“WE’re ENERGIZED, we’re growing, and we’re on the cusp of new things,” reports Acey Welch ’53, president of the Alumnae-i Network for Harvard Women (ANHW; harvardwomen-sig.com). The two-year-old Shared Interest Group (SIG) has grown fivefold since its founding, to a membership of more than 500; recently incorporated as a nonprofit organization; and in December drew a full house of more than 200 to campus to hear a cross-disciplinary faculty panel discuss new research and continuing concerns about the role of women in leadership positions, in media coverage, and at home. (For audio coverage of the event, co-sponsored with the Harvard Alumni Association, visit https://soundcloud.com/harvard/beyond-balance-womens.)

ANHW’s roots have a cherry-red tinge: some of its DNA derives from the Committee for the Equality of Women at Harvard, set up in 1993 by concerned Radcliffe alumnae (many from the classes of 1953 and 1958) who sought a significant increase in tenured women, and equity for all women, at Harvard. But the reference to “alumni” in the SIG’s name is neither accidental nor wishful. “We have male members and we’d like more,” Welch says. “We feel this is important in discussing issues of particular concern to women.”

The new SIG “aims to develop a vibrant intergenerational community of Harvard and Radcliffe alumni/ae designed to increase and strengthen Harvard women’s presence, voices, and leadership within Harvard and the larger society.” Its officers reflect that intergenerational focus: secretary Alexa Ing Stern ’12 and treasurer J. Robin Umbley, A.L.M. ’13, are Welch’s juniors by decades. “Many recent members are younger alums,” she says. “That delights us, because we’re reaching out to that age group. The majority of our members range from the 1980s to 2014; we have a good showing from the 1950s, and fewer from the ‘60s and ‘70s. There are members from the schools of education, law, design, and business, and roughly 7 percent of our group is international, including members from Europe, Central America, Asia, Africa, and Micronesia.” Advice from the HAA on coordinating national and global activities, along with its technical guidance, Welch notes, are enabling ANHW’s far-flung members to build stronger connections with each other; efforts to set up regional chapters are in the works, and Welch says the SIG expects to have a presence on Facebook and LinkedIn very soon: “Check our website on that, and for updates on an event planned for late April.”

As one of multiple Harvard groups focused on women’s concerns, ANHW seeks in particular to “[expand] societal definitions of leadership and success to acknowledge the value of women’s contributions and leadership styles in traditional and nontraditional realms, including both paid and unpaid work.” Welch points to a possibly larger role, too: as a real network building connections among those SIGS “to make the discussion more universal, to develop a more unified focus and so be more successful in getting our message to the wider world.” Participation will be key. “It’s important to become a member,” she adds. “Because when we can say our membership is 3,000—that carries some weight.”

For a complete list of SIGs, visit http://alumni.harvard.edu/haa/clubs-sigs/sigs-directory.