

The Society of Light and Lighting



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Learned society or trade association, where lies the future of SLL?

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Many of you present will remember the inauguration of the Society as a newly identifiable body under the umbrella of the Chartered Institution. For those with longer memories this was an opportunity to recall earlier incarnations, notably the IES, and to recover a greater degree of plurality. Core to the foundation of the Society was a desire to see a broader based membership and an, at least, partial dislocation with an institution focused on engineering issues. After seven years, we can, at best, reflect on the partial success of this move. Awareness of SLL as a professional body is still poor and whilst membership has remained static, perhaps not so bad in this current climate, we have failed to attract the diversity of members envisioned or form an attractive base for younger members. Together these should cause some considerable concern to us all because it begs the question of what is SLL's future.

In the past few months Council has set itself the task of reviewing how the Society is managed and this has inevitably drawn attention to a wider range of issues, which need to be considered by the whole membership. Let us start by looking outside our immediate boundaries and it is obvious to anyone with some perspective that the *lighting industry* in the UK is very different from when the IES was translated into CIBSE. Since then, most of the internationally significant manufacturing companies with their technical R&D have left these shores and the academic research community is a shadow of its former size. The very existence of the latter is vulnerable to its attractiveness to foreign students and it is difficult to assume that the current numbers from the Far East will be sustained in the longer term. With the 'free' global market place expanding from say 1 to 4-5 billion, simple arithmetic suggests that UK plc cannot maintain its relative status. The emergence of the services sector in the UK has in recent decades provided one area of growth but is an increasingly competitive field with the entry of large numbers of highly trained graduates in low wage economies. Dubai may be being built by labour from the Indian sub continent, but how far off is its design being sourced from there as well? Lighting design has been a success story for the UK and has in part filled the gap left by the dispersion of manufacturing and development. The question remains, however: has this until now masked many of the consequences?

Compared with other countries, representation of lighting interests in the UK is relatively diverse. Take, for example, the IESNA, an institution that brings together a rather wider range of participants stretching from luminaire manufacturers to defence industry contractors. Here in the UK we have an increasing variety of groups that respond to closely defined interests. Perhaps the most curious aspect of the UK Lighting's representation is the existence of two similarly sized professional bodies vying for the high ground, neither of whom has managed to attract lighting designers. Why is it that we have lighting designers and lighting engineers in separate organisations when the difference in their professional roles seems to be only defined by their presentational tools? Perhaps by way of symmetry, lighting designers currently have two associations to choose from, as do lighting manufacturers, and finally, into this equation, we must introduce CIE UK, our national body representing the UK in many international fora, whose composition and authority seems increasingly uncertain. It should come as no surprise that the Lighting Industry has a weak voice in the UK and even when it acts as a collective body it struggles to attract the attention of government. Given that lighting accounts for more than 10% of current Domestic energy consumption, this is at least a curiosity! Why isn't government knocking on the door? Maybe it is wondering whose door? At present, only issues such as dark skies or crime, requiring strategic alliances with more substantial bodies, appear to gain public attention. This lack of central co-ordination is becoming more apparent as the UK participates in the European Union, with the latter's increasing role in UK legislation. There is a clearly a growing need to consider lighting issues on levels beyond our own borders.

When looking at the SLL from this perspective, it has become gradually less influential in domestic legislation and is not seen as the first choice of professional body for lighting designers, the one area of growth in UK lighting organisations. Clearly, shaping SLL's future needs both internal examination but also co-ordination on a wider level. Whilst it has been mentioned *sotto voce* in the past, I sense it is time to ask whether a UK-wide lighting body is now overdue. Maybe it is already too late and a more European-wide structure is needed, in which the UK will participate? In some areas, this representation is already in place but the lack of clear cohesion on a national basis is not a benefit. None of this argument is new, but it is increasingly difficult to ignore. Past discussion of closer links with, for instance, the ILE has exposed differences in both perception and professional culture. More recent collaboration, however, has demonstrated that we are operating in a shrinking market with more overlaps. Clearly, neither institution wishes to set aside its history but we are all in danger of marginalisation. Geoff Cook has during his term aired ideas of an industry wide forum for discussion and I sense that SLL should see this initiative implemented and encourage it to grow. The role SLL will play within these changes is dependent how it regards itself, which draws me onto the question posed in my title – SLL learned society or trade association?

The creation of SLL, with its intellectual debts to the IES and its avowed objective of broadening its membership base has, in practice, presented the Society with a number of challenges. Both learned societies and trade

associations derive credibility from maintaining standards in their publications and amongst their members. Naturally, this objective is more easily attained when the scope of membership and their skills or responsibilities are small and easily defined. This has become increasingly difficult since SLL's adoption of its own tiers of membership. It should be recalled that this was seen as an opportunity to set aside the engineering qualifications as a prerequisite for full membership, though this has still to be widely recognised. Combined with a diversification in membership it has become rather harder for us to define our core professional skills and (professional) knowledge. For instance, can we use the same criteria to assess the knowledge and, more than that, the professional competence in lighting for, say, an architect, a colourist and a theatre lighting designer? Unlike a trade association, we have no definition of common services or even legal constraints, though government is increasingly requiring regulation of professional practice. Take, for example, the recent legislation on commissioning – something only a minority of our members actually undertake. We should be aware that further success in recruiting outside our traditional (CIBSE) lighting community will make it more difficult to define common ground and too narrowly defined criteria for professional association may at the same time serve as disincentive to new members. Our attempt to create a central register of skills has been of limited success and I suspect that, without a substantial focus on compliance issues, with which the majority will be engaged on a day to day basis, we are too diverse a membership to force adoption of a single professional path.

I feel we have to need to understand more clearly what are the fundamentals of our association and we cannot do this without being fully aware of the wider context in which we operate. If our mission is largely antipathetical to mechanisms of a trade association we should look to other models to reinforce the core of the Society. The title *Learned Society* may sound a little old fashioned but when we look at some of this Country's strongest non-governmental institutions, such as the Royal Society, the model is by no means out of date. Without the props of universal professional standards and legislation, I sense we should be clearer in our objectives. We must understand better why we wish to associate with each other and I am always struck by our members' deep interest in the subject of lighting. This sense of community, combined with a collective desire to raise quality or standards in lighting, depending on our use of language, is the driver. Once we understand this it is easier to appreciate why members donate their time and effort so generously both to internal dialogue and to the publications that we, as a Society, present to a wider audience. It is also the reason why so many of our members continue their active relationship with the Society after retirement from a working career. This provides SLL with a huge resource and sense of perspective to which I would like to pay tribute. To put it more succinctly, we must recognise that enjoyment plays an important part in the dynamics of the Society. It is this with an appropriate degree of up-to-date technical discussion that we need to attract new members from future generations and other fields.

At present, Executive and Council are reviewing the structure of the Society and it is apparent that we need to ensure that the quality and ease of

communication are raised both internally and to the audience outside the membership. We need to make use of mixture of media, notably the Internet, to facilitate dialogue and debate, and to integrate these with events and publications. As Chairman of the Daylight Group, a Society run on a nearly zero budget, I fully appreciate the scale and quality of debate that can be achieved simply through the wish of members to communicate. This month we discussed the replacement of Daylight Factors, a move that would transform current practice. It is a reflection on SLL and CIBSE's standing (internationally) that this change is likely to be adopted well beyond the shores of the UK. Openly debating issues such as those about ceiling brightness and luminaire output should be norm within the Society, as this gives credibility to the information and guidance that we present to a wider audience.

If we are to maintain our momentum and international credibility, we cannot survive just on internal conversations. Recent Presidents have championed the role of research and this must form the first tier of SLL's activities. Whilst we undertake only a small amount of direct research, *Lighting Research & Technology* is a vital element in supporting our role as a learned society. Most of us under-appreciate the international standing of that is acquired through publication of one of the world's leading lighting research journals. Before we settle down to congratulate ourselves, we should be aware of the pressures on the academic and intellectual base of the Journal as the UK's universities and substantial lighting business have steadily reduced the breadth of education available. We must, as a learned society, be better aware of how to support and maximise the benefits derived from such assets. Many of may feel that *LR&T's* output is too divorced from everyday practice to be directly applicable and here lies a persistent challenge, as recognising the potential in new techniques is a largely a task for the market place. Our role is to observe and review the adoption of innovation within working practice and from this move to advice on regulation and provision of guidance. We need to find the right balance between free distribution of such information and revenue generation. Whichever route we use to disseminate information we must maintain an intellectually authoritative position and this is only possible if we can attract the highest calibre of participants. In many areas we cannot undertake these projects alone and our strategic partnerships with other groups and institutions are vital and will grow, particularly where we try to access new audiences. Our current record on reaching non-lighting professionals has been at best patchy and other lighting institutions, like those for Scandinavia, show us how far removed we are from areas such as domestic lighting. My impression is that the public in the UK are increasingly accepting so called *energy saving lamps* but that the word fluorescent is rarely mentioned in the same sentence. Awareness of the range and uses of different light sources within the wider public is extremely poor. As boundaries between work place and domestic areas break down the lighting industry will need to respond. SLL's role in this and other equally important areas is to raise issues for debate and fulfil our core role of creating links between research and practical guidance. As I have alluded to earlier, we cannot do this alone and to be more effective we must draw the lighting industry together to form a stronger and more integrated grouping; a challenge both for myself and my successors.

At the risk of provocation, I would like to light the touch paper on several items. First, and perhaps not surprisingly, we need to update daylighting design practice and return it to the mainstream of lighting debate. If you don't think it is important, I have only to draw your attention to the accelerating professional interest in the subject in North America. Part L here has created a complex link between daylight provision and energy use. Further linkage will require daylight design to be integrated with cooling design and this I believe will start to change how we think about lighting as a whole. It will also expose a number of areas where we have failed to lead. One, of course, is the relationship between lighting and health. If we are to believe that the majority of us in the UK suffer from Vitamin D deficiency in winter months, there are clearly substantial underlying issues that we have not started to address. It does not take a major leap to detect competing concerns, such as increasing our exposure to daylight in the winter, preferably not behind glass, with energy-based conservation objectives. New tools for dynamic or time-based daylighting analysis will help to inform the process of design, and move beyond simple tests for adequate illumination. We are well behind other professional groupings in this area.

The second pillar of orthodoxy that needs re-evaluation is our publication of minimum illuminance levels and the vulnerability to their employment out of context. If we, as I expect by necessity, are to make greater use of daylight we need to think more clearly about aspects such as adaptation and relative brightness across the visual field before homing in on illuminance levels. Many of you will be aware of recent work on actual light levels in buildings. These show far greater diversity in illumination levels considered appropriate by occupants and also that the information content of views is influential in user acceptability. These findings suggest that many of our assumptions and, as a result, the guidance we have distributed are unnecessarily pessimistic, and that caution has demanded more light than many users feel they need. I would like to suggest that better understanding of the physical and physiological needs for light is a route to making more economical use of energy. At the back of my mind remains the question of will we in the future enter a shop where there is no apparent lighting on.

During this coming year there is much to do. The Strategic Plan for the Society will be revised and all members are welcome to make their contributions. My task will be to ensure that we are aware of and respond to the issues and pressures I have mentioned and I will be working closely with Executive and Council to co-ordinate the process. As the year will also see administrative changes with our Secretary's retirement, I will be endeavouring to implement revisions from the Strategic Plan into the day to day running of the Society. My other task is to raise the volume of debate and I trust that you will enjoy the rest of this evening.

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