



Mercian Collaboration Directors Meeting

Minutes¹

12th October 2016

Conference Centre, Knight Room, Third Floor, Nottingham Trent University

16/15 Apologies & introductions

Present: Diane Job (Birmingham), Chris Powis (Northampton), Caroline Williams (Nottingham), Robin Green (Warwick, meeting Chair), Maria Carnegie (Derby), Emma Sansby (Bishop Grosseteste), Dave Parkes (De Montfort), Emma Walton (Loughborough), Mark Toole (Nottingham Trent University), Chris Porter (Newman), James Anthony-Edwards (deputising for Wolverhampton), Neil Smyth (deputising for Lincoln), Heather Whitehouse (Aston), Enid Pryce-Jones (Birmingham City), Deborah Findlay (University College Birmingham), Gaz J Johnson (Development Officer), Liam Earney (Jisc)

Apologies: Ian Snowley (Lincoln), Caroline Taylor (Leicester), Paul Reynolds (Keele), Fiona Parsons (Wolverhampton), Phil Brabban (Coventry), Rosie Jones (Open University), Matt Gallon (Account Manager, SW/W.Midlands), Judith Keene (Worcester), Kathryn Greaves (Harper Adams), Janet Weaver (Staffordshire)

16/16 Jisc: National negotiations, reconfigured regional support & core services

The Chair welcomed Liam Earney, Director of Jisc Collections to the meeting. Liam spoke about a variety of topics, including the recent and extensive sector wide publisher negotiations that Jisc had undertaken on behalf of the Higher Education community. He noted that while he was happy to discuss the negotiations in the room, a number of aspects had been and were still confidential, hence he would share with Directors a version of his notes following the meeting for distribution to those unable to attend. Liam also took the opportunity to share with the Directors a range of information regarding the current reorganisations at Jisc, particularly as they related to regional support. Following a lengthy question and answer session, the Chair, on behalf of the Directors, expressed their gratitude for Liam's visit, and especially the discussions it had generated. On behalf of Jisc, Liam praised the academic library director community for their unity during the publisher negotiations, expressing that without their support this would have been a far more challenging prospect.

Action: Liam to provide notes on talk

Action: GJJ to write to thank Liam on behalf of Mercian

Action: Caroline W to share blog notes on Canadian experiences with shifting (oil linked) prices

Action: Chair to invite new Jisc Regional Officer to attend March 2017 Mercian meeting

16/17 Committee business & Governance

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

A couple of minor corrections were noted, and the minutes amended and accepted. All matters arising were either on the agenda for today, or for next March's meeting.

¹ Due to a laptop crash, these are brief minutes from memory

b) Chair, Steering Group and Succession Planning

As noted at the previous meeting (16/03) Caroline Taylor would be standing down as Chair at the March 2017 meeting. Robin also noted a willingness to stand down as Treasurer, although he could continue if no one else stepped forward. A Vice Chair was also needed for the Collaboration. After a brief discussion, during which the Directors agreed that the Mercian Collaboration was worth continuing, it was decided to open calls for self-nominations to the officer roles. The composition of the Steering Group itself, including the additional non-officer members currently serving, would also be reviewed at the March 2017 meeting.

Action: Chair: Steering Group composition to be reviewed at March 2017 meeting

Action: All to send any expressions of interest to Caroline T or Robin for roles of Chair/Vice/Treasurer by end Oct 2016

Action: Steering Group to review expressions of interest and report back to March 2017 meeting

c) Treasurer's Update, Subscriptions & Finance

Robin reported that the total anticipated total anticipated spend for 2017 was £17,410. This allows £2,000 for SDG funded events (only 1 has been proposed in their plan), £1,000 to support SIGs (i.e., the potential RDM training materials, and £500 for Web site development, together with £3,000 for the Mercian Conference. As previously agreed the first Mercian Conference will not levy a charge on delegates nor seek sponsorship to recover costs.

The outturn for 2016 is anticipated to be c.£9,400, and noting that members had previously agreed a reserve of £5,000 was appropriate, c.£13,000 in subscription income would be required in 2017. Using the accepted methodology for calculation of member subscriptions (i.e., a proportional charge based on income bands to reach the required anticipated expenditure for the coming year) the top subscription rate would be £1400, the lowest £93. It was agreed that following the meeting RG would take into account any changes to the required income resulting from discussion on the action plan for the coming year and circulate proposed subscription rates to members for consideration.

Action: Robin to share subscription rates for 2017 via email to all

16/18 Mercian Collaboration priorities

a) Action Plan

The current Action Plan items were addressed under (16/18b) and (16/19b). No further progress was made on the Mercian Action Plan.

b) Talent Management proposal

FP had been unable to supply a briefing paper on this as planned prior to the meeting, so GJJ and RG reported orally on the proposal. This had arisen from within discussions with Directors by the MCDO, and in essence represented an exchange of staff between MC institutions. The intention was to allow them to learn from cultural, managerial and practitioner activities. The experience of the exchange was anticipated to benefit both host and exchanging institution. After a brief discussion it was agreed that while the Directors supported this idea, a number of considerations needed to be fleshed out in more practical detail. Dave Parkes agreed to convene a task and finish group to develop this proposal, and a number of Directors agreed to assist him in this. The group will present their proposal at the March 2017 meeting

Action: Dave Parkes to convene task & finish group to review and draft proposal for Talent Management exchanges, and report back to March 2017 meeting

c) *Special Interest Groups: Feedback & Discussion*

The proposed Research Data Management Support Group, which had developed out of a MC event in April, had met with GJJ in recent months. Subsequently they had drafted a proposal for a Group constitution and function, which had been shared with Directors prior to the meeting. It was agreed that there was clearly a need for this group, and that it provided a support infrastructure within the region to professionals who lacked any other outlet. The Directors approved the proposal, and wished the new group well. GJJ noted he would be in communication with the Group, and would act as the liaison between them and the SG in the meanwhile

Action: GJJ to feedback to the RDM Support Group the MC Directors support and liaise with them over further developments

GJJ reported following up with Jane Mortimer at DMU and the meeting which had taken place early in 2016 between a number of MC librarians concerned with disability and accessibility, with respect to if a group might be formed from this. Jane had reported that they planned to meet again in early December, although there had been "*limited appetite from practitioners in the region for a formal group*". She also noted that she was no longer directly involved in the talks. The Directors discussed, and while there was some interest in supporting this area, since this grouping had sprung up independently of the MC, it was unclear what its purpose or function was. It was agreed GJJ would continue to remain in contact with the organisers, and report back to the SG if any coherent imperative towards proposing a formal MC subgroup arose.

Action: GJJ to feedback the Committee's comments and liaise with 'disability forum'

d) *Website and branding*

The prospective logos had been developed by a Graphic Designer at Loughborough, and following feedback from Directors (16/07) and the Steering Group, a final four proposed. As noted, the expectation is that variants of the main logo will be developed and provided for any subgroups to use. After discussions it was agreed to accept a variant of the logo currently in use for the website, noting some accessibility revisions to the font (Title Case). The Chair thanked Emma W and GJJ for their work on this.

Action: Emma W to request Graphic Designer produce final revised versions of Mercian and SDG logos

GJJ presented the Website for the Directors, apologising that more development had not yet been completed due to competing time pressures on his role. However, he noted that he hoped the site would soon be live, following the addition of pending content and the resolution of a number of outstanding snagging items. He noted that Adaptive, as SCONUL's outsourced web development company, had been very responsive and that a good working relationship with their developer existed. After sharing the access details² with those present, he invited comments and feedback from the Directors after the meeting. The Chair noted that progress with the website was commendable, and thanked GJJ for his efforts.

Action: All to provide feedback to GJJ on Website
Action: GJJ to continue with Website development

² Directors should contact GJJ directly for access information to the development site

16/19 Reports & Updates

a) Staff Development Group

On behalf of the SDG Kirsty presented their annual report, event evaluation and discussed the forthcoming programme for events. This had been revised in the light of discussions at the last Directors' meeting, and subsequently during SDG events. As before the programme for 2016/17 contains a mix of library tours (all the same, but different) and experience exchanges focussing on specific topics. The Chair thanked Kirsty and the SDG for their commendable work, and for preparing what appeared to be an engaging programme of events.

Kirsty also presented the buddying scheme proposal. This had been discussed previously [16/06] and following feedback, developed by the SDG. There was a brief discussion, and it was agreed that the scheme as outlined looked like a realistic prospect and would add value to the MC organisations. The Chair agreed that the SDG should progress with finalising, launching and manging the scheme as soon as was practical.

Action: SDG to progress with Buddying Scheme preparations and launch

b) Conference Group

Emma W and GJJ reported back on progress with the Mercian Collaboration Conference planning, following an agreement to pursue this at the last meeting (16/06). Following an initial planning meeting between Emma, GJJ and Kirsty Kift, and two rounds of recruitment for a Conference planning group, an initial meeting was planned (20th October, Leicester) where those whom Directors had identified would gather to begin preparatory activities. Emma noted that more Conference Group members had been proposed than there were spaces for, and an initial task for the CG would be to winnow numbers down to manageable levels. However, she noted the importance in ensuring the group had a strong cross departmental and varied seniority, to ensure diversity in all planning activities.

A brief discussion followed, concerning venues for the conference. Birmingham was a strong favourite, given its centrality, transport links and strong Mercian representation in the city. However, concerns were noted as to its potential venue costs. Consequently, Emma invited all Directors to provide suggestions for potential venues within their organisations or locality.

Action: Emma W to report back to SG on progress with conference development

Action: All to share suggestions for potential venues with Emma W

The conference is planned for September 2017, and as previously noted will not levy a charge on delegates for the first year. A range of terms of reference and planning papers had been developed by GJJ, and following review by the Steering Group, would be shared with the CG members. The intention being that they would revisit these in the light of post-conference experience and revise accordingly.

c) Collaboration Development Officer

GJJ reported back on his activities since March, which notably have included a lot of travel to meet with and discuss issues with Mercian Directors. This work was ongoing, and he hoped to soon complete his travels and be able to collate a report based on his experiences. Emerging themes include: Developing readership, recruitment and regional talent management, talent exchange programme, building development & refurbishment, community engagement (public/public libraries), managing partnerships, budgets and staffing resources, rebuilds/refurbishments, and



holistic staff team working. He noted it had been very valuable to learn about the different institutions, in terms of his own understanding of the Mercian members' needs.

As part of his duties GJJ had continued to collate information, briefings and reports for the Chair and the SG, most notably on the matter of Special Interest Groups and comparator activities within other collaborations. GJJ had also continued to liaise with other Collaboration Officers and Executive Managers around the UK, including attending the Northern Collaboration conference and a workshop at SCONUL.

GJJ demonstrated the draft MC website, developed via SCONUL's web provider Adaptive. He noted development was not as far advanced as he had hoped, due to other demands on his time, but that he hoped the site would soon be openly available. He noted that he had had a very positive experience working with Adaptive, who were extremely responsive and helpful to his questions and comments. He shared the logon details with the Directors, and encouraged them to test and feedback comments.

Action: All to look at Mercian site and note any comments to GJJ

GJJ concluded by noting his continued enjoyment of the job, and the challenge of finding time to take vacations days.

d) SCONUL Update

Mark made a report on behalf of SCONUL, noting that the Mercian now had a number of other representatives on the Board.

16/20 AOB

a) Brexit: Contingency planning, costs etc

Paul had raised this once more, and continued to seek input or comment as to how other institutions were preparing for any changes. As had been noted earlier, Caroline Williams had commented on the Canadian experience in dealing with fluctuating prices, due to oil, and this seemed a comparable case. There was a brief general discussion, although the general consensus seemed to be 'wait and see'.

b) Dates, venue & items for next meeting

Diane offered Birmingham as a venue for the March 2017 meeting, and this was agreed.

Action: GJJ to liaise with Diane and team over venue preparations

Action: GJJ and SG to agree a date for Directors meeting with Diane

Action: GJJ to share meeting date with all Directors

The Chair closed the meeting at 3.30pm, and thanked the Directors for their attendance