It gives me great pleasure to reflect on my first year as Chair of the Board of the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC). It has been a quick year in many ways as a result of the range of work which has been delivered by the team.

The Board had its annual away day in January where deliberations on the way in which the organisation had grown and changed provided a focus for the discussion. I’m pleased to share that to continue to ensure our governance keeps pace with the expanding role which SLIC undertakes, the Board has formed a Staffing and Remuneration Subcommittee.

SLIC continued to engage with Scottish Government policymakers to ensure the library offer, in all its shapes, is reflected in Scottish Government policy. In November 2017, Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs launched the One Card pilot at Aberdeen Central Library. One Card is part of the Programme for Government and sees library customers being able to use their membership card in any of the five library services which took part in the pilot, hence removing barriers to access and reducing inequalities. In January 2018, Aileen Campbell MSP, former Minister for Public Health and Sport, delivered a keynote speech at the opening of the Getting the Right Information Every Time event, which saw a coming together of public and health librarians to collaborate more effectively with self-management initiatives. This reflected Scotland’s health literacy action plan. Making it Easier, which clearly recognises the role in which public libraries play to assist members of the public with their health literacy needs.

The most significant change for the organisation came on the back of John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, announcing that it was his intention to formulate a national strategy for school libraries and introduce a £1 million school library improvement fund. SLIC was asked to support the development and implementation of both. The School Library Improvement Fund (SLIF) had its first round of applications received late 2017, with 15 projects across Scotland supported with the first £100,000 round of funding.

The Public Library Improvement Fund (PLIF) continued to support the implementation of Ambition and Opportunity: A National Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland 2015-2020 with three collaborative bids being successful and nine applications from local library services being financed. This fund promotes innovation in the public library sector in Scotland and delivers against the strategic aims of the national strategy.

Further funding was attracted from the Scottish Government to support a pilot of coworking hubs in public libraries in Scotland. Such is the success of the implementation of Ambition and Opportunity that work is underway to refresh the strategy to see it through to 2020.

The Innovation and Development Fund (IDF) 2017 attracted the most entries it has ever received from members, with three being approved from the HE and FE sectors.

One final event which took place in March 2018 in partnership with the Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries (SCURL), was Libraries, Literacies and Learning, which attracted practitioners from school, HE and FE sectors and was a strong blueprint for cross-sectoral collaboration - something which SLIC would like to further develop moving forward.

2017/18 has indeed been a busy year for SLIC with the aforementioned activity happening in addition to supporting the roll-out of How Good is our School Library Service? embedding How Good is our Public Library Service?, commissioning a full evaluation of the film education project from the University of Glasgow, and a co-design project for Ambition and Opportunity with Young Scot in the Year of Young People 2018.

I do hope you enjoy reading the 2017/18 annual review, which reflects SLIC moving from strength to strength. I personally would like to thank the Board for their support, time and dedication to SLIC as an organisation and also the very diligent SLIC team who continue to advocate and promote the best for Scotland’s libraries.
The strength and value of our advocacy role on behalf of Scotland’s libraries is reflected in an increase in SLIC’s membership numbers this year.

Advocacy: we advocate on behalf of libraries to government, funding bodies, elected members, users and potential users.

Through advocating for the national public library strategy, Ambition & Opportunity, we have engaged with Scotland’s health sector, which has led to the development of a health information initiative in public libraries. By engaging with the Minister for Public Health and Sport, NHS Scotland’s health libraries and the NHS digital health and care team, we are now promoting the role that public libraries play in supporting the public health agenda.

The impact of our advocacy work has also generated additional funding for public and school libraries and has led to additional responsibilities for the SLIC team, including supporting development of the national school library strategy and administering the SLIF.

We continually promote the role and value of libraries through positive messaging, and PR and communications activity has generated a strong presence in national and local media.

Ambition & Opportunity

The strategy has proved to be an extremely valuable tool as a framework for innovation. We have worked with services to support and develop a range of creative projects designed to modernise the library offer and ensure the needs of users are being met.

In November 2017, Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs joined us to launch the One Card pilot, a project to test the use of a single library card across Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Highland Council, Angus and Culture Perth and Kinross. One Card promotes library use by offering members automatic access to over 120 libraries, 1.6 million books, more than 600 PCs, free wifi and a regular programme of library-based events for people of all ages.

The strategy has also driven a programme of health and wellbeing activity in public libraries through the commitment in the Scottish Government’s Making it Easier: A Health Literacy Action plan 2017-2025. Libraries have been exploring how they can form partnerships with the healthcare sector to help improve the health and wellbeing of the population. In January 2018, we hosted an event, Getting the Right Information Every Time, where librarians and health professionals from across Scotland shared best practice approaches and new ideas to improve the provision of health information to communities.

We have commissioned research with key sector stakeholders to support a refresh of the national strategy in light of strong progress against the six strategic aims and to ensure we maintain momentum. We plan to publish the refresh before the end of 2018.

School libraries
The strength of Scotland’s commitment to school libraries was clearly demonstrated when John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, announced his intention to support the development of a national school library strategy.

SLIC was asked to provide secretariat support for the development of the strategy, an opportunity we welcomed, and we facilitated the establishment of an advisory group and helped set-up research and library site visits.

We were also asked by the Scottish Government to administer the new Scottish Library Improvement Fund (SLIF), launched in September 2017. The three-year, £1 million fund is designed to support school library projects as part of a wider approach to improve literacy and educational attainment.

National advocacy
Throughout the year, we have represented the views of Scotland’s libraries at several national groups and meetings, including the Scottish Government’s Creative Industries Advisory Group, the Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology Working Group and the First Minister’s Reading Challenge Advisory Group.

We also contributed to a number of public consultations, such as the impact of Poverty and Education, the development of a new BBC channel for Scotland and a Cultural Strategy for Scotland.
We are committed to providing a robust evidence base to demonstrate the value and impact of libraries, to inform policy development, and support decision-making.

During 2017, we commissioned a range of independent research and evaluation projects to assess the impact of various initiatives and to provide library services with frameworks and tools to evaluate impact at a local level.

**How Good Is Our School Library?**

To strengthen the role of school libraries, we worked with Education Scotland to develop a tool to assess the impact school libraries have on school improvement and how they contribute to the Curriculum for Excellence. The How Good is Our School Library? framework is designed to sit alongside How Good Is Our School? (fourth edition) and offers a flexible approach for schools and libraries to tailor evaluation to their local needs.

**Planned Film Education Project**

A £190,000 film education project, funded by Creative Scotland, has supported film clubs in six library services across Scotland. The film clubs, which have included regular screenings in libraries with discussion and exhibitions, have proved extremely popular with users and library staff.

To evaluate the impact of the project, we commissioned the University of Glasgow to conduct independent research to identify whether film learning and activities in public libraries have helped to engage more people in cultural experiences. The outcomes of the research are available on the SLIC website.

**PLIF and SLIF**

The Public Library Improvement Fund (PLIF) and the School Library Improvement Fund (SLIF) are two of the key funding initiatives we manage on an annual basis. To ensure the projects that receive funding are helping to meet objectives and are making a difference in communities, we have commissioned independent research consultants to examine the impact of funded projects. We plan to publish the research findings next year.

Scotland’s libraries are bursting with creativity and innovation. Library services across the country have developed unique ways of improving service delivery, engaging more people in library activities, and modernising the service in a digital world.

To celebrate the Year of Young People 2018, we worked with Young Scot to co-design a project to gain the input of young people to inform the refresh of Ambition & Opportunity. The project, titled The Next Chapter, involved a panel of young people taking part in two residential weekends, interviewing librarians, and consulting their peers about libraries.

The project and the input of the young person’s panel has been invaluable and will ensure the public library strategy continues to consider the needs of future generations of library users.

**Wikimedian in Residence**

We appointed the first ever Wikimedian in Residence in Scotland’s public libraries. Working in partnership with Wikimedia UK and public library services across Scotland, the 18-month post was created to boost Scottish content on Wikipedia.

This is a unique project, devised by Inverclyde Libraries through a PLIF project, that is engaging library users in digital literacy experiences and is helping to get more of Scotland’s library information online.

**Coworking hubs**

Scotland’s public libraries offer the perfect environment to support small businesses. They are connected spaces and offer an abundance of information and resources.

With this in mind, we have planned a pilot project, the Scottish Coworking Network, in six public libraries. Funded by a £150,000 Scottish Government grant, when launched in 2018, the pilot will evaluate the viability of rolling out a national network of entrepreneurial hubs.

**Library services across the country have developed unique ways of improving service delivery, engaging more people in library activities, and modernising the service in a digital world.**

**Innovation:** we drive innovation across the library sector through the provision of funding, people development opportunities and showcasing best practice.
Through a strategy development session with the SLIC board, we have identified the range of organisations and agencies we collaborate with, underlining the strong contribution that SLIC makes to the wider cultural landscape.

**Partnership:** working collaboratively with a range of partner organisations strengthens the impact of what we do and helps widen the reach of our activity.

**SLIC strategy**
We have strengthened our approach to partnership working in our new strategic plan 2017-2020. Through a strategy development session with the SLIC board, we have identified the range of organisations and agencies we collaborate with, underlining the strong contribution that SLIC makes to the wider cultural landscape. Our partner network will lead to more effective service delivery.

**Libraries, Literacies and Learning**
Further and higher education libraries from across Scotland’s library sector joined SLIC and SCURL at this event to explore the importance of literacy, in all its variations, to learning.

The full-day agenda included various speakers who explored information and digital literacy and how librarians are helping students and researchers to overcome barriers.

**Publishing and Libraries Day**
Delivered in partnership with Publishing Scotland, we provided a learning and networking opportunity for all our members. Bringing together 15 publishing companies and more than 50 librarians, attendees learned more about how publishers work and made new connections.

**Book Week Scotland 2017**
We supported the annual celebration of books and reading, Book Week Scotland, once again with funding to support author events in public libraries. Over 220 events took place with authors across a range of genres, including Scottish crime writers Christopher Brookmyre and Lin Anderson and children’s author and illustrator Mairi Hedderwick, with non-fiction appearances by record-breaking cyclist Mark Beaumont, sharing his adventures, and Judy Murray, discussing her memoir.

**Funding:** we help our members do more by providing funding for improvement projects and skills development, and signposting to other relevant funding sources.

Our funding role is vital for members to allow them to invest in service improvements. Likewise, supporting librarians and library staff to improve their skills through funding for training and development opportunities helps to raise standards, which in turn enhances service delivery.

We have continued to support members by distributing a monthly e-newsletter which highlights funders who are kindly disposed to libraries.

We have also continued to support libraries through a range of annual funding programmes, which are designed to support different parts of the library sector.

**Public Library Improvement Fund**
Twelve public library projects shared a portion of the £450,000 PLIF, which is administered by SLIC on behalf of the Scottish Government.

Three of the projects were collaborative bids, involving a number of services across Scotland, allowing projects to be delivered at scale and offering a more consistent service to users. Every successful project supported the six strategic aims of Ambition & Opportunity.

This year, in response to requests for additional support, we commissioned an independent consultant to run a workshop to help services to improve their bid applications.

We continue to be impressed by the creativity and innovation demonstrated by library services through the PLIF bids. Successful projects included health literacy training for library staff, autism-friendly library initiatives, and an employability hub for young people.

You can find out more about all PLIF projects on the SLIC website.

**School Library Improvement Fund**
The new SLIF, launched by John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills in September 2017, is a £1 million fund aimed at supporting school library improvement projects over three years until 2020.

In the first funding round, £100,000 was allocated to 15 projects across Scotland, including a teenage sensory reading programme in the Highlands and a mental health and wellbeing initiative in Clackmannanshire.

The successful bids reflect the popularity of the new funding stream, as well as the wide variety of activity taking place in Scotland’s school libraries.

**Innovation and Development Fund**
In recognition of the strength of applications to the IDF, we increased the fund to £27,000 (from £25,000).

The IDF is open to our non-public library members for projects that improve service delivery.

Applications from Robert Gordon University, University of the West of Scotland and Glasgow Caledonian University were successful in gaining funding for projects to promote the Doric language, a literacy-focused project to support transition from school and college to university, and development of a framework to help library staff better understand copyright issues.

**Bursaries**
We provided a number of bursaries to library staff to help them attend industry events and conferences to support their professional development. We funded places at the annual Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) conference, EDGE conference and the Internet Librarian International Conference.
Corporate news

Growing the team
The additional work we have been commissioned to undertake, including development of the national school library strategy, administration of the SLIF and new projects to support public libraries, has resulted in a growth in our headcount. Five new people have joined us, including temporary staff, to support the development of a national strategy for school libraries, develop the co-working hubs and deliver the Wikimedian in Residence project.

Financial performance

A positive fiscal year for SLIC

New office space
Our expanding team meant we needed more office space. We have moved to a bigger office in Glasgow city centre, which has provided us with the room we need for the team, as well as meeting space and video conferencing facilities, which will enable us to build even stronger engagement with our members and partners.

SLIC Board

Trustees
Ian Ruthven, Chair
Ken McKinlay, Company secretary
Carole Gray (ex officio College Development Network)
Fiona Clark (ex officio Association of Public Libraries in Scotland)
John Scally (ex officio National Library of Scotland)
Susan Ashworth (ex officio SCURL)
Sha Nazir
Abigail Mawhirt
Peter Reid
Fiona Dakers
Ann Wales
Kate Ho
Alison Stevenson
Eleanor Logan
Dilys Young

Restricted income up from £516,530 to £779,256 – 50% increase

We secured additional funding to support Ambition & Opportunity and development of the national school library strategy:
• Coworking hubs £150,700
• PLIF £450,000
• School library strategy development £80,000
• SLIF £100,000

Team headcount: 5 > 8

Core income up from £317,531 to £373,143 – 17.5% increase

SLIC’s core grant maintained at £205,000

Core income

Team headcount

SLIC’s core grant

Restricted income