

Mercian Collaboration Steering Group

Meeting 5 May 2016

Present: Phil Brabban, Fiona Parsons, Kirsty Kift (for MSDG, items 1-4), Caroline Taylor (Chair), Robin Green, Emma Walton, Gareth J Johnson (MSDO)

Minutes

1 Notes from 16 March Directors meeting and matters arising

Mentoring Scheme: CT queried what action had the Committee arrived. Kirsty noted that they were planning to talk further at next SDG in June about the scheme to take it forward. Reconfirmed that this was an informal not formal mentoring process, and more networking type approach. The SDG would flesh out the proposal and practicalities of the proposed scheme for the SG in greater detail. Ideally CT suggested that this would be useful for the SG's September meeting.

AP: Kirsty and MSDG to continue developing mentoring scheme proposal for SG September meeting

2 Mercian Conference a. Establishing a conference steering group

Having agreed to go ahead with the conference a *Conference Steering Group (CSG)* to work with MSDG and take a lead was needed. A discussion followed, noting the input from NC (Sue White) on their experiences as well as SDG comments at the Directors' meeting. The question of how to identify people to take forward the planning was raised – should directors nominate or does the SG send out a call for participation? Suggested that it would be best if Directors nominated volunteers – balancing enthusiasm, capacity and competence. Additionally recognising which staff would be developed through experience of involvement would be valuable.

Agreed: Pursue nomination from Directors. SG person to lead and co-opt in host institution. SDG to liaise with CSG and provide input.

Noted difficult to call on SDG to lead on this, as previously expressed time demand/pressures. It was suggested to co-opt a member from venue location to lead on practicalities, but they shouldn't be chair as this would be too demanding on one person's time. Ideally a Steering Group member should Chair the CSG, especially for the first conference, ensuring it is shaped according to MC ethos, direction and intent. Additionally it would ensure strong ownership of the conference by the MC. Emma volunteered to lead on this, with initial support and input from Kirsty and GJJ

Agreed: Emma to lead on Conference for MC

AP: Directors to propose names of staff to be on Conference Group.

b. TOR and guidance for the conference steering group

The practicalities of nominations, configuration and terms of reference for the CSG would be discussed between Emma with Kirsty and GJJ. The group ideally would have 4-5 additional members, and a careful approach to recruitment was needed – email might not get the desired response. Key things for this group to agree are potential venues, group membership, terms of reference and dates for conference to take place. Hence a need to get a group together quickly. Membership of the group should ideally be for two years, so some continuity between conferences can be maintained. Where staff left or were unable to continue, would open potential for CSG recruitment in the future.

AP: Emma, Kirsty and GJJ to sort out initial configuration, group TOR and recruitment of CSG

Likely need a good venue, and this will likely need to be booked some time ahead – and may also configure the delegate size. Noted a commercial site might be easier to fix dates with, but comes with a greatest implication. In principle offer from CT – Leicester as potential venue with the big lecture theatre and suite of conference rooms adjacent to the library. Additionally Leicester is relatively central, and this may well be an issue in getting delegates. 1 day conference format agreed, and potential for a longer format if successful in the future.

3 MC and SDG branding and logo

a. To agree

2 things needed to be agreed (1) How to proceed for MC and SDG logos and (2) to adopt one design that for all MC committees and SIGs.

Agreed: One logo and adapting for MC and SIGs as appropriate.

Some discussion over which design, as despite feedback members of SDG liked some of the designs that Directors were less keen on. Suggestion that the bracket designs (B3-B4) represent an inclusive style design. Some discussion on colour scheme, noting Mercian colours (blue and yellow) might not generate sufficient contrast on a website. There was also a suggestion that text for specific groups could go below, rather than be incorporated into the logo itself. Hence keeping the main logo as just the MC name/brand. Agreed that asking Emma's staff member to revise a number of different designs (A3, A4, B3, B4) and reflect on these at the next the SG to make a final decision. Emma asked if it might be possible for the MC to recognise the contribution of the graphic designer (Chris Bassford) in some way, and this was agreed. Robin did note he wasn't sure on the practicalities, but favoured the idea.

Agreed: Provide reward (book token/Amazon voucher etc) from MC to graphic designer (Chris Bassford)

There was a discussion if wording on the logo should just be "*Mercian Collaboration*" or something more "*Mercian Collaboration of Academic Libraries*". It was agreed that it could be valuable to flag up the libraries angle, and this should be played with in the redesigns. GJJ noted other collaborations tend to simply use their name, and put any subheadings as separate text or images. It was noted that Given the time spent developing the MC name, producing a MC logo that is more flexible would be the best approach.

AP: Emma to go back to designer and ask them to redevelop specific designs for MC and MSDG and circulate to SG

- 4 **Special interest groups (SIGs)/ Task & Finish groups**
 - a. **Recommendations and feedback; deadline and progress**

It was noted that while there were actions on this from the Directors' meeting, it needed some prompting and collation of responses. A list of suggested SIGs was present in the minutes and views on whether they should be set up as SIGs or T&F groups were needed. An end of June deadline was agreed. This gave rise to 2 questions. (1) Which groups should be SIGs or T&F (2) Are there staff who would be interested in being involved.

AP: GJJ to chase directors for feedback on SIGs for end of June

- b. **Additional: Collections task and finish group**

This was already in the list in the minutes

- c. **TOR for SIG/T&F**

GJJ noted that the TOR for the MSDG already existed, and would use these plus the report recommendations to draft a proposed TOR. He would incorporate any feedback from Directors also on the subject.

AP: GJJ to draft TOR for SIGS following feedback and share with SG

- 5 **Mercian steering group:**
 - a. **Update TOR**

It was noted that this will need to be updated to reflect following discussions.

AP: GJJ to amend TOR to reflect discussion outcomes for review by SG/Directors

- b. **Vice Chair and Secretary roles**

When MC was first set up there were 4 members with the roles of Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary, and arrangement which lasted about 6 months post-hoc. Do we need to keep these formal roles and if we assign them, or if so we need to adjust what has been done previously. CT agreed to take Chair to spring 2017, and believes it is important for someone else to step into role at this point to bring a fresh perspective. The question was asked if the SG should continue in a formal way following the TOR or should we think about operating it in a different way?

The role of secretary is now probably redundant with the appointment of the MCDO, where the responsibilities have been rolled into the post's operations. GJJ noted he is happy with this role, and agreed it makes sense for him to adopt it. Additionally it provides consistency and helps in keeping momentum going with the MC in general.

Agreed: Role of secretary is removed and responsibilities absorbed by MCDO

Role of Vice-Chair, is a key position in terms of providing support for, and assisting in succession for the role of Chair. The question was ask if we are willing to get someone to stand up and take on the role on the day and are able to nominate from the floor for a new Chair? If it is easy for this, then not need a VC, but if we envisage this will be a struggle then we need a formal process through which someone becomes the new Chair. Noted that there is some nervousness about taking on something that the commitment for is uncertain and expectations might need to be managed. It was noted that the role of VC smooths transition, and adds continuity to governance.

Agreed: Role of VC is a valuable one and someone should have been appointed to the role by or during the next Directors' meeting

A point was raised about a Past-Chair position. It was noted that on other committees that a past-chair is often given a remit, or task to lead on. If we don't have that need, then perhaps we don't need one.

Agreed: There is no current need for a Past-Chair role on the SG, but that this should be revisited in the light of future SG experiences

It was agreed that a little more time is needed so people have clearer idea of what the VC/Chair role represents. It was also agreed that there needs to be acceptance from all Directors that at some point they will need to fulfil leadership role as a member of SG or Chair. This is part of the deal that comes with being part of the MC group. It was proposed that this involvement should be codified in the terms of reference. Noted that there may be a need to apply gentle persuasion from the SG where a lack of willing involvement is noted.

Agreed: TOR may need revision to include expectations of membership on Directors/members

AP: SG members to think over summer about VC role, what it comprises and who might take on role

Brief discussion on treasurer role, which was felt to be a very valuable one, and well executed by the current post holder.

c. Work plan

CT noted being able to say we're going to do something tangible is considerable valuable in terms of giving a return on investment to the member organisations, and we need to make sure that something is done. While we currently have themes, these haven't been taken forward practically as of yet. It is useful for those involved in engaging with these efforts to be aware that reporting that no progress has been made, still needs to be reported. Additionally making sure any activity here is represented on the website in terms of visible activities.

AP: GJJ chase Sue for NC planning template

6 Finance

a. Update & Subscriptions for 2017

Robin gave a brief report that we have spent £2.5k, and have an anticipated spend this year of £17k, with a balance of £19.5k. Noted SDG yet to draw on £1.1k allocated for external speaker. Other minor costs will come in from MCDO in terms of travel, and other costs. But on track currently very well. Question raised if we're planning to not charge for conference or get sponsorship – then need to fund conference from within subscriptions. It was suggested that sponsorship seeking skills could be a key skill base for a CSG member. Additionally it might be decided to not go with commercial venue first year to reduce costs.

AP: Emma and CSG to provide input to RG by late September what anticipated conference costs

Robin proposed that the costs are likely to go up for the MC now we have a regular spend, hence he recommended returning back to 2015 subscription levels to accommodate these anticipated costs. Also costs might have to accommodate the SDG if they spend the nominal £3k set aside for helping them organise events. It was perhaps too early now, but Robin reported that he should have a clear view in time for the October meeting.

AP: Robin to report on anticipated MC subscription charges for 2017 at October meeting

7 MC Officer update

a. Website development

Information drawing on the MC's documents has been collated and passed to SCOUNL. After some discussions, and minor revisions this is now in the hands of their Web company (Adaptive is the new web company provider). In liaison with Lori Bailey at SCOUNL over this, and hope is during May we will have a draft site to look at, comment on and test. SDG site is coming in to this site, and most of the info on their current site has been copied in preparation for this. Intention is for a low tech functional site, with an open ethos (e.g. minutes from most meetings will be made available on it). Photos for Phil and Fiona are still outstanding though.

AP: Phil and Fiona to provide photo headshots to GJJ for Website

Question from Robin re SCOUNL, and the need to acquire a domain name still outstanding. SCOUNL are creating and hosting site, do we still need a domain name?

AP: GJJ will check with SCOUNL/Adaptive if we still need to acquire a domain name for the website

b. Director visits

Done: Loughborough, Lincoln (last week), Birmingham, Nottingham, NTU. Pending: Staffordshire, Keele (both next week), BGU (week after). Setting up next batch later today. Intention is to have document by next Directors meeting summarising common themes (possibly grouping by institution types – acknowledging unlikely to be totally overlapping themes and interests) to feed into MC planning and activities

Other: Collating structure diagrams in shared file space.13/22 received to date, and will chase again in a few weeks. Attended a meeting at SCOUNL (with SCOUNL, NOWAL and Northern Collaboration) a couple of weeks ago. A useful exchange of experience, planned follow up in Nov with NOWAL, NC and White Rose.

8 AOB

a. Undergraduates and reading – role for university libraries?

CT commented that this item was here to consider about in terms of the MC if there is anything to explore or develop collaboratively. She highlighted comments in THE/national press about the extent that UGs don't read in a sustained manner, along with an OECD report about low levels of numeracy and literacy in UK graduates. Fiona and CT suggested that there might be something to think about collaboratively. Emma noted a member of staff who has a library wide responsibility for developing readership – to support the theory that reading for pleasure helps reading academically. Noted a lot had been done in concert with NHS and public libraries in this regard. Also gave an EMALINC (pre-MC) session, about why the project started, rather than about student reading itself. Valuable to link this sort of work with other service aspects, so interest certainly at Loughborough. But it is not a service priority, which means finding time and resource is an issue.

Fiona has had some internal conversations. Her areas of responsibility include pedagogic teaching, and has been thinking about setting up some work around this. This is about quality of *learning experience*, as opposed to teaching quality – and there appears to be a gap in understanding in the role of reading in student success. CT noted conversely a link with academic success and reading has been made. Phil noted they are liaising with public libraries in Coventry, and have developed a leisure collection where the stock was drawn from the public libraries' collections. Again he cited issues over finding time to do it, similar to Loughborough. It was suggested this (along with links with public libraries within the MC region) could form a topic for the next Directors meeting.

Emma had gained some (limited) funding from alumni association to develop leisure reading collection, as funding for library as a whole is specifically for teaching/research collections. Rest of funding needs to be found externally to fund the collection. Coventry's approach seems to be a valuable one, and that would require very limited funding and staff resource to replicate in developing a collection.

AP: CT to forward articles on student literacy and attainment to SG

Agreed: UG reading and public libraries seems a potentially strong idea for the October Directors' meeting

b. Links with Public Library directors in the region

There were also discussions about dire straits of regional public libraries, and the question raised if the MC should make links with Service Directors.

9 Date of next meeting

Late June 2016. Exact date TBC

AP: GJJ & CT to coordinate on setting a date for the next SG telcon

GJJ 5th May 2016