# Conference Group Meeting Minutes

## Thursday 19th January 2023 @ 10:00 - Online

# Summary of New or Outstanding Actions

* ACTION: *Chair to update member roles and responsibilities list and send out via Conference Group Jiscmail. ✓*
* ACTION: Grace and Funmike to look at materials from last year’s speaker briefing sessions and develop a plan for new speaker briefing sessions. Grace/Funmike to put a call out to Conference Group in they need help with this task.
* ACTION: Chris Bradford offered to look for last year’s Speaker briefing materials and send to Grace and Funkmike. ✓
* **ACTION**: Chair to email Catherine with authorisation to officially book the Exchange as the conference venue.
* ACTION: Catherine to coordinate with appropriate person at Birmingham to pay the venue and claim the money back from the Mercian Collaboration, via Helen Curtis (Treasurer).
* ACTION: Team asked to hold the conference date - 7th Sept 2023 - in their calendars.
* ACTION: NBF to publicise conference date as appropriate.
* ACTION: Conference Planning Group may be expected to be onsite prior to conference start time of 9:30am, so team asked to discuss with their respective Directors the possibility of staying over in a hotel on the night before the conference, particularly if not based near Birmingham.
* ACTION: (As Birmingham-based members) Dave, Grace, Andrea and Catherine to collate hotel suggestions for delegates and Conference Group members.
* ACTION: Chair to look at last year’s schedule and develop proposed timeline of 2023 conference tasks.
* ACTION: Catherine and Andrea to ask venue for proposed deadlines for delegate numbers and catering.
* ACTION: Chair to send updated sponsorship policy document to Paul, Jodie and NBF.
* ACTION: NBF to post updated sponsorship policy on website.
* ACTION: NBF to collate info on conference themes & dates of other collaborations: ALN, M25, WHELF and SHELF and send to Chair?
* ACTION: Matt to send out a copy of Gaz’s old conference comparison document for Conference Group to read. ✓
* ACTION: NBF to send last year’s call for sponsor to Paul and Jodie✓
* ACTION: Paul and Jodie to hold a meeting to discuss how they will approach sponsors and develop the wording for this year’s call for sponsors (to be sent out by end of February 2023 at the latest).
* ACTION: Paul and Jodie to discuss if they wish to send the call for sponsors from the Mercian Conference gmail account. If so, contact NBF for access to the account.
* ACTION: Chair to create padlet for sponsor suggestions.
* ACTION: Group asked to contribute sponsor suggestions.
* ACTION: Speaker Liaisons, Grace and Funmike to make a start at looking at the call for papers - Delegate bookings expected to open in early June 2023.
* ACTION: Andrea, Catherine, and Michelle to check with venue – if 120 delegates attend, how many exhibitors can the sponsor space hold? (The answer to this, will determine if we need to limit the number of sponsors).
* ACTION: Chair to create padlet for keynote speakers approaches and panel suggestions.
* ACTION: Team asked to contribute sensible suggestions for keynote speaker and panel members, and upvote other good suggestions.
* ACTION: Chair to contact Helen Curtis to see if she would be interested in returning to be part of the panel.
* ACTION: Chair to create and send doodle poll for next meeting in late Feb/early March.
* ACTION: NBF to add Michelle to Jiscmail list ✓
* ACTION: New members of the Conference Group to send NBF a photo for inclusion on conference group members webpage.
* ACTION: NBF to update Conference Group webpage with new members, updated roles and photos as necessary.
* ACTION: Chair to update schedule of when tasks need to be completed.

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# 23/01 Welcome and Apologies

Group welcomed to Conference Group meeting. All members introduced themselves and chair ran through apologies.

**Present**: Laura Newman (Chair, Loughborough), Ruth Houghton (Vice Chair, Cranfield), Matt Cunningham (MSDG liaison, Loughborough), Chris Bradford (Warwick), Andrea Kellett (Birmingham), Grace Troth (BCU), Katie Abranson (Cranfield), Dave Palmer (Aston), Michelle Mayer (Coventry), Paul Cavanagh (Nottingham), Emily Wild (Worcester), Jo-Anne Watts (Steering Group Sponsor, Wolverhampton), Jodie Heap (Staffordshire), Natalie Baker-Fosker (Mercian Collaboration),

**Apologies:** Catherine Robertson (Birmingham), Funmike Ifie (Loughborough)

# 23/02 Matters arising from previous meeting

None. All previous actions completed.

# 23/03 Member Roles and responsibilities confirmed

Chair welcomed newest group members and tweaked member roles slightly to accommodate gaps in group responsibilities.

* Dave Palmer - previously listed as Speaker Liaison - unable to attend on day of conference so swapped to Communications and Programme Liaison.
* Grace swapped to Speaker Liaison.
* Michelle Mayer (new member) to be tasked with assisting Venue Co-ordinators.

#### Action: Chair to update member roles and responsibilities list and send out via Conference Group Jiscmail ✓

# 23/04 Conference themes discussion

Team thanked for their contributions to the Padlet. Chair noted that some suggestions were a little too niche as standalone topics but could potentially be included as sessions under one of the following overarching topics:

* Learning from others – Collaboration and cooperation between library and external bodies
* Putting change into action – including decolonisation etc
* Future of libraries and staff – looking at recruitment and staff development

Chair asked team for their preferences, prompting discussion on the topics suggested.   
General consensus was that the “Future of libraries and staff” and “Putting change into action” themes are broad enough themes with universal appeal and could be easily merged.

It was suggested that the strapline “Future of libraries and staff” seems to have negative connotations, whereas “Putting change into action” feels much more positive, therefore it was broadly agreed that the strapline “Putting change into action” would be put forward to the Directors Board in March 2023 by Joanne (Steering Group Liaison).

Chair noted her concerns at waiting two months for approval from the March Directors Board meeting, as she would like to pull forward the timeline of many tasks. E.g., the delegate bookings deadline needs to close earlier this year - to allow enough time to plan attendance at sessions and to inform venue of numbers for catering etc.

Joanne noted that the Directors are unlikely to reject the theme as it is so broad and can encompass many different related topics and discussions. Joanne gave an overview of the SCONUL conference she recently attended, where there was a lot of discussion and interest in widening recruitment in libraries.

# 23/05 Venue discussion

As Venue Co-ordinator, Catherine has previously sent the Conference Group two quotations for Birmingham based venues: - Edgbaston Hotel and The Exchange.   
Chair briefly went through the pros and cons of each venue.

* The Exchange:

Main room holds 120 delegates, plus 4 smaller breakout rooms that can hold between 12-26 delegates.

Separate area for lunch, which would double as an area for sponsors to setup a stall – delegates could visit sponsor stalls during coffee breaks.

Close to train stations and other public transport, but no car park.

The cheaper venue option.

Parallel streams would be much more complicated to plan with 4 simultaneous but small breakout sessions.  
Small breakout rooms might encourage new/nervous speakers.

* Edgbaston hotel:

Main room holds 120 delegates, plus 3 mediums-sized breakout rooms that can hold 30, 40 & 50 delegates respectively.

Has car park on site, but further away from public transport.

More expensive venue option.

UCU strike action could cause issues.

Team noted that due to the smaller breakout rooms, delegates would need to indicate first and second choice on session bookings, and Delegate Liaisons will have to manage their expectations on the day.

Chair noted that last year, we ran sessions online (in advance of the call for papers deadline), specifically designed to encourage new speakers to submit papers. Chair stated her desire to run similar sessions this year, which was agreed upon by the Speaker Liaison, Grace.

#### Action: Grace and Funmike to look at materials from last year’s speaker briefing sessions and develop a plan for new speaker briefing sessions. Grace/Funmike to put a call out to conference group in they need help with this task.

#### Action: Chris Bradford offered to look for last year’s Speaker briefing materials and send to Grace and Funkmike ✓

Following some discussion, team agreed that The Exchange was the more suitable venue option and chair confirmed that Mercian Treasurer, Helen Curtis has confirmed the venue expense is within budget.

#### Action: Chair to email Catherine with authorisation to officially book the Exchange as the conference venue.

#### Action: Catherine to coordinate with appropriate person at Birmingham to pay the venue and claim the money back from the Mercian Collaboration, via Helen Curtis (Treasurer)

Chair confirmed: Conference will be held on 7th September 2023 (approx 9.30 start)

#### Action: Team asked to hold the conference date – 7th Sept 2023 - in their calendars.

#### Action: NBF to publicise conference date as appropriate.

#### Action: Conference Planning Group may be expected to be onsite prior to conference start time of 9:30am, so team asked to discuss with their respective Directors the possibility of staying over in a hotel on the night before the conference, particularly if not based near Birmingham.

#### Action: (As Birmingham-based members) Dave, Grace, Andrea and Catherine to collate hotel suggestions for delegates and Conference Group members.

# 23/06 Planning schedules- call for papers, next meetings, conference dates/venue

Chair noted that the group is made up of many new members, who won’t necessarily know when tasks need to be completed. NBF suggested producing a Gantt chart to record the actions and the proposed timeline. Matt stated he has experience of creating Gantt charts be able to create one in excel if needed.

#### Action: Chair to look at last year’s schedule and develop proposed timeline of 2023 conference tasks.

#### Action: Catherine and Andrea to ask venue for proposed deadlines for delegate numbers and catering.

# 23/07 Sponsorship policy / Call for sponsors

Laura and Joanne have looked at and tweaked the sponsorship policy. Joanne confirmed that the Steering Board were not happy with increasing the cost of sponsorship.

#### Action: Chair to send updated sponsorship policy document to Paul, Jodie and NBF.

#### Action: NBF to post updated sponsorship policy on website.

Joanne noted that ALN’s June 2023 conference theme is quite similar to our suggested theme.

#### Action: NBF to collate info on conference themes & dates of other collaborations: ALN, M25, WHELF and SHELF and send to Chair?

It was noted that Gaz had once written a document comparing Mercian conferences with other similar collaborations. When the new Executive Officer is in post, they may be asked to collate a new comparison document.

#### Action: Matt to send out a copy of Gaz’s old conference comparison document for Conference Group to read ✓

#### Action: NBF to send last years call for sponsor to Paul and Jodie ✓

#### Action: Paul and Jodie to hold a meeting to discuss how they will approach sponsors and develop the wording for this year’s call for sponsors (to be sent out by end of February 2023 at the latest)

Paul noted his preference to contact sponsors via the Mercian Gmail account. Chair noted previous issues with emails (Gmail) going into the sponsor organisations spam filter and noted that last year, the sponsor co-ordinator has used his own institutional email account.

#### Action: Paul and Jodie to discuss if they wish to send the call for sponsors from the Mercian Conference gmail account. If so, contact NBF for access to the account.

Chair noted her preference to secure a platinum sponsor as well as several gold, silver and/or bronze sponsors, And requested team’s suggestions for sponsors to approach.

#### Action: Chair to create padlet for sponsor suggestions.

#### Action: Group asked to contribute sponsor suggestions.

Call for papers

Chair noted that the call for papers should aim to go out in early March (at the latest).

The deadline for papers will closed in early May.

#### Action: Speaker Liaisons, Grace and Funmike to make a start at looking at the call for papers -

#### Delegate bookings expected to open in early June 2023.

#### Action: Andrea, Catherine, and Michelle to check with venue – if 120 delegates attend, how many exhibitors can the sponsor space hold? (The answer to this, will determine if we need to limit the number of sponsors).

# 23/08 Suggestions for Keynote speaker

Team asked for suggestions on keynote speaker(s) on theme of “Putting change into action”

#### Action: Chair to create padlet for keynote speakers approaches and panel suggestions

#### Action: Team asked to contribute sensible suggestions for keynote speaker and panel members, and upvote other good suggestions

Chair reminded team that keynote speakers are not expected to talk to free, but the budget for keynote speaker is modest so the fee needs to be reasonable.

Group discussed panel suggestions based on the conference theme -  
One suggestion included: women that have progressed fast – what decisions and actions have contributed to their career’s progression? Helen Curtis was suggested as potential panel member, albeit she is planning to leave her post within the Mercian Collaboration in March 2023 .

#### Action: Chair to contact Helen Curtis to see if she would be interested in returning to be part of the panel.

Chair confirmed that the Mercian conference will continue to be free for delegates to attend, therefore, we may need to limit places in the first instance.

# Next meeting

Chair noted that meetings will likely be every 6 weeks.

#### Action: Chair to create and send doodle poll for next meeting in late Feb/early March

#### Action: NBF to add Michelle to Jiscmail list ✓

# AOB

#### Action: New members of the Conference Group to send NBF a photo for inclusion on conference group members webpage

#### Action: NBF to update Conference Group webpage with new members, updated roles and photos as necessary✓

#### Action: Chair to update schedule of when tasks need to be completed

*Chair reminded group that each role will have time sensitive tasks and responsibilities at different times of year. Team agreed that everyone is happy with their roles, responsibilities and actions.*