could better communicate with one another.

Recommendation 15 (page 12). A more comprehensive list of large groups should be produced, included on the SRP website, and an article on the subject written for the Recorder Magazine.

Recommendation 16 (page 12). Branch secretaries should be sent a regular ‘what’s on’ of regional and national recorder events, so that their members are better informed about forthcoming performances by large groups.

Recommendation 17 (page 13). All UK recorder courses should be freely publicised on the SRP website. All course organisers should be provided with publicity about the SRP (for example in the form of a general flyer), and requested to make this publicity available to their course members.

Recommendation 18 (page 13). Further contact should be made with the Chief Executive of BIFF, to explore ways of stimulating interest in the recorder in music festivals.

Recommendation 19 (page 14). Effective communication should be made to all members, explaining our charitable objectives in non-technical terms.

Recommendation 20 (page 14). When people join the society, it should be made clear to them, in non-technical terms, that they are joining a charity, with corresponding obligations.

Recommendation 21 (page 16). There should be a mechanism whereby branches share information about how they operate, including things they think work well (including things that do *not* work well would be useful, but probably asking too much). In this way there would be a transfer of information and ideas to other branches, which they would be free to experiment with, if they so wished.

Recommendation 22 (page 16). Branches should be made aware of the potential benefits of a regular (possibly anonymous) survey of their members.

Recommendation 23 (page 17). Branches should be made aware of the advantages (including cost advantages) of developing in-house conductors, and how the SRP conducting workshops could help.

Recommendation 24 (page 18). A working group should be established to study SRP branch visitor policy. This should include how (or if at all) a uniform policy should be adopted by all branches.

Recommendation 25 (page 18). The amount that should be charged as a branch visitor fee should form part of the work of the above working group.

Recommendation 26 (page 18). Irrespective of the above recommendations on SRP visitor policy, each branch page should state that visitors are welcome, and what the visitor fee is.

Recommendation 27 (page 18). The system of renewal of membership at branch level should be reviewed, so that those people who have not renewed are followed up.

Recommendation 28 (page 19). In addition to the regular analysis of branch strength, there should be regular analysis of joiners and leavers at each branch.

Recommendation 29 (page 19). A simple enquiry of new members should be made, perhaps integrated with their application form, to find out how they heard of the SRP, and what attracted them to it. The results of this enquiry should be made available to SRP Central, who should distribute a summary to the branches. Branches who are particularly successful at attracting new members should be invited to share their experiences.

Recommendation 30 (page 20). The SRP should carry out a regular survey of people who have left, to learn more about why they left.

Recommendation 31 (page 21). COS membership should be promoted to people who are about to leave (or who have left) the society. It may be attractive to players no longer interested in group branch playing, as the subscription is lower, and they would still be entitled to the Recorder Magazine. They would, however, still be supporting the general aims of the society.

Recommendation 32 (page 22). The SRP should make an annual review of branch health, using simple statistics. Those which show 'danger signs' should be approached at an early stage with an offer of help and advice.

Recommendation 33 (page 22). The SRP should carry out a survey of branch members of branches that are about to leave (or which have recently left) the SRP, to ascertain the reasons.

Recommendation 34 (page 23). The SRP should make regular explanations to its membership of what the society's money is spent on, and how members are being given value for money.

Recommendation 35 (page 24). Someone with access to technological expertise should be tasked with carrying out a pilot study of Skype, to investigate the current possibilities, beginning with one-to-one lessons. An article in the Recorder Magazine might be a useful way of informing people about the possibilities of this technology.

Recommendation 36 (page 26). Each branch should state on their part of the SRP website what it is trying to achieve, in terms of entertainment and technical improvement. It should include details of the general standard, range of music played at meetings, regular playing days and workshops, and what opportunities there are for consort and concert playing.

Recommendation 37 (page 28). The SRP should set up a working group to address our relationship with the U3A, to identify the reasons why members find it useful to belong to both organisations, and to propose ways in which the SRP could make itself more attractive to typical U3A players and/or ways in which the two organisations could collaborate. It is important that this working group approaches the task with awareness of the principles on which the U3A operates.

Recommendation 38 (page 28). The SRP should nominate someone to make contact with the WEA organisation, to investigate whether some sort of collaboration is feasible.

Recommendation 39 (page 28). An SRP course/workshop should be devised for would-be teachers of the recorder, including suggested repertoire.

Recommendation 40 (page 30). The SRP should address other ways of increasing membership as a higher priority than working on how to attract younger members.

Recommendation 41 (page 31). A working group should be set up to investigate how we can attract inbetweeners into the society. We believe that this is a promising area, on which it is worth expending time and resources.

Recommendation 42 (page 31). The SRP should investigate the potential of using social media, both to attract new members and for networking.

Recommendation 43 (page 31). The SRP should investigate how the U3A has been so successful in attracting inbetweeners, probably beginning with SRP members who are also U3A members.

Recommendation 44 (page 31). The use of images of so many young people on the SRP website should be considerably reduced, and replaced by images of inbetweeners.

Recommendation 45 (page 32). The SRP should decide whether or not it is committed to the idea of recruiting older members.

Recommendation 46 (page 32). A working group should investigate how we can attract older members into the society.

Recommendation 47 (page 35). The SRP should prepare an information sheet about what opportunities the SRP can offer to a recorder professional, and the relevant services that could be offered by such a professional (probably with some idea of the range of fees that could be expected).

Recommendation 48 (page 35). The SRP could make the task of the professionals easier by, for example, providing SRP members with lists of professionals who can supply such events as branch workshops (other than the SRP-subsidised workshops), together with fees.

Recommendation 49 (page 35). The SRP website should have a list of teachers, with links to further details, such as fees.

Recommendation 50 (page 35). The SRP committee should decide whether it wants to spend significant money to develop the activities of professionals inside (or even outside) the SRP.

Recommendation 51 (page 35). If the SRP committee *does* decide to spend money to develop the activities of professionals inside (or outside) the SRP, possible uses of SRP money should be collated and costed. A budget should be fixed for total expenditure, and projects approved up to that limit.

Recommendation 52 (page 36). The SRP committee should consider the virtue of creating Honorary Members, to act as ambassadors for the SRP.

Recommendation 53 (page 38). In the light of continuing decline in support for the Recorder Magazine, the SRP should once more review the future of the magazine.

Recommendation 54 (page 38). The editorial policy should be reviewed, with a view to limiting the length of articles.

Recommendation 55 (page 38). The magazine should contain more articles of interest to the ‘ordinary’ SRP member.

Recommendation 56 (page 38). The magazine should proactively solicit articles for the ‘ordinary’ SRP member.

Recommendation 57 (page 38). An editorial in the magazine should clarify that it is an independent publication.

Recommendation 58 (page 38). The cover of the magazine should clarify that the cover price applies only to third-party sales.

Recommendation 59 (page 39). The SRP should review the content of the SRP website. There is also scope for a members-only section of the website, which would give additional benefits exclusively for members, for example back issues of the Recorder Magazine.

Recommendation 60 (page 39). An SRP Facebook account and Twitter should be incorporated into the SRP website.

Recommendation 61 (page 40). The structure of the SRP website should be reviewed in order to make things easier to find.

Recommendation 62 (page 40). The SRP webmaster should allocate responsibility to individuals to keep the content of specific parts of the site up-to-date.

Recommendation 63 (page 41). The content of the booklet of pastoral visitors (or, to use the official title ‘Panel of Visiting Conductors’) should be reviewed. We suggest the content should include biographies, information about fees charged, what the conductor attempts to

do in a session (for example entertain or educate), and what musical styles they are likely to explore.

Recommendation 64 (page 42). Branches should be made aware of the potential benefit of wider use of their branch libraries.

Recommendation 65 (page 42). The SRP should find out what use is made of the inter-branch borrowing system, and the potential for extending the idea (perhaps to non-SRP members). If there is little use made of it, and little potential, terminating the service should be considered, by reviewing the costs and benefits.

Recommendation 66 (page 43). As the festival is held annually in different parts of the country, it should be used as an opportunity to showcase to members the wider side of the SRP's work.

Recommendation 67 (page 43). The SRP should develop help sheets on various topics, including those mentioned in our survey of members. It should decide on the best method of communicating that such advice is available, for example in the Recorder Magazine, or on the SRP website.

Recommendation 68 (page 44). The SRP should make branches aware of the facility for borrowing the larger instruments held by NYRO, outside the summer residential course period.

Recommendation 69 (page 49). The SRP should make clear the purpose of the compositions that they are currently commissioning through, for example, an article in the Recorder Magazine.

Recommendation 70 (page 50). The SRP should consider re-creating the position of SRP publicity officer, perhaps with a list of specific objectives.

Recommendation 71 (page 50). The SRP should produce, and distribute to branches, advertising for the SRP. This could be used at, for example, branch concerts.

Recommendation 72 (page 50). The SRP should clearly specify the minimum expectations of an SRP branch - for example the holding of regular branch meetings, open to visitors (both players and non-players).

Recommendation 73 (page 51). The SRP committee should discuss the principle of providing value for money for *all* members, and how that relates to any provision of professional services. The conclusions should be widely communicated within the society.

Recommendation 74 (page 52). The SRP committee should review the policy (if, indeed, that is a conscious policy) of maintaining the capital of the Arthur Ingram Fund.

Recommendation 75 (page 53). A detailed study should be made, and subsequently publicised, looking at what NYRO has achieved since it was created, and what – in total – it has cost.

Recommendation 76 (page 54). The SRP should try to identify other organisations similar to the SRC.

Recommendation 77 (page 54). The SRP should look closely at the SRC model and consider the feasibility of helping to set up and support similar initiatives in other places, as part of the SRP's remit to support the development of recorder playing. Perhaps such initiatives could be in collaboration with, for example, county music services.

Recommendation 78 (page 54). The SRP website, and suitably designed leaflets for general and branch use, should give information about how to make a bequest to the society. The same is true for donations, whether for the Walter Bergmann Fund, NYRO or donations for general purposes.

Recommendation 79 (page 55). The SRP website should give information about how to join the society, and about the different classes of membership.

Recommendation 80 (page 56). The SRP should carry out a regular survey of all members.

Recommendation 81 (page 57). The SRP should identify the basic SRP 'facts of life' and communicate them to the membership.

Recommendation 82 (page 57). The SRP should regularly publish a document that gives members clear and readily-understandable financial information.

Recommendation 83 (page 60). The SRP should decide how it should communicate to the society, to ensure that information reaches all members.

Appendix 4

Formal objects of the SRP

The object of the Society shall be the education of the public in the study, practice and appreciation of the art of music and the allied arts and in particular the promotion of the education of the public in the study, practice and appreciation of the recorder and its repertoire and in pursuance of the foregoing object [...] the Society may [...]

- sponsor or promote or join in sponsoring or promoting concerts, demonstrations, lectures, discussions, seminars, classes, courses, meetings, broadcasts, recordings and events of an allied nature.
- provide facilities for rehearsals and performances and for the teaching of the recorder.
- commission or arrange for the commissioning of musical works employing the recorder.
- acquire and make available for study and reference purposes a library of music for recorder and of recordings of the instrument and its players.
- print publish and distribute to members and others (or join with others to print publish and so distribute) books, booklets, pamphlets, leaflets, periodicals, music and recordings and otherwise disseminate information relating to the recorder and its music.
- organise and conduct examinations or competitions for recorder players (whether or not members of the Society) and award certificates and prizes to candidates in any of such examinations or competitions.