



## Mercian Collaboration Steering Group

Telcon, 3pm, 11 August 2017

### Minutes

**Present:** Diane Jobs (Vice-Chair & Meeting Chair, Birmingham) Paul Reynolds (Treasurer, Keele), Emma Walton (CG, Loughborough), Phil Brabban (Coventry), Gaz J Johnson (MCDO)

#### 17/18) Apologies

Dave Parkes (DMU, Mercian Chair). It was noted that Dave and GJJ had spoken ahead of the meeting, and briefed Diane on key issues.

Minutes of previous meeting (11<sup>th</sup> May 2017)

#### *a) Corrections or amendments*

None. The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

#### *b) Outstanding actions from prior SG not on agenda*

All items for discussion were represented on the agenda.

#### 17/19) Treasurer's Update

Paul had distributed an update earlier in the week, noting that on an income of £13,221 expenditure to the end of July had been £5,383.17 plus the SCONUL admin charge of £800.35. Reserves had stood at £7,307.87 (31/Dec/2016). With the remaining anticipated commitments for the year (including conference costs, MCDO salary and expenses, SDG and RDM costs and website charges) the total expenditure for 2017 was estimated to be £16,650.52, which would reduce reserves to £3,878.35. Paul noted that there was some degree of guesswork in the anticipated costs, but that he expected the reserves to be reduced by the year end.

#### *a) Website: New Security Costs*

One new, and unexpected, cost has been the requested charges from Adaptive (website provider) via SCONUL for ongoing security updates and maintenance. There was an initial £240 fee, and then a monthly hourly charge (£80+VAT) for one hour's work to continue these updates, meaning an annual charge of over £1,000. Paul, Dave and GJJ had already briefly discussed these, with Paul raising concerns with SCONUL, as these charges were an unanticipated additional call on Mercian funds. He'd been informed that the Northern Collaboration (NC) had already paid, although he noted their finances (due to considerably higher member subscription fees) were likely more able to absorb the costs.

A discussion around the website, and any potential for relocating it followed. While the Chair had expressed a desire to relocate it, SG members felt that this would be practically and politically problematic, noting the ongoing SCONUL subgroup status discussions. Additionally, and in the light of the problems NoWAL had encountered, cyber-security was an ongoing concern, and these new costs might represent a prudent expenditure. However, a question was raised as to the general satisfaction of the SCONUL Board with such charges and the surprising way they had been revealed. It was agreed as

Updated: GJJ 14<sup>th</sup> August 2017



that this was something the SCONUL Board should consider, and that an approach would be made to their chair.

**Action: Paul to express Mercian concerns to SCONUL regarding website charges and seek a reduction in charges**

**Action: Paul to discuss website support and charges with Chair of SCONUL (Mark Toole)**

A final point, was that these new costs would impact on the Treasurer's calculations for Mercian subscription cost models in 2018. However, it was generally agreed that remaining with the current website provider for the foreseeable future, was currently the most appropriate solution to maintaining the Mercian's web presence.

*b) Subscriptions 2017*

Paul noted he was working on the subscription options, using the SCONUL stats for banding. He was hopeful of having data in the next week or so, which would be shared with the SG initially. He planned to propose a number of models, with staying the same or slight increase being two options. However, he would also propose some other models, taking into account Mercian outline plans for development. He stressed, that staying the same would have a critical impact on the Collaboration's reserves by the end of 2018. It was agreed the SG would review these subscription models, and select a preferred choice to presented to Directors at the November meeting.

**Action: Paul to formulate Mercian subscription models for 2018 and distribute for discussion by SG**

**Action: SG to make recommendation, for approval by Directors, on Mercian subscription fees for 2018**

*17/19) Governance*

*a) SCONUL Subgroup Status*

Paul noted he had contacted SCONUL in May 2017, following the SG's last meeting, to express broad support for the idea and to develop the required Memorandum of Understanding. However, no response from the SCONUL Executive Director (Ann Rossiter) had been received nor had she responded to follow up enquiries. The NC, and Mercian Chair, were similarly in the dark on this point. While it was anticipated this matter would be resolved by the end of 2017, an interaction with SCONUL was crucially required ahead of the November Directors meeting, where any proposed change to Mercian governance would need to be approved.

**Action: Paul to continue efforts to discuss SCONUL Subgroup status with SCONUL Director**

*b) SIG Sponsors*

GJJ noted that as discussed at the last meeting (SG: 17/12(b)) he had drafted and distributed the proposed role description to the SG for comments. As he had received no comments, the Chair had commented he assumed there was general agreement to move forward on assigning special interest group (SIG) sponsor roles to members of the SG. This was agreed, with Dave and GJJ to lead on sorting practical details.

Updated: GJJ 14<sup>th</sup> August 2017



**Action: GJJ and Dave to agree SG Sponsors for SIGs, and facilitate introductions to the respective groups**

*c) Membership Applications*

Dave reported that he had been formally approached by Cranfield University, and informally by another University, to join the Mercian Collaboration. Diane noted that there were two questions for the SG to consider (a) do we support them joining and (b) what fee should they be charged for the remainder of 2017 membership.

While it was noted that the Mercian does not offer the same expansive programme of professional development events as the M25 (due to their considerably larger income and secretariat), it was assumed both organisations were fully aware of the differences between the organisations.

It was unanimously agreed to formally accept both organisations joining, and that they would be charged a pro-rata amount for the remainder of 2017. This would be invoiced on their 2018 SCOUNL invoice to reduce administration.

**Action: Dave to formally extend invitation to join to Cranfield and the other institution**

**Action: Paul and GJJ to sort financial and administrative matters relating to the new member institutions**

17/20) Collaboration Action Plan

*a) Website*

It was noted that discussions relating to website costs had already been handled in the Treasurer's report (17/19). GJJ noted that his call to Directors for news items for the site had netted zero responses, and consequently he had concerns over the perceived currency and dynamism of the Mercian web presence. Currently, most new material and news items added to the site relate to SDG and other group events, and efforts to seek more event reports from participants had netted very few items. In the light of the site's anticipated broad audiences<sup>1</sup>, contrasted with its currently relatively low web traffic, as well as issues around marketing and raising awareness of the Collaboration, the SG were asked their thoughts on this issue.

It was agreed that gaining new content was key in terms of maintaining the currency of the site, and some ideas around themed articles were initially discussed. However, concerns were raised about generating more work for members, and also that particular themes might represent some in a poor light (e.g. NSS scores etc.). It was agreed that news should remain primarily about the Collaboration's activities, rather than its members, and hence all SIGs should be promoted for regular reports and content on their activities, suitable for use as news items.

The hope was expressed that the conference might provide a rich source of a number of articles.

**Action: GJJ to request/prompt SIG chairs for news items on their activities**

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<sup>1</sup> See: Johnson, G.J., (2017). Mercian Website Audiences.

<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Website%20Audiences.pdf>

Updated: GJJ 14<sup>th</sup> August 2017



*b) Talent Management scheme*

Dave noted small progress here, but had been talking to the SDG about the practicalities and governance of such a scheme; in particular how it is communicated and participants recruited. Ideally, this would be launched at #Mercian18, as the next step in the Collaboration's workforce development agenda. Additionally, the SDG's buddying scheme, being rolled out at #Mercian17, would have valuable lessons to feed into this process.

**Action: Dave to continue to lead on developing Talent Management programme, in consultation as required**

*c) Regional Outreach*

GJJ noted he had exchanged emails with LIEM, but that had been it. Emma noted she would follow up with her local LIEM contact directly and report back.

**Action: Emma to discuss potential LIEM/Mercian links with Loughborough LIEM contact**

*d) Collaboration Inter-Relationships*

All SG members attending the SCONUL 2017 Conference had been charged with speaking to their counterparts in other collaborations. It was reported that a good exchange with the NC officers had been achieved, and an agreement reached to potentially extend services and explore joint working. It was noted that exchanges between Collaboration Officers continued, with GJJ meeting with his counterparts annually and discussing issues collaboratively as an ongoing role.

Dave had spoken with Alan Brine (DMU) about MUAL and the Mercian. Alan would be speaking with the MUAL Board, who were reportedly very interested in working closely with, or becoming part of the Mercian Collaboration. It was noted issues over governance, and support by the MCDO, would need to be addressed during any formal integration period.

**Action: Dave to report back on MUAL's collaboration preferences to SG**

*e) Transparency & Promotion*

GJJ noted he had been commissioned to write an article on the Collaboration for SCONUL Focus (Issue 71, late 2017), with input from Dave. He asked SG members for any input or thoughts they had, and it was noted that uniting the east and west midlands institutions, had been a significant step.

GJJ and Dave were also leading on the Mercian Annual Report 2017, due for early 2018.

**Action: All to submit key ideas/insights regarding the Mercian's development to GJJ**

**Action: GJJ and Dave to develop Collaboration Annual Report 2017, with input as required by SIGs and Directors**



17/21) SIG Matters

*a) Ensuring Consistency and Accountability*

GJJ noted that he had re-distributed the SIG governance recommendations in May, and that there had been no feedback from the SG. Consequently, the Chair proposed to pass these to the Directors Committee for approval and adoption.

**Action: GJJ to write revised SIG governance rules paper for Directors meeting**

*b) Conference Group*

Emma reported that progress for the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017 inaugural Mercian Conference (#Mercian17) was in its final stages, with 54 places already booked. The programme is varied, and there had been a number of practical lessons learned by the CG in their planning processes. Additionally, the CG had required careful management to rationalise their operations and limit their expectations within a realistic framework. She reported plans to promote the event further ahead of the 1<sup>st</sup> September Booking deadline, and had proposed to remove the current cap on institutional places in two weeks (after 24<sup>th</sup> Aug). She also noted that places for non-Mercian staff could be made available, if the SG were agreeable, given that these would be free as no charging mechanisms were in place. The SG supported this proposal, noting that ideally as many places should be filled with Mercian staff members first.

The issue of Director attendance was raised, with a number of SG members expressing a conflict between a desire to attend, and a wish not to block members of their own staff from attending. It was agreed that Directors should be encouraged to attend, should spaces be available. It was hoped that all the SG could attend. Emma noted that the venue could take more than the 100 delegate places, although additional catering costs would be incurred.

Costs should be as anticipated, coming in just under £3,000, and Emma noted a particular thanks to Diane for an additional financial support contribution towards the keynote speaker. This boost had facilitated the purchase of some giveaways. It was noted that DMU were satisfying most costs internally, and that they would reclaim this directly from SCOUNL's Mercian funds.

After a brief discussion, it was agreed to offer Cranfield and the other institution two delegate places each, in line with their anticipated Mercian membership. It was also agreed that places should be opened up for Collaboration Officers from outside the region.

**Action: Emma to approach Cranfield and the other institution to offer conference places**

**Action: GJJ to approach regional collaboration officers to offer conference places**

**Action: Emma and GJJ to promote conference over the next few weeks**

**Action: All SG/Directors to consider booking attendance at conference**

Diane noted that Birmingham was hosting a major international librarian's event in summer 2018, and asked if #Mercian18 could be tied into this. Ideally, this was to be held in early July, although a later date might be possible. Emma, noted concerns over conference lead and planning time, and would explore it with the CG, as part of the #Mercian17 evaluative process.

Updated: GJJ 14<sup>th</sup> August 2017



**Action: Emma to discuss tying into Birmingham event with CG and report back on considerations**

*c) Disability Group (Mercian Disability Forum)*

GJJ attended a meeting at Nottingham (12<sup>th</sup> July) with the MDF and helped formulate their Terms of Reference and action plan. The TOR will be going to the Directors meeting in Nov for approval. Another group meeting will be held in Nov to plan a prospective event in March/April 2018, with the draft title 'Inclusivity: The Wider Picture'. A Jisc speaker has been identified, which means there may be a cost for this, but that the group are aware they would need to submit a funding request for this. Paul asked if there were any planned events, and hence costs, in 2017, to which GJJ replied that there was not. Webpages will be online for the group in the near future, along with hopefully a bespoke version of the logo. Membership of the group currently stands at around 10 institutions represented, but all Mercian libraries are eligible and encouraged to send representatives to future meetings or events.

**Action: GJJ to continue liaison and support for MDF as ongoing action**

**Action: GJJ to construct web pages for MDF**

*d) RDM: Update*

The RDM Support Group (RDMSG) had said that they currently had little to report, other than their hosting of an event at #Mercian17. It is anticipated that this will feed into their planning for 2018 activities and events, and particularly an anticipated workshop in March/April. The SG noted that any costs for such an event would, as is standard practice, be met by the hosting institution.

*e) SDG: Update & review of proposed events programme*

Kirsty Kift, as SDG Chair, had reported via GJJ on their proposed events for 2017 (See SDG: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017: 6). She had also noted a hope that any workshops declined for #Mercian17 might form the nucleus for future SDG events. The SG expressed their thanks to Kirsty and the SDG, and supported their programme of events, noting that the inclusion of new institutional members in the membership would offer new venue possibilities and content. The SDG will be meeting in late September to begin implementing their programme of events for 2017/18.

**Action: GJJ to add events calendar to website**

**Action: Emma and CG to consider passing declined #Mercian17 events to SDG**

*17/22) November Directors Meeting*

*a) Invited Speakers*

Tracey Clarke, Associate Director Academic & Digital Strategies (Sheffield) will speaking in place of Anne Horn who is unavailable, about OCLC GreenGlass. Dave has approached Stewart at Jisc (Web Curator, Digital Capabilities), and he is keen to attend. Dave noted that while Stewart might not be the ideal person, having a Jisc representative at the meeting for the Directors to discuss issues with was a preferable option. It was agreed this was acceptable.

**Action: Dave to invite Stewart to attend as Jisc Representative at the November meeting**

Updated: GJJ 14<sup>th</sup> August 2017



Fiona noted that the 'partnership document' was a slightly grand term for a spreadsheet. However, there was potential for a discussion with Director colleagues of around an hour that would make for useful content. Hence, it was agreed to include this in the agenda, with Fiona leading on it.

**Action: Fiona to facilitate discussions around partnerships at November meeting**

*b) Draft Agenda*

GJJ noted that Caroline Taylor would report back on Digital Preservation Training for the region, as per the actions on her earlier in the year. Emma would report on the conference evaluations, as well as discuss plans for future events. Along with the normal governance, and external speakers, it was felt that the November meeting agenda was beginning to look quite busy and that only minor items be added from this point on.

**Action: GJJ and Dave to finalise and distribute Mercian Directors agenda**

*c) Future Topics*

GJJ reported that Judith Keene had approached him, wearing her SCONUL Transformation Strategy Group hat, with a proposal to include two pieces of work for discussion with fellow directors (Learning Spaces/UCISA/SCHOMS toolkit, and the future of academic libraries). It was noted that including a brief item around the learning spaces toolkit, which had been published, would be worthwhile at the November meeting. The latter issue, given SCONUL's planned December workshop on the issue, would fit well into the March 2018 meeting. Fiona noted that SCONUL would be launching a 18 month project on Leading Librarties, in October 2017, and this would likely also fit into similar discussions in March.

**Action: GJJ to reply to Judith on behalf of the SG**

**Action: GJJ to incorporate items into future Director agendas**

*d) MCDO Update*

This had been distributed prior to the meeting, and no questions were raised.

17/23) AOB

*a) Date of Next SG Meeting*

GJJ noted that the SG normally meetings in November, following the Directors October meeting. However, as the Directors were meeting in November this year, would the SG prefer to meet in October, or after the Directors meeting, later in November? It was agreed that it was preferable to have it after the Directors meeting, and that GJJ would speak with Dave to find an agreeable date.

**Action: GJJ to send out date reminder to all Directors**

**Action: GJJ to discuss SG meeting date with Dave**