



Directors Board Meeting

Minutes, 10th Oct 2019, Bishops Grosseteste University

19/08 Apologies & Introductions

Page | 1

Present: Diane Job (Chair, Birmingham), Chris Porter (Vice-Chair, Newman), Mark Toole (Treasurer, NTU), Emma Walton (Steering Group, Loughborough), Sue Ackermann (Steering Group, Nottingham), Simon Bevan (Steering Group, Cranfield), Gaz J Johnson (Development Officer), Heather Whitehouse (Aston), Emma Sansby (host, BGU), Phil Brabban (Coventry), Dave Parkes (DMU), Gary Elliott-Cirigottis (OU), Paul Reynolds (Keele), Caroline Taylor (Leicester), Ian Snowley (Lincoln), Chris Powis (Northampton), Fiona Parsons (Wolverhampton), Heather Green (Warwick),

Guests: Nick Poole (CEO, CILIP), Andrew Grave (Employer Engagement Manager, CILIP)

Apologies: Robin Green (Warwick), Judith Keene (Worcester), Paul Mahoney (Staffordshire), Enid Pryce-Jones (BCU), Laura Pilsel (Harper Adams)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially those attending the Board for the first time. She also noted thanks to Emma Sansby for hosting the meeting.

The Chair highlighted Enid retires at the end of the month, and had indicated there would likely be an interim contact at BCU until arrangements were made for her successor. On behalf of the Collaboration, Diane noted thanks to Enid for her contributions and wished her well in her retirement. The Chair also referenced the recent appointment of Paul Mahoney at Staffordshire University, and while he was unable to attend today, she was looking forward to welcoming him to the next meeting. GJJ would be briefing Paul on the Collaboration in the near future.

The Chair added since Deb Finley had departed University College Birmingham, we no longer had a Director contact at the institution. This needed to be followed up with some urgency, not least because of the forthcoming 2020 subscription invoicing.

ACTION: Chair to arrange a formal thanks to Enid

ACTION: GJJ to approach UCB contacts to locate interim director representative

19/09 Guest Speaker: Nick Poole, CEO, CILIP

Diane welcomed Nick Poole and thanked him for coming to speak today. Nick gave a briefing around CILIP's current activities, but also looking to the next five years of their strategic agenda ('20-25). Nick's talk ranged through a variety of topics, including:

- **Values of libraries, librarians and CILIP** itself as a professional body, where achieving a continuity of skills and supporting change based on the commonality of skills within the profession was key. A position paper is coming in late October, launching a conversation about supporting members, as part of a shift towards a more 'activist CILIP'.

- **Developing equity as a principle at the heart of CILIP** and within the sector, transparent and accountable within our principles. Allied to this is work looking at overcoming poverty and understanding the experience of growing up 'information poor'. Socioeconomic background does impact on recruitment diversity and progression within the profession, making it a 'less equal' environment. This meant a need to meet evolving employer needs in a changing technological, social and cultural environment. This necessitated a pipeline for the profession and recruitment back to school age (~13y.o.) communities.
- **Developing and supporting the developing workforce**, in particular the 'leadership gap' with the degree of senior staff retiring in the next decade, and middle managers not progressing sufficiently to be suitable for these roles. They were also considering a strategy for the wider library (paraprofessional) workforce, including membership eligibility for library staff who haven't come up through the post-graduate study route. CILIP was also reviewing professional registration to better understand skills, needs and other aspects of the information and librarian professionalisation agenda.
- **Revising CILIP delivered training and development opportunities**, as they planned to synchronize all their various online training into a single package/environment. Allied to this was the long-overdue decentralisation of training and development out into the regions away from London, CILIP North in Leeds in being developed. A casualty of Brexit and austerity has been a reduction in CILIP members able/willing to attend events in London.
- **Working within a changing policy, information, technological and social environment** is a key challenge. There are wide impacts of Brexit recognised in terms of policy, talent, relationships and recruitment within the sector. Related to this has been increasing localised governance, decentralised and greater regional Independence structures. Understanding how to work with open knowledge, publishing challenges, and instigating solutions when they go beyond the bailiwick of the library.
- **CILIP's relationship with government** and policy, in particular grounding libraries in evidence base and the resultant impacts on government policy. In particular the library beyond 'infrastructure and books' and its role driving the information economy agenda, with managing information rather than technological prowess being key. But also, information vs digital literacy in terms of update and recognition within governmental policy

A healthy debate and discussion between the Directors and the CILIP representatives followed, exploring points of issue and synergy with respect to the Collaboration, specific member libraries and the wider SCOUNL agenda. How each organisation can learn from and share knowledge with the other represented an aspect of particular interest.

Importantly, Phil asked Nick what he wanted the Directors to take away as the key point, and also what the Collaboration could, ideally, do for CILIP? Nick identified that knowing where the skills, needs and gaps are within library organisations was of value to CILIP, as was learning from the Collaboration's shared experience. As a result, an ongoing dialogue would be valued to facilitate this exchange. The Chair agreed that a named point of contact between the organisations with regular interactions would be ideal.

Diane thanked Nick for a very interesting presentation, and the Directors for the robust debate. Nick noted he was talking to other collaborations, but the Mercian Collaboration was the first to formally invite him to talk with their governing body.

ACTION: GJJ and Diane to follow up with Nick on behalf of the Collaboration

ACTION: GJJ to arrange to distribute Nick's slides to the Directors

19/10 Strategic Plan

a) Update on progress

The Chair noted ([SG 9th Aug](#)) a successful meeting with the SG and SIG Chairs had driven this forward, although the document had yet to be finalised. SG would pick this up in Dec to hopefully agree the final plan and would share it with the Directors after this point. As Nick's discussions had some resonance, SG would aim to incorporate aspects of this and SCONUL's strategy in their thinking.

ACTION: Chair and SG to finalise Strategic Plan by Dec 2019

b) Tangible outputs & terms of reference

GJJ reported this document was still in development by the SG but was intended to highlight the value of the Collaboration to stakeholders. It would likely be shaped by the final form of the strategic plan. The Collaboration's Terms of Reference would also need to be revisited too in 2020 as a result of these strategic developments.

ACTION: SG to consider revisions to ToR in light of strategic plan and associated discussions

19/11 Governance

a) Minutes of the previous meeting, actions and matters arising

These were accepted as an accurate record, with all matters arising on the agenda.

b) Notifications of new appointments to Steering Group

Sue Ackerman (Nottingham) has volunteered to fill the vacant spot on the Steering Group (SG) through to March 2021. The Chair thanked Sue for stepping forward.

c) Treasurer's Update: To receive a report

Mark had distributed a report ahead of the meeting, although due to staffing issues at SCONUL he couldn't currently provide a detailed breakdown. The headline figures are:

- 2019 income is around £22k: £18k from members subscriptions, £4k from conference sponsorship.
- 2019 expenditure will be around £25k, and includes Officer wages and expenses, funding for SIG events, and the balance of the 2019 conference fees of ~£3k.
- Projected reserves at 31/12/19 will be about £12k.

These figures exclude the funding held aside to pay for the 2018 conference invoice, which was still outstanding, as per earlier discussions at SG. Mark noted the Collaboration was in a strong position with respect to managing conference expenses, provided a similar level of sponsorship was received annually.

ACTION: Emma to send conference 2019 sponsor details to Mark for invoicing their contribution

Assuming the Collaboration will deliver roughly the same mix of activities next year and with the same sorts of income levels, our reserve levels would fall below £10k, probably closer to £9k if we adjust for inflation, by the end of 2020. There is the notable risk of reducing reserves to £5k if we don't obtain conference sponsorship and the costs for the conference remains about the same. Therefore,

considering this and our increasing portfolio of activity, Mark proposed a subscription increase in line with inflation (2%) would be advisable. Notably, this means our subscription levels would continue to remain considerably below most, and possibly all, comparator organisations. From 2021 onwards, Mark noted we would need to get expenditure and income better balanced by either decreasing the former or increasing the latter.

It was agreed this level of activity, and conference funding as our flagship event, should continue into 2020; and as a consequence, the rise in subscription rates was accepted by the Board.

ACTION: Mark to chase for detailed update from SCONUL when staffing makes it possible

ACTION: Mark to arrange 2020 subscription invoices with SCONUL to member organisations

d) Annual Report 2019: Call for contributions

GJJ noted the institutional highlight report vignettes had successfully received by the membership and would be included again in this year's report. As before each institution should supply a single contribution of around 250 words, and where possible an image, which highlighted an interesting or key development within their library service. It was suggested common themes might be a useful framework to guide what was included.

ACTION: ALL to send suggested annual report themes for contributions to GJJ by 31st Oct

ACTION: ALL to send annual report vignettes to GJJ by end of 2019

19/12 Operations

a) MUAL: Relationship & overlaps

John Dowd as current chair had been invited to the meeting, as this had been an issue their group had also discussed. However, as he was unable to attend, he would be invited to address the March 2020 meeting. Diane noted she had already had outline discussions with John on behalf of the Collaboration.

ACTION: John Dowd to be invited to address the next Board about MUAL relationships with the Collaboration

b) Brexit Preparations & Contingencies

The Chair introduced a discussion, and various examples of preparations at institutions were shared. While approaches varied, steps to dealing with uncertain outcomes were a recurrent theme. Some concerns were expressed on the impact on staff-wellness from Brexit uncertainties, including varying political positions of staff. The Chair asked for any further useful insights or preparations to be shared within the discussion list.

ACTION: ALL to share useful insights relating to Brexit preparations or activities to Director list

c) SCONUL report on BAME staff experience

Caroline led on this item, framed by her provocations and SCONUL's report which had been previously circulated. Clearly, she stressed this conversation tied into the morning's discussions with Nick. She noted some of the questions to Directors originated from discussions at the SCONUL conference. One of the outcomes from those, was to instigate conversations at regional groups to better perceive where the report's issues resonated with Directors and library services. Some points made included:

- **Practical steps:** Some action is being taken towards addressing the agenda, but uncertainty remains as to what practically can be done. Conversations about the topic can be sensitive and difficult to initiate, as engaging culturally with staff can be challenging. Value in SCONUL report in helping to frame some of the topics better.
- **Representation:** Staff demographic (not just library) less representative of local or student population. Low turnover of senior staff, and lack of POC entrants at professional grades was challenging. Noted as institutional staffing issue, not just one for libraries.
- **Recruitment Pools:** Recruiting paraprofessional staff from former student pool to challenge perceptions of HEIs as less-than desirable employer or career path was suggested. UniTemps can provide a good source of more diverse staffing base, as perceived reluctance from some communities to view 'library jobs' as desirable. HR statistical information on applicants (rather than interviewees and new starters) was not routinely obtained, and could provide useful evidence base for future actions.
- **Outreach:** Not reaching right audiences to recruit, and language in job adverts may need to be reconsidered, as currently might be 'too exclusionary'. Suggestions of 'pop-up- recruitment events in under-represented cultural and educational communities to address applicant representation. Provision of 'taster' sessions, and support for under-represented applicant communities for applications, and potentially interviews suggested. However, increased recruitment costs will arise from wider advertising flexibility and outreach.
- **Current Staff:** It is not just new entrants who need support, as within diversity context established staff do too. How diversity of staff represented in internal communications was an important related issue in feeling 'valued, visible and validated'. Personal testimony useful in sharing positive experiences within staffing communities and committees. There is also an impact on current staff who can feel undervalued and potentially marginalised by diversity agenda too.

Caroline thanked everyone for their contributions and commented a lot was happening at institutional level, although perhaps less specific activity at service levels as of yet. In terms of what SCONUL can do, she suggested seems things could include:

- Provide approaches to starting conversations about diversity issues with existing staff.
- Consider and advise on what practical steps library leaders could take.
- Continue sharing new, inclusive, and non-conventional approaches to about recruitment.
- Commission, collate and communicate best practice case studies.
- Identify role models and consider how they can be celebrated, promoted and replicated.

Caroline closed by noting CILIP's work in this area could also be drawn on by Directors, and the Collaboration in shaping these ongoing discussions. Caroline would take a report back to SCONUL and thanked everyone for their contributions.

ACTION: Caroline to feedback Director comments to SCONUL's Workforce Development group

d) Libraries & Diversity Considerations

As part of the above discussions, the Directors also received a report on diversity discussions from the MSDG. It was agreed along with the SCONUL paper, that the report from MSDG should be tabled at the DSSG to inform their outline discussions. Diane noted her thanks to the MSDG for their input. The

Chair expressed her hope that the DSSG would return concrete suggestions for action by the Collaboration's members for action.

ACTION: SCONUL report and Caroline's 'provocations' along with MSDG diversity discussions to be shared and tabled with DSSG in November

ACTION: GJJ to respond to MSDG on behalf of Board

e) [SIG Commitments: Benefits & recognition of staff contributions](#)

This item had arisen from the 9th August SG meeting. The Chair led a discussion around local recognition of the efforts and requirements from participation in our SIG by staff. Emma noted CG members have a particularly focussed workload. It was agreed the developmental benefits were identifiable, but local recognition was not standardised across the Collaboration. It was also agreed group chairs should encourage their members to highlight their involvement with managers through local appraisal schemes, and for managers to also recognise the intrinsic value of professional activities for the Collaboration. This could be highlighted in the Collaborations reports and strategic documentation, including experiential comments from group members.

ACTION: GJJ to notify SIG chairs on the importance of group members highlighting their involvement within local appraisal schemes

ACTION: GJJ to collate report from groups on the benefits from SIG membership from their participants

f) [Development Officer Update](#)

A report had been previously circulated and is available online.

19/13 [SIG Matters and Reports](#)

a) [Deputies & Senior Staff Group](#)

An inaugural discursive event is to be hosted at the University of Birmingham, Wed 27th by the Collaboration Chair. GJJ has advertised the event on the list, and to specific contacts, and will send a reminder at the start of next month. The meeting is expected to explore the results of a feasibility study, along with considering the viability, function and value of establishing a new special interest group. All senior, non-director-level staff welcome to attend.

ACTION: ALL to continue to encourage senior staff to attend inaugural DSSG meeting

ACTION: Diane to report back to Directors on results of meeting

b) [Staff Development Group \(MSDG\)](#)

Chris Porter reported that they had met most recently 3rd Sept 2019 at the University of Nottingham and would meet again in March 2020. The events programme for 2019/20 has been launched, and details are appearing on the website. GJJ noted the group would likely have a change of chair in 2020.

As noted earlier, diversity discussions were ongoing within a subgroup of the MSDG, and a further meeting was anticipated. This would likely need to inform discussions elsewhere in the Collaboration.

c) RDM Support Group (RDMSG)

Simon noted, as had been highlighted at the SG in August, two of three organising group members had departed, and the remaining member was looking to stand down as well. As a result, the organising group would seek to recruit and re-establish itself, although it was anticipated there would be a reduction in activities in the meanwhile. GJJ and Simon had highlighted their availability to support the group during this handover period.

d) Metadata Group (MMG)

Sue had taken on group sponsorship and thanked the group organisers for supplying her with lots of information about their planned activities, through into 2020. She highlighted their successful launch event (Aston, 20th Aug 2019) on 'the future of cataloguing'. GJJ had been present at the event and noted it would be replicated by other collaborations. A face-to-face meeting was planned for December, and the group were looking towards formally electing an officers for their organising committee. An eForum on legacy metadata was planned for late October. Going forward, RDAⁱ frameworks had been noted as a group area of focus, with a CILIP Cataloguing and Indexing Group (now the Metadata & Discovery Group) national event planned, to which the MMG would contribute. The group was also looking towards involvement in Jisc Plan M. Sue expressed the group was very energised, and she hoped they'd find the time to meet all their planned activities.

e) Mercian Disability Forum (MDF)

Diane reported that this was another active and engaged group, with representation at NoWAL and MC conferences this year. They would be meeting next in December. The group was also collaborating with the MSDG in reviewing their events and highlighting where accessibility could be enhanced in their delivery. Web accessibility was discussed by the Directors, as it had been at an earlier MDF. While this was being driven by institutional processes, concern was expressed over intranet material that would not potentially be include. It was agreed to request the MDF to pull together a brief report to establish what is being done at each member institution in terms of: which department is leading, what has been done, and progress to date.

ACTION: MDF requested to draw together a report to Directors on progress and format of web accessibility within regional institutions

f) Mercian Copyright Group (MCG)

Chris Porter reported that the group's most recent meeting had been postponed due to low availability of members due to clashing with institutional induction activities. The group had highlighted an overlap with the RDMSG group in membership and interest terms, and further inter-group discussions were pending. As with the MDF, MCG members were a diverse selection with many competing professional priorities, which made for some broad discussions. Recent topics of discussion had been Plan S, overseas licences, academic copyright training, gamification and accessibility requirements for cleared scans.

g) Marketing & Communications (MarComs)

Mark reported on August's successful launch event at BCU (20th Aug 2019), at which he and GJJ had been in attendance. He noted it was a good event, with excellent exchange of experience and a number of people taking things forward. While the new year had seen things go a little quiet currently it was still very promising in terms of planned activity and sharing of practice. GJJ noted the group had representation at the conference as well, and their next group meeting was anticipated later this year.

h) Conference Group (CG)

Emma reported as sponsor and chair how the conference went well with just under 100 delegates attending, slightly fewer than was originally hoped. Delegates demonstrated a good regional spread, although a few members were absent in terms of representation, mainly due to the date clashing with induction and other local priorities. While the 2020 event could be shifted back a week, holding it earlier in the year would be impractical for planning purposes. Sponsorship brought in just over £4,000, which went a considerable way to cover the ~£7k event costs, although the Collaboration had made up the difference as in previous years. The group will meet for a formal evaluation meeting in Nov, which will appear in the annual report.

Emma noted while as requested by the Board she had chaired the group since 2016, she was now standing down into a sponsor-only role, in line with the other SIG. She also noted that a number of group members were standing down. Consequently, there will be a new group chair (Claire Brown, Birmingham) from Nov, and a call for new members to go Directors in the near future. An approach would be made to the DSSG to recruit a vice-chair who would take over as chair from late 2020.

The 2020 conference would be held, as previously noted, at the University of Birmingham and then return to Nottingham in 2021. Emma asked for guidance on a theme, as choosing this early would assist planning and keynote considerations. After some discussions an outline theme of 'diversity, staff and services' was proposed, which will be discussed by the CG. GJJ noted that this had been the theme of the NoWAL 2019 conference, which had been well received.

ACTION: ALL to consider suitable staff members to join the Conference Group organising committee

ACTION: ALL to send conference theme and speaker suggestions to Emma Walton by 3rd Nov

19/14 AOB

a) Library Design Awards

Chris Powis highlighted the SCONUL Library Design Awards, noting these were primarily a one-day conference on library design, alongside the awards. He encouraged anyone with an interest in design to attend for an excellent day, and a likely highly engaging keynote.

b) Aston Director

Heather noted that herself and Angela, after years of sharing a co-deputy director role, were both retiring soon. As Aston has not had a library director for some time, the role was to be re-created, and she encouraged suitable people to consider applying. The Chair thanks Heather and Angela for their various contributions to the Collaboration over the years and wished them a long and happy retirement.

c) SCONUL: To receive an update on activities

Caroline noted these had been touched on earlier, and as she didn't have access to the recent board minutes briefly reported on the Workforce group. The group was conducting a new library staff survey, which she encouraged Directors to direct newly recruited staff towards. The group was also hosting a facilitated conversation with library staff about strategic workforce development, especially in terms of filling leadership roles.

d) Next Meeting: Dates, Venue & Speakers

Warwick was suggested, although had been used relatively briefly. Fiona offered Wolverhampton, and this was agreed for March 2020. The Chair invited all Directors to send her and GJJ suggestions for potential speakers or themes for discussion by the end of November.

ACTION: GJJ, Chair and Fiona to agree date for next meeting

ACTION: ALL to send suggestions of Board guest speakers to GJJ and Chair

ⁱ Resource Description and Access