

## AGM 2025 - Chair's report for 2024



Overall it has been a very satisfactory year for the group. We continued to evolve to expand some programmes and introduce new ones. Whilst one or two volunteers resigned, we actually had a good recruitment drive and gained several new volunteers.

RPS-wide we had some changes. During 2024 there is evidence of the CEO endeavouring to bring more central control and oversight of Groups and Regions. Firstly the introduction of Terms of Reference – referred to as TORs. These are common to all Special Interest Groups and replace our various Constitutions. You will hear more about this when we get to Nominations later in the AGM programme. Another thing you will get more detail on during the Treasurer's report is the HQ levy we now have to bear monthly. Other less significant aspects include us having to deposit our committee meeting notes to a central system. Similarly our finance documents.

Let's look at our **volunteer team** first. We need to thank those who have given service to DI but have resigned during the year. Jocelyn Edwards, who was our Secretary for a couple of years. Holly Stranks who did the admin for DI Accolade. Jean Robson who has had several roles and has been a significant contributor to the team. Ken Ness who has run our competitions. Trevor Jordan who joined us but subsequently decided it wasn't for him. Jean is moving on to be the Scotland RO and Ken is also on that committee.

The recruitment drive was astonishingly successful and so allowed us to start up new programmes that previously we didn't have the bandwidth to do. Joining were Madelaine Lenagh, Kevin Payne, Denise Bowden, Marie-Ange Bouchard, John Porter, Robin Price, John Elvin, Caroline Petch, Sue Vaines, and Brian Priestley. We thank them all and each is now playing their part in the team in various roles.

Not to forget those volunteers who have remained and continued to work with us in various roles during 2024. Rex Waygood, Neill Taylor, Deborah Loth, Trevor Pogson, Lois Wakeman, Dimitrios Theodorakis, Melanie Chalk, Dennis Knowles, Martin Tomes, Gary Beaton, and Sylvie Domergue.

Let's now look more at the diverse and highly active programme that our volunteer team have organised during 2024.

**Workshops.** Now a key aspect of the group. In 2024 apart from the individual workshops we had two major projects – *Books & Zines* and *From Seed to Bloom*. Both were extremely well received and supported by our members. The enthusiasm for the Books project was such that we have turned the page to continue this in 2025 with *The Next Chapter*. *Seeds to Bloom* also supports those members wishing to enter the RHS annual portfolio comp. We continue to work closely with the RHS team.

We continue to use Billetto for the booking system due to the sheer workload and to ease the stress for the volunteer. Once the RPS ticketing system is finally stable and easy to use we will return to that.

Saturday monthly **webinars** continued with a really strong programme. For this we struggle on and use the RPS ticketing system, but this does increase both the stress and workload of the team. Due to faults in the system this means they have to manually administer linking the 400+ registrations to provide the webinar links to each individual.

**Competitions.** In 2024 we introduced the new **Print Portfolio** to replace the Annual Exhibition we used to run pre the pandemic. This is now our annual 'exhibition in a book' and represents a high quality cross section of our members best prints for the year.

For the Digital Image comp we tried to get members shooting new images and working to themes. Whilst the number of entries was moderately good, the DI member survey we ran in the autumn proved to us that they weren't that popular. So we have evolved that to three Classes in 2025.

We dropped the monthly comp as it was felt that with the DI competition themes to concentrate on there wasn't room for the monthly comp as well. Again the survey proved that perhaps not be the most popular decision so it has returned for 2025.

So this is evidence that by running a survey periodically we do listen and adjust to improve things for our members. Thank you to those of you who took the time to complete it for us.

**Publications.** For DIGIT we started the year with the special edition of DIGIT 100, with a further 2 issues. We moved our published dates back a month so as to not clash with The Journal. DI Online has gone out regularly for 11 issues; taking August off for a break. Accolade returned as we finally started to get information about recent successes again from the HQ Distinctions team.

**eCircles** are the online peer to peer meetings we hold for members to meet to discuss their work. With one of the administrators having now moved to Australia we are just setting up one for our international members, based in that time zone. Equally new Circles have started up around Books & Zines too. Plus the **Print Circle** continues as a physical thing where prints get posted round the group.

**TALK-WALK-TALK**, which we run in conjunction with the Landscape group, has gone from strength to strength. We now have several Regions actively engaging with the project. We ran two programmes during 2024 – Architecture and Woodlands.

We shouldn't forget **AI**. During 2024 we held some talks, and ran an online Challenge for members to share what they were creating. We included something about AI in each issue of DI Online. Plus an article and stunning cover in DIGIT 101. Like it or loathe it, AI cannot be ignored.

Towards the end of 2024 we introduced our new **LRPS Support Group**. We were overwhelmed with the response when we first promoted this in the autumn. So much so that we had to go back to the drawing board and rework our plans to accommodate so many, all at different points in their journey. This boiled down to operating 2 monthly online meetings for discussions and a bespoke forum to support the group. Now we are into 2025 this will continue to develop, and we will hopefully see some members gaining their LRPS in the forthcoming months.

The **web site** saw a remodelling during 2024. This was essential as with the new programmes it was becoming difficult to make the old format work. It is kept totally up to date and should be bookmarked and your de facto place to go for all things DI.

The **Membership** has been pretty consistent – win some lose some. We do follow up on those who leave but not all respond. Of those who do, we normally hear that they have resigned from the RPS and wished they could

remain with DI. It is a compliment to us of course, but still a disappointment to lose them.

So in conclusion, your committee feels proud of all that we deliver for the benefit of our members. It gives us a big boost when you contact us with praise and thanks – after all that's the only reward we get for the hours we give. In return may we just ask that you read emails and communications thoroughly so we can cut down on some of the unnecessary emails we have to deal with when you ask us questions, which, had you read things through, you could have answered for yourself.

Thank you to each DI member for your continued support. We hope you will enjoy what we have in store for you during 2025.