



## Mercian Collaboration Steering Group Meeting

Telcon, Thur 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 2019

**Present:** Dave Parkes (DMU, Chair), Diane Job (Birmingham, Vice Chair), Paul Reynolds (Keele, Treasurer), Emma Walton (Loughborough), Fiona Parsons (Wolverhampton)

**Apologies:** Phil Brabban (Coventry)

### 19/01 Matters arising from previous meeting (9<sup>th</sup> August 2018)

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance, before confirming all matters arising from the previous meeting had been actioned or were appearing on today's agenda. He asked for any AOB before moving onto to the main items of business.

### 19/02 Governance

#### a) Nominations and Elections

GJJ confirmed following the extended nomination period (to end of Jan 2019) the following unopposed nominations had been revived.

**Vice Chair: Chris Porter** (nominated: Robin Green)

**Member: Simon Bevan** (nominated: Judith Keane)

**Member: Emma Walton** (nominated: David Parkes)

As there were fewer nominations than Steering Group places, all three of these people were elected to serve on the new Steering Group for two years from the end of March 2019 to 2021. Diane Job as Vice-Chair (2017-2019) would also progress to the role of Chair. However, this left the post of Treasurer and one Committee Member role vacant. It was agreed to fill these vacant roles at the March Directors Board by accepting nominations from the floor, or as a fall-back to utilise Chair's actions to co-opt members.

The potential of nominating deputy director/senior staff to serve in these roles was discussed. However, with 23 Mercian Member Directors and only five Steering Group roles to fill biennially, finding sufficient Directors willing to serve from among the Board, it was agreed that this was the Steering Group's overwhelming preference. The importance of ensuring varied representation and demonstration of commitment to the Collaboration from all members through involvement in the Steering Group, was stressed. However, it was noted that Derby, Nottingham, and the OU were in Director transition, which likely affected the ability of some individuals to serve.

It was agreed that Dave would informally speak with the Directors to locate members willing to serve on the Steering Group, and report back ahead of the Board meeting.

**ACTION: Dave to informally canvas Directors for Steering Group membership**

#### b) Handover to Incoming Chair and Steering Group

It was agreed that Dave and Diane would meet at a mutually convenient time and place ahead of the Board to discuss practicalities. GJJ would be present if available or alternatively would meet with Diane subsequent to the Board to brief on ongoing activities.

**ACTION: Dave and Diane to arrange a meeting to discuss handover before March 26th**



**ACTION: GJJ and Diane to arrange a meeting to discuss handover after March 26th**

c) Treasurer's Update

Paul noted he had distributed an update in Nov ahead of the aborted December meeting, and that given Ruth's current absence at SCONUL he had been unable to obtain more up-to-date account information.

- Reserves at end of Nov 2018: £19,767.00
- Projected spend to end 2018: £6,578.00
- Projected reserves 31 Dec 2018: £13,189.00

However, he noted that expenditure was well in line with expectations. He was in the process of actioning the MSDG's recent invoice for an external speaker (event 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019). He anticipated receiving full accounts in early March and producing a full report for the March Board. He would update the Steering Group ahead of this meeting.

**ACTION: Paul to produce Treasurer's report for Directors Board.**

Practically he noted he was still struggling to arrange payment for the 2018 conference venue, despite having a good relationship with the Birmingham team. Diane noted Birmingham had transitioned to a new admin system, and this had caused a backlog of invoices. It was hoped that the matter would be resolved soon.

**ACTION: Diane to assist Paul where possible in resolving conference payment problems**

d) Mercian Sponsorship Policy

Emma, GJJ and the Conference Group had discussed this at recent meetings, and it was proposed to revise the policy to offer only two tiers of sponsorship, at the Gold and Bronze levels. This was in the light of experience with sponsors, all of whom had expressed a preference for attending the event over any additional options or simply sending marketing material. As the lead time for sponsors was crucial, Emma and GJJ would revise the documentation and make it live as soon as possible. The Chair noted his agreement and asked that the policy be brought to the Board for information only.

**ACTION: Emma and GJJ to revise and update the Sponsorship Policy**

**ACTION: Emma to bring Sponsorship Policy to Directors Board for information**

e) Annual Report: Update

GJJ noted the report was underway and would be ready for the Board in March. He hoped to share it with the Steering Group ahead of this. It was noted the only outstanding items were now Dave and Diane's contributions.

**ACTION: Dave and Diane to supply foreword and afterword for Annual Report ASAP to GJJ**

**ACTION: Annual Report 2018 to be presented for information and approval to the March Board**



#### f) MCDO Workloads & Priorities

GJJ and Dave noted they had been having discussions around the increasing demands against Gareth's limited employed hours. The expansion of the Collaboration, especially SIG activity, but also in terms of providing essential governance, corporate secretary, website administration and regulatory functions, meant the demands on the Officer's time had significantly increased. Dave and GJJ had also been discussing questions around incremental salary concerns, which Dave would brief Diane about. GJJ noted with the growth of SIGs, the time devoted to supporting and meeting with them was considerably eating into his developmental and strategic activities, not to mention opportunities to attend Collaboration events. The Chair and the Officer would continue to monitor the situation, and prioritisation of the Officer's activities, along with lessons learned from the other comparator collaborations' staff.

However, GJJ and Paul noted that any increase to the Officers' hours, while potentially desirable, would place considerable financial pressures on the Collaboration's budget. It was noted any increase in subscription rates to meet this income need, may cause some members to reconsider their ongoing membership. Nevertheless, GJJ reminded the Steering Group that the Mercian Collaboration's subscription fell below those of other academic library collaborations by a considerable margin. Paul agreed to investigate this further, with the other collaborations.

**ACTION: Paul to discuss membership fees, banding & structures with NoWAL and NC treasurers**

It was noted that the Collaboration had evolved considerably in scale and scope of operations since its initiation 5 years ago, with its continuing expansion of its activities demonstrating a healthy degree of continued member interest. In discussing the value of the Collaboration, it was acknowledged that for those present it clearly represented an important and high priority. However, it was agreed to canvass further input from the Directors as part of the discussions on the Collaboration's future, and its relationship with future financial planning and operational support.

In terms of meeting and managing the current demands on the Officers time consideration will be given by the Chair to identifying activities where others could contribute or financing more hours on an ad-hoc basis. The treasurer noted his concerns that any such expenditure lay outside the current budget calculations. Noting the earlier concerns over member subscriptions, it was suggested that perhaps the time was ripe for the Collaboration to explore additional routes for income. One suggested example was revisiting the conference entrance fees question. No clear consensus was reached, and it was agreed to revisit this topic in the light of discussions at the March Board.

### 19/03 Collaboration Action Plan

#### a) Strategic Plan: Revision and Update

It was noted that this still required revisions ahead of the Board. The Chair and GJJ would work on this over the next few weeks and share with the Steering Group for review before finalisation. GJJ enquired if the SCONUL strategy had been finalised, so that this could be incorporated. It was generally concluded this had not yet happened, but it would be worth checking into. Dave would also review the other Collaboration's strategic plans for guidance.

**ACTION: Dave to review SCONUL Strategy and incorporate elements and synergies where possible within Collaboration's planning**

**ACTION: GJJ & Dave to finalise strategic plan for Steering Group and Board review**

#### b) SIG Proposals

GJJ reported there were two SIGs currently under discussion, both arising from within the membership rather than any direction from the Board or Steering Group. The first was *Marketing and Communication*, where Steve Rose (late of BCU) had facilitated discussions at two meetings in 2018. GJJ had been present for the latter of these meetings and had set up a distribution list to facilitate further discussions of those present. A subset of meeting attendees had since been drawing up a proposal intended to go to Directors Board in March, of which a draft had arrived yesterday. GJJ would review and offer advice, with the expectation that this would be finalised and presented at Board next month. He noted there were some confusions over governance and operations, which he was in the process of clarifying.

The second group concerned *Metadata and Collections*, and while some informal discussions had been taking place, a meeting of interested people was planned at Aston 28<sup>th</sup> February 2019. As GJJ is unable to attend due to a meeting clash, he would be meeting with the leading proponents (Will Peaden, Aston and Richard Birley, BCU) the following week to help shape a formal group proposal, also intended for the March Board.

The Chair and members noted these were exciting developments, although referring to earlier discussions, did express some concerns concerning the impact on the Collaboration's resource (finances, MCDO time etc) to support. The enthusiasm was welcomed, and with both groups clearly addressing a clear need within the region, likely to thrive and offer authentic benefits to the membership. GJJ noted that all SIGs are subject to periodic review, of which contributing to the annual report was a key aspect. He explained that the Steering Group could formally review any and all SIGs at any appropriate point for fitness (in terms of operations, activities, costs, impact, value and strategic fit), should that be seen as necessary.

It was agreed that representatives of these potential groups should be invited to the Directors Board to present their proposals, and to provide to them an idea of the importance of representation, requirements and responsibilities which fall on all out SIGs.

#### **ACTION: GJJ to invite proposed SIG representatives to the March Board**

#### c) CILIP Follow Up Discussions

Dave noted that following her representation at the October board (18/09), Jo Cornish had held a follow-on discussion with Dave, as the Collaboration's Chair, a few weeks ago. One question which had arisen was how CILIP could recognise, formally, the Collaboration's contributions. This was unclear and Jo had taken the question to her CEO. It had been stressed that the Collaboration could join CILIP, as a group, under the Employer Partnership Scheme, although any demonstratable value from such an arrangement was presently felt to be unclear. Part of the concerns over such an arrangement centred over the representation of the Collaboration's voice within CILIP, a theme mirrored in the SCONUL MoU discussions. However, it was noted the CILIP CEO is currently leading on diversity within the profession, activities which could hold some value for the Collaboration, alongside considerations of how former public librarians could transition into academic librarianship. There were also points made about apprenticeships, CILIP orthodoxies and particularly their lack of representation to staff drawn from outside of librarian career tracks. Dave noted Jo had expressed a willingness to return to address the Board again, if it was felt to be of value.



It was agreed that there was some potential, although not overwhelming, value in working with CILIP in some unspecified future capacity. It was also agreed that a wider discussion was perhaps needed, and an extra-ordinary Board meeting attended by the CILIP CEO and president could serve to clarify some issues. While initial discussions suggested rolling this into the conference, it was agreed this could impact on Director attendance in the programme and as delegates. Hence, holding such a summit as a discrete event would be more desirable, although the treasurer noted any costs may need to be considered first. It was agreed to report back on these discussions and explore the degree of interest in hosting such a meeting with CILIP to the Board before taking discussions further.

**ACTION: Potential for CILIP/MC extraordinary Board meeting to be discussed at March Board**

d) [Development Officer Update](#)

GJJ apologised for not tabling a written report, but as noted above (19/02(f)), his meeting workload now often left little time for administration and reporting. He however, provided a brief update for the minutes as follows:

- Met with regional collaboration officers (NC & NoWAL (DMU, Leicester), Nov 18 and NC, NoWAL, White Rose, M25, SCURL (UCL, London), Jan 19) to exchange experience. Topics discussed included governance and operational procedures, Plan S, Public Sector Website legislation, demonstrating member value, buddying schemes, legal configuration and strategic planning. This will be fed back to Chair, Steering Group and into operations as appropriate. Questions around the South West's approach to academic library collaboration, and efforts on jointly authoring an article were also touched upon. A meeting in March 2020 at York is currently planned.
- Has met with most SIGs in the past six months, with the exception of the RDMSG due to meeting dates. He had also met with (or was about to meet) instigators of new SIGs, to advise on progression to formal status.
- Has developed the outline annual report and hopes to share shortly following Chair and Vice-Chair's overdue contributions.
- As noted above, balancing administration, governance and operational support for the Collaboration is becoming an increasingly intractable barrier to any developmental work.
- The website, twitter presence, and distribution list continue to be major channels of marketing and update for the Collaboration's membership.
- Preparations for the March Board are well advanced, with a venue, catering and speaker sorted. The agenda is being drawn together following the Steering Group meeting and will be circulated for comment shortly.

The Chair noted his profound thanks to the Officer for their invaluable contribution to the Collaboration, and especially their support for his own role as Chair and in developing the outline strategic plan.



## 19/04 SIG Sponsor Updates

### a) Conference Group

Emma reported back on progress, as sponsor and group chair. The Nov 18 meeting had produced an evaluation report (to be published within the Annual Report 2018). It had also produced considerations over adopting two 'home' cities for the conference (east and west). These had been initially proposed as Birmingham and Nottingham, noting their multiple institutions who could host the event and favourable geographical location as transport hubs. It was also noted developing strong, ongoing relationships with on-site conference staff could prove beneficial in supporting effective organisation and delivery of a suitably good event. Following site visits by Emma, GJJ and Helen Curtis, it had been agreed that Nottingham would be the venue for 2019 (Tue 10<sup>th</sup> Sept, #mercian19) with a theme of collaboration. It was perceived that this was a sufficiently broad theme which could serve to support applications from many different speakers.

Emma noted that it was hoped to embrace diversity better within the keynote speaker, and that their talk would not need to be directly aligned with the conference theme. Potentially it could be a 'famous' alumni of a Mercian institution. She added the group hoped to recruit an additional representative from Nottingham, to help with local coordination, and she would be approaching the library directly to recruit a suitable person.

**ACTION: Emma and CG to approach Nottingham to seek new group representative for venue**

As Emma has been re-nominated to the Steering Group, it was anticipated she would continue as sponsor and chair of the Conference Group for the time being.

### b) Copyright Group

This had met last week at DMU (8<sup>th</sup> Feb), with GJJ in attendance for the whole meeting and Dave for some of it. GJJ noted the extremely impressive timebound nature of the meeting, and also that there was clearly a genuine value from the group's members' attendance. The group clearly represented a strong body of professional knowledge, of benefit to participating members. In particular issues around forthcoming CLA audits for some members had been addressed, along with various issues of mutual concern. Like some of the other SIGs, the Copyright Group is as of yet not representative of all Mercian Member organisations.

### c) Staff Development Group (MSDG)

The MSDG had held a number of events since the Group and Board had last met and continued to have an active programme. Their committee would be meeting the week before the Board (19<sup>th</sup> March, Worcester), where the Chair of the MDF would also be present. Diane noted she had spoken with the MSDG chair recently and noted her concerns over supporting the group as sponsor once she becomes Mercian Chair. It was suggested that, as the most active SIG, that the sponsor role for the MSDG should fall to the Vice Chair. As the incoming Vice Chair was already on the group, this was seen as an agreeable arrangement. Other sponsor roles would be allocated through discussion of the incoming Steering Group.

**ACTION: Brief discussion on sponsor arrangements with the incoming Steering Group to be held at Board**



#### d) Disability Forum (MDF)

This had met 8<sup>th</sup> January at Nottingham, with GJJ in attendance, and where Beck Maguire (Nottingham) had handed over as chair to Laura Waller (Warwick). GJJ noted the group continued to be an active and useful forum for information exchange, although it was as yet not fully representative of all Mercian Member organisations. The MDF was looking to host an event on accessibility and disability support, targeted at non-specialist practitioners (e.g. other library staff), and would be arranging this in partnership with the MSDG. Laura would be attending the forthcoming MSDG meeting as part of this planning process. GJJ also noted that the outgoing MDF Chair had expressed her satisfaction in the support from the Steering Group sponsor (Phil), and were anxious that his successor would offer similar levels of support.

#### e) RDM SG

GJJ highlighted that the group were organising an event focussing on RDM skills for 26th March, which he had noted to the group, unfortunately, clashed with the Directors Board meeting. He also noted the current committee still lacked a nominal chair, with Gareth Cole (Loughborough), Laurian Williamson (Leicester) and Patricia Herterich (Birmingham) operating as equals, which had caused some operational and coordination difficulties for him. However, he stressed the group continued to be active, engaged with a broad membership, and especially proactive in engaging with staff outside of library services with involvement in RDM activities. Fiona has also had a strong link with the group as its sponsor, which had been noted as being valuable for all involved.

### 19/05 Directors Board Meeting (March 2019)

#### a) Confirmation of Date, Venue, Speakers and arrangements

GJJ confirmed this was Tue 26th March 2019, at BCU. Liam Earney (Director of Jisc Collections and Head of Library support services) of Jisc would be in attendance to discuss Plan S and other related service updates. Some Directors would be attending a briefing on this tomorrow, it was noted. GJJ would be sending a reminder to all Directors later today and would also canvas for agenda items.

**ACTION: GJJ to send reminder of Directors Board out and seek any additional agenda items**

### 19/06 AOB

#### a) Deputy Directors Group

GJJ noted that other Collaborations had reported success with running a Deputy Directors (or nominated senior staff, where no formal deputies existed), as part of their succession planning, leadership development, experience exchange and also as a location to work through strategic and operational challenges. It was agreed to add this as a potential development for the Collaboration, and to discuss at the Directors Board. Dave would also chat to the respective organisational chairs to learn more about how this operated.

**ACTION: Dave to speak to NoWAL Chair about Deputy Directors Group**

#### b) Brexit

Dave had agreed to share a paper relating to Brexit and various preparations, relating to data protection with interested parties.

**ACTION: Dave to share Brexit paper**

Dave closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their participation today and over his term of office.