

SUPPORT FOR CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE: SLSA/ALT/SLS JOINT STATEMENT

In early June, the heads of the three UK learned societies in law wrote a joint letter to the Chair of the Committee of the Heads of University Law Schools to express concerns about the impact of funding cuts on conference attendance budgets for law school staff in the UK.

Dear Professor Carey

We write to express our urgent concern at the impact of funding cuts in UK universities, on the health of our field, its international standing, and on the careers of legal academics at all career stages. In particular, we note a growing trend to refuse or limit support for conference attendance by staff members.

The three learned societies in law – SLSA, SLS, and ALT – which we currently lead, each organizes a major annual conference. These are vibrant, inclusive and intellectually stimulating moments of mutual exchange and support.

Conferences enable the presentation of new work and ideas in a supportive environment. They provide formal and informal mentoring and feedback. They sustain community horizontally through new and renewed encounters, and vertically through thematic streams.

Conferences bring together postgraduate researchers and early career scholars, with experienced law teachers and researchers with specific early career sessions. Advice and support from editors of journals and book series, directors of research and teaching, REF-panellists, and

reviewers for research funders, is invaluable and only available in the general conference setting.

Conferences marry the professional, the intellectual and the social. Plenaries allow the legal academic community to take stock of developments within the field as a whole, as regards regulation, the professions, international context and so on. Open calls for papers and panels showcase cutting edge developments in scholarship and methods.

Our executive boards and annual conference organizing teams work tirelessly to ensure the relevance and liveliness of conferences. Each of us has kept increases in fees for membership and conference attendance at below the level of inflation. Our bursary schemes have been greatly expanded to help colleagues otherwise impeded from joining us.

Smaller scale events are also vital to the community and to individual careers. Each of us organizes very successful events in this format. But they perform different functions to larger encounters and are not a substitute for them.

We appreciate the considerable constraints now being placed on heads of law schools. We support them in their work to secure the best conditions for academics working on law at all stages of their careers.

We urge them to recognize the essential contribution made by conferences to our community of research and teaching. We ask them to review and challenge allocation decisions which deny support for attendance at annual conferences.

Our learned societies are keen to work with heads of schools in supporting individual academics and the community as a whole.

Kind regards

*Professor John Harrington, Chair, Socio-Legal Studies Association
Dr Emma Jones, Chair, Association of Law Teachers
Professor Paula Giliker, President, Society of Legal Scholars*

BUILDING LINKS: SLSA AND LEGAL PUBLISHING

SLSA Chair, Professor John Harrington, introduces a new initiative to expand the SLSA's links with the socio-legal publishing world.

Publication is the lifeblood of socio-legal studies. The SLSA actively collaborates with journals and book publishers to secure the health of our discipline and to promote inclusivity and access to scholarship for our membership around the world. To this end, we are launching an initiative to deepen and widen our engagement with journals and publishers.

The SLSA benefits from the generosity and long-standing support of both the *Journal of Law and Society* (JLS) and *Social and Legal Studies*. Both consistently contribute to our Annual Conference Bursary Fund, with *Social and Legal Studies* also providing funding for the SLSA International Collaboration awards, targeted at partnerships with Global South institutions. *Modern Law Review* has sponsored conference plenaries and streams in recent years, including our 'Migrant Scholars' event with the Council for At Risk Academics at Portsmouth 2024.

We are delighted to welcome major law publishers to our Annual Conference each year to promote their recent publications, but also, importantly, to meet with current and future authors to discuss proposals and new ideas.

Hart Publishing has been supporting our book and article prizes for many years, while the *International Journal of Law in Context* has pledged to donate to our bursary

fund from next year. This fund is growing more and more important for our community given the considerable financial challenges currently faced by our community and the wider sector.

In spring 2024, in *Socio-Legal Newsletter 102*, we showcased 30 years of the *Journal of Social Security Law* and 50 years of the JLS. This launched a new regular slot in the newsletter, allowing the range of journals welcoming work in socio-legal studies to present themselves to SLSA members. In this issue, our featured journal is the *Entertainment and Sports Law Journal*, an open access journal published by the University of Westminster (see page 13).

Our Publisher Liaison officer, Raza Saeed has been engaging with publishers to renew their discount schemes, and currently members can benefit from discounts of up to 30 per cent for online purchases from the law collections of Combined Academic Press, Bristol University Press/Policy Press, Edward Elgar, Hart and Routledge (see the [SLSA membership benefits page](#) for details). Do look out for further announcements in the weekly ebulletin.

Finally, our Open Access group, led by Simon Flacks, actively contributes to REF and UKRI consultations, representing our values in a time of great change in how publications are funded and accessed.

The SLSA is keen to expand this cohort of partnerships with journals and publishers that regularly feature socio-legal work. If you publish, edit, or serve on the advisory board of a journal or book series and are interested in helping to develop these links, which are essential to the health of socio-legal studies, do contact Raza at epublisher@slsa.ac.uk.