



Mercian Collaboration Steering Group

Telcon, 2pm, 11 May 2017

Minutes

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

17/10) Apologies

Fiona Parsons

Minutes of previous meeting (20th Jan 2017)

a) Corrections or amendments

None. The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

b) Outstanding actions from prior SG not on agenda

(17/06) FP to share Wolverhampton partnership relationship checklist as paper (work in progress) at Directors meeting.

This item relates to discussions under (17/15(b)) below, and was addressed there.

17/11) Treasurer's Update

These had been previously circulated by Paul via email. Reserves at end of 2016 were £7,307.87 with subscription income for 2017 being £13,221.00. Expenditure to end Feb 2017 was £1,690.38, with a projected spend of £16,523.38 by year's end. This would leave a reserve of £4,005.49. If we assume a spend of £15K in 2018 and increased subs back to 2015 levels, this would leave reserves of only £3,171 by the end of 2018, which would be £2K less than the target reserve at year's end. Paul met with Robin recently for an update and to confirm that these were accurate records. Robin had always recommended that reserves should have a target of around £5k, meaning there may well be a need to increase subs to somewhere close to 2015 level, to achieve this.

Paul noted that his calculations had included the £2k nominal set aside for SDG events, but that he had reduced the conference allocation to £2k. However, he asked Emma to clarify if this would be an issue. Emma noted catering costs were likely to be around £1,200-1,500, but on top of this the conference may incur costs for keynote speaker. She had a potential speaker, but they were quite expensive (charging £1.2k fee). With this, plus catering, freebies and other marketing outlay, the cost would likely still come out around £3k. Paul then agreed that he will add these anticipated costs back in, restoring the anticipated conference spend to £3k.



Emma noted that potential venue costs had been far greater than the proposed conference budget could accommodate, and clearly this was a reason why other collaboration conferences have sponsors and/or charged delegate fees. While the 2017 conference was not planning to seek sponsorship, she also didn't desire to push Mercian costs up to accommodate future conferences. Hence, there will need to be a SG evaluation of benefits after the event, and discussions about appropriate fees and sponsorship arrangements for any Mercian 2018 Conference.

ACTION: Paul to review Mercian subscription costs for 2018 and report back to SG

Paul and GJJ noted that they had been investigating the costs from Adaptive for Website work. While two hourly figures (£80 and £96) plus VAT had been quoted for development work, there had been some grey areas where this applied. It seems that any website development work will have a cost implication¹, but bug fixing will not. This latter work would be conducted under Adaptive's agreement with SCONUL.

Paul raised another, and rather crucial, new issue which SCONUL head Ann Rossiter had outlined in discussions with him that morning, relating to issues auditors had raised with respect to SCONUL's income and the VAT threshold. Associated with this are the Northern and Mercian Collaboration's somewhat ambiguous non-charity status, and their operation as SCONUL partner organisations in name, but as a subgroup, in actuality². It was agreed that this matter needed clarification, to avoid potential costs. Nevertheless, SG expressed that concerns remained over potential loss of autonomy, increase in formality, changes in governance, impacts on the MCDO's contractual status, as well as decreases in Mercian Collaboration operational freedoms, were such a subgroup arrangement to be formally accepted. It was agreed that while the SG would investigate this matter further, any final decision would need to go before all Mercian Directors for their agreement before adoption. Paul noted that SCONUL hoped to resolve this issue 'Sooner rather than later', which the Chair agreed was a likely outcome.

ACTION: Paul to continue liaising with SCONUL, on behalf of the SG over subgroup/VAT issue, and report back to SG

ACTION: Paul to discuss SCONUL subgroup/VAT issue with NC Treasurer

ACTION: GJJ to discuss SCONUL subgroup/VAT issue with NC officer counterpart

17/12) Governance

a) Officer Role Descriptions: Update and agree

These had been previously distributed, although they are not currently listed on the website. After discussion, it was agreed that these were a fair representation of the officer roles, and should be added to the About/governance section of the website. Emma suggested that a line be added to represent the elected non-officer SG roles, and this was agreed.

ACTION: GJJ to amend SG Role descriptions and upload to the Mercian Website

¹ E.g. the proposed revisions to the front page of the site, to incorporate more local image content

² Cf: http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends50/0000278550_AC_20151231_E_C.pdf, p.5



b) SIG Sponsors: Roles, responsibilities and personnel

It had been previously discussed by the SG, that in line with other collaborations, assigning a member of the Steering Group to have responsibility for each Mercian SIG/subgroup would be a valuable endeavour. It was noted in particular, that the RDM Support Group had formally requested such a link in their initial proposal. It was agreed that there were advantages to SIGs, the SG and the MC as a whole from such an arrangement, not limited to but including: direct advocacy, communication, support and governance. It was noted that the Conference Group (CG) had had such an arrangement from its start, which had been demonstrably beneficial to its members and operations. However, introducing such arrangements to pre-existing SIGs would need to be handled sensitively and discursively. Nevertheless, it was noted that as the parent body, the SG on behalf of the MC had the authority to take the final decision in such matters. It was agreed, in line with the Officer Roles, that GJJ would draw up an outline of the SG sponsor role for SG to agree, before progressing further with this initiative.

ACTION: GJJ to create SG Sponsorship role description and disseminate to SG

17/13) Collaboration Action Plan

a) Website content, news, target, costs

GJJ reported that while any additional work on the site is chargeable at an hourly rate, Adaptive will provide a time estimate of any work beforehand, before committing to it and any expenditure. This arrangement would be the same for any support request we make of the site. While any work would be billed to SCONUL initially, the MC would be recharged for it eventually. Bug fixing and security updates for the site, however, were dealt with under the service contract Adaptive held with SCONUL, and hence would not be charged to the Mercian.

The Chair and GJJ outlined some further questions, w.r.t. the Website. Notably, identifying who its audience was and how new content could be generated, notably within the news section. The Chair shared his vision for the site's audience, and it was agreed that while the core audience for the site are staff at Mercian institutions, there are other communities to whom we should also regard as drawing potential value from the site. These included, but are not limited to, other collaborations, institutional senior managers, other library organisations, potential collaborating organisations, governmental bodies and the public. Publicly demonstrating the Mercian's activities and outputs was especially key in terms of demonstrating an ROI to library 'employer' stakeholders.

ACTION: Chair and GJJ to outline a statement as to the Mercian Website's audience

GJJ noted that while he was encouraging news content from the SDG, and other SIGs, in the wake of their events, he was keen to continue to add interesting and relevant pieces to the site. This would help promote the MC, as well as offering a demonstration of the ROI to members' stakeholders, but would also in itself create a valuable information resource which would drive traffic to the site. With respect to new and additional content, GJJ remains the arbiter, lead-writer and editor-in-chief of what is of value to the site for the purposes of promoting the MC's endeavours. However, it was agreed that highlighting achievements from within member libraries, rather than mundane announcements, were noted to be valuable to the membership and the collaboration.



It was agreed that the SG, and by extension Directors, should continue to be encouraged to supply items and reports of note to GJJ to consider as news items.

ACTION: GJJ to remind Directors and SIGs to contribute newsworthy copy and items

The question of the MC websites visibility on member websites was raised. It was noted that not all MC member institutions had websites that were suitable for including such external links, but that where possible links to the site and the social media presence should be included on member websites. This should aid in driving traffic from both library staff but also other institutional employees to the site, achieving the goal of increasing the MC's brand awareness and potential agency.

ACTION: GJJ to remind Directors to link to MC online presence where possible

ACTION: GJJ to add MercianCollab twitter handle to site front page

b) Talent Management scheme

The Chair noted, as per his report to the MC Directors in March, that this was still in early stages of development. Given this could be a major and unique MC output, he stressed the importance of progressing with care to ensure whatever scheme emerged was of sufficient quality to MC members and their staff.

ACTION: Chair to continue to develop Talent Management Scheme and report back to next SG meeting

c) Regional Outreach: Regional overlaps & collaborative opportunities

The Chair and GJJ noted that they had discussed with the outgoing Chair last month the question and value of arranging closer contact with other regional organisations. It was agreed that while there was some value in reaching out to public library groups, given current sector wide issues, they were less likely to have time and resource to discuss such arrangements. Notably, the archives sector by contrast may well be a far more productive location to start. Emma flagged up LIEM (<http://www.liem.org.uk/>), an organisation for libraries in general in the East Midlands which may be worth approaching, if only to note the MC's existence. It was unknown if the SDG had any links with such organisations, and Emma agreed to investigate.

ACTION: GJJ to approach LIEM and explore potential coterminous issues

ACTION: Emma to explore any SDG links with LIEM and similar organisations

d) Collaboration Inter-Relationships: Engaging with other library collaborative officers

GJJ outlined the value he had enjoyed through contacts with other library collaboration officers, which raised the question if value to the MC as a whole could be generated through closer ties with other regional collaborations. For example, forming a unified voice, discrete to SCONUL themselves. It was agreed that closer communication, if not outright collaboration, with other regional collaborations could be beneficial, and that this should be explored. The forthcoming SCONUL 2017 conference would provide an ideal opportunity, as all members of the SG (with the exception of GJJ) would be attending, to engage in initial informal discussions.



ACTION: All SG to explore linkages with other collaborations at forthcoming SCONUL conference

ACTION: GJJ to retrieve information on current committee members of other collaborations

e) Transparency & Promotion: SCONUL Focus, Annual Report

Dave noted two points that GJJ had highlighted from earlier SG discussions, relating to increasing awareness of the MC and its activities to the wider library and professional community. Firstly, whether the MC should attempt to run an article in a forthcoming issue of SCONUL Focus, and secondly, if an annual report should be generated. GJJ explained that the previous Officers had been keen on both these ideas, but that time had run out on developing them. It was agreed an article, focussing on the conference, would be of value. Additionally, an annual report, tied to calendar years, would be a good idea. Hence, one would be created for early 2018, and in line with other regional collaborations, would largely collate and repurpose pre-existing text.

ACTION: Chair and GJJ to approach SCONUL Focus editor re a potential article

ACTION: Chair to lead SG in creating a MC annual report for 2017

17/14) SIG Matters

a) Ensuring consistency and accountability

GJJ noted that the prior SG, and the Directors, had had several brief discussions around the formal accountability of SIGs, in terms of governance, reporting, oversight etc. While these had been positive, especially with regards to GJJ's reports on the matter, little concrete action or conclusions had been reached. It was noted that the issue of SIG sponsors had been positively addressed earlier, highlighting the need to reach some firm decisions. It was also noted that there may be a need to mirror SCONUL's reporting expectations of its own subgroups. It was agreed to address this via email, and reach an agreement at the next SG.

ACTION: GJJ to redistribute key SIG governance recommendations to SG

ACTION: SG to discuss, amend and agree SIG governance recommendations

b) Conference Group: Update

Emma and GJJ reported back on behalf of the CG. They noted that the call for papers has gone out³, with a theme of *In libraries we trust*, and thanked Diane for the initial suggestion that helped shape this. The CG remain keen to see the conference as an inclusive event for all library staff, hence it is proposed that they will support any staff member who might want to submit a paper, but might feel unprepared or inexperienced, and help enable them to run a session. It is hoped that some of the sessions will have outputs that will make for content for the website, for further dissemination. Emma noted that a keynote speaker has been identified, but they would charge £1,200 to speak and attend. However, she invited suggestions for other keynotes from the SG.

³ <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/conference-2017-call-participation-opens>



The SG suggested that perhaps sponsorship for the keynote could be sought, which would reduce costs, and make them more affordable within the overall conference budget. Emma agreed to discuss the issue with the group, as she felt there was potential but wasn't certain this could be achieved.

ACTION: Emma to take sponsorship proposal for keynote back to CG for consideration

The call for papers closes 9th June, but should not enough people submit proposals, then the CG will approach people directly. The CG would meet again 14th June to review proposals and put together the programme for the conference.

ACTION: Emma to share draft programme with SG for input and approval before promotion

c) SDG: Update

GJJ reported that following their March 2017 meeting, the SDG would next meet next in June (13th, Leicester), where they would put together their 2017-2018 events plan and finalise their buddying scheme proposal. He noted a slight dysfunction, in that due to the timing of the next Directors' meeting (6 November, Coventry), the new SDG programme would be underway before this. It was agreed that following their June meeting the SDG Chair should supply the final events plan to the MC SG for approval, before presenting it for information to the MC Directors in Nov 2017.

ACTION: GJJ to liaise on behalf of SG with the SDG with regards to their final 2017/18 events plan

d) Disability Group: Response to Proposal

As noted in his report, GJJ had had an initial positive response from Beck Maguire (Nottingham) to the proposal response at the Directors' Meeting (March 2017). However, he was pending follow up discussions, and potentially a face-to-face meeting before the group could be developed further.

e) RDM: Update

As noted in GJJ's report the RDM Support Group has now launched at an engaging event in April⁴. He noted that the group was still forming their governance structures, and hence it was a key time for the SG to provide an SG sponsor, especially noting the RDM Group has directly requested one. He also noted that there is some interest from within the group for applying for 'Library Carpentry funding for staff training⁵', which it was understood some local RDM people had tried, and failed, to get external funding for, and were looking towards the Mercian as source of support. GJJ explained he'd asked the group to start outlining: what they hope to achieve, any resource commitment from the Mercian (time, funding, support), benefit(s) to member organisations, envisaged demographics of participants. The SG agreed this idea sounded of value, and welcomed the opportunity to discuss this further, once the RDM Group supplied additional information.

⁴ See <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/mercian-research-data-management-support-group-launches>

⁵ To do something like this: <https://software-carpentry.org/workshops/operations/>

Updated: GJJ 15th May 2017



17/15) November Directors Meeting

a) Invited speakers: DTP, Ann Horne, Jisc Regional Officers

It was noted that preparations for the 6th Nov 2017 meeting of Mercian Directors should begin, as where externals are expected to attend, some lead time is needed. It was highlighted that the Jisc Regional Officers, now known as *Account Managers*, did not cover the whole Mercian region due to a strange geographic split, and hence not all of them would be invited. However, it was noted that there was value in Jisc reporting to the Directors during the meeting, and one of them should be invited to attend, especially w.r.t. banding and the methodology they will be applying.

ACTION: Dave as Chair to contact Jisc Account Managers and invite one to report during November 2017 Directors meeting

Caroline T had also been proposed to invite DTP Training to address the Directors on Digital Preservation Training (17/05(a)), and this would need further liaison from the Chair and GJJ. Additionally, there was an outstanding action from the Jan SG telcon (17/06(b)) on Fiona to sound out Ann Horne in the White Rose regarding OCLC's GreenGlass product as well. As Fiona was not present, she couldn't speak to this, but these were two additional avenues for potential discussion.

ACTION: Fiona to continue efforts to liaise with Anne Horne and report back to the SG

ACTION: GJJ to liaise with Caroline T to see what progress she was making with speaking to DTP and report back to SG

b) Discussion topics: Partnership Experiences, other

As noted earlier, Fiona had volunteered to potentially convene a discussion session at the November meeting on partnership experiences. This potentially could be in a similar vein to the *library futures* session in March, with contributions from other MC Directors. As Fiona was not present, this was tabled to be discussed at the next SG.

ACTION: Fiona to report to SG on ideas for discussions on partnership experiences at forthcoming Directors meeting

17/16) MCDO Update

GJJ had circulated this prior to the meeting, highlighting his activities in the past two or so months. He noted that most matters had either been reported on, or promoted items, within the agenda today. The Committee welcomed this report, thanking GJJ for his efforts.

17/17) AOB

a) Past Event payments

Paul highlighted that he and GJJ had been looking in to an issue where the costs of an SDG event had generated an invoice sent between different member institutions. Noting that the cost of the time for himself, GJJ and other staff involved in the exchanges probably exceeded the cost of dealing with the invoice, he asked the Chair to reiterate support for the general principle, that the hosting institution pays for any refreshment or catering costs. The exception to this rule is where a submission is made, via GJJ, for additional funding, in which case the SG would make a judgement.

Updated: GJJ 15th May 2017



The Chair welcomed these points, and reaffirmed this principle: hosting organisations pay for event costs, unless the SG has made an exception. GJJ noted that a closely related matter had been highlighted at the Directors meeting (March 2017), regarding the more regular use of certain institutions for events due to their locality. He noted that Directors of 'central'⁶ Mercian institutions had agreed they were prepared to pay for a greater proportion of event costs, due their geographical centrality (Directors Meeting: 17/06(a)).

b) MUAL Event

Dave reported that a MUAL event had recently taken place at DMU, and that the group was not aware of the Mercian. Referring to earlier discussions (17/13(c)), he asked if there was any value in exploring closer links. It was highlighted that other such organisations (e.g. NIAL) exist, and that not all Mercian members would be involved with each. It was agreed that an informal discussion between Dave and the local DMU staff involved with MUAL could be of some value in bringing greater clarity to this matter, for discussion at the next SG meeting.

ACTION: Dave to speak with Alan Brine at DMU about MUAL and report back to SG

c) Approximate dates for next meeting

It was agreed that unless anything pressing arose, the next SG telcon should be arranged for late July, early August.

ACTION: Dave and GJJ to coordinate on the next SG telcon date

The Chair thanked all attendees for their participation.

⁶ Loosely, but not definitively, defined as Nottingham, NTU, Derby, Leicester, Birmingham, and DMU
Updated: GJJ 15th May 2017