

# WHO SPEAKS FOR THE SOCIETY OF AUTHORS?



This policy document aims to clarify who speaks for the Society of Authors (SoA) and in which circumstances:

- For the avoidance of doubt, the only social media accounts that speak for the SoA are the authorised SoA organisation accounts.
- All social media posts made by anyone else on personal accounts, including staff and volunteer officeholders, are made in a personal capacity and do not represent the views of the SoA.
- Volunteer office-holder roles include the role of President, Chair, Management Committee, group committee members and chairs, fellows, trustees or judges.

## WHEN ARE PEOPLE SPEAKING FOR THE SOA

Staff and volunteer officeholders who speak or write in a public forum are doing so in a personal capacity. They are only authorised to speak on behalf of the SoA in specific circumstances, which are:

- When the individual has been fully briefed by the SoA;
- When the content has been first published via authorised media releases such as the SoA communications channels and/or in the media;
- When it is explicit in the communication that the individual is speaking on the behalf of the SoA.

Staff and volunteer officeholders might hold multiple roles for different organisations (paid or unpaid) and therefore we advise them that a disclaimer is used on all social media accounts in order to reduce the risk of people interpreting statements made as being representative of the SoA's position on a particular matter.

Volunteer officeholders should always make it clear when they are speaking in a personal capacity and when they are speaking on behalf of the SoA or another organisation. To protect our staff and officeholders, we ask that anyone speaking on behalf of the Society of Authors has an audit trail for their comments.

**If providing a quote for the press or responding to member communications:** volunteer officeholders should clear all quotes or responses with the SoA before writing on behalf of the SoA. We suggest that you ask all press to put their questions in writing and to send you the quotes they intend to use for sign-off. No responses should

## *Who Speaks for the Society of Authors?*

be given to the press by phone and no comments should ever be given 'off the record.' Having this strict policy protects everyone from misquotes and misunderstandings.

**If speaking on behalf of the SoA:** volunteer officeholders should always be fully briefed by senior SoA staff in advance. SoA staff will provide briefing papers by email.

We will often invite volunteer officeholders, members and supporters to help raise awareness in their personal capacity by sharing SoA-published content, messaging, and campaigns, all of which include links to signpost back to the content on the SoA website. These posts do not speak *for* the SoA but help spread awareness *about* our work for authors.

The SoA does not police the internet and has no desire to restrict use of online platforms or free expression in a personal capacity. Our approach to Freedom of Expression is below. However, we do request that all members, and anyone who interacts on SoA business, comply with our [Dignity and Respect Policy](#).

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

SoA membership includes authors from every background, working at every career stage, in every genre, who between them are driven by a full spectrum of experience and opinion. We support all members in their business as authors, regardless of what they believe or create as long as it is lawful. Our approach to protecting freedom of expression and preventing harassment and threats is as follows:

1. We support the [Book and Publishing Industry's Professional Values](#).
2. We support the right of all authors to hold and express opinions. See our position on [Freedom of Expression](#).
3. We condemn violence and the threat of violence unequivocally.
4. We condemn any kind of racist or hate speech.
5. We request professional behaviour from SoA members when interacting with the SoA and others on SoA business. If SoA service users are concerned about any member's behaviour in relation to SoA business activities, they should complain under our [Dignity and Respect Policy](#).
6. We do not get involved in individual debates or disputes between authors outside of SoA business activities.
7. We do not speak out publicly on individual cases, unless we choose to do so, in cases where there is a principle that will affect all authors and we have permission to reference that individual case.
8. We deplore bullying, trolling and personal attacks on authors. We provide individual guidance on dealing with [online abuse, harassment and bullying](#).
9. On request from members who are targeted, we will always, where appropriate, provide private, individual support and guidance -- both emotional and practical - including correspondence with publishers.

## USEFUL DEFINITIONS

### SOA OFFICEHOLDERS

Officeholders could include, but are not limited to:

- Staff (permanent, temporary and freelance)
- Volunteer officeholders such as:
  - The Chair and members of the SoA Management Committee (Board)
  - Chairs and members of SoA group and network committees
  - Those in honorary positions (President and SoA Fellows)
  - Charity trustees
  - Prize and grant judges and assessors

### ONLINE PLATFORMS

This policy covers all methods of communication, whether via email or telephone, online platform, via a news outlet, in the press or when speaking with journalists. By online platforms, social media or social networking sites, we mean any online environment that facilitates discussion, whether publicly or within a closed community. These could include, but are not limited to:

- X (previously Twitter)
- Meta (previously Facebook)
- Mastadon
- Facebook Threads
- Public and private Facebook groups, including those facilitated by the SoA
- Instagram
- Discord
- Subreddits
- Comment threads
- Discussion forums, including those hosted on the SoA website