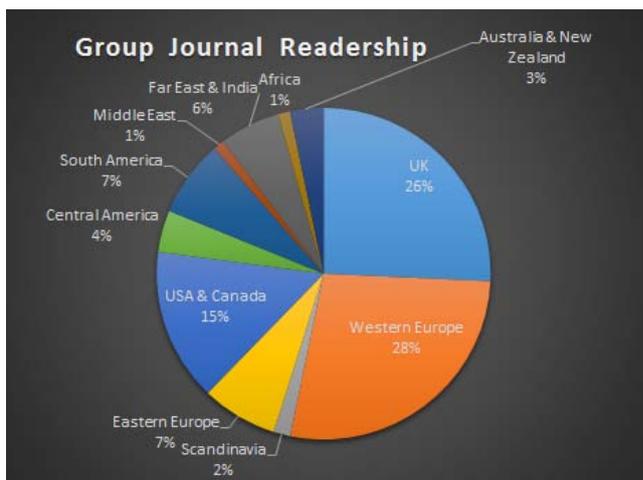


# Update to Group History (timespan mid-2014 to December 2017)

Group membership at this date is 430. There have been a number of changes in committee holders: Chair - Avril Harris ARPS, Deputy chair - Peter Ellis LRPS, Secretary - Kate Wentworth LRPS, Treasurer - Greg Holba LRPS, Postal portfolio - Duncan Unsworth, Journal editor - Paul Ashley LRPS, Webmaster - Sean Goodhart LRPS, e-Newsletter (*Concept*) editor, Lyn Newton; other committee members, Brian Steptoe FRPS, Rod Fry ARPS, Anne Crabbe FRPS, Tom Owens ARPS; co-opted - Alan Cameron LRPS. There are currently four UK sub-groups: South West, North West, North East and East Anglia.

The Group Journal *Contemporary Photography* changed editorship from the Summer 2017 issue. Our new editor is Paul Ashley. It continues to be published quarterly and is also published on-line on the major magazine website [issuu.com](http://issuu.com). Readership on [issuu.com](http://issuu.com) shows wide variations between each journal issue, and has reached over 3000. There are currently 441 'followers'. The reader and follower profile shows a wide geographic spread.



On-line readership has only shown small changes since the survey shown here from late-2016. UK readership is now 27%, Western Europe 30%, Eastern Europe 9%, USA & Canada 16%

The 2015 weekend Group conference was held at Sheffield Hallam University. The speakers were Paul Reas, Melanie Manchot, Chris Coekin, Melinda Gibson, Liz Hingley, Laura Pannack and Peter Mitchell.



*Heartspace display and catering area, Sheffield Hallam University*

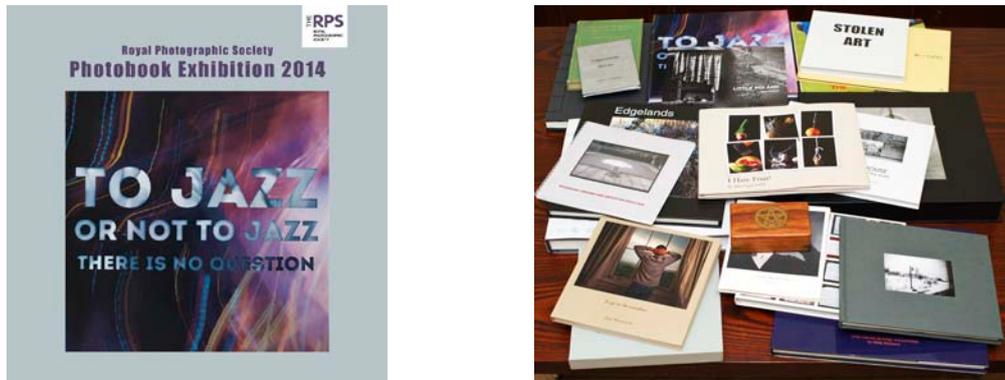
The titling of the RPS Distinction category associated with the Group was changed from 'Contemporary' to 'Conceptual and Contemporary' in mid-2014. This was with the aim of widening the understanding and appeal of this category to RPS members.

## Our Photobook Initiative

The boundaries of what constitutes 'photography' continue to widen, with the rôle of the photobook becoming more prominent, particularly over the last 5-10 years. The photobook is no longer seen as another way of presenting photographs, but as a photographic object in its own right. Photobooks are regularly submitted to competitions and exhibitions. They are assessed at international level by a combination of their 'worth' as a book with story or theme, how the photography supports the storyline, the editing, design and sequencing of the pages and the physical book attributes.

The Contemporary Group ethos with emphasis on photos being 'about' something and often being a project to a theme, is a natural fit for the modern photobook.

The RPS Council agreed that the Group would run a pilot photobook exhibition in 2014, which would be restricted to Society members only. There were 54 entries, short-listed down to 21 and these were passed to photobook authority Gerry Badger to choose a winner and runner-up entries. These were exhibited at Fenton House in late-2014.



*Exhibition catalogue and short-listed photobooks, 2014*



*Winning photobook, by Karen Rangeley, 2014*

Following the success of the pilot exhibition, the RPS Council agreed that an open international photobook exhibition would be held in 2016, organised by the Contemporary Group, whose members have the knowledge and experience needed. A call for entries was announced on the Society's competition and exhibition webpages and with publicity in the RPS Journal. Information and leaflets were sent to many external contacts both in the UK and Overseas.

Entries closed on 31 July 2016 with a total of 155 books entered; 43 of these from 22 overseas countries around the world.

*International Photobook Exhibition entries before short-listing, August 2016.*



The short-list selection of 25 was chosen by David Company, Lucy Kumara Moore and Dewi Lewis on 2 September 2016 and a catalogue of the exhibition was sent to all entrants.

These were exhibited at the Espacio Gallery, London E2 on 18-23 October as part of East London Photomonth, and then at the Impressions Gallery, Bradford. There was an accompanying 'print plus photobook' exhibition in the Espacio Gallery, also organised by the Group.

The winning photobook was *Hometowns*, by John MacLean, second was *Entre*, by Arnaldo Pappalardo, third was *Missing Buildings*, by Thom and Beth Atkinson, with *Five Days in Northumberland with Doris* by Jeff Hutchinson given a Hon. mention.



Here are a selection of photos from the Private View at the Espacio Gallery. The final photo shows the presentation of awards by RPS President Walter Benzie.



Following a member survey, Group conferences were changed to a one day format in 2017.

**Featured speakers on 8 April 2017 were Yan Wang Preston and Polly Braden.**



Yan Preston's work on Mother River - the River Yangtze has been exhibited in China, Dubai, Dublin and was then at Impressions Gallery, York among other locations. Yan's presentation began by showing several 19th century photos from her background research, the detailed planning needed to allow access across frozen tundra, problems of travel on dirt tracks with sheer drops in mountainous regions of Tibet plus needs for oxygen due to the heights involved. An epic journey to fulfil her self-set objective of 63 5x4in. film images at precise 100km intervals from source to sea.

Polly Braden showed a selection of her photos from the River Lea project, carried out with David Campany before the London Olympics site construction. Polly then moved to her ongoing personal work on London's Square Mile, then to her work on people with learning disabilities and with autism. Her current work following up on this, is about how the criminal justice system leaves such people in a state of limbo without suitable support.



*Yan and Polly in discussion over lunch*

Later in the day, many attendees set out their own work, as photobooks or as prints, reviewed and commented on by all, including Yan and Polly, who were impressed by seeing that we were all working on projects, not just showing stand-alone photos.

In all, a day that fully met the ethos of the Group.

**Following a short Group AGM on 30 September 2017, we had talks and interactive discussions with Derek Trillo and Zelda Cheatle.**

Derek Trillo spoke for an hour before lunch about his photobooks. Zelda Cheatle talked about her experiences in publishing and with the photographers who had been shown in her gallery. Attendees then showed and talked about photobooks they had produced or those planned or in progress. Zelda and Derek critiqued each in more detail.