



Marketing & Communications SubGroup

Minutes

Friday 6th May 2022, 2-3.30pm

Present: Claire Brown (Organising Committee, Birmingham), Emma Halford-Busby (Organiser Committee, Nottingham), Scott Chesworth (Keele), Matt Cunningham (Loughborough), Stewart Sandilands (BCU), Rebekah Broads (NTU), Katie Mann (Newman), Katie Jones (Newman), Ed Wakefield (Newman), Gareth J Johnson (Mercian Collaboration, Executive Officer) Page | 1

Apologies: Kirstie Brookes (Staffordshire), Sue O'Sullivan (BCU), Joe Carey (Wolverhampton), Karyn Meaden-Pratt (Cranfield)

Summary of Actions

ACTION: GJJ to send Doodle poll for next meeting date to all members

ACTION: ALL to send any agenda items to GJJ ahead of the next meeting

ACTION: Organising group to agree preferred date & themes

ACTION: GJJ to promote group membership via the Board and Steering Group

22/07 Introduction & Overview

Emma and Claire opened the meeting with introductions and touched on what members were doing generally with respect to marketing.

22/08 Survey Feedback & Group Focus Preferences

GJJ updated everyone on the feedback from the survey last time. He reported there had been 7 responses in total and the votes were tallied as follows.

	Very Interested	Moderate Interest	Limited Interest	No Interest
Doing more with less	4	1	1	1
Effecting student behavioural changes	5	1	1	0
Media production techniques & tricks	4	3	0	0
Messaging the disengaged or reluctant*	6	1	0	0
Quick collaborative wins	5	1	1	0
Rebuilding relationships post-covid	5	1	1	0
Skills & development priorities	0	6	1	0
Social media & alternative communications routes	3	4	0	0
Student collaboration & co-working*	5	2	0	0

Using a rough weighting system, the two starred (*) topics were selected for discussion today. Other topics proposed for discussion were (a) Communications planning (b) Building Academic Advocacy for Library Services. These were added, along with the other most popular topics to the item (22/10) below.

In terms of the content of future meetings the outcomes were: Group Discussions & Exchanges: 4 (44%), Practical Training: (3) 33%, Presentations/Speakers & Discussions: (2) 22%. It was agreed to plan for a discussion meeting once more for the next time.

22/09 Collaboration Update

GJJ offered an update on activities across the Collaboration:

- The Call for Speakers at the September (6-7th) Conference is now open through to 13th June, on the topic of redefining engagement. He encouraged members to consider submitting speaker proposals.ⁱ
- Related to this are two Speaker Briefing sessions (10th and 19th May) which are being hosted to help support first time and inexperienced speakers, by providing guidance and advice on presenting at the conference. GJJ is hosting these with members of the conference group.ⁱⁱ
- The Steering Group meets end of the month, and GJJ will be feeding back to them on the group's progress. He noted Helen Curtis as group sponsor will be especially pleased to hear about the progress.ⁱⁱⁱ

- There is a joint accessibility working group set up by the MDF and MSDG groups, looking particularly at making events more accessible. The hope is to create some guidance which can be used by all Collaboration members and subgroups. They will be meeting this month for the first time, and hopefully be offering some advice in the second half of 2022.
- Finally, GJJ is pressing ahead in organising a Copyright Group meeting during May^{iv}, where there has been a little more interest in relaunching the group than previously encountered. If there are any people interested in attending, he asked people to put them in touch with him.

22/10 Themed Discussions

a. *Messaging the disengaged or reluctant*

Emma introduced the first of today's topics, noting that social media can be a powerful tool for libraries, especially for getting short-notice messages out to its community. But for all marketing and communications you are often reaching those in the user community who have already, to an extent, engaged. So, the question of how you can reach out to those beyond this grouping, including possibly those that have never even visited or accessed the library's services was an interesting topic to debate.

Birmingham: Claire reported how their library had asked students 'how do you want to hear about library news and services?' to inform their efforts. There had been though a lot of interest and engagement through physical signage in the lobby space. Linked to this, were efforts linked to 'national months', where stock bought to promote these as promotions had been very well received (and removed!) by the community.

Keele: Scott reported engagement with twitter was low, but the library was still getting new followers, so was clearly still capturing the attention of some people. He suspected that where others re-tweeted library content this probably helped in terms of getting it before new eyes. Pre-pandemic the team had made efforts to visit and be present in student social spaces to promote library services. The result was some engagement but also a fair bit of reluctance whole because library was perceived as an 'interloper' in the student space.

Loughborough: Matt noted they had success engaging with the central marketing team, as students don't follow library accounts, rather their followers were mainly academics now. One big success over the past few years had been the library taking over the main marketing SnapChat (as it was the BIG platform at the time) to promote study spaces, helpdesk, academic support etc. As a result, there was more engagement in one afternoon than all the library's social media content to date with 60,000 engagements in an afternoon. So, concluded building working relationships with other staff and departments working on outreach had been essential in reaching new communities.

Nottingham: Emma reported some successes in terms of attendance at events and service engagement when promoted via academics and tutors. However, academics have big workloads, so getting them engaged themselves is challenging. It was clearly an effective route though, as there had been an increased engagement and number of followers after these kinds of promotional efforts. The library is active on Instagram, often posting images of libraries. While there's not a big response to these, sometimes central marketing will promote these posts, and then there IS a spike in engagement. In the past physical giveaways had been used as promotional items, although this had stopped over the pandemic period.

Recently though, the library has been producing bookmarks and these have been quite successful and well-received. Also, for mental health week about 50 goodie bags were hidden around the library, and promoted on social media. This raised a lot of interest as people tried to track them down. As it is now possible to do in-person events again, there are plans afoot to run some 'popup' libraries across campus. Hence, the library's reconsidering a digital over physical promotional focus.

NTU: The library had given out social media cards to students during induction, which extolled the benefits of engaging with its social media accounts. However, terms 2-had been 3 more challenging though, so they are looking to repeat these sessions or find other routes to reach out to the students and promote the channels. Nevertheless, the service has found that getting people back into building is still a challenge, post pandemic. The team has been making use of academics to promote the library during their teaching as this has offered an effective route. There's also a Teams group for all marketing people across the university, and it's another route to share the library's content and have other departments repost it. Doing this seems to have some good impacts so clearly broadcasting library messages via different channels has been a winner.

Emma thanked everyone for the comments, and noted engaging with the disengaged was clearly one of the biggest communications challenges overall, but it was good to hear how people were working to overcome it.

b. Student collaboration & co-working

BCU: The university's Marketing Department employs 'student influencers' but they don't share them with other parts of the institution unfortunately. There has been some success working with graduate student advisors as a route for passing on information, as they present to their faculties on an a weekly basis. Hearing information via peers seems to be a very successful route for reaching out to the student community. Additionally, there's a Grow your Own Scheme whereby the university employs former graduates to work within the library as student mentors. They answer basic enquires and often meet with the students, who once again feel they are learning about services and support from 'peers'. Additionally, the library is also looking at its LibGuides with a mind towards accessibility.

Birmingham: Claire explained how the library was using Instagram and twitter, although twitter was more for post-graduate interaction. The library has been asked by the 'Publisher Ambassadors' on campus for takeover events, although there is some enthusiasm for these at the start of term, it soon fades. Discovered the print collections were weak in terms of stock to support themed months. The library had canvassed for suggestions, and had emails from students on related courses with an interest. Keen to offer material but with limited to no budget available to purchase new stock. However, now the library has a good list of target materials and in time hopes to resource their acquisition. Beyond this, the library is often asked to promote the archives & special collections. As the person responsible for these isn't a keen social media user, it requires some central support. One initiative was bringing the special collections to life in film, but even working with the Drama department, getting 'actors' for these films was a challenge.^v

Keele: Scott reported that pre-pandemic the library had had two students from their media courses come aboard for work experience in the library. Their brief was to produce a library marketing video as part of this, although the quality wasn't great and as a result the library opted not to use it. However, in principle this approach to making use of local student talent seemed worth perusing once more. Today, they have digital ambassadors who carry out similar sort of project based work in the library.

Newman: Katie noted during her time at Coventry they had stopped using Facebook for the library because it gained little interaction. Facebook consequently inactivated the page, with no option to get it reactivated because it broke their community standards (regularity of posts). Consequently, when she switched institutions, this caused issues at Newman for their library Facebook page. Because Katies' account was still associated with a defunct page, linking it to the Newman page caused this one to also be shut down for being 'similar to page shut down for breaching community values.'

Nottingham: The library had been using TikTok, but also running campaigns via Instagram too (reels, live and stories). However, twitter was no longer a focus for engagement efforts and the library doesn't have a Facebook page. They do have a communications officer though to work on much of this. The pandemic period saw a lot of focus and growth on Instagram, and so effort had been directed to maintain and develop this presence. With the changes to the Instagram algorithm, in that it prefers video to pictures, more video content has been created. However, this requires more resource/time to produce. Hence, getting 'Student Creators' involved - recruited by central marketing and paid an hourly rate – has been a way forward. It is possible to create a 'brief' for what you want, and then students in the scheme can express an interest, and the library can select with whom they want to work. You need to be flexible in what you want, but clear in your brief, and it is clear the 'authentic' element makes it more impactful.

For 'takeovers' students take over the library's social media accounts and talk about our topics from their perspectives. Throughout this, the central marketing people coordinate but don't dominate or dictate what you do, but are happy to advise if wanted. These efforts have produced some strong outputs, better than anticipated in many cases.^{vi} For 'Wobble week' efforts got student to 'takeover' boards, and also a mystery bookswap where the students then sit in new reading rooms reading their books. It costs about ~£35 to hire a student for a takeovers.^{vii} Beyond this, there had been some collaboration with work placement students to create some promotional material, not a major success but still a useful experiment to be repeated.

Additionally, the library has used the Student Creators for feedback purposes as it is a useful route for quickly getting community feedback. Emma also mentioned Nottingham's leisure reading collection which they want a student to curate, alongside obtaining suggestions for new texts from the community and then using these to make proposal for new items. In this way the students can experience the whole cycle of content.

22/11 Next Meeting

a. Potential Dates & Themes

It was suggested the group could meet three to four times a year, depending on demand from its members. As a topic for discussion, marketing and communications around induction would be a timely one, hosting the next meeting in July/August would be desirable. GJJ suggested, that if there was no second topic suggested by the meeting that perhaps a regional roundup on general marketing activity would prove a good focus. Stuart proposed that discussing 'communication failures' would be a potential useful topic too.

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ACTION: Organising group to agree preferred date & themes

b. Recruiting new members

GJJ pointed out he would continue to flag up the group's existence via the Board and Steering Group, and would encourage them to put their marketing related staff members onto the group mailing list.

ACTION: GJJ to promote group membership via the Board and Steering Group

ⁱ See: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/news-call-for-speakers-2022>

ⁱⁱ Event 1 (10th May) <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/event-conference22-speaker-briefing-01>, Event 2 (19th May) <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/event-conference22-speaker-briefing-02>

ⁱⁱⁱ Steering Group agenda & minutes <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/about-collaboration/agendas-minutes-steering-group>

^{iv} Now announced as Tuesday 17th May. See: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/copyright-group-meeting-may-22>

^v <https://twitter.com/UoBLibServices/status/1508469906534195205>

^{vi} This is before my time but an example of a student creator vlog - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2pWFHSG-h4>

^{vii} Here's a day in the life reel - <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CbPXJKuqd-7/>; University Mental Health Day takeover - <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17935207018352922/>