

Directors Board Meeting

Minutes, 18th October 2018, University of Warwick

18/08 Apologies & introductions

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Present: Dave Parkes (Chair, DMU), Diane Job (Vice-Chair, Birmingham), Paul Reynolds (Keele), Phil Brabban (SG member, Coventry), Fiona Parsons (SG member, Wolverhampton), Heather Whitehouse (Aston), Enid Pryce-Jones (BCU), Sally Wilkinson (Cranfield), Laura Pilsel (Harper Adams), Chris Porter (Newman), Mark Toole (NTU), Rosie Jones (OU), Janet Weaver (Staffordshire), Deborah Findlay (UCB), Maria Carnegie (Derby), Caroline Taylor (Leicester), Chris Powis (Northampton), Robin Green (Warwick), Judith Keene (Worcester), Jo Cornish (CILIP, AM only), Ruth Stubbings (SCONUL, AM only), Gareth J Johnson (Development Officer)

Apologies: Simon Bevan (Cranfield), Ian Snowley (Lincoln), Emma Sansby (BGU), Emma Walton (Loughborough), Caroline Williams (Nottingham)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked Robin and team for hosting.

18/09 Guest Speaker: Jo Cornish (CILIP)

The first speaker was welcomed by the Chair. Jo works at CILIP as their Employer Engagement Manager, and she is trying to meet people in libraries working at a strategic level, with respect to a variety of employment and workforce issues. She hopes to help CILIP better understand how they can support people, but also garner a greater understanding of where the sector is going and their emerging needs. She noted HE was a sector she was less familiar with, and particularly welcomed the chance to speak with the Directors today. She spoke about CILIP's 'Employer Partnership Package'¹, a new scheme which will replace organisational membership, which incorporates sector specific material as well as broader picture resources. The scheme is hoped to function better as both a partnership and in engendering on going conversations with organisations. She noted CILIP were speaking other organisations including Jisc and SCONUL as part of this effort. The employer package she noted also includes some individual memberships, bundled in the price, along with having a standard, premium and add-on levels of subscription. Jo provided Directors with materials for their interest.

The Chair opened the floor to discussions. Points raised included:

- Questions around duplication of efforts within the sector by different bodies and organisations. Although the benefits of CILIP bringing different library sectors together was noted.
- The involvement and promotion of CILIP by HE library directors to their own staff. It was noted HEA accreditation is far more widely recognised in HE as being relevant and valuable to careers paths than CILIP chartership. It was also noted that CILIP had not especially mobilised the HE library sector in campaigns, despite a notable decline across all sectors.
- The diversity of HE library staff was highlighted, noting that increasingly they were not drawn from 'library' backgrounds, and hence would be unlikely to look towards a 'librarian' professional body for guidance, development or support.

¹ CILIP Employer Partner scheme <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/EmployerPartner>

- How other organisations (e.g. SCONUL) can influence CILIP's agenda was discussed, something Jo would welcome input on. CILIP's role in affecting governmental policy was noted as an area of particular interest. This relates to areas of interest for the Collaboration in terms of workforce development and political agency/lobbying.
- It was also noted the BAME agenda was one all libraries should be considering, with respect to diversity in recruitment and promotion, although it was unsure where common ground between library sectors lay. There is potential here for more investigation at a national/international level.

Dave thanked Jo for attending, and she noted she was happy to continue the conversations between both organisations.

ACTION: Dave and Jo to have follow up conversation to continue input from Collaboration

18/10 Guest Speaker: Ruth Stubbings (SCONUL)

The Chair welcomed the second speaker, Ruth Stubbings, Deputy Director of SCONUL and former Vice-Chair of the MSDG. Ruth spoke on three topics: the potential changing of SCONUL's name, SCONUL Focus and SCONUL's developing strategy.

It had been suggested SCONUL's acronym is no longer fit for purpose, as the organisation is more diverse in its membership than just college and university libraries. There have been a number of ideas, and SCONUL would welcome input on this from the Collaboration. The idea is that the AGM in June 2019 would see any decision put into effect. Suggestions in the room included leaving it as it stands, but changing it to an empty acronym, given its current strong brand recognition. Any change in name it was suggested must offer an increased value to the sector, over any potentially lost kudos and recognition. Ruth mentioned a number of suggestions that would be full names rather than acronyms. However, Directors generally agreed that any organisation would end up being known by an acronym, which would not offer any benefit over the currently well recognised name. It was agreed the Collaboration felt there was insufficient drive or value in changing the name.

ACTION: All to send any further feedback on SCONUL's name directly to Ruth

SCONUL Focus has been on a break, following the editor standing down. A new push for articles was forthcoming, and the plan is to publish article by article rather than wait for an issue deadline. It was noted by Directors that SCONUL Focus had a strong value to staff, although perhaps less for Directors, but remained a valuable, tangible output.

Ruth turned to address SCONUL's strategic development, where a survey had been used to garner feedback from members. There had a good spread of comments (geographically) even if the actual numbers of responses was lower than was desirable. The major issues members faced were: budget pressures, workforce (recruitment & development) and demonstrating value and impact. Ruth asked if these issues resonated with Directors, which it was generally agreed they did.

Discussions followed, with the following comments being made:

- The increasing complexity of partnerships libraries manage is challenging from a leadership position, as are the political structures within institutions. Although it was noted that perhaps complexity itself is a wider issue. Partnerships are not just horizontal, but up and down too. This meant that some partnerships may be best done nationally and some best done internationally (e.g. scholarly communication).

- The importance of looking forward, and the role SCONUL plays in that respect was noted as being valuable.
- It was noted that the commercial players (publishers, library suppliers, etc) and the power they wield over the sector, caused concerns. This means SCONUL's value in assimilating and articulating to Directors what is going on with commercial actors (e.g. Plan S) was valuable in synthesising comments at local institutional levels from a 'sectoral viewpoint'. A 'watching brief' role for SCONUL, on educational features was also a powerful contribution.
- How SCONUL can help with addressing genuine disruptions within the sector (technological, sociological etc), and issues which may have genuine existential issues for academic libraries was also highlighted. SCONUL again can help synthesise these developments and how they impact on different scales of HEIs/libraries. The Directors noted that having this information adds to the value and professional recognition within the organisation for libraries and their strategic contribution to institutions.
- Linked to this was the suggestion of how the only way libraries could have an effective chance of influencing budgets, was to have powerful international voices. It was noted that the Midlands, and the UK itself remained small voices within a globalised 'market'. SCONUL in this respect was key as both a conduit and advocate at a national and transnational level.
- Caroline T, as SCONUL Board Vice-Chair, noted there are many things SCONUL does for members, but member activities (such as those by the Collaboration) are also outputs from SCONUL. She highlighted there may be things which could potentially be done or concerns which could be addressed by SCONUL, which the Collaboration could highlight. For example, the role of SCONUL in facilitating placements (e.g. talent management). There is a staffing resource issue here though, for both SCONUL and member organisations, in enacting any efforts. However, it was suggested there was potential for the SCONUL Deputies groups to make a greater practical contribution than they were presently delivering.
- Comments on SCONUL not acting as a parallel professional body were raised, with CILIP's role in taking a lead on professional ethics noted. Nevertheless, the need for these bodies, and the Collaboration, to engage in ongoing dialogue around these issues was also highlighted as being of value.

ACTION: Jo Cornish to share (via GJJ) information on CILIP and professional ethics

- It was highlighted with the Collaboration now officially a SCONUL subgroup that there were hopes this would be to the benefit of both organisations, and the other related regional groups. The Chair suggested SCONUL should facilitate a meeting of the various regional collaborations, to see what synergies or potentialities for cross-working existed or could be explored. Hopes were highlighted that the SCONUL strategy incorporated a regional as well as individual library member lens.

ACTION: All to provide feedback on the SCONUL's strategic development as institutions

ACTION: Chair and Steering Group to provide feedback on SCONUL's strategic development for the Collaboration

ACTION: SCONUL strategic feedback to be discussed at next Steering Group meeting

Dave thanked Ruth for attending.

5th November 2018

18/11 Strategic Direction

a) Outline Strategic Plan

Having been previously disseminated, the paper was formally introduced by the Chair, with support from the Steering Group and GJJ. The Chair outlined that when the Board had last met the idea of developing a more tangible strategic plan for the Collaboration had found favour from the Directors. Subsequently the Steering Group and GJJ had met to discuss this and develop an outline strategic plan for the next five years (2019-2023). The idea was that the document condenses these core themes, and the Collaboration's aspirations in this regard. The seven core themes were: **Environment, Agency, Workforce Development, Collections, User Experience, Learning & Teaching and Research**. In particular Environment, Workforce Development and Agency were seen as overlapping all areas of activities. GJJ noted he hoped the finalised plan, along with giving guidance on the Collaboration's aspirations, would also act as an evaluative tool for identifying gaps in our activities and the overall organisational direction of travel.

b) Review & Discussions

While the plan was generally welcomed by the Directors there were a number of areas of particular comment and revision required before it could be considered for acceptance.

General Comments

Aims: It was suggested that an overarching aim for the Collaboration should be encapsulated in the strategy. Additionally, whether the Collaboration had any metrics, benchmarks or targets that should be included.

Format: There were some concerns relating to the document density, and a need to improve clarity.

Future: There was a need for more clarity with respect to looking towards the future. E.g. Is the Collaboration looking towards the future of libraries more generally, or working to support members where they presently were in their developmental journey along with navigating through the challenges which lay ahead.

Pragmatics: Questions were asked around the role of the strategic plan in capturing what the Collaboration wants to do, although noting this might be too low level for such a high-level plan. It was agreed that the actual direction and outcomes from the Collective as a whole, or individual members, in terms of practical steps stemming from the strategy, were something which requiring more thought. This was acknowledged as a key role for the Steering Group March 2019 onwards to work towards clarifying.

Region: Given the Collaboration is a regional group there is no mention about the relationship to that region. E.g. are we creating links in the Midlands with other organisations etc. Hence there is a need to introduce an element of regional focus within the document.

SCONUL: Notably following the morning's discussions, there would be a need to align elements of the plan with SCONUL's Strategy (itself still under development). It was highlighted that the Collaboration's Strategic Plan could be used to influence SCONUL's agenda too.

Time Frame: Some questions were raised as to the time frame of the plan, and how this needed to be emphasised more.

Themes

Directors agreed that generally the themes captured the areas of operation, with some caveats as follow. The diagrammatic representation in particular was felt to be valuable.

Agency: The practical implementation of this was discussed. It was noted that the Collaboration could, and perhaps should, adopt official positions and make statements on key sectoral issues. This might require closer interaction with the SCONUL agenda, with ideally an aspiration for someone from the Collaboration’s Board sitting on a related SCONUL group to provide the measure of regional focus within any national agency. However, how the Collaboration’s relationship with SCONUL in terms of formal influence and agency operated, remained uncertain currently. Additionally, how the Collaboration relates to other sectoral actors (e.g. CILIP and their SIGs) should be accounted for in this section.

Collections: The topic of collections was seen to be somewhat contentious by some, given that services might be seen to ‘curate’ rather than provide ‘access’ to resources (physical and/or digital). It was proposed to rename Collections theme to something akin to Access to Collections/Information Resources.

The Chair thanked everyone for their input, with particular thanks to GJJ for his extensive effort in synthesising the draft plan. He requested any additional or detailed input be sent to GJJ in the wake of the meeting.

ACTION: All to send further comments on the plan to GJJ no later than the end of Nov 2018

ACTION: Strategic Plan to be revised by the Steering Group, considering and incorporating the above comments where felt appropriate

ACTION: Strategic Plan draft to be shared with SIG Chairs, for comment by end of Dec 2018

ACTION: Revised document to be shared with SCONUL and CILIP to inform their strategic thinking

18/12 Governance & Operations

a) Minutes of Previous Meeting

These were accepted as an accurate record, with the exception of a minor correction to attendance. The one outstanding action was (18/4(c)) on Paul and Caroline T to follow up with SCONUL on administration cost breakdown information. Paul confirmed this had been actioned.

b) Treasurer’s Update

Paul had circulated a report ahead of the meeting, which noted that finances for the Collaboration were in good shape. Notably, the income from the conference sponsorship, had considerably bolstered the Collaboration’s reserves, and he thanked the Conference Group for their efforts here. He also noted that some of the anticipated costs for 2018 had been less than expected

Reserves (31 Dec 2017)	£9,190.00	
Income (2018)	£23,429.00	
Expenditure (Jan-Sept 2018)		£9,026.00
Reserves (Sept 2018)	£23,593.00	

Projected Spend (Oct-Dec 2018)

£9,777.00

Projected Reserves (31 Dec 2018)

£13,816.00

He did note that while reserves were projected to be far stronger than in recent years, they are far smaller than comparable regional collaborations, although he acknowledged their larger fixed outgoings. He noted his expectations that costs will increase in 2019, not only because of inflation but also because the Collaboration is still building up its range of activities. He indicated that since both the 2017 and 2018 conferences have been well attended and received, he was working on the assumption that there would likely to be a third one in 2019. The Chair noted general agreement on this point.

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However, Paul did not presume the Collaboration will always be able to attract sponsors as we have done this year and he had not factored in any additional sponsorship income when calculating the total net spend for 2019: likely to be in the region of £25,000. Nevertheless, he recommended that the Collaboration held subscriptions at the current level for 2019, which was warmly received by the Board. Notably, some members had dropped down a subscription band, based on their SCONUL listed income, which had led to a small decrease in subscriptions for these organisations. The Chair thanked Paul on behalf of the Board, and the subscription rates and accounts were agreed as accepted.

c) SCONUL MoU & Relationship

Dave confirmed as per his email earlier in the week that SCONUL and the Collaboration's Steering Group have agreed the MoU and are in the process of signing it. Detailed discussions about some of the costing arrangements were however still under discussion. The Chair and Steering Group highlighted that this process had taken far longer than was anticipated, for various reasons. However, they were satisfied now the discussions were complete.

d) Elections 2019

GJJ noted that the current Steering Group's term would come to a close at the March 2019 meeting. While Diane would be succeeding Dave as Chair, the post of Vice-Chair would become vacant. Additionally, Paul confirmed he planned to step down as Treasurer. The three other members of the Steering Group's terms would also be ending, although they were free to stand again for the roles. As such, GJJ would arrange for nominations to open in Nov/Dec 2018, to close after Christmas, to give sufficient time for elections, should a superfluity of candidates emerge. The Chair noted his hope that all members of the Board would strongly consider serving on the Steering Group, especially in the light of the new strategic plan's implementation. He considered his role serving on the Group had been a deeply satisfying involvement, which the other Steering Group members confirmed for their own parts.

ACTION: All the consider standing/nominating members to serve on the Steering Group 2019-2021

ACTION: GJJ to send out nomination call and further information in November

e) Annual Report

GJJ noted that he would be making a call to the SIG Chairs, along with the SG members for material for the annual report. He proposed it would be of value to add vignettes on activities from all Directors in the report, as this was not produced elsewhere. He noted the value it added to the report as a tool for promoting both the membership and the Collaboration, through demonstrating the diversity of activities within it. Mark asked if perhaps the news section of the website could also host these. GJJ

noted that prior discussions about this had not found favour at the Board, and while he was happy to accept any appropriate materials submitted, he had his doubts this would occur. It was agreed that GJJ would approach Directors for brief content for the report on a particular highlight from their respective libraries for this year's report.

ACTION: GJJ to approach all Directors for brief snippets on their libraries for the annual report

ACTION: ALL to provide GJJ with brief items for the annual report by the start of January 2019

f) [Development Officer Update](#)

The Board acknowledged the recruit of a report from GJJ on his activities, noting issues around generation of news items as discussed earlier.

[18/13 SIG Reports](#)

a) [Conference Group](#)

In the Group Chair's absence, Helen Curtis had tabled a report on the event, noting that a formal evaluation report would be produced on Emma's return in November. The report noted the considerable success of the event, with 100 delegates and speakers represented 21 out of the 23 Collaboration members. A wide range of staff attended, including a strong Director presence. GJJ noted that perhaps there was still a need for more junior staff to be encouraged to attend future events. Conference sponsorship brought in £4,000 of income, which went a long way to satisfying the costs of hosting the event and reducing the demand on the central Collaboration funding requirements. Feedback from delegates had been very positive, with people highlighting the keynote, networking space and breadth of topics as strong elements. Areas for improvement were suggested increased hands-on activities and greater group work aspects, which supported the introduction of the afternoon workshops strand.

Helen commented that the sponsorship had worked well but had increased the demands on the team in terms of managing various aspects of it. What criticism had been received was largely constructive and would be reviewed as part of the Conference Group's next meeting in November, alongside beginning considerations to hosting a 2019 event. Diane requested feedback about the venue to be forwarded to her, as she would then provide it to the conference venue staff – noting this was only the second event in their new facilities. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanks Helen, GJJ, Emma and the rest of the team for all their hard work in delivering on the conference. The Directors also noted their support for continuing to host a conference annually.

ACTION: Helen to send Diane comments on venue from feedback

ACTION: Emma and Conference Group to make a formal report on the conference for inclusion in the annual report.

b) [Mercian Copyright Group \(M\(C\)G\)](#)

Dave as group sponsor reported that while the group had been somewhat quiet of later, he had spoken with them and they were holding a committee meeting at DMU in the near future. GJJ noted that the group had asked for a year's trial membership with the Collaboration, and that this period was now up, hence we needed to formally consider if we wished them to continue, as well as if the group themselves wished to continue this arrangement. It was noted there is no SCONUL copyright group, and that Directors strongly supported the continued association of the M(C)G with the

Collaboration as it offered genuine benefits to members' staff. There is a potential too for the Board to task the M(C)G with specific issues to investigate and recommend a position on.

ACTION: DP and GJJ to speak with the group concerning their relationship with the Collaboration going forward

c) Mercian Disability Forum (MDF)

GJJ and Phil, as sponsor, reported that the group had held a very successful event on inclusion, with a couple of reports for the news pages being produced as a result. The formal evaluation had been received which was very positive, and the Chair noted his thanks to all involved in hosting the event. Phil noted the group as a whole is very engaged and working well with their role, which had resulted in some developing contact with the wider Midlands community.

d) RDM Support Group (RDMSG)

Fiona, as sponsor, reported on behalf of the RDMSG, noting they were growing in strength and focus, alongside maturing as a SIG. Notably they have been recently very much finding a stronger sense of direction and purpose, alongside developing a regional support community for research data practitioners. She highlighted their recent event (18th Sept) and contribution to the conference. They were now positioned a group with regional reach and influence, rather than simply a 'coalition of the willing', and she was very pleased with their progress. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, noted his thanks to the group members for their continued efforts.

GJJ noted he had recently highlighted an issue concerning nominating a chair for the RDMSG, it was agreed alongside the maturation of the group's operations that this represented a logical step to take. Fiona noted the RDMSG Committee would be meeting in December (10th) to discuss their next set of activities.

ACTION: Fiona to feedback comments from the Board to the Group Committee

The Board received a report on digital preservation training, which the RDMSG Committee had sent to the Steering Group over the summer. Key points included the issue that RDM is a wider perspective issue than libraries, and that a SIG such as the RDMSG did not have the capacity to take on the considerable challenge of addressing a regional training agenda. Mark raised a question about why this training issue was being looked at regionally, when nationally it was an issue, although it was acknowledged that there are Midlands institutions who have taken a lead which others can draw on. It was noted that there could be value in the SCONUL Transformation Group liaising with the RDMSG in terms of tackling these skills need from a wider perspective. Hence, Judith as Transformation Group Chair would approach them, to discuss these issues further.

ACTION: GJJ to provide contact details to Judith of the RDMSG

ACTION: Judith to speak to RDMSG and Fiona relating to the Transformation Group's current agenda

e) Staff Development Group (MSDG)

The draft programme of events for 2018/19, along with an evaluative report on the preceding year's ones, had been received ahead of the meeting². The Chair thanked the MSDG Chair and Committee for this, and their continuing efforts. It was agreed that this represented an interesting selection of events. As had been previously noted, there was no longer a requirement on the MSDG to have their

² And had been available on the website and conference

events programme formally approved by the Board, as operationally this had proved to be problematic in implementing the new programme. Additionally, Diane as MSDG Sponsor had been taking a keen interest in providing support and input to the group, which had helped provide an increased level of match against Collaboration aspirations for the programme. Diane and the Chair reminded Directors as had been previously agreed, that there was requirement on them to speak to their local MSDG representative to contribute strategic level input into the events programme.

ACTION: All to meet with their local MSDG representative to provide input and insight into events programme

As had been noted earlier, the new Collaboration strategic plan would provide a useful tool through which to access the MSDG event programme strategically and identify any areas of omission.

f) **SCONUL Update**

As Vice-Chair of the SCONUL Board, CT provided an update. She noted that there have been a number of new Board members joining, which provided some fresh insights. Consequently, the SCONUL Director had introduced a paper focussing on the Board's purpose as a charitable board, especially those duties relating to strategy and the need for members to be prepared to challenge each other. It was noted all Board members must express opinions, and not be complicit in aspects with which they were not in agreement. A strategy away day had been recently held, looking at SCONUL's strategic plan. The importance of SCONUL positioning itself effectively nationally and internationally, and discussions on how this can be achieved had also been noted here.

CT reported briefly on the various SCONUL Strategy Groups and their current activities.

Communications: Looking at SCONUL's name, as had been discussed by Directors earlier in the meeting.

Collaboration: Not met recently but were considering a proposal relating to AI.

Content: Continuing work on areas including OA monographs and theses.

Services Group: Engaged in a review of the services SCONUL offers, to not only quality assure them but also to explore if they meet member needs and expectations.

Transformation: Had not met recently but was working on understanding why students study in libraries, drives towards digital content and digital preservation challenges, as well as overseeing the library design awards.

Workforce: Three strands of activity were noted: experiences of staff members, understanding the pipeline of new talent to the profession, and thinking about how SCONUL can support members in terms of emerging new demands on skills and competencies.

CT also noted that the Deputies and New Directors' Group had a call for expression of interest, and that the SCONUL mentoring scheme is now up and running. Notably, there are more mentees than there are mentors. Hence, she encouraged Directors and colleagues to get involved.

ACTION: ALL to let SCONUL know if they are interested in being a mentor

18/14 AOB

a) Dates, Venue and Items for the Next Meeting

The next Board meeting would be held in March 2019 and would see the hand over of Chair to Diane from Dave, along with the newly reconfigured Steering Group members. Prior to the meeting an offer from BCU had been received to host, with Dave also offering DMU. It was agreed to approach BCU as a venue, with DMU as a backup.

ACTION: Gareth, Enid and Dave to coordinate over date of next Directors Board Meeting

b) Marketing and Communication Potential Group

Steve Rose (BCU) had been following up on some earlier communications about staff involved in marketing and communications roles, with the idea of forming a community of practice as a potential Mercian SIG. He was hosting an event at Aston University (5th Dec) for interested parties, which GJJ would be attending in his Officer role. The Board strongly supported this move, noting their interest in its outcome. They would also highlight it to appropriate members of staff within their own organisations. GJJ would report back to the Steering Group following the meeting with any next steps.

ACTION: All to promote marketing event to own staff

c) Metadata Potential Group

GJJ had also been approached by William Peaden (Aston) concerning the potential for bringing together a potential grouping within the collaboration aimed at metadata practitioners, the idea for which had germinated at this year's Cataloguing and Indexing Conference. Alongside experience exchanging on areas of shared interest (e.g. the implementation of R3 for RDA, standards data quality and records management), it was felt such a group could also offer training events. He had already had interest from Warwick and other Birmingham universities, and was looking to draw in wider interest from across the Collaboration. The Directors noted their support for this idea.

ACTION: GJJ to coordinate with William Peaden an initial meeting to discuss potential for a metadata special interest group

d) Steve Rose retirement

It was noted that Steve Rose (BCU) was retiring in Dec 2018, and that he had been a long-time supporter of both SCONUL and the Collaboration. The Chair commended the Collaboration's formal thanks to Steve for all his contribution and would personally follow up with him to convey this thanks.

ACTION: Chair to personally contact Steve Rose to convey the Collaboration's appreciation

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions closing the meeting. A tour of the Warwick library for those Directors who were interested followed the meeting.