The last year has been an exciting time to be part of Informa.

Informa entered 2023 well placed, thanks to the decisions and actions taken in previous years, and the progressive reopening of the world after the pandemic.

Notably, the Board and leadership team had taken the decision to fully focus the business on Academic Markets and B2B Markets, divesting Informa’s Intelligence portfolio to enable the return of capital to shareholders and reinvest in growth initiatives for the benefit of all of Informa’s stakeholders. As a focused business with a clear growth strategy and strong balance sheet, facing into more normalised customer markets, Informa really fired on all cylinders during 2023; fantastic to see after the challenges the company had to manage in prior years.

Specialisation and scale
The underlying business performed strongly and consistently in all areas in 2023. We expanded further in geographic growth markets, with a particular highlight being our Tahaluf partnership business in Saudi Arabia. This is going from strength to strength as the Kingdom diversifies its industries and invests in bringing new jobs and international connections to the region: all goals that B2B events support well.

As many readers will know, adding complementary businesses that operate in attractive specialist markets is an established part of Informa’s approach to growth and building scale, and this was a particular feature of 2023.

Thanks to our strong financial position and the proceeds of 2022’s divestments, we took the opportunity to add scale in several specialist markets, welcoming excellent brands and talent in Aviation and Packaging from Tarsus, in Foodservice from Winsight, in Tech Research from Canaly, in Healthcare Tech from HIMSS, in Life Sciences from LSK and in Scientific and Medical Research from Future Science Group over the course of 2023.

For several years, Informa has been building its position and capabilities in digital services that serve B2B customers. This accelerated during the pandemic, and when much business activity moved online, the company took the decision to invest in its first-party data platform IIRIS and in the specialist businesses NetLine and Industry Dive.

2024 began with an announcement that signifies the next step in Informa’s progress in B2B Digital Services: a proposed combination of the digital businesses in Informa Tech with US-listed TechTarget. This is subject to satisfying customary approvals and conditions, but is an exciting development that demonstrates Informa’s ambition and capacity for further scale and growth in the years to come.

Investment and returns
For a business like Informa, ongoing investment in brands, products and platforms is key to delivering a great experience and value for customers. This has been a focus under the 2021-2024 Growth Acceleration Plan - known as GAP 2 - which is the structured, six-part programme through which we are delivering our growth strategy. It will continue to be a focus in 2024 and beyond, including the further deployment of new technology and generative AI-based tools where they can improve customer experience or help the business and our experts be more efficient.

We have also invested in accelerating shareholder returns to match the business’s accelerated performance and share a good balance of the benefits of growth with investors.

Having restored ordinary dividends in the middle of 2022, we have confirmed a dividend of 18p for 2023, a year-on-year increase of over 80%. The share buyback programme initiated in early 2022 was further extended in 2023, based on positive feedback from investors on this approach.

Change and resilience
When I look at the broader world, the landscape that businesses like Informa are operating in is varied and changeable. Sadly, there is conflict in some areas of individual countries, although thankfully this is not directly impacting Informa’s offices or operations. In some markets, inflation and cost of living pressures remain high, but in other markets, we are seeing good levels of growth, investment and innovation.

This makes it as important as ever to stay close to what is happening in our markets and with customers, take an agile approach and keep focusing on the areas of greatest opportunity, all of which I know Informa colleagues do well.

The company is well diversified by geography, customer market and product, and has a built-in level of resilience that comes from delivering on its purpose: providing must-have knowledge and connections that help specialist markets, and the customers operating in them, succeed.

Opportunity and thanks
Informa is a very enjoyable company to be a part of and contribute to, and this is one of the most exciting periods in its development.

The business is not only in a strong position today, consistently delivering on its commitments to shareholders, customers, partners and colleagues; it is also moving forward with pace, ambition and confidence.

Thank you to the shareholders I have met over the last year at Informa’s AGM, the Chair’s annual roadshow or in other forums for the open exchange and the engaged and constructive support shown to the company and its leadership team.

And thank you to all of the colleagues at Informa, whose enthusiasm, professionalism, talent and skill make it all possible.

John Rishton
Chair
7 March 2024

Long-term success and Section 172
Informa’s Board is committed to performing all the duties set out in section 172 of the Companies Act 2006. These include promoting Informa’s success for the benefit of its members as a whole by considering the long-term consequences of decisions, the interests of colleagues, customers and partners and the impact of our operations on the community and environment.

Full information on how we performed these duties can be found in the Board’s year (pages 96 to 101) and in our Section 172 Statement on page 102.
2023 was a standout year for Informa by any measure. Our financial performance was strong; we invested in improving our products and serving customers in new ways; we added high-quality brands and businesses that have expanded our positions in the specialist markets we focus on; and our performance on sustainability and environmental, social and governance measures was again well recognised.

As a point-in-time snapshot, it is positive and encouraging. For everything that went into creating such a strong and successful year, my deep thanks go to all Informa colleagues. But just as importantly, our 2023 performance reflects the outcomes of decisions and actions taken over the course of the last decade. Informa has progressively become a higher-quality and a higher-growth business, and we are confident that there are further opportunities ahead and more to come for our customers, partners, colleagues and shareholders.

We have a clear strategy. Informa is a growth business, and creating accelerated growth through building scale in our chosen specialist markets has long been our focus. The pandemic interrupted and tested the Group, bringing significant disruption to some areas of our business for a prolonged time, as well as challenges to many of our personal and professional lives. But that period also enabled us to look again at the value of our first-party data, expand and invest in our digital services, be creative and flexible in how we serve customers, reassess the markets we were in and double down on the markets where we see the best long-term potential for growth and leadership.

Informa also has a clear focus and operating model. After successfully divesting our intelligence portfolio in 2022, we entered 2023 focused on Academic Markets, where we deliver specialist academic research, advanced learning and open research through Taylor & Francis, and B2B Markets, where we deliver live and on-demand events and digital services through Informa Markets, Informa Connect and Informa Tech.

We are a leader in both areas, with the opportunity and the ambition to do more. Early in 2024, we have illustrated this ambition through our agreement to combine the digital businesses of Informa Tech with US-listed TechTarget, to build a leading platform in B2B Digital Services. The proposed combination will create a new TechTarget, listed on Nasdaq, in which Informa will have a 57% ownership position. This is of course subject to customary conditions and approvals, but it represents one of the further growth opportunities we see ahead and reflects the confidence and ambition with which we are entering 2024.

**Strong and performing businesses**

Each of our four divisions performed well in 2023 and has clear further growth opportunities ahead.

In Academic Markets, Taylor & Francis delivered another year of consistent growth, with total revenues of £619m and underlying revenue growth of 3.0% (2022: 3.0%).

Taylor & Francis has transformed since our first Growth Acceleration Plan (GAP 1) in 2014 and is a higher-quality business, a more digital business and, increasingly, a more customer-focused business, centred around researchers and knowledge makers.

Over that time, we have consistently invested in platforms and technology that make research more discoverable and easier to apply, maximising its impact and value. We have progressively established a strong position in the growing area of open research too, adding businesses and expanding our capabilities. And in common with all parts of the Group, we have deliberately focused on specialist subject categories where output and demand for expert research are growing, such as in medicine and education.

In 2023, pay-to-read subscriptions to research remained resilient, the volume of open research published continued to grow and our advanced learning business performed consistently, with ongoing investment into our digital books platform supporting customers’ continuing shift towards ebooks and other digital formats.

Across our B2B Markets businesses, we delivered an aggregate underlying revenue growth of nearly 40% in 2023. This significant rate of growth reflects strong demand for our major brands as markets progressively reopened after the pandemic, coupled with the long-term decisions we have taken to operate in specialist markets that have good growth characteristics.

At the start of the year, it was not clear when, or how quickly, Mainland China and Hong Kong would reopen for travel and live B2B events. That process began in April and was felt most keenly in Informa Markets, as one of the largest operators of exhibitions in China. The pace at which live events restarted, and the strength of demand from businesses to get back to exhibiting and trading in person, underlines the unique value of what we offer, particularly in a world that is increasingly communicating and interacting online. Our performance prompted us to raise our revenue expectations and market guidance three times during 2023.

Elsewhere in Informa Markets and in Informa Connect – our content-led live and on-demand B2B events business – part of our ongoing growth comes from our investment in improving the customer experience and expanding our range of services. This is helping to maintain and increase the benefits and value we deliver to customers, as we will come on to.

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One of the exhibition halls at LEAP 2023, a global tech event held in Riyadh that brought together over 150,000 local and international tech professionals, start-ups, investors and innovators.
Group Chief Executive’s Review continued

As many shareholders will know, in late 2021, we took the decision to divest our Intelligence portfolio, and this too is a significant factor in the opportunities and choices we have today. We invested in our intelligence businesses significantly during GAP 1, improving products and platforms, refocusing on customer benefits and service and successfully turning around performance from sharp decline to consistent growth. This created a high-performing, high-quality portfolio of businesses, but in 2021, we reached the conclusion that there were limited opportunities here to further scale our positions compared with Academic and B2B Markets. We completed the divestment of our Intelligence businesses during 2022, realising a gross value of almost £2.5bn, and have invested the proceeds in a range of ways that strengthen and expand our business and set us up for future growth.

Growth through product and customer investment

In the markets in which Informa operates, to stand still is to move backwards. Investing in our brands, products and platforms has been a consistent feature of the company over the last decade, to keep pace with market and technology developments and continue delivering benefits and value to our customers. These investments are also part of driving future growth. In Academic Markets, one of the areas we have focused on is making our publishing processes more efficient and effective through technology, particularly for open research. This helps us to better serve researchers by getting their work published more quickly and means we can accept higher volumes of submissions, expanding our specialist content and titles.

As recent examples, in 2023 Taylor & Francis piloted technology that screens and identifies duplicate submissions more efficiently and accurately, helping maintain the integrity of the publishing process as we expand. We also introduced an article transfer service across a network of over 50 journals, helping researchers find the right journal for their work and maximising the original, peer-reviewed content we publish.

In B2B Markets and since the return of live events after the pandemic, we have prioritised investments that enhance customer experience and maximise their return on investment. Technology, including existing and newer forms of AI, is creating new ways to extend the value customers get from the connections they make and knowledge they gain at and around live events.
Group Chief Executive’s Review

We are both embedding digital features into live events to drive greater customer value, as shown on pages 46 and 47, and launching new digitally enabled products that support event brands. Recent examples funded by our GAP 2 investment programme include Beacon Discovery, a platform that helps distributors and buyers discover and engage with new suppliers and products in the specialist Natural Products market. Similarly, Informa Connect is expanding its leading partnering platform, which enables biotech companies to find investors and schedule in-person meetings at our events, into a year-round matchmaking and investment partnering service.

At the heart of what we are doing in B2B Markets, and fundamental to our future growth opportunities, is data. We took the decision in 2021 to invest in IIRIS, our first-party B2B customer data platform, because we could see a considerable opportunity from better capturing, enriching, analysing and using the data generated when customers interact with our brands in live settings, at on-demand events, when using our specialist media and content sites or product platforms, and so on.

This remains a focus and driver for Informa and we look to roll out IIRIS to all the B2B brands that join the company through addition and combination. It allows us to market our products better, expand our audience, improve customer experience, and develop new digital services based on access to permissioned first-party B2B data. One recent example that has been well received by customers is Lead Insights, described on page 36.

Growth through business addition and combination

Over the last decade, through business growth and addition, Informa has progressively built leadership positions in Academic Markets and B2B Markets, in live and on-demand B2B events, research publishing and specialist research. But these remain relatively fragmented markets, and so we continue to see opportunities to grow and make the most of our scale platforms by adding businesses, brands and portfolios to the Group.

In 2023, the capital available from the proceeds of divesting our Intelligence business, growth from the underlying business and our strong financial position allowed us to further invest in expanding our positions in specialist markets and categories. In Academic Markets, this included expanding in scientific and medical research by bringing Future Science Group into Taylor & Francis. In B2B Markets, we added Tarsus to the Group in the second quarter: a very complementary portfolio of event brands that has added to our positions in Aviation and Anti-Ageing and brought new positions in markets like Packaging.

Through Informa Connect, we have built a position in the B2B Foodservice market and expanded this in 2023 with the addition of Winsight, enabling us to support the food, restaurant and hospitality groups more comprehensively through live events and specialist media, research and data. And in Informa Tech, we welcomed the Tech research business Canalysis later in the year. Canalysis has a particular strength in research on the international Channels market, making it an excellent complement to our Omdia business.

Over time, we have built considerable expertise in identifying high-quality, well-run businesses and brands that take a similar approach to serving customers and have a complementary culture to ours. We have also developed our capabilities so that when we combine businesses, we do it in a way that brings value to those brands and to Informa, and this will continue to be a feature of our growth and development in the years ahead.

Growth through continued progress on sustainability

At Informa, we approach sustainability in the same way we do any other part of our business. We have progressively built, invested in and improved our sustainability capabilities and performance over the course of a decade, focusing on the areas that matter most and deliver the most benefits to customers, shareholders, colleagues and the business.

There are many initiatives underway and embedded in our business, and our long-term targets are encapsulated in the FasterForward programme: an established part of GAP 2.

There is no end point when it comes to sustainability, and as both expectations and possibilities increase, we are focused on continuous improvement and progress. We expanded our Sustainable Events Fundamentals programme in 2023 to cover more brands and introduce even more ambitious standards on environmental, social, community, product and governance matters. Better Stands, which targets waste and carbon at live events, has rolled out to all our geographic markets and is now being piloted by the wider events industry too. Both programmes are described in more detail in the FasterForward section.

Across our operations, products and community activities, we are performing well and with consistency. This continues to be recognised by index providers and analysts. Informa ranked in the BDI World Index for the sixth consecutive year in 2023 and received an AAA ESG rating from MSCI, the highest possible level and an upgrade on our previous AA rating.

Growth through talent and culture investments

Behind all our sustainability activities, business addition and combination programmes, product creation and innovation, customer insight and customer service lie over 12,000 colleagues. Great talent, distinctive culture, and the commitment and contribution of colleagues everywhere really make the difference to everything we do as a company today and want to achieve in the future.

As a colleague myself, I know that it comes down to making Informa a great place to work and keeping it so, by investing in the experience of life at Informa; by listening to and acting on ideas and feedback; by supporting and encouraging diversity of perspectives and experiences; by creating opportunities for personal and professional success; and by sharing the benefits of company growth with those who make it possible.

This is a shared responsibility that leaders at all levels in the company have, and it is often one of the real pleasures of life at Informa too. It was fantastic to be named as a top 20 UK place to work in early 2024 in an independent survey of colleagues by Glassdoor, and there is more investment in key investments and activities on pages 32 to 35.

Future growth and opportunity

We have entered 2024 confident of and committed to further growth, and with that comes the opportunity for further investment in shareholder returns too. We are on course to complete the £1,150m share buyback programme during the first quarter of 2024, which began in 2022 as a way to share a portion of the value created by divesting our Intelligence portfolio. The Board has approved a year-on-year increase in the dividend of over 80%, and I would echo the Chair in thanking shareholders for the ongoing support shown to the company last year and in all recent years.

However, we are well aware that the future is just as important, if not more important, to many shareholders: the opportunities that this company has to go further, and how we make the most of the scale and leadership positions we have created so far. That is our clear focus as a leadership team and Board for 2024 and beyond, and I look forward to sharing and reporting back on our progress.

Stephen A. Carter
Group Chief Executive
7 March 2024