CHIEF EXECUTIVE CANDIDATE PACK

Closing date: 10 November 2023
Thank you for your interest in leading the UK’s trade union for writers, illustrators and literary translators.

After 13 years in the role, Society of Authors Chief Executive Nicola Solomon will retire in April 2024. She has been a force for change during that time, leading the modernisation of the organisation’s strategy, structure and practice. Membership has grown by 40% to 12,400 during Nicola’s tenure, increasing our influence with industry and government, and extending our inclusive approach to reach and empower a wider community of authors.

Nicola will leave behind an organisation that is better prepared than ever, at a time when union representation of creative workers is vital.

Your role in what comes next...

You will join us at a challenging time for authors. The profession is still reeling from the effects of the pandemic, the ongoing cost of living crisis, the impacts of Brexit and an institutional devaluing of creative work. It now faces the existential challenges of artificial intelligence, as well as threats to our copyright infrastructure, freedom of expression, and more.

We are looking for a new Chief Executive who will lead us through the years ahead to ensure that in spite of these challenges, a career as an author affords a sustainable living and is accessible to all. Working alongside our highly skilled staff team and our elected board, you will drive our next five-year strategy, to further our vision of a cultural environment where creativity, creative work and free speech are valued, and where all authors are empowered to retain control over their work and careers.

I look forward to meeting you during the recruitment process.

JOANNE HARRIS
Chair, Society of Authors
The Chief Executive leads the Society of Authors (SoA) - a body which is both a company limited by shares and also a special register trade union, for writers, illustrators and literary translators, and oversees the 15 charitable trusts for which the SoA acts as corporate trustee.

The Chief Executive works with the Management Committee (the board of directors), comprised of authors elected by and from the membership, to agree the SoA’s priorities and goals, and to implement strategies to achieve these aims. Our new Chief Executive is expected to secure the trust and confidence of the SoA’s membership.

**THE ROLE**

As spokesperson and one of the high-level public faces of the SoA, the Chief Executive oversees and manages relations with external bodies associated with the profession, including the Authors’ Licensing and Collecting Society, Association of Authors’ Agents, Booksellers Association, BBC, British Copyright Council, Creators’ Rights Alliance, Publishers Association, Writers’ Guild of Great Britain, and many others.

Using these contacts, the Chief Executive looks for opportunities to raise awareness of the SoA and its work. The Chief Executive is also a member of the staff team, which represents the SoA on national and international committees and liaises with international bodies.

The Chief Executive reports to the Chair and Management Committee. This role involves identifying and recommending strategic priorities to the Management Committee in the interests of all authors, and working closely with the senior management team to plan, develop and implement agreed policies.

The Chief Executive oversees departmental strategies for the provision of services to members, including member recruitment, retention, engagement and outreach, through to fundraising strategies for the SoA’s prizes, grants and awards, organisational policy and public affairs.
As the Senior Management Team’s line manager, the Chief Executive oversees operational activities, strategy implementation, and personnel management, including dispute resolution and disciplinary matters when required.

This role involves high-level financial management and includes overseeing the 15 charitable trusts for which the SoA acts as corporate trustee.

As the leader of a progressive and ethical not-for-profit membership organisation, the Chief Executive will embody the values of the SoA and will ensure a working culture that is inclusive, collaborative, nurturing and supportive.

THE INDIVIDUAL

You are experienced at leading established teams; making the most of their skills and experience, and identifying ways to develop staff roles and careers within an organisation.

You have a successful track record within business; working with a board, coordinating and executing strategic priorities. You are familiar with high-level budgets, as well as resource management and financial planning.

Your interpersonal skills enable you to communicate effectively and to work cooperatively at all levels, from talking to aspiring and first-time authors, through managing a diverse staff team, to representing the SoA in meetings with freelance creators, government ministers, industry leaders and charity trustees.

You have senior level experience in the publishing, broadcast or other creative industries, and you are passionate about promoting authors’ interests. You will be committed to making and maintaining strategic alliances and to developing the SoA’s member recruitment, retention, engagement and enrichment activities.

You are up to date with business issues which relate to the self-employed. You understand the specific concerns of writers, illustrators and literary translators when they are dealing with publishers and other organisations wishing to use their creative work, specifically in relation to copyright and contracts.

Experience within a trade union, membership or charitable organisation will be an asset, as will experience of lobbying and campaigning, as well as an understanding of the governance of both trusts and charities.
The Society of Authors (SoA) is the UK trade union for all types of writers, illustrators and literary translators, at every stage of their careers. We have advised individuals and spoken out for the profession since 1884.

Making a living as an author is not easy. Everything we do is designed to support people to enter and sustain careers in this challenging and competitive industry. We share knowledge to help authors navigate the complexities of publishing. We offer direct support. We bring author communities together. And we lobby industry and government for an environment that can sustain and nurture the careers of creators and their work.

With over 12,400 members and 33 staff, the SoA provides unlimited, confidential advice on all aspects of authorship, including clause-by-clause vetting of publishing and other contracts.

We campaign on issues ranging from artificial intelligence and author incomes, to copyright and contractual law.

We run and support hundreds of events each year, including professional training and industry discussions to member-led community events online and around the country.

We also manage 15 charities which award prizes and grants, and over 50 literary estates.

The SoA is run from 24 Bedford Row in Holborn, London. The building is owned by the SoA and the upper two floors and basement are sub-let to literary, free speech and cultural organisations, with the ground floor used as a dedicated events space for many events and meetings.

As an employer, we nurture a working environment in which staff can grow and develop. Inclusion, diversity and representation are at the core of our values, and we are determined to tackle structural discrimination and prejudice. We recognise the value of flexibility in the way we work with a positive infrastructure built on hybrid working practices.
There is no typical year for the SoA. Here is a snapshot of a few things we have worked on over the past year or so.

We have answered more than 6,000 members’ queries over the past 12 months, guiding authors through the complexities of publishing, broadcast and more.

Almost 3,000 members joined us for 80 online and in-venue events, at the SoA offices and around the UK. And we continued to support our network of 40 local groups, helping organisers to run more than 250 events and meetups. Over one-third of SoA members have a group in their area.

We spoke out on issues that matter, raising concerns about artificial intelligence long before our partners across publishing. We joined legal action against Internet Archive, convinced the Government to pause its plans to change the UK copyright exhaustion framework. We continue to assess the ongoing impact of the pandemic and cost of living crisis on authors’ wellbeing.

We published Is it a steal? – an investigation into poor practice among publishers that charge authors for publication. And we lobbied successfully against Amazon’s ebook returns policies and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), and ensured authors were part of conversations in the drive for a more sustainable publishing industry. Thousands of authors signed our open letter of support to authors in Ukraine, in which we wrote: ‘Create freely. Write fiercely. Share your story. The authoritarian mind is right to fear you. You have the power to counter it.’

We celebrated authors’ work through prizes – awarding more than £100,000 for fiction, non-fiction, illustration, audio drama and translation. Hundreds of authors joined us at Southwark Cathedral for an SoA Awards ceremony hosted by Val McDermid and Joanne Harris. And we awarded the inaugural ADCI Literary Prize to encourage greater positive representation of disability in literature.

Our estates team celebrated the centenary of Philip Larkin’s birth and 10 years since the republication of the works of romantic novelist Catherine Gaskin. We negotiated licences for the works of Clive Bell, Anthony Berkeley, Rose Macaulay, Alison Uttley, E.M. Forster, Walter de la Mare, Anthony Berkeley, L.P. Hartley, Compton Mackenzie, Virginia Woolf, and many others.

We financially supported over 100 authors to create new work, awarding more than £350,000 in grants for works in progress – and we awarded Contingency Fund and Francis Head Fund grants for authors in need, worth £300,000.

And as a trade union, we went from strength to strength, passing the 12,000-member milestone in summer 2022 to over 12,400 members today.
CURRENT ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Management Committee
The SoA’s board of directors – 12 democratically-elected members (unpaid volunteers) who are responsible for the direction of the SoA making all major policy and strategy decisions.

For more about the Management Committee: authr.uk/mc

Staff team
We have a staff team of 33, working full and part-time – either hybrid, from our London offices or around the UK.

Senior managers
Senior SoA staff leading specific activities and working together on organisational strategy and development.

Advisors
Providing expert one to one advice to members — from vetting contracts to offering support at every stage of the author career.

Literary estates
Managing the literary estates of many distinguished writers, including Bernard Shaw, Virginia Woolf, Philip Larkin and Rosamond Lehmann.

Member services
Our front-line team, managing member subscriptions and continually working to improve our offer to members.

Grants and prizes
Administering our range of awards for poetry, fiction, non-fiction and translation, alongside our grants for works in progress and for authors in need.

Communications, events and outreach
Coordinating our outward public and member-facing work — from public relations, online channels and The Author magazine, to online and in-venue events and community networks.

Policy and public affairs
Promoting the interests of authors through public campaigns, political and industry lobbying, and working with industry partners.

Community coordinators
Bringing our members together in professional and national groups and networks, and local communities.

Operations
Keeping our IT, finances, and office facilities functioning smoothly.

For more about the staff team: authr.uk/staff
Our principal activity is as the UK trade union for writers, illustrators and literary translators.

We have an annual income of almost £1.7 million, a significant proportion of which is generated through membership fees, with the remainder coming in commissions and royalties from the literary estates we manage, management fees from the prizes and awards we administer, investment and rental income, donations and legacies. With healthy financial reserves, the SoA is well positioned for further growth and continued investment in our strategic goals.

The Society of Authors is trustee for 15 charitable trusts for which it carries out management services. In 2022, our management fee was £180,850. Disbursements are also paid out to some of these charitable trusts for prize fees and fees for awards issued by the trusts.

In 2022, the SoA received over £600,000 from the Charities Aid Foundation America, Inc which was paid out in its entirety to several of the charitable trusts. This funding was applied for by the charitable trusts administered by the SoA and the related projects operate through the trusts themselves.

Our most recent Annual Report and Accounts are available for download from the SoA website.
TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

Job type
Permanent, full-time

Location
London. The SoA’s offices are in London and it is expected that the postholder will live within a commutable distance.

Basic hours
35 hours per week

Remuneration
£60,000 - £85,000 depending on level of experience + benefits

Benefits
As a progressive and ethical not-for-profit, we offer a range of benefits to support your physical, mental and financial wellbeing and positive work-life integration. We’re London Living Wage Accredited and Disability Confident - Committed.

Benefits include
• Competitive salary
• Flexible, hybrid working practices
• Family-friendly, disability confident, inclusive culture
• Generous annual leave, including all bank holidays
• Enhanced employer contributions to a group personal pension plan
• Private healthcare
• Death-in-service benefit
• Employee assistance programme
• Employee perks scheme
• Interest-free annual travel card loan
• Cycle to work scheme
• Office closure over Christmas
If you are passionate about the rights and interests of authors, and excited by the possibilities and challenges of this role, we would love to hear from you.

Contact Katharine King to arrange an informal and confidential conversation about the role and application process – KKing@societyofauthors.org.

Ready to apply?

Please send the following:

• A personal statement that demonstrates how you meet the criteria set out in the Role Description (max. two x A4 pages)

• A current CV

We also ask that you complete our Equity and Diversity monitoring form to help us assess this recruitment process. Data collected from this survey is anonymous and cannot be traced back to the respondent.

If you need any changes to the application process or wish to submit your application as a video or in an alternative format, we would be happy to support you and accommodate this. Please contact us to make us aware.

The closing date for applications is: Friday 10 November 2023.

Longlist interviews will be carried out remotely during November with final interviews and assessment will be carried out in person at our offices at Bedford Row during December.

We aim to appoint for this role by 31 December.

The role will start from spring 2024 and ideally the post-holder should be in place by March 2024.