



Mercian Collaboration Steering Group

Vidcon, 10:00am-12noon, Thu 13th August

Minutes

Present: Diane Job (Chair, Birmingham), Chris Porter (Vice-Chair, Newman), Susan Ackerman (Nottingham), Emma Walton (Loughborough), Alex Fenton (Birmingham/Copyright), Claire Browne (Birmingham/Conference), Sarah Pittaway (Worcester/Staff Development), Richard Birley (BCU, Metadata), Phil Vaughn (Coventry, Deputies), Gaz J Johnson (Mercian Collaboration),

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Apologies: Mark Toole (Treasurer, NTU), Simon Bevan (Cranfield), William Peardon (Aston, Metadata), Stewart Sandilands (BCU, Marketing), Gareth Cole (Loughborough, RDMSG Lead), Kirsty Kift (Coventry, Deputies), Laura Waller (Warwick/Disabilities)

Actions

ACTION: Diane to speak to Robin and Paul with respect to Treasurer role as a matter of urgency

ACTION: GJJ to update and clarify SIG and Operational Group Statuses on the website

ACTION: Steering Group to review and agree outline subscription levels for 2021 via email ahead of the 5th October Board meeting

ACTION: GJJ to facilitate brief meeting between Diane and the Northern Collaboration and NoWAL chairs to discuss regional representation.

ACTION: General discussion on 'progress and developments' to be main item on agenda for Oct 20 Directors Board

ACTION: Officer priorities and deployment to be discussed at Oct 20 Board

ACTION: GJJ to compile brief role priorities and neglected activities document to inform discussions

ACTION: Chris and Diane to revise and update Tangible Values document by October Board meeting

ACTION: Diane to update Risk Register by December Steering Group meeting

ACTION: GJJ to seek member and SIG contributions to annual report 2021, outlining importance of showcasing responses to disruption

ACTION: GJJ to include staffing and restructuring as subtheme to general discussions at Board

ACTION: MSDG Sarah to attend next deputies meeting to initiate discussions between the groups

ACTION: MSDG to share representative expectations document with Board for information

ACTION: GJJ to follow up with Copyright Group about future meetings and events

ACTION: Group to consider exploring copyright briefing event for Directors

ACTION: Phil to share finalised TOR with GJJ/Steering Group

ACTION: Deputies group to agree date for next online meeting

ACTION: Deputies group to consider more frequent experience exchange meeting

ACTION: GJJ to follow up with Stewart and Marketing Group on future plans and support needs

ACTION: GJJ to highlight what kind of material can be added to the annual report by SIG

ACTION: Simon to report back to Steering Group on outcome of talks with RDMSG Lead

ACTION: GJJ to coordinate with Diane's PA and Steering Group on dates for next SG meeting.

20/06 Governance

a. [Minutes of previous meeting: 13th May 2020](#)

These were accepted as an accurate record of the previous meeting

b. [Outstanding Actions](#)

Chris went through the actions on the Chair's behalf, noting all items were previously addressed or on today's agenda.

c. [Interim Treasurer](#)

Diane apologised for lack of progress on this but would be speaking with Robin and Paul as a matter of urgency next week.

ACTION: Diane to speak to Robin and Paul with respect to Treasurer role as a matter of urgency

d. [Strategic Plan](#)

It was agreed we are in a period of significant transition, but it is too early to make concrete strategic plans for the Collaboration. After some discussion, it was agreed the incoming 2021/23 Steering Group would be tasked with updating the Strategic Plan as a primary goal, as it was felt there would be more time for directors to deal with these issues at this point in the academic cycle. The Chair noted the importance of staff development contributions by SIGs and the Collaboration as a whole, as outlined in the Plan and Tangible Values document, and strongly encouraged their continuance during this time.

e. [Shift to Operational & Special Interest Group Designations](#)

As per [DB 20/11\(d\)](#), p5, it was agreed to approve the migration of the Conference Group and MSDG from SIGs to Operation Groups; recognising the particular importance of their contributions to the tangible outputs and Collaboration value to the membership. GJJ will update the website to reflect this change, and update the SIGs/OGs once this is complete.

ACTION: GJJ to update and clarify SIG and Operational Group Statuses on the website

f. [Subscription Fees 2021](#)

As per [DB 20/11\(c\)](#), p4. It had been agreed to lower subscriptions for 2021. GJJ had distributed a range of options for the Steering Group to consider ahead of the meeting, noting the relatively healthy financial position of the Collaboration (see [20/7\(a\)](#)). While there were some uncertainties over the exact levels to be set, and if all members would be in a position to continue in the Collaboration, it was agreed Steering Group would agree a proposal via email discussion to take to the 5th October Board meeting.

ACTION: Steering Group to review and agree outline subscription levels for 2021 via email ahead of the 5th October Board meeting

g. SCONUL Board: Regional Representation

It was noted questions had been previously raised about the Collaboration's representation on SCONUL's governing committees, noting this had been a topic of some concern during the MoU discussions in 2018/19. GJJ noted with the departure, and to date vacancy, of the SCONUL Deputy Director there was no longer even any nominal representation for the Collaboration at SCONUL or on the Executive Board. It was noted while the annual report, and informal channels, allowed the Collaboration to report to SCONUL, there was no official channel to escalate issues of concern for the group, beyond nominal Executive Board membership by regional directors. In this latter case they were personal EB members, and not specifically representatives of Steering Group or the Collaboration as a whole. It was agreed that it would be invaluable to discuss this issue with NoWAL and Northern Collaboration Chairs, before progressing any action or discussions with SCONUL, but the current arrangements were insufficiently robust.

ACTION: GJJ to facilitate brief meeting between Diane and the Northern Collaboration and NoWAL chairs to discuss regional representation.

20/07 Officer Reports

a. Financial Update

In the absence of a Treasurer, GJJ has been liaising with SCONUL over finances. An update shows, with figures correct to 6th August 2020, the Collaboration's finances are as follows:

Income 2020: £18821.00 Expenditure 2020: £7,378.95 Account Balance: £33,121.41

GJJ noted that Leicester are the only member still outstanding on their 2020 membership invoice payment and have been reminded. With respect to fees (**20/6(f)** above) this demonstrated our strong position to reduce fees for a year. GJJ noted to his knowledge we were the only Collaboration currently considering a reduction but might simply be ahead of the curve. It was noted an update to the Tangible Values document should be considered in tandem with fee discussions.

b. Development Officer Update

This had been [previously circulated](#) for information and comment.

20/08 Operations

a. Speakers/Discussion themes & Agenda Items for Board (5th Oct 2020)

GJJ noted he had received no suggestions for topics or themes, in response to the earlier call. It was agreed to spur a general discussion on 'progress and developments' for the first hour of the next Board meeting. This could embrace all the changes to practices, staffing and institutional responses to the various current pandemic-induced tensions, operational practicalities and strategic re-evaluation.

ACTION: General discussion on 'progress and developments' to be main item on agenda for Oct 20 Directors Board

b. Officer Workloads, Remuneration & Value

As per **DB 20/11 (c), p5** it had been agreed to discuss the value from the Officer. Once again it was noted on his very limited FTE, the Collaboration received an exceptional level of return. Any revision to the Officer employment time, would need to be balanced against continuing priorities and emerging needs, along with the level of fees and other income to the Collaboration in the coming year. It was agreed to

return this matter to the Board for discussion. GJJ noted he had started drafting a document of areas of neglected concern and would augment this into a short report for the Board, incorporating current priorities as well, to help inform these discussions.

ACTION: Officer priorities and deployment to be discussed at Oct 20 Board

ACTION: GJJ to compile brief role priorities and neglected activities document to inform discussions

c. Risk Register & Tangible Benefits

As per (SG 20/01 (d)) there was an outstanding action on Diane to update the Risk Register, which she agreed to do ahead of the next Steering Group. As per the outstanding action (SG 20/01 (d)) it was agreed Chris and Diane would revisit the Tangible Values document, in the light of sectoral changes and financial impacts from Covid-19, ahead of the Directors Board in October.

ACTION: Chris and Diane to revise and update Tangible Values document by October Board meeting

ACTION: Diane to update Risk Register by December Steering Group meeting

d. Annual Report 2021

GJJ highlighted the time had come to start preparing the 2021 report and asked if there were there any revisions to the format required. It was agreed to increase the emphasis on showcasing what groups and member libraries had done during this unprecedented period of disruption. This would be a powerful message about the membership, but also demonstrate the richness of experience across the Collaboration.

ACTION: GJJ to seek member and SIG contributions to annual report 2021, outlining importance of showcasing responses to disruption

e. Member Staffing Structures

GJJ had asked given the staff structure organograms held by the Collaboration are now a few years old, if we will be seeking to update them. It was agreed to remind people they exist, but to postpone any general update until early in 2021, due to potential staffing and structure changes in the coming months. It was agreed to add a note to the discussion item at the next Board with respect to this area of response to change.

ACTION: GJJ to include staffing and restructuring as subtheme to general discussions at Board

20/09 Subgroups: Activity Update

a. Conference Group

As Emma joined the meeting later, Claire Browne reported on the Conference Group's activities. She noted the hopes for an online event this year had been quashed due to the clash with library reopenings and lack of submissions. Having agreed to cancel for 2020, there was a plan to launch a conference later in 2021, with potentially an additional smaller event in January 2021. Most, but not all, of the committee had agreed to continue, which should help practically as well as continuing the shared experience of organising the event. Claire will be standing down in October as group chair, and Damien Pugh

(Nottingham) will take over. There had been discussions with Sarah and the MSDG with respect to overlap in plans and timing, especially in the light of the potential January 2021 event. The Conference Group committee would be meeting next week to start moving their plans forward.

GJJ confirmed that potential speakers had been thanked, and all noted a willingness to participate in future events.

b. MSDG

Sarah Pittaway as Group Chair reported on developments, especially in response to the comments made at Board (DB: 20/11(b), p.5-6). After some effort there was now a full complement of officers, who would be meeting later today. It had been agreed to continue as one group, but to have officer meetings between full group representative meetings to progress core activities. The Group's terms of reference were to be reviewed, and they would be clarifying expectations from representations; especially in terms of regular meeting attendance. GJJ noted he had conducted some background research to support these discussions.

Only one formal event had been run since lockdown began, but it had been very accessible, possibly because online access allowed people to be present who might not attend a physical event. Feedback for past events continued to be high, and while the 20/21 programme was not yet finalised, the first event in the series was to be held next week. The 20/21 programme is likely to be more reactive and adaptable to changing needs and demands in the post-lockdown/ongoing pandemic environment, meaning less concrete information until close to event dates. There were plans for a retrospective of student induction event for December 2020. The All the Same, But Different library tours were hoped to shift to some form of video delivery, as these were much valued by front-line staff members. As noted above, the MSDG were talking with the Conference Group to ensure no event clashes; and there may be some synergies with the Deputies Group too.

ACTION: MSDG Sarah to attend next deputies meeting to initiate discussions between the groups

The issue of who attends MSDG remained a hot topic, and there was still a need for conversations with directors concerning this, in the light of clarifications on 'representative role expectations' by the group.

ACTION: MSDG to share representative expectations document with Board for information

c. Copyright Group

As Yvonne Budden was unable to attend, Vice-Group Chair Alex Fenton updated the Steering Group. It has been a relatively quiet time with the last meeting held in June 2019. One planned for Sept 2019 had been cancelled due to induction clashes, and to date there had been no further ones scheduled. While the group list has been low traffic, the lis-copyseek national mailing list had been very active, with weekly webinars during lockdown dealing with the considerable copyright issues which had arisen. Alex commented group membership remained committed and it was hoped that a future meeting could be scheduled soon. The Chair noted the importance of copyright expertise to inform director decision making processes, and that potentially an event from the group aimed at this level would be valuable. GJJ noted a virtual networking copyright event might be valued by the membership, and it was agreed to explore the possibility.

ACTION: GJJ to follow up with Copyright Group about future meetings and events

ACTION: Group to consider exploring copyright briefing event for Directors

d. [Deputies & Senior Staff](#)

Kirsty Kift had been scheduled to appear on behalf of the group, but due to changing vacation plans, her colleague Phil Vaughn was in attendance. He explained since the inaugural meeting in 2019, the group had met twice: once physically and once virtually. A terms of reference for the group had been agreed and would be made available on the website. The plan was for future meetings, virtual for the time being, would be to theme them around discussions on particular topics including: CPD for senior managers, collection development etc. The planned, but not as of yet scheduled, autumn meeting would focus around research and how it was supported. The group would hope to make arrangements to host this meeting in the near future. GJJ noted the NoWAL Senior Staff group had been meeting frequently during the lockdown period to exchange experiences in a rapidly changing environment. It was agreed that more frequent meetings of the Deputies group could be beneficial in this respect in our region too.

ACTION: Phil to share finalised TOR with GJJ/Steering Group

ACTION: Deputies group to agree date for next online meeting

ACTION: Deputies group to consider more frequent experience exchange meeting

e. [Marketing & Communications](#)

Stewart Sandilands had been unable to attend, and with Mark likewise away there was no formal report. It was noted that the group had been relatively inactive during the lockdown period, and it was agreed to follow up with them to see what further support they might need.

ACTION: GJJ to follow up with Stewart and Marketing Group on future plans and support needs

f. [Mercian Disability Forum](#)

Laura Waller had been scheduled to attend, but unfortunately had not joined today's meeting. In her absence, GJJ noted the group had met twice online during lockdown to discuss a range of topics, with [comprehensive minutes available](#). He highlighted he had sought input from the group members, with respect to accessibility issues and online meetings. The Chair noted the importance of accessibility in the post-lockdown library, in both the virtual and physical environment, and welcomed the expertise of the group members in this respect.

g. [Mercian Metadata Group](#)

William Peadon had apologised as he had been unable to attend due to changing vacation plans, in the wake of the Leicester lockdown, and in his place co-chair Richard Birley represented the Group. The Group had hosted a co-badged meeting at BCU with the MDG (CILIP SIG) on RDM and RIMF which was well attended by the Collaboration membership. The Group had met face to face once at Leicester in January 2020 and had ratified the committee, with Will and Richard servicing as co-chairs. An eForum event was being hosted next week, which going on past experience, should prove to be popular. Richard noted that RDM/RIMF and other training may be challenging for the time being as this was not easy to pivot to online format, but as these were strongly desired elements the group was looking to find ways to deliver them. It was anticipated they would host another forum towards the end of the year, to pick up on hot emerging topics (e.g. decolonisation and catalogues standards) with respect to challenges for metadata workers.

Will and Richard speaking at the MDG SIG Conference in September on their experiences of setting up a regional metadata group, which with costs of travelling to London (pre-pandemic) had become somewhat of a national concern.

Diane noted again, like other SIGs that there were valuable experience here that could be included in the annual report and encouraged all groups to share this sort of knowledge when submitting their materials.

ACTION: GJJ to highlight what kind of material can be added to the annual report by SIG

h. Research Data Management

Gareth Cole (Group Lead) and Simon Bevan (Sponsor) were both unable to attend but were scheduled to meet 26th August to discuss the group's future. It was noted there were no activities or developments for the group to report since the August 2019 Steering Group meeting.

ACTION: Simon to report back to Steering Group on outcome of talks with RDMSG Lead

20/10 AOB

a. Public Library Reopening

Diane noted she was speaking to Library of Birmingham about their reopening plans, which along with the combined public/academic library experiences at Worcester be worthy of sharing with the wider Collaboration membership.

b. Face Masks in Libraries

There was a discussion over understandings concerned with the legal status and practical arrangements of face covers being required in academic libraries, in contrast to libraries.

c. Date of next Steering Group meeting (Nov/Dec 2020)

It was agreed to aim for early December for the next Steering Group meeting, which would once again be online.

ACTION: GJJ to coordinate with Diane's PA and Steering Group on dates for next SG meeting.