



## Mercian Collaboration Directors Board

Thu 28th May: Reports

The following are reports, submitted for information for the Directors Board (28<sup>th</sup> May 2020, item 6). The Chair will take specific questions and consider actions, but it is not anticipated each report below will be discussed in depth.

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### a. Strategic Plan

A revised version incorporating suggested changes, and SIG improvements, was distributed to the Steering Group for consideration 12th Feb 2020. This was approved ([SG 20/01\(c\)](#)) and [made public](#). However, in the light of the Covid-19 outbreak, lockdown and anticipated sectoral financial challenges, the Steering Group has agreed the need to revisit, revise and update this document later this year.

### b. Key Operational Documentation

Following requests at Board two key documents were created by the Officer and approved by the Steering Group in early 2020. The [Tangible Values document](#) has been shared online. Both documents have been shared with the Board earlier in 2020. The **Risk Register** is currently with the Chair for revisions to planned mitigation, in the light of the Covid-19 crisis, and input from the Board is warmly invited to her.

### c. Annual Report 2019

Due to the lockdown period, the completion of this report was delayed, with currently the Chair's introduction remaining the only outstanding item. Notably, the 2020 report will likely focus on a very different environment and Collaborative activity than the previous year.

### d. Treasurer's Update

In lieu of a treasurer's report – these are the following key figures for the Collaboration's finances (correct to 22/May/2020), with thanks to Kim Hardingham at SCNU.

Income (2020):	£18,821.00.
Expenditure (2020):	£5,717.35
Current Balance:	£34,783.01 <sup>1</sup>
Estimated Minimum Expenditure (May-Dec/2020)	£5,963.12 <sup>2</sup>
Estimated Reserve 31/12/20 (for minimum expenditure):	£28,819.89

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<sup>1</sup> Figure includes reversal of accrual for Birmingham Conference 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Figure mainly accounts for officer's salary and phone costs, and absence of costs for physical events or travel expenses under lockdown operations. Comparable costs for the same period 2019 were £10,690, which included £3,828 towards conference hosting costs.

### e. Special Interest Groups

The most recent reports can be found in the recent Steering Group minutes ([SG 20/04, p4-5](#)) with earlier reports for the period Oct 2019-early March 2020 in the March Board Briefing Notes ([DB 20/06 p2-3](#)). A brief summary of activity follows.

<b>CG (Conference)</b>	As reported elsewhere, plans are underway to pivot #Mercian20 to an online only event, hosted 8 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2020. A <a href="#">call for session proposals</a> is now live.
<b>D&amp;SSG (Deputies)</b>	Plans for a virtual meeting (23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2020) are underway following a second successful event in March 2020.
<b>MarComms (Marketing)</b>	Limited current planned activity, though organisers remain responsive to enquiry.
<b>MCG (Copyright)</b>	While the mailing list has some activity, Group Chair is currently unresponsive so Collaboration Vice-Chair following up.
<b>MDF</b>	As their April meeting was cancelled due to lockdown, an online meeting was held Tue 26 <sup>th</sup> May 2020, minutes available soon. Topics discussed included: support for students with special needs under lockdown, plans for reopening, click to collect book services and potential conference support/contributions.
<b>MMF (Metadata)</b>	Active group, and while they have postponed an event in June are receptive to potential online activities.
<b>MSDG</b>	Postponed current events programme, with the exception of (1) Decolonising Academic Libraries (16 <sup>th</sup> June) and (2) the <a href="#">virtual networking pilot</a> (13 <sup>th</sup> May 2020). Conducted a survey of member staff, along with local rep discussions concerning 2020/21 programme: expected to embrace a hybrid (online/physical) approach. Handover to new chair (Sarah Pittaway, Worcester) underway, with an online meeting anticipated June/July 2020.
<b>RDMSG</b>	No currently visible or reported activity.

### f. MSDG Representation & Attendance

Incoming MSDG Chair Sarah Pittaway and outgoing Chair Matt Cunningham wished to bring the following concerns to the Directors' attention for feedback and guidance:

Group is lacking volunteers to take up essential posts (2 years) for *Admin Officer* and *Evaluation Officer*. These (along with Chair/Vice, which have been potentially filled<sup>3</sup>) were previously identified and agreed as essential for the Group and its programme to operate successfully. Despite calls for volunteers (twice) there have been no candidates willing to take on these roles. As a result, the options currently are:

- a) Disband SDG/put on hiatus if no one comes forward
- b) Pull names from a hat for these 2 roles

Either way, this situation ties into broader concerns around how member representatives' prioritise MSDG commitments within their own work commitments, as well as how Directors frame the group's importance with their local representatives. Two particular related concerns which may impact on the above issues are:

<sup>3</sup> Pending approval by the next group meeting June/July

**Attendance:** The Group has a lot of representatives not attending relatively regularly, sometimes missing multiple meetings in a year<sup>4</sup>. While they recognise all staff are likely busy, as an important group for staff development across the Collaboration the Group believe membership and involvement (attendance at meetings and engagement outside) should be a relatively high priority.

**Representation:** There are questions concerning if the right people are currently serving as group representatives<sup>5</sup>. Initially, representatives were drawn from the deputy directors and/or heads of service areas strata, but this is now more varied. The MSDG acknowledges there are benefits from group membership as a staff developmental opportunity. However, MSDG representatives need to have a good understanding of their entire service to provide updates, recognise staff training needs along with putting forward event programme ideas and identifying suitable colleagues to host events.

#### g. Member Event Participation Survey

A membership survey was conducted online during March/April, partly in support of the Staff Development Group's 20/21 programme of events. The survey also gathered information on delegates willingness to engage with online events and desires to travel to events. Respondents were also invited to attend a virtual networking pilot event. 50 member staff responded, and the [full report is now available](#).

#### h. Online Event Guides

The Officer has developed [guidance for organisers](#) as well as [information for participants](#) in online video conference events. This material has been developed in discussion with other collaborations' officers and is subject to update as a result of ongoing experience. It is available for re-use under a CC-BY licence (as is most Collaboration material).

#### i. Officer's Update

See also [report to Board March 2020](#).

Following the previous update, over and above his regular coordination, administration and governance work, during the lockdown period the Officer has been spending a lot of time facilitating and attending video meetings with the Steering Group, and other SIGs. These have notably included: the Conference, MSDG and MDF. Further meetings with the MSDG, Conference Group, and Deputies & Senior Staff Group are anticipated in the next few weeks.

The officer has acquired a licence for the Zoom platform, which is regularly being deployed to facilitate Collaboration meetings. He was instrumental in initiating and facilitating the recent video networking event ([13<sup>th</sup> May 2020](#)) and subsequent feedback analysis, which followed a survey on behalf of the MSDG on membership future event desires. A [report on this work](#) is now available. He will be co-hosting a second networking event (8<sup>th</sup> June 2020, in collaboration with the Conference Group Chair). He has created a range of [support documentation](#) relating to this, and has been handling queries relating to hosting online meetings.

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<sup>4</sup> Group normally holds 3 meetings annually

<sup>5</sup> Current representatives: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sdg/representatives> These are selected by each institution, according to their own internal processes and/or personal preferences.



GJJ also chaired the annual meeting of the Regional Library Collaboration Officers' forum (April 2020), where issues of mutual interest concerning developments across the UK were discussed. Despite the lack of travel in the past two months, the Officer remains close to or mildly over-capacity in terms of workload.

The Officer's second salary increment was implemented in spring 2019 (following the first adjustment in 2018), following work by Chair and Steering Group<sup>6</sup>. The annual review of Officer remuneration, remains an 'on request' action, rather than being incremental within scale, which is out of step with practice adopted by the other SCONUL regional officers (NoWAL and Northern Collaboration).

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<sup>6</sup> The Officer has been in post since November 2015