

Mercian Collaboration Directors Meeting

16th March 2016, Loughborough University

Minutes

Present

Alan Brine (DMU), Caroline Taylor (**Chair**, Leicester), Chris Powis (Northampton), Christine Porter (Newman), David Parkes (Staffordshire), Emma Walton (Loughborough), Phil Brabban (Coventry), Robin Green (**Treasurer**, Warwick), Deborah Findlay (UCB), Emma Sansby (BGU), Enid Pryce-Jones (BCU), Heather Whitehouse (Aston), Kathryn Greaves (Harper Adams), Maria Carnegie (Derby), Paul Reynolds (Keele), Fiona Parsons (Wolverhampton), Sue White (NC/Huddersfield), Sue Story (for Caroline Williams, Nottingham), Ruth Stubbings (for Mark Toole, NTU), Kirsty Kift (MCSDG Chair), Gaz J Johnson (MCDO)

16/01 Apologies & introductions

Apologies had been received from Diane Job (Birmingham), Ian Snowley (Lincoln), Caroline Williams (Nottingham), Mark Toole (NTU), Judith Keene (Worcester) and Nicky Whitsted (OU).

Emma Walton welcomed everyone to the meeting and the campus, along with general housekeeping.

Actions (All)

- [Action: Directors Committee to review Steering Group (SG) composition at March 2017 meeting]
- [Action: ALL to consider standing for SG membership]
- [Action: ALL to review SIG paper recommendations and feedback comments to GJJ]
- [Action: ALL to contact Ruth Stubbings or Mark Toole if any interest in collaborative open presses]
- [Action: Anyone with an interest to discussing Brexit library matters to contact Paul]
- [Action: ALL to share with confidential experiences of restructuring with Enid Pryce-Jones]
- [Action: ALL to send organisational structures/organograms with GJJ for sharing]
- [Action: ALL to note date of next Directors' meeting (Oct 12th 2016) and venue (NTU)]
- [Action: ALL to identify/consider issues and speakers for discussion session at next meeting and notify GJJ by July 2016]

Actions (Steering Group)

- [Action: SG to arrange telephone conference in Late April 2016]
- [Action: SG to discuss internal configuration and dispensation of unallocated roles (Secretary, Vice-Chair)]
- [Action: SG to discuss MC conference planning, with KK in attendance]
- [Action: SG to consider if a collections task and finish group would be of value]

Actions (Other)

- [Action: GJJ to update TOR in discussion with SG, and share via Website]
- [Action: MC Staff Development Group (SDG) to explore informal mentoring/buddying scheme initial meeting]
- [Action: Sue White to share planning template with SG]
- [Action: GJJ to distribute proposed brands to Directors list for comment]
- [Action: MC-SDG to review current areas of concern and propose where a SIG or task/finish group could meet needs]
- [Action: Sue Storey report back on May 2016 initial Alumni Library Forum meeting to Committee]
- [Action: GJJ Investigate online shared file storage with SCONUL or seek alternative]
- [Action: Mark to confirm NTU as first choice venue, others retained as possibilities]

16/02 Minutes of the previous meeting

Matters for correction - none.

Matters arising:

Item 3: MCSDG Report: Action on KK, who was present to report on activities and discuss matters arising with the Committee. Report distributed prior to the meeting via mailing list.

Item 3: Website action on Mark Toole: Noted that this work has been superseded with GJJ's work on website, with SCOUNL. To be reported on later.

Item 4.2: Action on MCDO: Noted GJJ had already been out meeting directors, and would be continuing this in the coming months.

Item 5: Special interest groups: Noted that a paper on SIGs had been prepared by GJJ for discussion. The report had been distributed prior to meeting via the mailing list, and the topic was on the agenda today.

Item 6: JISC Account Manager: Noted JISC Account manager was on agenda and had been invited by the Chair, but was not in attendance.

Item 8: RDM: This had not yet been taken forward. It was noted however, that RDM remained an element of the staff development programme that can be picked up on by the MCSDG in due course, as part of their forthcoming programme.

Item 9.1: Subscriptions: This had been actioned by RG, and would be reported on by the treasurer later in the meeting.

Item 9.4: Director Updates: These had not received, however the Chair noted that she had not reminded the Committee, and apologised. It was agreed that, if time permitted at the end of the meeting that these will be tackled under AOB.

16/03 Steering Group: Appointments and configuration

The Chair noted that the MC was at the point where we need to move forward on this, for a new Steering Group (SG) committee cycle and made a general call for volunteers. It was noted that the SG members had spoken to a number of directors outside of the meeting to gauge interest and encourage new blood to contribute.

The Chair opened the role of Chair and Treasurer to nominations. CT noted that she would be prepared to take the role of Chair on for one further year. RG also noted a willingness to continue as Treasurer, noting it had not been a major workload for him. As no further nominations were forthcoming, the Committee agreed, especially in the light of it being early days for MC, that a measure of continuity in these roles would be of value.

Agreed: CT and RG appointed as Chair and Treasurer respectively for period 2016/2017

[Action: Directors Committee to review SG composition at March 2017 meeting]

There was a suggestion that there was a need to reword the Terms of Reference (TOR), given the role of Vice-Chair is expected to succeed to chair. It was noted that NW is retiring this week, and cannot take the role of Chair. There were some additional comments and discussion around the Steering Group's composition, and contrast with the Northern Collaboration's. The general feeling of the Committee was that an increase in the number of SG members would be valuable in ensuring

a broader representation of views, experience and insight in terms of direction and ethos of the MC as a whole.

Agreed: Expand the Steering Group with additional Directors

Calls for interest as additional Directors were made, although not necessarily to fill specific roles. Noted EW, PB and FP had shown some interest. Discussions around commitment level for involvement in the Steering group followed, noting that as of yet the themes and activities over the coming year need discussions.

Agreed: Phil Brabban, Emma Walton elected to Steering Group for 2 years, 2016-2018

In the light of suggested expansion of the SG, further expressions of interest in membership were left to directors to consider and discuss with the Chair outside of today's meeting. CT thanked Nicky for her contributions as Vice-Chair, and wished her a pleasant retirement.

[Action: ALL to consider standing for SG membership]

[Action: SG to arrange telephone conference in Late April 2016]

16/04 Update to terms of reference (TOR) document

This had been circulated prior to the meeting, and had been updated by GJJ to account for the appointment of the MCDO, among other minor tweaks. There was also an issue on the wording of co-optation and whether this needs to also be corrected. Finally, relating to this and the previous items there were brief discussions on how any changes in the configuration of the SG should be represented

Agreed: Update to TOR accepted

[Action: SG to discuss internal configuration and dispensation of unallocated roles (Secretary, Vice-Chair)]

[Action: GJJ to update TOR in discussion with SG, and share via Website]

16/05 Treasurer's Update

RG reported that currently income raised and anticipated (subscriptions coming in) came to £23,802. The spend over 2015/2016 so far, including SCONUL management fees came to £4,488. As a result the current account balance was £19,314.

The anticipated spend for the foreseeable future was:

£9,000: MCDO salary, equipment and travel expenses

£2,290: SCONUL management fees

£1,500: MCSDG Event costs

This left £6,500 currently unallocated/in reserve. The Chair noted her thanks to RG.

16/06 Staff Development Group: Events programme & update (KK)

A report on the recent MCSDG meeting and their discussions had been tabled prior to meeting, and KK talked to the major points. Of particular note was the proposed programme for 2016/17 which had been brought to Committee for comment and approval. KK again talked through how these events had been developed and themed, from shared issues across the MC representatives.

The Committee noted that this seemed to be a good mix of events, and thanked KK for her group's efforts. A suggestion that an event dealing with circulation, automatic renewals and fines would definitely welcome.

Agreed: KK and MCSDG to go forward events for 2016/17 as proposed

KK noted MCSDG wanted to talk about the facilitation of mentoring scheme across the institutions, less formal than the CILIP scheme, and shaped to better to fit the needs of regional library staff. It was felt that who comprised the targets for such mentioning seemed to need further discussion and clarification, as staff at all levels might desire a regional mentor. The term *mentoring*, *mentor* and *mentee* may need to be carefully considered, as these may be perceived as establishing a far more formal relationship than the proposed scheme entailed. It may cause unrealistic expectations for mentees, and may also dissuade potential mentors from participating. It was proposed that a term such as *buddying* be used, to signify the more informal relationship and support offered, and would likely help alleviate these concerns.

The Committee felt that this was a very positive idea, in line with the ethos of the MC. Configured as an informal scheme, this would mean there would be less need for training of mentors. Other than a set up meeting, there did not seem to be any need to organise a mentors' event, as their key tasks would be publicising, recruiting participants and matching buddies with each other. Additionally coordination of such a scheme across the Mercian region would provide tangible benefits for MC partner institutions' staff. As further benefit, it would also raise awareness and understanding of the MC itself.

Agreed: MC supported the setting up of a mentoring/buddying scheme, pending further operational discussions within the MCSDG

[Action: MCSDG to explore informal mentoring/buddying scheme initial meeting]

The question was raised about interest in more formal mentoring. The Committee felt that this could emerge, as the buddying scheme may uncover a desire for it. It noted that there may be a need for caution here, as unless people are trained well, they can be poor at mentoring. There would also be higher expectations, and hence a higher demand on the time of staff who participate.

Agreed: Committee to monitor response to buddying scheme, and revisit formal mentioning if sufficient demand arises

KK then raised the issue of the proposed MC Conference, and outlined the robust discussions that had taken place at the recent MCSDG meeting. A principal issue remained the lack of clarity on what the MC Conference was intended to achieve. Additionally, issues on identifying a theme that would appeal to all staff at all institutions, the relationship of the conference to the MCSDG events programme, and the robustness of support/financial infrastructures were also noted as concerning. Additionally, the MC branding remains to be established. Hence, KK concluded 'what are we trying to achieve?' with the conference.

The Chair asked Sue White to comment, noting the Northern Collaboration's past conferences. Sue explained NC has had 3 conferences, which are now managed by a dedicated Conference Planning Team, with previously support from the SCOUNL office. However, this support had been patchy and now the Conference Team have taken on all aspects of planning and delivery. Events have become more extensive over the years, but costs to delegates are now met through sponsorship brought in by their Development Officer (Emma) - £12k last year, which actually made a surplus. NC is committed to 1 conference a year. There is now a planning template for events that the Conference Team use. There is an expectation on Directors that they will endorse the work of the Conference Team, and as well as making suitable staff available for it, and permit the commitment of staff time to facilitating the conference – not simply permitting attendance at planning meetings.

[Action: Sue White to share planning template with SG]

Participation in the Conference Team is generally seen to be a development opportunity for its members, who normally are pulled from the middle management strata. Typically directors will seek volunteers or identify staff who can contribute, and serve a 2 year term of office on the group to provide continuity. The Conference Team is chaired by the Development Officer, who has helped refine processes overtime.

NC conferences have been a success, with “a real buzz about them”, appealing to staff across seniority levels and as a result people who wouldn’t normally be in the room intermingle. A mix of invited speakers (external to NC, keynotes) and talks from volunteers from within the NC’s institutions¹. Themes are kept very broad, as they want to appeal to across the membership and all levels.

CT thanked SW for her input and opened this up to general discussion. Noted that workload remains a major concern for MCSDG, and identifying a body of staff outside of this group to facilitate it would be their preferred option. It was also noted a need to plan the scheduling carefully for any MC conference, to avoid clashes with other events and suboptimal periods of the year.

There were then extensive discussions on the conference. The general feeling of the Committee was that a conference could provide a benefit to the MC, and partner institutions, but would require considerable planning and development. Ideally the first run of any conference would be a smaller event than later years, allowing more control, lower overheads and staff time demands, and provide a model to develop in future years. It was agreed that facilitating a staff gathering staff, especially those staff who don’t normally present, would be a good development opportunity.

Aligning the themes of the conference with the director priorities, and MC’s overarching goals would be ideal. However, in the first instance it was clear that the main aim was to bring staff together for the purposes of professional exchange, development and potential cross-fertilisation. That said, a strong central theme would ideally need to be identified first. Some broad themes suggested during the meeting included:

- Reshaping services
- New horizons
- Engaging non-users
- Use/Student experiences

It was also agreed that the format of the event should allow for different styles of sessions – not simply chalk and talk presentations – e.g. posters, cracker barrel, minute madness etc. The Chair thanks KK and the MCSDG, and the Committee, for their contributions.

Agreed: A MC conference should be organised, pending further clarification by the SG
Agreed: A Conference Planning Team should be constituted to take forward the conference practically

[Action: SG to discuss MC conference planning, with KK in attendance]

16/07 Collaboration Development Officer Update

GJJ shared a brief update on his activities since starting in the role which included: developing the MC website with SCUNL, market intelligence and research on other collaborations, liaising with and supporting the MCSDG as well as regular attendance at the SG meetings. He has also been on a visit

¹ Noted on conversation with NC’s Officer, that some staff who might not otherwise consider offering a session are encouraged by their Directors to contribute.

to the Northern Collaboration, where he met their Chair and Development Officer, and is regular communication with his counterparts around the country. He noted that SCOUNL is gathering the Development Officers for a meeting in April. Finally, he has begun to visit the MC Directors to find out more about their aspirations, hopes and desires for the collaboration, and will be in touch with those he has not yet visited in the coming months to make arrangements.

GJJ also noted in response to discussions that the MCSDG has been exploring brand identities, and has come up with a number of logos. He welcomed the comments of the Committee as to their suitability for adoption for the MC as a whole.

[Action: GJJ to distribute proposed brands to Directors list for comment]

16/08 JISC Account Manager

Not present. Noted that some had not been aware that there were different ones across the region.

16/09 SCOUNL Update

MT had previously circulated an update via email.

16/10 Mercian Collaboration priorities: Focus, potential projects & workplan discussions

This was postponed to the next meeting. Noted that GJJ's visits may well feed into this.

16/11 Special Interest Groups: Report & Discussion

GJJ had been tasked by the SG to produce a paper, which had been disseminated prior to the meeting, researching into special interest groups (SIGs) and their operations in other collaborations. The Chair noted her thanks for this. The paper and themes for new groups were discussed. These included:

- Campus Internationalisation & Accessing Staff/Services
- Collections and print management
- Copyright
- Data/records management
- Digital preservation
- Disability²
- Partners & Licensing
- Research support

It was a thought that a number of task and finish groups might be beneficial too, as well as a mix of ongoing groups. It was suggested that the long list of areas/issues that the MCSDG devised to drive its programme of events may well identify areas that might need either event to facilitate exchange of experience, or may require an ongoing group to address. It was suggested that further information on this topic, could help the Committee see where SIGs may need to be configured.

[Action: ALL to review SIG paper recommendations and feedback comments to GJJ]

[Action: MCSDG to review current areas of concern and propose where a SIG or task/finish group could meet needs]

² Noted that a Disability group, that is not aligned with the MC although geographically falls within the region, came into existence late last year. This is currently being led by Jane Mortimer from DMU

[Action: SG to consider if a collections task and finish group would be of value]

16/12 Focus on University Presses

Sue White, on behalf of Huddersfield University Press (HUP) explained the background to the work. Drivers for this work are the monograph crisis, funder mandates and early career researchers. HUP gained funding from JISC, and developed work timescales. Graham Stone leads on this, working with JISC under Rachel Bruce, with a researcher joining soon (Chris Keene). HUP will be surveying UK universities and reporting back in July, and should have a clearer idea about library and university publishing then.

Planned to publish via university repository (ePrints), maximising dissemination. Managed by the library but has a cross-university board chaired by DVC, so senior buy in exists, although some issues with VC not quite seeing its value. 'Business model' highlights the prestige factor. Since 2011 published 12 monographs, of which 6 are OA (open access), discoverable via OAI-PMH. 7 current journals, and these are all OA. Range of titles usually in niche areas that lack comparative titles. Methodology developed through HOPE, a previous JISC project. Also *Huddersfield Contemporary Records*, this has been very successful and a number of these were submitted for the REF – but Sue noted that you need a specialist if you start publishing music – dealing with licences and with music staff requires some considerable finesse and expertise.

Staffed largely from within current library staff, although a new 0.6FTE post has been created to help manage it. Editorial board comprises senior academics and professors who are Huddersfield based, so people from other institutions would be of value in the future.

Biggest challenge is establishing reputation and convincing major stakeholders of the value of the press. Noted *White Rose Press* has had a knock on effect that has increased support, seemingly providing the critical mass to take such an idea forward. Funding is an issue, but some small sums (~£15k) have been found to develop HUPs. However, currently this is being developed on a shoestring, lacking a long term commitment is an issue. As it grows there is a need for more specialist support, and this includes someone who can do the marketing as academics are not good at this.

Sue was thanked for the presentation and general discussions followed.

16/13 AOB

Open Presses

Ruth Stubbings commented Mark Toole keen looking at collaborative way forward at open presses and anyone who was interested should contact Ruth if interested? A JISC report due in a few months, looking at the practical experience running managing supporting institutional journal production. The Committee noted that this could be fruitful for a discussion or an experience sharing event for both practitioners and also those institutions that have an interest. Caroline (Leicester) and David (Staffordshire) expressed an initial interest.

[Action: ALL to contact Ruth Stubbings or Mark Toole if any interest in collaborative open presses]

Contingency Planning for Brexit

There were brief discussions around issues for libraries in terms of workloads, and exchange rates in the event that the UK vote to leave the EU. Noted that Funding and costs are problem.

[Action: Anyone with an interest to discussing Brexit library matters to contact Paul]

Library Forum (ALF) representation

Nicky had sent an email saying from someone else around a recently held ALF event. Discussed delegates and future plans and how to move this on in a new and exciting way. Looking at how libraries can engage with alumni communities. She noted that it is desired to set up an ALF committee, and interested people aim to hold a meeting. The Chair asked if there was interest in sending a MC representative, although noted that the email was from 2015. It was also noted that there is a one day conference in London as a kick off event for ALF. Sue Storey commented that she is attending event in May, and would be happy to send her thoughts back to the Committee afterwards.

[Action: Sue Storey report back on May 2016 initial Alumni Library Forum meeting to Committee]

Restructuring

Enid noted she was interested in speaking to anyone off the record about how and why they managed it. It was suggested that sharing organisational structures of all MC libraries would be of benefit, and might be a useful resource for the shared file store on Jiscmail.

**[Action: ALL to share with confidential experiences of restructuring with Enid Pryce-Jones]
[Action: ALL to send organisational structures/organograms with GJJ for sharing]**

Shared Working Spaces

This raised a question about sharing collaboration materials, and where we can access them. While the Website is one source, GJJ noted issues with hacking of other collaboration web spaces. As a result most other collaborations avoid using any publically visible location for shared file store. However, he would raise the matter with SCOUNL and see if an alternative to Jiscmail file store or Google Drive was on offer

[Action: GJJ Investigate online shared file storage with SCOUNL or seek alternative]

16/14 Dates, venue & items for next meeting

The date was agreed as **October 12th 2016**

[Action: All to note date of next Directors' meeting (Oct 12th 2016)]

In terms of venue the following were suggested in order of preference: 1) NTU 2) Warwick 3) Lincoln 4) Leicester. Noted may need to host a meeting at Lincoln at some point.

[Action: Mark to confirm NTU as first choice venue, others retained as possibilities]

Note: Post meeting this venue has been confirmed.

Ideas for afternoon session were posed including:

- JISC RDM
- The monograph strategy
- HE Act 15th July.

However, agreed other issues were likely to rise up over this time and that Committee members should share them with the Development Officer or Chair as appropriate; and where possible citing any speakers who might be approached.

[Action: ALL to identify/consider issues and speakers for discussion session at next meeting and notify GJJ by July 2016]

Thanks were noted to Emma and her team at Loughborough for hosting the meeting.

Meeting closed at: 14:59