



## Mercian Collaboration Steering Group Meeting

Webcon, Fri 10<sup>th</sup> May 2019

**Present:** Diane Job (Chair, Birmingham), Chris Porter (Vice-Chair, Newman), Emma Walton (Loughborough), Simon Bevan (Cranfield), Gareth J Johnson (Development Officer)

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**Apologies:** Mark Toole (Treasurer, NTU)

### 19/07 Welcome & Briefing

#### a) Briefing & Telcon purpose

Diane welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted thanks to her PA Julie for setting up the video conference arrangements. She noted Mark was unable to attend at short notice, having only just joined the Steering Group (SG). Diane highlighted the SG's role in guiding the Collaboration's activities and operations, alongside taking a lead on its strategy direction, while acknowledging the Directors Board as the final decision-making body. She asked if, as last year, an annual face-to-face meeting of the SG would be useful, and this was generally agreed.

#### b) Development Officer Update

GJJ noted he had placed any items of significance or report on today's agenda, rather than providing a separate report.

### 19/08 Notes of previous meeting (14th Feb 2019)

#### a) Matters of accuracy

These were noted as accurate by Emma and Diane. All matters arising were on the agenda with the following exceptions

#### **SG:19/02(c): Conference payment**

The payment to Birmingham still remained outstanding. Diane noted finance systems at Birmingham had stopped until June, and hence this matter would remain unresolved until later this year.

#### **SG:19/02(f): Subscription fees at other collaborations**

Paul had agreed to discuss membership fees, banding & structures with NoWAL and NC treasurers, but it was unclear if that had happened. It was agreed this was something for Mark to follow up with Paul, and the other collaborations as necessary, and report back.

#### **SG:19/06 (b): Dave to share Brexit paper**

This had not happened and would need chasing up.

**ACTION: GJJ to chase Dave over Brexit paper distribution**

**ACTION: Mark to follow up discussions on other collaborations membership fees**

**ACTION: Diane, Mark and Emma to liaise over conference payment**

## 19/09 Governance

### a) Steering Group: Vacancies & Recruitment

Diane noted that Mark had approached GJJ and herself to offer himself as treasurer, and this had been accepted. GJJ noted he had put Mark in touch with Paul, as past treasurer, and had also notified SCOUNL. There was a brief discussion of whom might fill the final position on the SG, although noting some director posts were currently recruiting and this might have contributed to the difficulties in finding volunteers.

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**ACTION: Diane to directly approach directors who haven't been on the SG before to consider filling final representative place**

### b) Mercian Strategic Plan

The strategic plan had been previously discussed at the Board (Oct '18 and March 19), and at the SG for the past year. Notably, its alignment with SCOUNL's as yet unfinalized own strategic plan, remained unrealised. There was agreement reducing the word/page count would be useful, although the strategy's general configuration remained suitable. It was agreed meeting face-to-face to finalise this would be more effective than attempting offline or remote working on the document, and the chair proposed the next SG meeting be a physical gathering. This was agreed. Facilitating the involvement of SIGs would also likely be of help in shaping an effective, realistic and useful strategic plan.

**ACTION: All to review SCOUNL's strategic plan in relation to the Collaboration's draft  
ACTION: All to attend and collaborate on final strategic plan at next meeting**

### c) Treasurer's Update

Mark was unable to attend, and additionally the last finance update from SCOUNL was in February, so there was no update beyond what Paul had reported at the March Board. While there had not been any significant expenditure, it was agreed to action Mark to seek an update for the SG.

**ACTION: Mark to obtain update on Collaboration finances from SCOUNL**

Emma noted that the conference venue for 2019 (Nottingham) had declined to accept the Collaboration as a legal body, and as such all financial relations were facilitated through SCOUNL.

**ACTION: Conference payment fee payment arrangements to be documented Emma and Mark**

### d) MCDO Workloads & Priorities

GJJ's level of work has been an increasing issue of discussion at recent Boards, SG meetings and 1-2-1s with the previous and current chairs. The Collaboration's expansion means it is no longer practical for him to handle everything he previously has within the same hours (7/week). It had been agreed to explore in the longer-term revising the hours, any change to employment conditions represented an increased member financial cost and would need to be agreeable with the post-holder as well. While the chair would continue to provide a steer on core priorities, the SG discussed areas which could be deprioritised or apportioned out to reduce the burden. Potentially minute writing could be one area where PA or deputy support could be used, although minutes would be necessarily less discursive and inclusive. GJJ however, highlighted the importance within his role of interaction, liaison with and attendance at SIG committee meetings and events, in providing an overview of the Collaboration's ongoing activities. While no definitive answer was found, it was agreed to consider, offline, routes to better support GJJ.

**ACTION: All to consider areas where support could be found for aspects of GJJ's role**

#### e) RDMSG Committee & Chair Role

It had been noted in various discussions the RDMSG was an outlier in terms of lacking a singular chair. The group was unsure if they needed to reconfigure their current 'triumvirate' of co-chairs to be more inline with the normative Collaboration model. GJJ highlighted the productive level of output from the group, although expressed some concerns over their organisational transparency. It was noted while the MSDG previously used rotating chairs, the SG had strongly advocated for their adoption of a single chair model. This approach had been adopted by most SIGs and represented the normative standard for the Collaboration's groups.

However, while alternative SIG committee models may be effective it was agreed there was a need for clarification on how the RDMSG's three-person model worked, in terms of: term limits, succession planning and member representation. While Fiona was (in her prior capacity as sponsor) was seeking to talk to the group, potentially this might be more effective coming from the new sponsor (once appointed). GJJ noted he was hoping to meet with the RDMSG in the near future as well, to catch up on their future plans, and this may form part of the continuing conversation.

**ACTION: GJJ to update RDMSG of outcome of chair discussions**

**ACTION: New sponsor to liaise with RDMSG (and Fiona) on configuration and operations**

### 19/10 Activity Planning

#### a) Deputies/Senior Staff Group

While this had been discussed at the March Board ([DB: 19/05\(a\)](#)), there was still some uncertainty over the value, configuration and sustainability of forming such a SIG. SG members noted varied levels of interest within their own staff, as well as the huge variation in senior levels across the Collaboration. It was agreed in the first instance to ask the 'senior' staff at all institutions for their thoughts with respect to such a group. It was agreed that directors at each member institution would have a free hand in identifying which staff qualified for membership. Diane and GJJ would seek to facilitate any inaugural meeting, to ensure it aligned with the Collaboration's strategic direction, although a subsequent high level of autonomy was felt to be important for its sustainability, in line with the NoWAL exemplar.

**ACTION: GJJ and Diane to approach senior staff for opinions**

**ACTION: Diane and GJJ to facilitate inaugural meeting, if sufficient desire/need identified**

#### b) SIG Chairs and SG Meeting

Following Board approval ([DB: 19/06\(f\)](#)), this would be held coterminous with the next Steering Group meeting in August, where discussions around strategy and group overlap would provide a focus. It was also agreed that attendance by one representative from each group would be mandatory, ideally the group chair or their designate.

**ACTION: GJJ to notify group chairs and invite to August SG meeting**

#### c) Tangible Member Benefits

It had been agreed at the Board ([DB:19/03\(c\)](#)) to develop further documentation beyond the annual report on the Collaboration's outputs, to demonstrate the ROI for members' to stakeholders. GJJ agreed to draft the initial document in consultation with Diane.

**ACTION: GJJ to create draft tangible outputs document for the Collaboration**

#### d) Website SIG Edit Access

GJJ noted he had been approached by the RDMSG to have editing access over their pages, noting there may be a few technical challenges and possible fiscal ones to overcome. It was agreed in principle the SG was happy for SIGs to take ownership of editing their pages, although GJJ and the SG would need to ensure house-style and a sufficient level of professionalism was maintained. It was noted this might reduce some of the load on GJJ's time, although initially policing any developments would not. Should SIGs require further technical support or assistance, this would not currently be practical within GJJ's time.

**ACTION: GJJ to create style guidance documentation**

**ACTION: GJJ to provide edit access to group pages, where desired.**

#### e) RDMSG Webinar outline proposal

The RDMSG wished to develop some webinars for their community, which the SG noted as a great development. They had enquired if there was any technology within the collaboration available to facilitate this, and if not, would it be possible to acquire some. It was agreed that in the first instance the directors would be surveyed to see what was available, although technical issues (e.g. IP restriction to host institution) might prove challenging. However, it was agreed that this was worth investigating.

**ACTION: GJJ to survey directors on webinar platforms available for collaboration and SIG work**

#### f) CILIP Follow Up Discussions

Diane noted she had recently met with Nick Poole (CILIP CEO) at an event, and he had expressed an interest in meeting with the Collaboration directors. Noting the variance in interest in such a briefing at the March Directors Board, it was agreed that he be approached to speak at a future Board meeting rather than a special event.

#### g) SIG Sponsors

As this was a new SG, the SIG sponsors needed to be re-assigned. GJJ noted the positive feedback he had received from various groups on the roles and support received. These were agreed as follows:

- Conference Group (CG): Emma Walton
- Copyright Group (MCG): Chris Porter
- Mercian Disability Forum (MDF): Diane Job
- RDM Support Group (RDMSG): Simon Bevan
- Staff Development Group (MSDG): Chris Porter

As the SG remained one member short, and Mark was not present, it was agreed to allocate them to the still forming Marketing & Communications and Metadata groups over the coming months.

**ACTION: GJJ to update website and notify SIG chairs of new sponsors**

**ACTION: All sponsors to contact their group chairs for initial discussion**

### 19/11 SIG & Sponsor Updates

#### a) Staff Development Group (MSDG)

Matt has been collating opinions from all members' staff on the proposed programme for 19/20, and they would be meeting in June (26<sup>th</sup>) to begin preparations for the finalised events, with GJJ in attendance. In the meanwhile, various events had been hosted by the group around the region.

#### b) Conference Group (CG)

Emma reported planning was progressing well, the call for papers and sponsors were both live. A review meeting in June (17<sup>th</sup>) would be held to agree the papers for the conference. £1,200 in sponsorship had been confirmed, and the hope was more would be coming in.

c) Copyright Group (MCG)

Nothing new to report, although they would be meeting next at Aston in June (10<sup>th</sup>). GJJ anticipated being present.

d) Disability Forum (MDF)

There were no new developments since the report to the Board in March. However, they met 1<sup>st</sup> April and the minutes were pending distribution.

e) Marketing & Communications (M&C)

A stub entry for the group has been created, a meeting was to be held (17<sup>th</sup> May) between the core planning group, ahead of a formal first meeting was anticipated for later in the year.

f) Mercian Metadata Group (MMG)

This group also has a stub entry on website and have been populating their mailing list with representatives across the Collaboration. The core group (Richard, William and Ed) have been meeting and planning across email to revise their proposed activities the light of the Directors Board's feedback. They are also discussing organising a launch event for the group, later in the year.

g) RDMSG

It was noted Fiona had been trying to arrange a conversation with the group, and GJJ. GJJ had also met informally with one of their co-chairs ahead of today's meeting to catch up on their activities.

## 19/12 October 2019 Directors Board

a) Confirmation of Directors Board Arrangements

It had been previously confirmed that this would be held 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019, at Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, and that GJJ was coordinating with Emma Sansby over arrangements.

b) Speaker(s) for Board

As had been previously discussed ([SG: 19/03\(c\)](#) and above), an approach to the CEO of CILIP would be made as the principal choice for the meeting. It was agreed that the idea of the 'extra-ordinary' Directors Board previously suggested was not likely to be viable, and so the invite would be to the October meeting in Lincoln. Various ideas for potential alternates and future speakers were discussed, including reaching out to more significant and senior figures within the HE sector. These included representatives from WonkHE or the OFS, as well as directors of academic or significant national services from outside the region, for example. It was felt these individuals such as these could offer benefits to the Collaborations standing through attendance, as well as offering directors with valuable insight. Further suggestions should be sent to GJJ to note.

**ACTION: GJJ to send formal invite on behalf of Collaboration to Nick Poole of CILIP**

**ACTION: All to send suggestions of future speakers to GJJ**

## 19/13 AOB

a) Access & Participation Plan

There was a general discussion about libraries involvement in formulating these plans.

b) Director Attendance at Conference

Emma noted as in previous years the importance of Director attendance at the conference and asked that as many of the Steering Group as possible should aim to attend.

**ACTION: GJJ to send reminder to Directors to put conference date in diaries.**



c) Future Meetings

As noted above the next planned meeting (**10.30am, 14th August 2019**) will now be a face to face gathering, for which Diane and GJJ would make the arrangements. Dates for the meeting subsequent to the October Directors Board (Nov/Dec 2019) will be arranged via email. It was noted that the Skype format had been reasonably successful and would likely be used for future meetings too.

**ACTION: GJJ and Julie Swann to sort arrangements for final SG telcon of the year**