

Annual Review

2008-09



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ROWLAND LLOYD | CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW

During 2008, the UK and much of the developed world entered financial crisis and recession. Nearly every sector of the economy was affected. For most the impact was adverse, some to a greater extent than others, some earlier than others.

In the UK (the world's second largest market for market and social research) 2008 was a remarkably successful year for the research industry, with the MRS Annual Survey recording overall growth of 6.2%. Within that, international research made a particular contribution to growth, emphasising again the importance of the UK as a hub for international projects.



2009 already looks a much tougher proposition. Although it is worth recalling experience from previous downturns during which research has proved relatively robust and resilient, the impact of cuts in client budgets and delays in commissioning work is already being felt by MRS Company Partners and individual members.

While industry consolidation has continued, it has slowed down dramatically for the time being. A huge exception in the circumstances, by far the largest and most visible transaction was the acquisition of TNS by WPP. The credit crunch has constrained other deals, and left some balance sheets under debt-laden strain from previous highly leveraged deals. As with earlier recessions, it is likely that the industry and market landscape, both in the UK and internationally, will be different when economic growth resumes.

Last year's *Annual Review* highlighted how the landscape was already changing significantly. This was referred to as a 'broader footprint' for market research. It is within that context and several others that MRS Council is striving to broaden the appeal of MRS.

Engagement and networking

One of the many purposes of joining a professional body is to gain the opportunity to meet and network with other members, to gain from their experience, engage in debate, exchange sector news. Our paid-for events fulfil part of that function but more is needed.

Online communities are growing apace as one of the most useful ways of establishing and maintaining contact on a global basis with others of shared interest. The MRS and Research Live websites facilitate this. Nonetheless, despite the time pressures encountered today by most people, the opportunity to meet can be very welcome. MRS likes to engage directly with its members, and also of course to provide opportunities for members to meet each other.

It is, therefore, pleasing to report on the outstanding success of breakfast meetings and members' evenings, many of which attracted capacity attendances. A team of Council Members is also nearing completion of developing its proposals to encourage greater involvement and participation by young members. All the above are very welcome developments in energising the 'society' dimensions of MRS, and encouraging members to be both active and proactive within it.

Industry standards and self-regulation

Standards lie at the heart of everything MRS does. The core purpose of MRS is to set and uphold standards embodied in the *MRS Code of Conduct*.

Internationally, MRS is also involved via both the Market Research Quality Standards Association (MRQSA) and the European Federation of Associations of Market Research Organisations (EFAMRO) in supporting the updating of process standards in ISO 20252. This is due to be completed by 2011 and should then remain unchanged for five years. ►

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◀ We are committed to working with others who share our vision of a realistic framework for international self-regulation, based on a code of durable principles. Research is evolving and is meeting the needs of cost, speed and quality by the increased use of global skills and expertise. Ethics and process can be at risk via subcontracting, outsourcing and offshoring. We are determined to work with the international community to ensure our sector is fully aware of and well supported by clear and appropriate standards. It is important that leading associations create a consistent and practical infrastructure for global regulation and enforcement of compliance. Without that, we are exposed to far greater risk of statutory intervention and to state levies to fund that intervention.

International role

UK researchers have always been influential as thought leaders and innovators in the international arena. Our contribution for the future will require us to be aware of issues surrounding growth in emerging markets, listening, supporting and adapting to this as it impacts the way clients and agencies work together. We know that clients face their own set of issues which are changing more rapidly than ever before. Research is at its best when it's in tune with the business pressures being experienced by clients.

With nearly 380 MRS Company Partners and 7,000 individual members MRS is the world's largest trade

and professional body in this sector. It undertakes many activities with international scope, and exerts influence internationally on industry standards and representation.

MRS is the owner and publisher of market-leading international journals, magazines and websites. *The International Journal of Market Research* (now complemented with an annual *IJMR* Research Methods Forum) focuses on development of technique and methodology, and is sold throughout the world to both practitioners and academic institutions. Its papers reach a huge worldwide readership electronically via warc.com.

Likewise, *Research* magazine is the worldwide market-leader as the trade publication for the sector, with a significant and growing proportion of its subscribers outside the UK. Its companion websites – research-live.com, theresearchbuyersguide.com and researchjobfinder.com – all have global content, use and readership.

Our conferences, training courses and qualifications also attract participants from many countries, and our accredited qualifications are being taken up in emerging markets by MRS Company Partners who operate globally. We have MRS members in over 70 countries.

MRS participates in ESOMAR's annual meeting of WIN (World Industry Network) and welcomes the renewed drive to work towards a more efficient and consistent international approach worldwide. MRS is a member of

EFAMRO (the European trade federation for research) and MRS Director General David Barr has been elected as a Vice-President. From April 2009, MRS will be providing secretariat services to EFAMRO covering standards and guidelines, communications, and public affairs representation in Brussels.

MRS Presidency

I would like to pay tribute and offer many thanks to Jeremy Bullmore who completed his five-year term of office as MRS President at the end of March 2009. Jeremy's contribution to our thinking has been immense, and has been delivered with such wisdom, rigour, experience and mischievous humour that it has always been hugely enjoyable as well as beneficial.

I am delighted that Rita Clifton has become our new President from April 2009. Once again, MRS has been immensely fortunate in finding an interested and interesting President whose expertise is aligned with the particular stage we have reached in development of MRS and its services, not least with regard to broadening its appeal.

MRS financial position

For three quarters of this financial year, the growth in MRS turnover matched that of the industry at 6%-plus, but the impact of recession in 2009 on demand for our more cyclical services reduced the overall growth for April 2008–March 2009 to 3%. ▶

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- ◀ A post-tax surplus of £167,995 was generated, inflated by postponement of £75,000 of new product development expenditure, which will have to be incurred during 2009–10 (when an overall deficit is anticipated). This welcome boost to reserves was offset by a reduction in the value of our offices at Northburgh Street leading to lowering our property reserves by £221,713 after depreciation.

Overall, MRS finances are in very good order, and well placed with adequate liquidity to withstand the recession and ensure continuity of core services to members and Company Partners. Medium-term sustainability of this position is, however, constrained by the maturity of the research sector as traditionally defined. Maintenance and enhancement of future discretionary spending and investment by MRS will indeed depend on extending the appeal of MRS to a 'broader footprint' of activity and business, and also on ensuring that that appeal has international reach.

Our commercial activities are also critical to future funding of MRS, but most are media-based and therefore subject to the same cyclical economic pressures being encountered by even the largest media owners.

Despite current economic turbulence and uncertainty, MRS is in a good position to meet the challenge and opportunity which could arise from broadening the appeal. For that reason and many others, we should feel positive about the future.

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Membership and MRS Company Partner Service

Although total membership fell to 6,938 during the year, it remained relatively constant at this level for most of 2008–09 as the attrition rate reduced. The number of MRS Company Partners increased by 22% to 377 comprising a good spread of organisations including 11 clients.

- The number of new applications for membership was at its highest for seven years, and 15% higher than in 2007–08.
- The Field Membership grade was phased out during the year; over 500 Field Members (85%) upgraded to Affiliate Member and received additional benefits for the same subscription rate.
- The membership and Company Partner Service numbers for 2008–09 demonstrate the effectiveness of the recruitment and retention initiatives implemented since the end of 2007.

Networking and communications

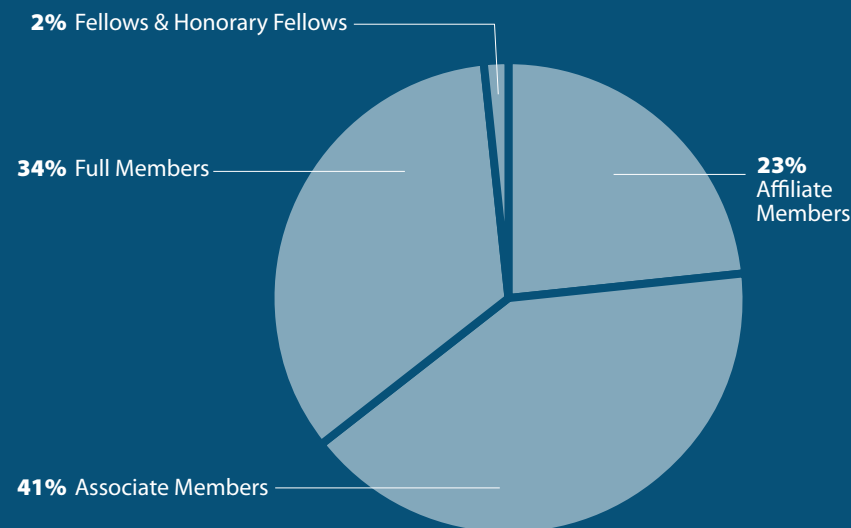
- New communications plans were introduced during the year reminding members and Company Partners of their benefits and encouraging them to make full use of them.
- There were 232,530 unique visitors to the MRS website during 2008–09 and an average of 36,250 visits a month.

- Over 50 literature searches (23% more than 2007–08) were conducted for members and Company Partners.
- Over 400 enquiries from non-members (an increase of 7%) were handled by the Information Service, usually directed to one of the MRS websites for a response.
- In addition to sending six bi-monthly issues of *MRS News* to all members, *MRS e-News* was sent to over 2,000 subscribers each month.

- The Membership Team sent 70,000 e-mails to members during the year inviting them to participate in free events and membership activities.
- A third annual series of Members' Evenings was held in London. Most of the events were standing room only. This programme was extended regionally to include one event in Leicester which was open to all members and Company Partners. Following its success, four regional events will be organised in the autumn of 2009. ►

MRS Members

At 31 March 2009
(n = 6,938)



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A new programme of eight monthly 'Breakfast Bites', free morning events for young members, was introduced in October 2008. These followed the research process with a sector expert presenting on one element of the MRS Advanced Certificate syllabus at each session.

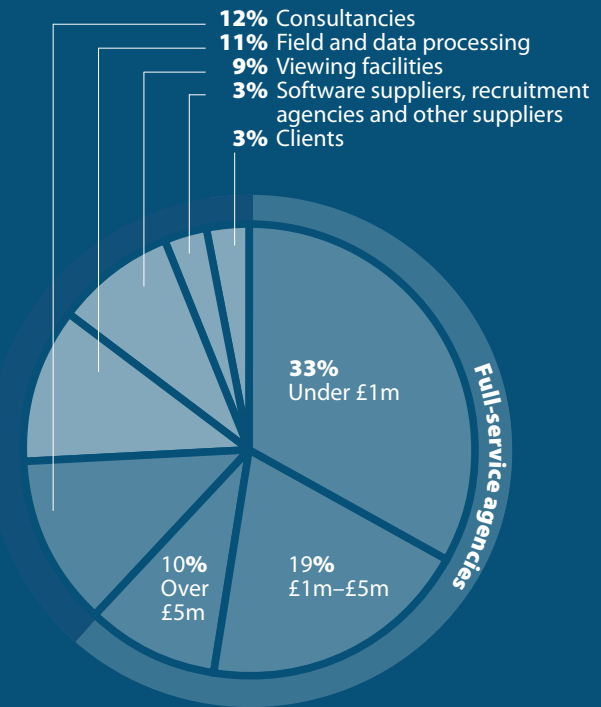
- Nearly 20% of members (1374) attended one or more MRS event during the year. Over a third of them attended free events.
- MRS supported new member initiatives in the North West and South West. During the year, regional events were held in Manchester, Gateshead, Scotland and Bristol. All were well attended by local members.
- R-Net (the young researchers' network) continued to organise its popular annual programme of professional development and social events. It launched a Facebook group and over 100 young researchers joined during the first year.
- The Census & Geodemographics Group (CGG) organised a free half-day seminar on *The Techniques of Geodemographics*.
- MRS continued to co-operate with the Association for Survey Computing in organising regular evening events providing a forum for those interested in technology issues.

● Council initiated a project to encourage greater involvement and participation by young members in MRS. Preliminary findings indicated that recruitment and retention of members under 30 had increased substantially during 2008 as a result of various initiatives. In total, 49% of them had attended an MRS event and/or registered for a qualification during the year. A brief online research survey was conducted during March 2009 to determine their future needs.

● During the year, Company Partners received: nine administrator newsletters; quarterly newsletters for their staff; three *Public Affairs & Standards Updates*; quarterly e-mails reminding them of unused benefits; and notes from the quarterly Company Partner Service Advisory Board meetings. In addition, two general briefings and four standards briefings were organised. ►

MRS Company Partners

By company type at 31 March 2009
(n = 377)



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Promoting excellence

- The *International Journal of Market Research (IJMR)* celebrated its Golden Jubilee year in 2008. Highlights of the 50th anniversary year included:
 - Each issue addressed a current key topic, including a themed issue on Web 2.0.
 - Introduction of the *IJMR* Collaborative Award and *IJMR* Reviewer of the Year Award.
 - Introduction of Conference Notes providing summaries of methodological conferences written by the presenters.
 - Moving the submission process online.
 - Launch of the new Facebook group to discuss issues and topics covered in the *Journal*.
 - An archive of all the MRS Gold and Silver Medal-winning papers on the *IJMR* website which is freely available to members.
 - The inaugural *IJMR* Research Methods Forum which attracted a capacity audience of nearly 100 participants.
 - The 50th anniversary dinner hosted by MRS for those closely associated with the journal since its launch.
- The relaunched Research Awards attracted the highest ever level of entries (over 170) for the portfolio of MRS and *Research* magazine awards, and the largest attendance at the Awards Dinner, reflecting their professional and business prestige.



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During 2008-09, MRS continued to lead the field in protecting the reputation of research via its wide-ranging professional standards services and activities:

- The MRS Codeline Service responded to 489 queries from research professionals, plus 120 calls from members of the public seeking assurance about research. Data protection continued to be the dominant theme of the queries, with interviewing children and respondent confidentiality being the other main issues of concern.
- A further 13,322 calls were handled by the MRS Freephone service, which provides members of the public with assurances regarding the bona fides of researchers and research organisations.
- 86 complaints were investigated during 2008-09, of which all but 10 were resolved during the year.

MRS as a regulator

MRS maintains two regulatory procedures: one for MRS members and another for MRS Company Partners. The MRS Market Research Standards Board (MRSB) is responsible for compliance within the sector and, during 2008-09, the following activities were undertaken to protect respondents and ensure robust self-regulation:

- The MRS Standards Department resolved 57 complaints without the use of the formal procedures.

- MRSB formally investigated 29 cases, 11 against individual MRS members and 18 against MRS Company Partners.

- MRSB found there were cases to be pursued against two members and one Company Partner for breaches of the MRS *Code of Conduct*. As a consequence one member was expelled, one was suspended following a tribunal held by the MRS Disciplinary Authority, and the Company Partner was asked to make procedural changes.

- One decision made by MRSB was reviewed by the Reviewer of Complaints (an option in cases where a decision of no case to be pursued had been made). The Reviewer of Complaints remitted the case back to MRSB on the grounds of new evidence.

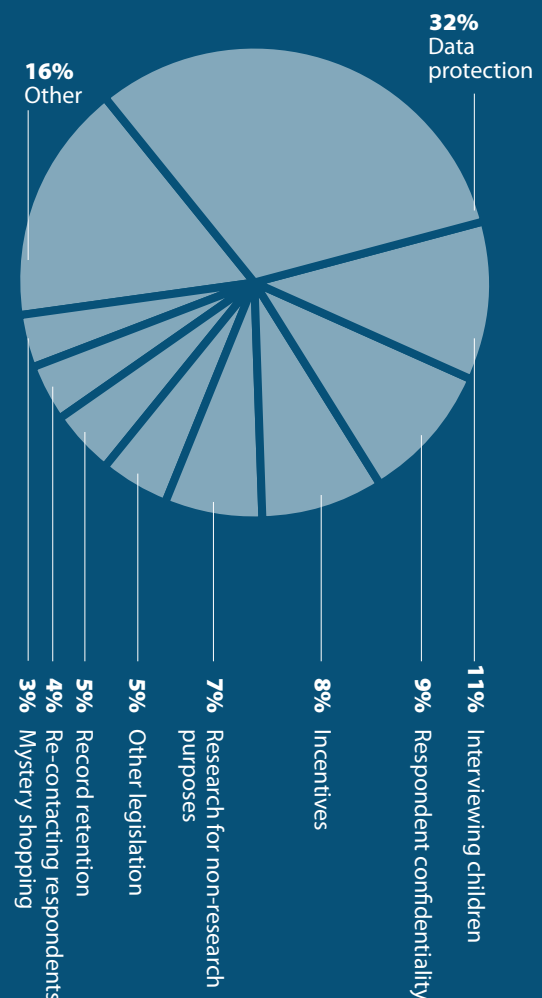
MRS Code of Conduct and guidelines

MRSB is responsible for the maintenance and updating of the MRS *Code of Conduct* and its associated regulations, guidelines and compliance frameworks. Another busy year for MRSB, 2008-09 saw the following activities:

- The MRS *Code* was last updated in December 2005 and, in line with recognised good code maintenance, MRSB initiated a review during the year. In January 2009, MRSB conducted a consultation with MRS members and Company Partners on the proposed revisions which primarily focused on new ►

Codeline queries

2008-09 (n = 489)



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principles for the MRS Code. These were amended to recognise the breadth of activities currently being undertaken by researchers. Major changes include the rules on incentives, and the consent requirements for interviewing children in public areas. Members and Company Partners actively engaged in this process providing over 100 written responses; 30 members attended the MRS Code consultation meeting held at the MRS offices in March 2009.

- In October 2008, MRSB published revised guidelines for mystery consumer research.
- From January to March 2009, MRS worked with key practitioners to develop guidelines for deliberative and public engagement research. These are due to be finalised in 2009-10 and are likely to form an addendum to the MRS *Qualitative Research Guidelines*.
- MRSB initiated a new Web 2.0 project with a view to developing guidelines in 2009-10.
- MRSB reviewed the proposed frugging guidelines drafted by the Institute of Fundraising (IoF). MRSB was concerned that the IoF rules were not sufficiently wide ranging and, following discussion, MRS and IoF have agreed in principle to develop joint guidance on frugging.
- MRSB began drafting a document for the media advising on the reporting and publishing of research results.

- MRSB reviewed the responses to all the Codeline queries answered during the period and provided more detailed advice on a wide range of topics including the use of hypnosis as a research tool, conducting 'sensitive' research and responding to one consent waiver request for researching children.

Quality standards

ISO for Market, Social and Opinion Research (ISO 20252)

MRS continues to actively support and provide input to the development of quality standards for the sector via its participation in MRQSA and the British Standards Institution (BSI) committee for research (SVS/3).

During 2008-09, MRS become a full-time UK representative on the ISO Technical Committee responsible for the development and update of ISO 20252; furthermore a UK representative was selected as the new Chairman of the Technical Committee.

MRS and the UK delegation succeeded in obtaining sufficient votes from other ISO members to agree that the review of the ISO 20252 should be brought forward. The process formally started at the March 2009 ISO meeting in Madrid at which the UK delegation, including MRS, volunteered to update ISO 20252 with a view to revising elements that, based on the UK's experience of implementation, are insufficient. The UK is also to

Complaints completed in 2008-09

(Total 80)

Minor complaints handled by the Secretariat

(Total 57)

Interviewer payments	21
Incentive payments	11
Interviewer behaviour	6
Quality control	5
Re-contact	5
Misleading respondents	3
Interviewing children	2
Questionnaire design	1
Client dispute	1
Respondent confidentiality	1
Member behaviour	1

Cases investigated under the Disciplinary Regulations

(Total 8)

Reporting of results	3
Respondent confidentiality	2
Member behaviour	1
Questionnaire design	1
Client dispute	1

Cases investigated under the Company Partner Complaints Procedure

(Total 15)

Questionnaire design	4
Client dispute	3
Reporting of results	2
Interviewing children	2
Interviewer behaviour	2
Interviewer payments	1
Respondent confidentiality	1

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produce a separate supplementary document advising on certification to the standard, which it is hoped the ISO will ratify and publish alongside ISO 20252.

ISO for Access Panels (ISO 26362)

The new ISO for access panels, ISO 26362, was completed during the year and was formally issued in the UK in March 2009. Any requirements in the access panel standard which are not in the research standard ISO 20252 will be incorporated during the review of the latter to ensure that the two are compatible in the area of panel research.

Other related quality standards

During 2008-09, a European standard for Print Media Surveys (BS EN 15705) was approved by majority despite opposition from MRS, and from national standards bodies including BSI. Although BSI is obliged to adopt the European standard as a national standard, it will not be actively promoting it.

In January 2009, a new direct marketing standard, PAS 2020 Direct Marketing - Environmental Performance - Specification, was launched. MRS had reviewed and commented on the standard during the drafting process highlighting the need to differentiate between market research and direct marketing issues. All the key issues identified by MRS were taken on board.

Throughout the year, MRS contributed to the Joint

Industry Committee for Population Standards (JICPOPS) Social Grade Working Party discussing the development of a social grade system based on the MRS occupational groupings data.

International activities

With increased globalisation and increased levels of cross-border research being conducted, it is vital that MRS has wide-ranging international reach.

- MRS maintained its support of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Committee for Marketing & Advertising. It provided input to various issues including a draft ICC paper on code drafting and consultation particularly when a code is jointly owned.
- MRS attended the February 2009 meeting of the World Industry Network (WIN) held in Amsterdam at which the MRS Director General agreed to participate in an initiative to improve the international industry statistics based upon the work MRS has undertaken to improve the robustness and representativeness of the UK figures.
- MRS continued its discussions with ESOMAR regarding the ICC/ESOMAR Code of Conduct and during the year representatives from ESOMAR attended an MRS Council meeting and vice versa. MRS subsequently gave written recognition to ESOMAR that the principles of the ICC/ESOMAR Code are consistent with those of the MRS Code. ►

Complaints received

	2008-09			2007-08		
	Member	Company Partner	Total	Member	Company Partner	Total
Disciplinary cases						
Upheld	2	1	3	2	0	2
Not upheld	7	9	16	7	12	19
Ongoing	2	8	10	3	3	6
Total			29			27
Minor complaints resolved by the Secretariat			57			45
Total complaints received			86			72

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- EFAMRO, of which MRS is a member, undertook a wide-ranging strategic review. The impetus for this, and the resulting business plan, came from MRS at EFAMRO's request. The MRS proposals were accepted and, as a consequence, from the beginning of April 2009 MRS will be providing professional standards, public affairs and communications services on behalf of EFAMRO. The activities that will be covered by this arrangement are:
 - monitoring European activity, legislation, proposed Directives, etc;
 - interpreting monitored items for EFAMRO members and providing guidance on potential implications;
 - preparing and drafting policy papers for EFAMRO General Meetings/Executive Boards and submissions for the European Commission;
 - reporting on progress on ISO standards relevant to research;
 - drafting EFAMRO best practice guidelines;
 - advising EFAMRO members on all of the above issues via a telephone/e-mail advisory service;
 - devising and leading the content of EFAMRO's external communications including editorial maintenance of the EFAMRO website and e-zine; and
 - leading press office activity on preparing statements and press releases, handling press enquiries and PR for EFAMRO.

Communicating on standards

- MRS continued to participate in the B2B Best Practice Alliance, an online best practice initiative for B2B practitioners. It assisted in the next stage of the Alliance's development, most particularly in providing input to its business plan.
 - MRS presented on the MRS *Code of Conduct* and associated standards issues at various external events including an IQCS Working Forum and the BHBIA annual conference in addition to undertaking bespoke in-house standards briefings at a number of MRS Company Partner offices.
 - Three editions of the MRS *Public Affairs and Standards Update* newsletter were issued. These covered a wide variety of topics including:
 - appointment of the UK Statistics Board and its Chair and Deputy Chair;
 - the Information Commissioner's new powers and practices;
 - Privacy Impact Assessments;
 - the impact of surveillance and data collection;
 - the data sharing review consultation;
 - data protection and children in Spain;
 - the UK Employment Simplification Bill;
 - CRB checks for interviewers in specified places from 2009;
 - the consultation on the "Persistent misuse" Statement of Policy;
 - implementing the Services Directive in the UK;
 - new Civil penalties for personal data loss;
 - the EC comments on workplace data collection;
 - consultation on the Code of Practice for Official Statistics;
 - the Equality Bill;
 - new UK consumer protection laws;
 - the revised code of practice on discipline and grievance consultation;
 - EU privacy chiefs update the rules for overseas data transfers;
 - Ofcom fines for silent calls;
 - the Information Commissioner's guidance on Freedom of Information exemptions;
 - the Lords approving safeguarding vulnerable groups regulation;
 - penalties for health and safety law breakers;
 - EC concern over threat to flexible working extension;
 - equal treatment for agency workers;
 - end of Statutory Disciplinary Procedures;
 - European Parliament vote to end working time opt-out; and
 - UK Government consultation on European consumer rights.
- These communications were supported by four Standards Briefings for Company Partners held at the MRS offices which covered topics such as the MRS *Code of Conduct* and the Data Protection Act 1998, research with children and young people, data ►

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◀ security, and emerging research techniques and the MRS *Code*.

- The MRS Professional Standards Forum, which is open to any MRS members or Company Partner employees interested in professional standards and compliance issues, expanded its membership in the year. In addition to ad hoc e-mail correspondence, two meetings were held during 2008-09, where issues such as the Information Commissioner's new powers to impose fines, revisions to EU Directives, revisions to the MRS *Code of Conduct*, and the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive were discussed.

Supporting interviewers and respondents

MRS provides a number of schemes which support interviewers in their day-to-day activities, whilst also ensuring that respondents are protected.

- Since the beginning of 2009, only MRS Company Partners have been eligible to purchase MRS Interviewer Identity Cards (IID) as only these organisations have signed up to the MRS Quality Commitment which ensures that all interviewers must adhere to the MRS *Code of Conduct*.
- As a consequence of the change in eligibility, the total number of 2009 IID cards decreased to 45,847 issued to 86 organisations compared with 59,937 issued to 123 organisations the previous year.

- In February 2009, MRS issued standard text to be used on thank you leaflets by Company Partners when using MRS IID Cards. This ensures that respondents are receiving accurate assurances and consistent messages about the benefits of research.

- The MRS Field Conference 2008 continued to attract key field practitioners with its programme devoted to providing the latest information on legal, ethical and practical issues. This was supplemented with two half-day legal seminars which were devoted to the latest legislative developments in areas such as employee and worker rights, health and safety, vetting and barring, handling personal data, and free prize draws.

- A review of the training manuals for the Accredited Interviewer Training Scheme (AITS) was initiated during the year, and a separate initiative was also undertaken in partnership with GfK NOP to develop a new AITS training DVD. The new training materials are due to be issued to all Scheme participants during 2009-10.

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPRESENTATION AND MEDIA COVERAGE

Protecting

During 2008-09, MRS made a significant number of direct representations on a wide variety of issues which have an impact on research. This busy year saw MRS make more submissions than ever before.

Data protection

Data protection remains the key piece of legislation that has a direct impact on the way that research is undertaken. MRS has strong links with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the regulator responsible for the relevant legislation in the UK. Throughout the year MRS contacted the ICO on issues such as data sharing, data security and the parameters of the data protection definitions.

Richard Thomas, the Information Commissioner, and Dr Walport issued a review on data sharing. One of the recommendations from the review was that 'safe havens' should be developed for population-based research and statistical analysis in which the risk of identifying individuals is minimised. The report also recommended that a system of approving or accrediting researchers to work in these safe havens is established. MRS contributed to the data sharing review and has started initial discussions with the ICO to discuss how the recommendations from the review can be practically implemented. This could be an excellent opportunity for MRS to embed the MRS *Code of Conduct* within these proposed changes and to give recognition to MRS members and Company Partners within the accreditation procedures.

Following on from the data sharing review, linked consultations were launched including the NHS *Connecting for Health* consultation on the use of patient information for purposes such as health research. The MRS submission highlighted the importance of differentiating between medical research and market, social and opinion research, as well as highlighting the robust regulatory system in place for MRS members and Company Partners.

2009-10 is going to be a very important year for representation as the review of the Data Protection Directive will commence, the results of which will impact on the way that data protection legislation develops in the future. MRS is well placed to influence this review due to the connections it has made in both the UK and Europe. The start of the review is a conference in Brussels in May 2009 and MRS has been invited to attend.

Statistics and the Census

The Census may only occur every 10 years but a significant amount of representation takes place in between. MRS and the MRS Census & Geodemographics Group (CGG) made numerous representations on Census and statistics-related issues during 2008-09 including:

- In May 2008, the CGG and MRS separately responded to an ONS consultation on 2011 Census output.
- In June 2008 CGG members met with the Office for

National Statistics (ONS) to discuss the UK Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and how this legislation was shaping ONS activities, plans for the 2011 Census and beyond, and other issues on the horizon including the development of an alternative to the 'traditional' Census.

- In October 2008 CGG and MRS separately responded to the General Register Office for Scotland consultation on proposed changes to the definitions of usual residence in the 2011 Census.
 - In February 2009, the CGG contacted both the Registrars in England and Scotland about the 2011 Census, and most particularly the need for consistency between the two regions. Currently there are concerns that there may be different questions on the two versions of the 2011 Census forms.
 - In March 2009 CGG and MRS separately responded to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) consultation regarding the transposition of EC INSPIRE Directive 2007/2/EC, which relates to spatial data, into UK law.
- Other developments in the field of statistics primarily related to the bedding in of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 which was established to regulate the production and publication of government statistics. When this Act was being considered, MRS submitted a detailed response which included a ►

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◀ recommendation that all government statistics should be of a consistent standard and produced in accordance with a statistics Code of Practice. During 2008-09, the UK Statistics Authority, the body responsible for promoting and safeguarding the production of official statistics, consulted on a new Code of Practice for Official Statistics. MRS responded to the consultation, focusing on the need for a clear definition of 'official statistics', the need to recognise other relevant codes particularly the MRS *Code of Conduct*, and suggesting some additional clauses which would complement the requirements of the MRS *Code of Conduct*.

On a similar theme in October 2008, MRS submitted a response to the Research Council's consultation on its proposed code of conduct and policy on governance of good research conduct. The MRS submission highlighted the existing research codes, particularly the MRS *Code of Conduct* and its compliance framework, and how these should be recognised in relation to market, social and opinion research.

Royal Mail and the Postal Address File

During the year, the Royal Mail launched a consultation on proposed licence changes to the Postal Address File (PAF). The proposed changes appeared to restrict the use of the PAF as a sample frame for research and for re-use for modelling purposes. MRS and CGG both made strong representations on this issue including written submissions and meetings between MRS, CGG members

and the Royal Mail. These discussions have been positive thus far and it is hoped that more favourable, separate licence arrangements can be agreed for market, social and opinion research during the forthcoming period.

Children

During 2008-09, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) approached MRS about participating in a review of the impact of the commercial world on children's well-being. A panel of experts is reviewing the available evidence including related research projects. The sector was asked via the Advertising Association (of which MRS is a member) to provide evidence to support the view that the commercial world can have a positive impact. MRS was also invited and attended a closed session by the Family & Parenting Institute to discuss the concept of "toxic childhood" and associated children's issues.

Employment and professional development

In November 2008, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) invited MRS to take part in phase two of its consultation on the UK policy for National Occupation Standards (NOS). MRS had responded to the first phase and will continue to participate as this links to its participation in the Marketing & Sales Standard Setting Body (MSSSB). MRS emphasised the need to use the professional and trade association links more effectively,

particularly when trying to communicate with employers.

Throughout the year, MRS maintained contact with all the various regulators and government departments involved in education and vocational qualifications including UKCES, the Office of the Qualifications Regulator (Ofqual) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

Commercial issues

As the business association for research, MRS also responded to a wide variety of commercially related issues.

In March 2009, MRS responded to the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) consultation on developing the use of "established means". This was a public consultation on a draft set of principles that the OFT proposes to apply when working with its partners to maximise compliance with the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 and Business Protection from Misleading Marketing Regulations 2008. The MRS submission was supportive of the draft OFT principles. Additionally it focused on the merits of the current system of self-regulation of market, social and opinion research and how it could provide an "established means" of preventing unfair commercial practices such as sugging and frugging.

In June 2008, MRS attended a stakeholder meeting hosted by the Department for Business, Enterprise and ▶

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- ◀ Regulatory Reform (now the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) to discuss the Government's response to the consultation on implementing the EU Services Directive in the UK. The proposed implementation is in line with MRS expectations.

Sustainability

Following some government-sponsored research into marketing and sustainability, an initiative was established to review the research and to develop some proposals to improve sustainable practices in the marketing and communication sector. MRS was invited and agreed to participate on behalf of the research sector. The focus of the group's activities is how to implement sustainability into CPD, training and qualifications programmes. During the coming year, a series of no-nonsense, best practice information guides on how marketers can minimise the environmental impact of their activities are due to be developed.

Promoting

During 2008-09, MRS continued to promote the benefits of research.

MRS at the House of Commons

In March 2009, MRS sponsored a debate at the House of Commons as part of its participation in the Debating Group (the parliamentary forum for marketing debate). The motion, *Market research is becoming more of a manipulator than a messenger*, was fiercely contested and was ultimately defeated.

Media activity

The MRS Press Office responded to approximately 80 incoming press calls during 2008-09. In addition, proactive media relations activity resulted in coverage in approximately 90 articles between April 2008 and March 2009. MRS spokespeople appeared in a range of national, regional and trade media, including the titles on the right.

Nationals

The Guardian
Reuters
Daily Telegraph
Telegraph Weekend

Sector press

Admap
Brand Republic
B2B Marketing
Campaign
Marketing
Marketing Week
New Media Age
Research
Research World
warc.com

Specialised press

Charity Funding Report
Education Business
Government Business
The Grocer
Health Business
IT Wales

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Professional development

The MRS programme of research training and qualifications is one of the most comprehensive in the world. Throughout 2008–09, MRS continued to build on its strong international foundations to such an extent that its training and qualifications were accessed by individuals from more countries than ever before.

Qualifications

- During 2008–09, 460 candidates participated in assessment for the MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice, an increase of 6% on the previous period. The overall average pass rate was 69%, the same as for 2007–08.
- A total of 97 candidates participated in assessment for the MRS Diploma in Market & Social Research Practice, an increase of 100% on the previous year. Seven candidates completed the qualification during the year.
- A total of 22 candidates registered for the MRS/City & Guilds Certificate in Market & Social Research.
- In addition to the UK, candidates from 17 other countries sat MRS Qualifications during 2008-09: *Australia, Belarus, Egypt, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam.*
- In February 2009, TNS held its second Knowledge Box

Course, a six-day intensive training course mapped against the MRS Advanced Certificate syllabus. It was held in Bangkok with 75 attendees from all over the Asia Pacific region, creating a workforce with the full range of transferable research skills.

- An Ofqual Audit of MRS Qualifications was successfully conducted in April 2008. MRS received the draft Awarding Body Post-Monitoring Report in September; it detailed only eight accreditation conditions, the majority of which had already been completed.
- A new Annual Award was introduced by MRS in recognition of the best performance by a candidate in the MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice.
- New brochures for both the Advanced Certificate and the Diploma were designed and printed.

Training

Face-to-face training

- A total of 939 delegates attended 74 face-to-face training courses during 2008–09, a 15% increase in delegates on the previous period.
- Of the 74 courses, 13 were new topics which had been added to the MRS programme including: NLP, innovation, effective influencing skills, online

quantitative research and developing relationships using online panels.

- 72 international delegates, 8% of the total, from 24 different countries visited the MRS Training Suite for face-to-face courses:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Lebanon, Netherlands, Netherlands Antilles, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, USA, Ukraine and United Arab Emirates.

Online training

- There were 125 registrations for online training during 2008-09, a 6% increase on the previous year.
- Two new business skills courses were added to the training provision.
- Candidates from Belgium, Dubai, Spain and Romania accessed the MRS online courses.

In-company training

- A total of 29.5 days of in-company bespoke training was provided. This was attended by 378 training delegates, a 17% increase on the previous year.

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- The circulation of *Research* magazine rose to over 10,000 with significant growth from international client-side readers, increasing revenue and yield from corporate advertising.
- The magazine and website increased interaction with readers through a number of Web 2.0 channels. The *Research* Magazine Facebook Group and the website's Twitter feed have done much to increase traffic and communication with the domestic and international reader market.
- During 2008–09, the editorial and commercial teams commissioned a new website for *Research* which went live in June 2009. It is designed to harness the latest multimedia technology, cutting-edge analytics and content maximisation tools to provide an enhanced and attractive service to a growing base of international readers. It will also ensure increased flexibility and functionality for advertisers, sponsors and media partners.
- Online traffic to research-live.com continued to rise with 60,000 unique visitors per month, representing a 50% increase on the previous twelve months.
- The *Research Buyer's Guide* continued to flourish with the 2009 edition containing over 630 company listings. The *Guide's* website added greater breadth of coverage by the inclusion of over 700 international companies. The circulation of the 2009 edition of the directory was again extended by inclusion of a further 600 senior client-side buyers, all of whom had a spend of between £0.5m and £5m.
- *Research 2009: The Annual Conference* offered a programme that provided a platform for a wide range of formats and content, which reflected the diversity of the sector and addressed the interests of the audience. The result was a conference which attracted over 750 attendees, produced for researchers by researchers, that stimulated, informed and entertained.
- Research Conferences produced six one-day events in 2008–09 on a range of topics. It continued to build on the reputation of established annual conferences on Online Research and Researching Children, and introduced new events on Diversity, The Green Consumer, and Financial Services Research.



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This summary of key financial information is extracted from the audited accounts for the year 2008–09.

A copy of the Statutory Report and Accounts which will be submitted to Companies House is available to MRS members on request.

	£'000 2008–09	£'000 2007–08
Summary Income and Expenditure Account		
Income		
Individual membership subscriptions	717	693
Company Partner Service	258	215
Publications & information services	1,846	1,825
Training & qualifications	611	583
Conferences & seminars	447	429
Other services	255	279
Total	4,134	4,024
Expenditure		
Cost of activities	1,329	1,304
Employment	1,839	1,742
Other administration less sundry income	699	788
Net financing charges & taxation	99	85
Total	3,966	3,919
Net surplus	168	105
Adjustment on property value	(222)	0
Contribution to reserves	(54)	105
Summary Balance Sheet		
Tangible assets	2,714	2,943
Net current liabilities	(23)	(110)
Long-term liabilities	(781)	(869)
Net Assets	1,910	1,964
Property revaluation reserve	217	439
Income & expenditure account	1,693	1,525
Reserves	1,910	1,964

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With members in more than 70 countries, MRS is the world's largest association serving all those with professional equity in provision or use of market, social and opinion research, and in business intelligence, market analysis, customer insight and consultancy.

MRS has a diverse membership of individuals at all levels of experience and seniority within agencies, consultancies, support services, client-side organisations, the public sector and the academic community.

It also serves MRS Company Partners – agencies, suppliers of support services, buyers and end-users – of all types and scale who are committed throughout their organisations to supporting the core MRS values of professionalism, research excellence and business effectiveness.

In consultation with its individual members and Company Partners, MRS supports best practice by setting and enforcing industry standards. The commitment to uphold the MRS *Code of Conduct* is supported by the Codeline service and a wide range of specialist guidelines.

MRS contributes significantly to the enhancement of skills and knowledge by offering various qualifications and membership grades, as well as training and professional development resources.

MRS enables its members and Company Partners to be very well informed through the provision of a wide range of publications, information services and conferences.

MRS offers many opportunities for meeting, communicating and networking across sectors and disciplines, as well as within specialisms.

As 'the voice of market research', MRS defends and promotes research in its advocacy and representational efforts.

Through its media relations and public affairs activities, MRS aims to create the widest possible understanding of the process and value of market, social and opinion research, and to achieve the most favourable climate of opinion and legislative environment for research.

Officers 2008–09

President Jeremy Bullmore

Vice President Simon Lidington

Council

Chairman Rowland Lloyd

Honorary Secretary–Treasurer Raz Khan

Members

Rupert Anderton | Crispin Beale | Nikki Bell | Susan Blackall
Sue Brooker | Geoff Gosling | Vanella Jackson | Tara Lyons
Rob Sheldon | Richard Sheldrake | Leslie Sopp
Alan Wilson | Alex Wright

Lists of those serving on MRS Committees, Advisory Boards and Task Forces are available on the [MRS website](#).

The Market Research Society

(Limited by Guarantee) Company Number 518685

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