

2018



Annual Report 2018

Contents

At A Glance.....	2
Chair’s Introduction	3
Preface	4
About the Collaboration	4
Steering Group (Mar 2017-Mar 2019)	5
Strategic Plan	6
Treasurer’s Report	6
Online Communications.....	6
Vital Statistics.....	7
Special Interest Groups (SIGs).....	8
Conference Group (CG).....	8
Conference 2018: Evaluation Report.....	8
Sample Comments	10
Copyright Group (MCG)	13
Mercian Disability Forum (MDF).....	13
RDM Support Group (RDMSG).....	13
Staff Development Group (MSDG)	14
Events Programme.....	14
Evaluation & Feedback.....	15
Event Feedback Examples.....	16
Buddying Scheme.....	16
Membership Highlights.....	18
Aston University.....	18
Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln.....	18
Open University	19
University of Birmingham	19
University of Derby	20
University of Keele	21
University of Northampton.....	21
University of Warwick.....	22
University of Worcester	24
Looking Ahead.....	25

Contact..... 26
Contributor Acknowledgements..... 26

At A Glance

- Formal name, The Mercian Collaboration
- Informally, The Collaboration
- Founded in 2013/4
- 2nd Annual report
- 5 special interest groups & growing
- 14 visits, workshops & networking events
- 16 committee & group meetings
- 23 academic library members
- 100 delegates at annual conference
- Parent body, SCONUL

Chair's Introduction

I'm delighted to introduce this annual report. This year has been a tremendously successful year for the Mercian Collaboration, as a truly collaborative and creative endeavour we have grown in confidence, in reach and awareness. From the buzz of our annual conference to the driven professional contributions of our special interest groups, in partnership we have built a strong regional organisation with influence and impact.

We have generously shared ideas, and initiatives, we have debated our concerns and our approaches and offered our solutions. We have developed as a collective, as a network, and in turn as institutions and as individuals. Thanks to the imaginative, creative and professional contributions of our members our future together will inform, enlighten and contribute to regional and national debate on the future of library provision in HE.

As outgoing Chair, I am very grateful for the efforts of our steering group members and officers, for the outstanding support of our Collaboration Development Officer and for the members of special interest groups who drive our organisation forward in new and imaginative ways.



*David J Parkes
Chair (2017-2019)
Director of Library and Learning Services, De Montfort
University*

Dave Parkes, Mercian Collaboration Chair (2017-2019)

Preface

Welcome to the second Mercian Collaboration annual report. This report is intended to provide a potted guide to the Collaboration's activities over the past 12 months, of interest to member organisations and beyond.

Keen readers of last year's report might notice we've reworked the format a little, to hopefully make this a more digestible and enjoyable read. In particular, we've also taken the opportunity to spotlight some of the interesting activities and events taking place within our member organisations. We hope you find something to stimulation and informative within them.

My thanks as always to all contributors to this report, especially the Officers, Special Interest Group Chairs and those submitted member updates. Additionally, thanks to anyone who helped organise or facilitate our events, or who participated through your attendance. It's through this kind of participation, that the Mercian Collaboration can function and continue to grow; and it is deeply appreciated.

Dr Gaz J Johnson, *Collaboration Development Officer*

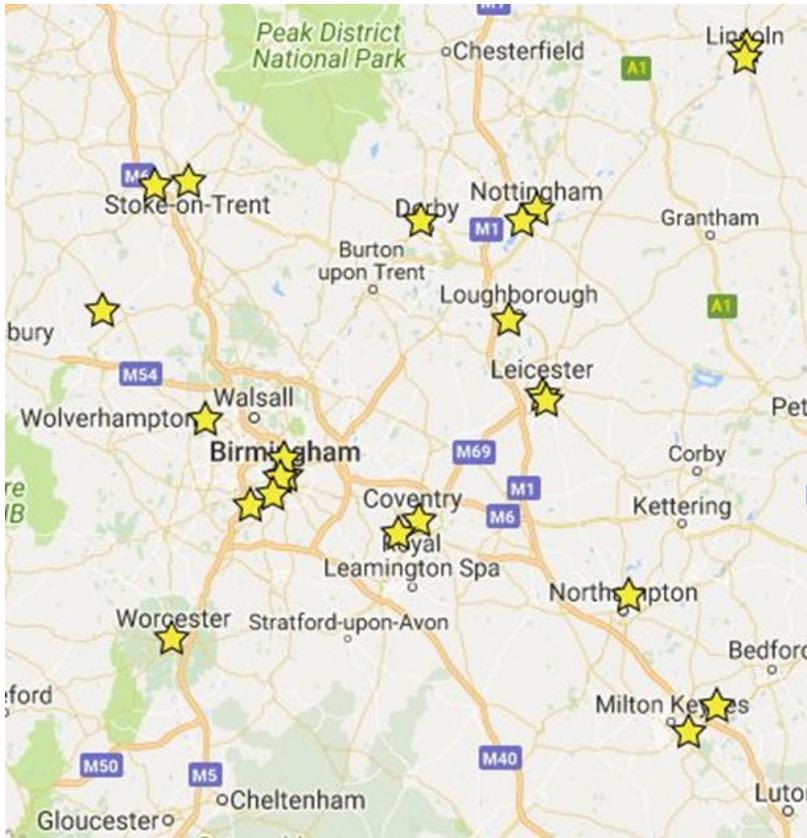
About the Collaboration

The **Mercian Collaboration** is a regional library network based in the UK Midlands. Founded as the Midlands Academic Library Group in 2014 initially with 22 academic library members, in 2017 Cranfield University became our first non-founding member, bringing our membership up to 23. Members provide the Collaboration's operating capital through an annual, institutional subscription model. Contributions are proportionate to member's income as reported to SCOUNL, with levels reviewed annually and any changes subject to agreement by the Collaboration's governing body. The Collaboration's ultimate governing body (**Directors Board**) is comprised of the member libraries directors. The Board meets twice annually (normally March & October) to discuss issues and exchange experiences, along with deciding on the Collaboration's future strategic direction. Where directors are unable to attend, they can deputise a senior member of their staff to appear in their place.

During 2018, the Collaboration also more formally aligned with its parent body, SCOUNL, through the signing of a **Memorandum of Understanding**. Operationally, a **Steering Group**, comprising a subset of these directors, oversees and advances activities outside of these meetings, along with having responsibility for monitoring and supporting the activity of the Collaboration's special interest subgroups. Representatives of special interest groups do not normally attend the Directors Board, unless specifically invited by the Chair, and their interests are represented by their respective **Steering Group Sponsor**.

The Steering Group also has a responsibility for representing the interests of all member organisations in their deliberations and decision-making processes. While initially Steering Group members had been informally co-opted, from March 2017 a biennial nomination and election process was instigated as the standard practice.

The current Steering Group currently comprises three officer roles (**Chair, Vice-Chair** and **Treasurer**) as well as three non-officer member director positions. Apart from the Vice-Chair, Steering Group members serve two-year terms. The Vice-Chair serves a four-year term, normally progressing to Chair after the first two.



Mercian Collaboration member Locations

Map data: © 2019 GeoBasis-De/BKG (©2009), Google

Steering Group (Mar 2017-Mar 2019)

			
		<p><i>From left to right: (top row) David Parkes (Chair, DMU), Diane Job (Vice Chair, Birmingham), Paul Reynolds (Keele, Treasurer), Fiona Parsons (Wolverhampton), (bottom row) Emma Walton (Loughborough), Gaz J Johnson (Development Officer). Not pictured: Phil Brabban.</i></p>	

Strategic Plan

2018 represented the fifth year that the Collaboration has been in operation, from its founding as Midlands Libraries in 2013/14, during which time the higher educational libraries landscape has continued to evolve. As such, the time was ripe to take a fresh look at activities and intensions in a new strategic light, to ensure a continued value of the Collaboration to its membership and their staff. Additionally, there is a desire to position the Collaboration appropriately within the evolving educational, research and learning environment. Following initial discussions at the March 2018 Directors Board, the Steering Group and Development Officer have been working to formulate a new strategic plan to drive forward the next five years of academic library collaboration in the Midlands. Additionally, with the formal agreement of a Memorandum of Understanding with SCONUL in late 2018, the Collaboration is also looking to develop greater synergies and cross-fertilisation with its parent organisation. At time of writing the strategic plan is undergoing revisions, following Director and SIG feedback, and will be presented to the Board in March 2019 for hopeful formal approval and adoption.

Treasurer's Report

2018 has been once again a busy and successful year for the Collaboration, with the second annual conference along with numerous special interest group events proving to be notable highlights. As in previous years, the continued and additional activities brought with them largely anticipated increasing costs. The success of the Conference Group in recruiting a number of event sponsors, went a considerable way to offsetting the not-insignificant financial demands on the Collaboration in hosting a delegate-fee-free membership conference. Elsewhere, the Mercian Disability Forum, Research Data Management Support Group and Copyright Group hosted events which in drawing on external speakers and expertise, represented a necessary further expenditure of our funds.

As a consequence of this anticipated rise in activity, and to support a healthy ongoing development, subscription fees increased for 2018. This rise, approved by all members the previous year, had the additional benefit of ensuring that our financial reserves remained well above the minimum desirable threshold set at the Collaboration's inception. The support from the membership Directors in this regard, represented a heartening and satisfying recognition of the value emerging from the Collaboration's portfolio of activity, while providing necessary financial stability in uncertain political times. However, no further rise in subscription fees has been scheduled for 2019, which means that the Mercian Collaboration continues to represent a very cost-effective return on investment for its member organisations.

Online Communications

Launched in early 2017, the website provides a location for staff within member organisations to find out about Collaboration events and activities along with minutes, reports and position statements. Built and managed by the Development Officer, its contents continue to steadily grow alongside the expansion of the Collaboration's activities. Notably the website holds the online open-access archive of Collaboration Directors Board, Steering Group and SIG committee minutes, to provide transparency into operations and decision-making processes.

The Development Officer also runs a twitter social media presence (**@MercianCollab**) to further promote the Collaboration and its activities. This twitter presence has served to highlight new additions to the website in terms of meetings, events and news content, and consequently the visibility of the Mercian Collaboration itself. Followers currently number one-hundred and seventy-five, with over one-thousand tweets made to-date.

As many library staff are not overly keen engagers with social media, a general distribution Jiscmail list, exclusive to staff from member organisations, was set up in early 2018 (**mercian-collaboration@jiscmail**). This list carries semi-regular newsletters from the Collaboration, highlighting events, committee meetings and opportunities to become involved in activities. It is also sometimes used to promote vacancies within member organisations.



Directors Board, 18th October 2018, University of Warwick

Vital Statistics

<p>Members: 23 Academic Libraries</p> <p>Special Interest Groups: 5</p> <p>Most Northerly: Bishop Grosseteste University</p> <p>Most Southerly: The Open University</p> <p>Most Western: Harper Adams University</p> <p>Most Eastern: Bishop Grosseteste University (just!)</p>	<p>Steering Group: 3 Officers, 3 Representatives, 1 Ex Officio</p> <p>Events in 2018: 14</p> <p>Meetings in 2018: 16</p> <p>Twitter Followers: 171</p> <p>Website Hits in 2018: 20,102</p> <p>Unique Website Visitors: 4,579</p>
---	--

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Since its formation, the Collaboration has established several special interest groups (SIGs), beginning with the Mercian Staff Development Group. SIGs provide a location for Directors to turn to for expert advice, along with enabling experience exchange and professional development for practitioners within various specialised niches. SIGs also contribute to furthering the Collaboration's aims and objectives, and therefore represent a key membership value. All SIGs benefit from having a close liaison with the Mercian Development Officer. Though sitting on their committees as an observer, he provides support, offers guidance, facilitates information exchanges and enables coordination across the Collaboration as a whole. Each SIG also benefit from an assigned Steering Group Sponsor, to provide further support, insight and communication between the membership and Mercian Directors, while further enhancing cross-collaboration coordination.

Details of all SIGs and their activities can be found here: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/activities-groups>

Conference Group (CG)

The Conference Group's core role is to plan, develop and deliver all aspects of the annual Mercian Collaboration conference. Unlike other SIGs, because of the need to deliver on such a focussed and time-sensitive output, committee members are proposed by their Directors. Since the CG's activities represent a high-priority tangible Collaboration output, their Steering Group Sponsor, Emma Walton (Loughborough), also serves as its Chair. Additionally, because of their own contemporaneous events programme, the MSDG provides an ex-officio observer to provide guidance, liaison and support between the two groups, with the role currently held by Matt Cunningham (MSDG Chair, Loughborough).



Conference Group Members 2018 (sans group chair) relax after the conference!

Conference 2018: Evaluation Report

This report will provide some evaluation, analysis and reflections on the second Mercian Conference held at Edgbaston Park Conference Centre at the University of Birmingham on Tuesday 11th September 2018. The theme was 'New for You!' and gave an opportunity for staff from across the Mercian region to share new initiatives and service developments in their libraries, and lessons learnt.

Delegates

The conference welcomed 100 delegates and speakers from 21 of the Collaboration's 23 libraries. Given the location of the venue this year, more delegates were from West Midlands libraries, but it is very positive that so many of the Collaboration were still represented this year. Delegates had a range of library roles and we had a good presence from library directors who also contributed to the plenary session. The conference proved popular and we had a waiting list for places.

Sponsor income

This was the first time the conference had received sponsorship and we were fortunate to have had ‘gold’ level sponsorship from four sponsors; Talis, Askews and Holts, OCLC and AnyBook Ltd, generating £4,000 towards the conference costs. Our thanks to the sponsors for their support was noted on the day, and in delegate conference materials.

	Expended	Income
Venue	£3,625.00	
Key note speaker (fee & expenses)	£1,485.90	
Merchandise	£453.60	
	£5,564.50	
Sponsors		£4,000.00
TOTAL	£1,564.50	

The shortfall in event costs was made up from a contribution from the Mercian Collaboration itself.

Changes Following 2017 Conference Feedback

- Reducing the number of parallel sessions from 15 to 12
- Including more workshops – all sessions in the afternoon slots were workshops
- Longer lunch time slot increased from 40mins in 2017 to 80mins in 2018

Additionally, the Conference Group held an extended meeting in May 2018 to select papers, allowing time to consider all papers and select a range of topics and presenters to maximise engagement and participation.

Evaluation

Feedback was gathered via an online evaluation form. A response rate of just under 50% was achieved. This feedback indicates delegates that were impressed with the conference venue, organisation of the conference, keynote speaker, and the quality of the parallel sessions.

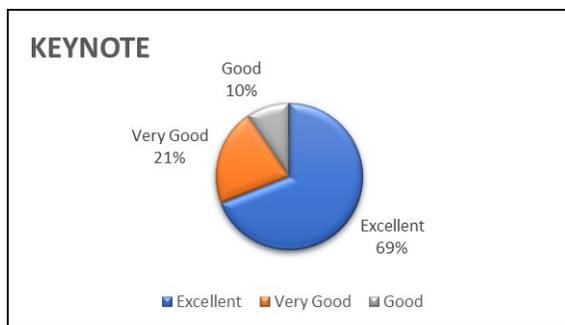


Figure 1: Conference Keynote Evaluation

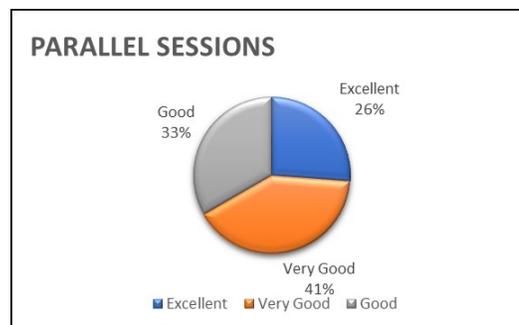


Figure 2: Conference Parallel Session Evaluation

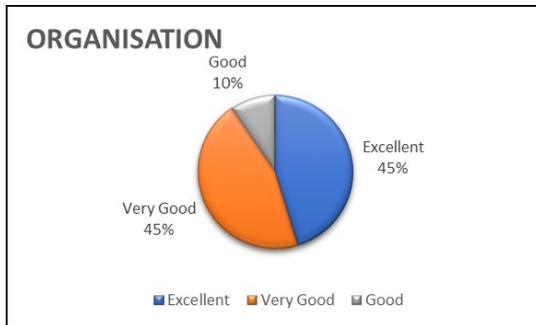


Figure 3: Conference Organisation Evaluation

Sample Comments

Conference delegates provided a range of positive, insightful and reflective comments, of which a sample is presented below.

“The keynote speaker was excellent and created some much-needed energy and enthusiasm for the rest of the conference.”

“Range of topics – got to develop knowledge relevant to my role but also learn about things outside of my experience. I really liked the hands-on workshop bits too.”

“The fresh approach to thinking about key areas given by all presenters. Useful because they are areas that we are currently looking into in my workplace.”

Many of the comments about the most useful aspects of the conference relate to the sharing of experiences, the opportunity to pick up new ideas, and the networking opportunities. This is reassuring as providing such opportunities is one of the main objectives of the conference.

“Meeting people from other Libraries and understand how they solve similar problems, this gave me new ideas to bring to my Library.”

“Opportunity to meet other library staff from other universities and discuss shared interests.”

“Opportunity to talk with colleagues across Universities. Love that the conference enables a wide range of library staff to come together.”

A handful of criticisms were related to some issues with the venue facilities and organisation of refreshments, and a few delegates were expecting a tour of the University of Birmingham Library. A few comments indicated more time for hands-on and practical activities in a workshop style would be welcomed in future conferences which is certainly something which will be considered.

“During the workshops there weren't enough practical activities.”

“More workshops, fewer presentations.”

“More group work and chance to learn from other delegates.”

Reflections and Recommendations

Each year after the conference the Conference Group hold an evaluation meeting to reflect on the conference and look at recommendations for the next conference. This follows an informal review held immediately following the end of the event. This was held in Nov 2018, and the following proposals were put forward.

1. That the conference be held at the same time in the year w/b 9th September 2019.
2. That we look to find two 'permanent' venues for the conference one in the East and one in the West of our region and alternate. We believe this will help and reduce organisation time and activities regarding the venue. That said the group will evaluate locations for quality and ensure we have venues that provide value for money.
3. It continues to be of great value to have "onsite" group members. Where this is not possible due to venue and group membership, co-opting members from local institutions will be necessary.
4. That we look to continue to seek sponsorship to help with costs but will reframe the sponsorship policy created last year based on feedback from sponsors.
5. We retain the 100-120 delegate number for 2019.
6. That we look for greater diversity from keynote speakers.
7. That we continue to find a broad theme for the conference to encourage a wide variety of submissions and delegates.
8. That we make best efforts to encourage attendance from across the library workforce and strongly encourage those in Library assistant roles to both attend and present.

Conclusion

The CG ran a successful event, successfully incorporating changes based on the evaluation of the 2018 conferences. In addition, the sponsorship income meant costs for the Collaboration were significantly reduced and provided excellent value for member organisations' subscription fees. The changes to the programme organisation were positively received and will be carried through into 2109. As the CG Chair and Sponsor, I was unable to attend the conference or participate in the last month of activity and so want to thank the group members for managing this situation so well. I also want to thank them for their hard work, time, creativity, judgement and support throughout the planning and delivery process, and notably to Helen Curtis for the content of this report.

Emma Walton, Conference Group Chair, on behalf of the CG members 2018: Carol Barker (DMU), Jen Brotherton (Wolverhampton), Helen Curtis (Loughborough), Claire Browne UoB), Lydia Matheson (Aston), Liz Kennedy (Warwick) Jo-Anne Watts (Keele) and Ex officio members Matt Cunningham (MSDG rep) and Gaz J Johnson (MCDO).



*They were at the 2018 Mercian Collaboration Conference – were you?
Image credits Lydia Matheson & Gaz J Johnson*

Copyright Group (MCG)

The Mercian Copyright Group, currently the newest SIG, is now in its second full year of operation. In 2018 the group has formalised its governance structure and appointed new officers to form its committee. Yvonne Budden (Warwick) continues as Chair and was joined by Alex Fenlon (Birmingham) as Vice-Chair and Luke Fowler (Birmingham City) as the group's Secretary. A key activity for 2018 was an event, hosted by Leicester University with financial support from the Mercian Collaboration. The event gave members of the group, as well as other interested Collaboration members' staff expert guidance on copyright and data protection for HEIs with a focus on new roles, responsibilities and obligations under the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations).

During 2018 the group also organised a dedicated Jisc-mail list for members (mercian-copyright@jiscmail), expanded the membership to other Mercian Collaboration members, alongside making contact with our equivalent groups in the M25 Consortium and the NoWAL Collaboration with view to share practice as a group. The Group's sponsor during 2018 was David Parkes (Collaboration Chair, DMU).

Mercian Disability Forum (MDF)

The Mercian Disability Forum is one of the Collaboration's newer special interest groups, comprising library professionals with a remit, responsibility or strong interest in providing and developing support for disabled students. Chaired during 2018 by Beck Maguire (Nottingham), the MDF aims to meet on a termly basis to exchange experiences, discuss developments and explore potential training opportunities. The Group's sponsor during 2018 was Phil Brabban (Coventry).

The MDF has developed considerably this year and been involved in the following activities:

May 2018: Meeting at DMU (Leicester) with the aim of planning the MDF event scheduled for June

June 2018: MDF event held at the University of Nottingham: Inclusion – Back to Basics. This event explored inclusivity and assistive technologies focusing on how libraries can support an inclusive agenda using technologies and e-resources to benefit all students. We had speakers from Jisc and Ability Net - both leading charities in this field, and presentations by colleagues from Warwick and DeMontfort. The afternoon workshop, facilitated by Alistair McNaught from Jisc, provided an opportunity to take part in an audit of the accessibility statements of ebook publishers and aggregators, as part of a wider national ebook audit. The feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive and a number of attendees have since joined the MDF.

September 2018: Mercian Conference. Two members of the MDF, Carol Keddie and Vicki MacGarvey facilitated a workshop which looked at the implementation of a values framework based upon inclusion. Again, this had very positive feedback.

November 2018: A West Midlands group organised a meeting around Alternative Formats in collaboration with the MDF. Some members were able to attend this meeting and we will continue to work together moving forwards to ensure that we support each area without replicating effort.

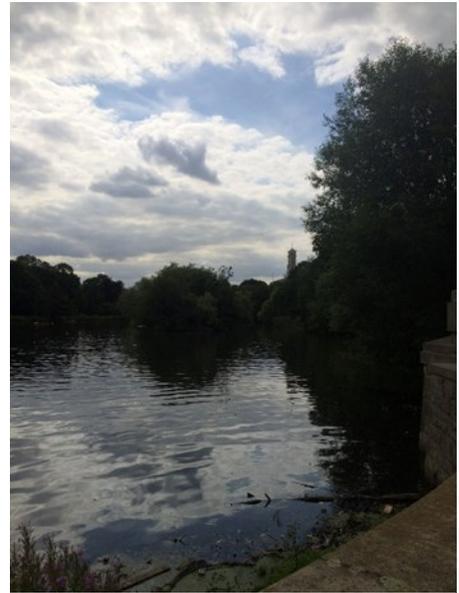
RDM Support Group (RDMSG)

The Mercian RDM Support Group (RDMSG) is the special interest group of the Mercian Collaboration, aiming to provide regional and local support and exchange of experiences within and for membership organisations. The main focus of the RDMSG in 2018 was to plan and deliver events on two key issues affecting data curation and management emerging services for academic libraries, namely, GDPR and digital preservation and how these issues are increasingly important for RDM practitioners. The Group's sponsor during 2018 was Fiona Parsons.

The RDMSG held two well-attended successful community events/workshops this year, one at the University of Nottingham in April with a focus on GDPR and research data and the second in September at Loughborough University on digital preservation.

Both events had excellent expert keynote speakers, Dr Scott Summers from the University of Essex (UK Data Archive) and Sharon McMeekin from the Digital Preservation Coalition. In addition, local RDM practitioners provided interesting updates on activities within their institutions on GDPR and digital preservation.

The coordination group held three planning meetings during 2018, the most recent in December, was the first for our new committee member, Patricia Herterich from the University of Birmingham. The RDMSG bid adieu to Ben Veasey from the University of Nottingham and we shall be actively seeking to co-opt a new member of the RDMSG in 2019, and we are particularly interested in having someone from a non-research-intensive institution. Many thanks to Ben for his valuable and insightful contribution to the RDMSG.



University of Nottingham. Image © Grant Denkinson, included with permission.

Staff Development Group (MSDG)

The Mercian Staff Development Group is the longest established Collaboration SIG, and as a consequence has a mature programme of activity. Driven by a member representative committee, the MSDG has a remit to organise and deliver an annual staff development and training programme. Some events and workshops are targeted at staff within specialised professional niches, while others are intended for more general consumption, for example the *All the Same, But Different* library showcase visits. The group chair for most of 2018 was Matt Cunningham (Loughborough), and their sponsor was the Collaboration's Vice-Chair Diane Job (Birmingham).

It was another busy year for the MSDG. Elections were held at the first meeting of the year and a new Chair and Evaluation Officer were elected: Matt Cunningham (Loughborough University) and Sarah Pittaway (Worcester University). Thanks go to the outgoing officers: Kirsty Kift (Coventry University) and Ruth Chell (Keele University) for all their work over the previous two years. Jane Mortimer (De Montfort University) kindly agreed to extend her term as Admin Officer/Secretary to the Group.

Events Programme

The Group Developed its programme along similar lines to previous years with sessions aimed at different types of library staff, with nine events being organised in 2018.

- Manging Undergraduate Reading (January, Newman University)
- All the Same, But Different (January, University of Warwick)
- What do Year 2 Students Need to Know (March, De Montfort University)
- All the Same, But Different (March, University of Derby)
- Student Wellbeing (April, University of Warwick)

- All the Same, But Different (May, Loughborough University)
- All the Same, But Different (July, Birmingham City University)
- Behaviour Management (November, University of Worcester)
- All the Same, But Different (December, University of Wolverhampton)

Details on all past MSDG, and other SIG events, [can be found online](#). As the MSDG events programme runs in sync with the academic session, the following information relates to those events hosted Sept 2017-Aug 2018. Where any staff member at one of the Collaboration's libraries has an idea about an event they would like to be run, they are encouraged to talk to their institutional contact for the MSDG who can bring it to the Group for discussion when planning the programme for the following year.

Evaluation & Feedback

Evaluation was taken after each of the events using a standard template giving delegates the opportunity to feedback how events met their expectations. An impact questionnaire was sent towards the end of the academic year giving delegates a chance to reflect on how attending an event influenced their working practices and professional networks.

MSDG Event Evaluation Summary: Academic Session 2017-2018

- We held 10 events with a total of 217 attendees during 2017-18
- 77% of attendees rated 'event overall' as excellent, 23% as good
- 60% of attendees state that the session content was most useful, 31% stated the networking and discussions with others was most useful
- Session timings were a repeated theme of suggestions for improvement, mainly requesting more time. However due to the wide geographic area we continue to work with the 10am to 3pm slots.
- Attendees requested lists of attendees so they could keep in touch afterwards and to be supplied with Power-point notes pages or be sent slides after the event; which is something for event organisers to bear in mind during the year ahead.
- From on the day feedback, 10% were able to state how the session would lead to them doing something different after attending
- From the Impact feedback questionnaire, 81% of respondents stated that attendance had influenced how they work
- 44% of respondents to the impact questionnaire state they have kept in touch with someone they met at one of our events
- 100% of respondents would recommend Mercian Staff Development events to others
- 29% of respondents indicate they'd like to contribute to future events

Event Feedback Examples

I find them fascinating, informative and always too short. I think we all have tons to learn from each other and collaboration across the sector can do nothing but benefit us all. I'd be interested in going further afield and go to MSDG national events.

I would certainly recommend others to attend one of these events - excellent networking opportunities.

These events are good opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaborative working.

The events are always interesting as you get to see how other people manage the same issues but in different ways.

The Group will be reflecting on this feedback when developing the events for the 2019/20 programme.

Buddying Scheme

The MSDG also manages the Collaboration's buddying scheme. Introduced in September 2017, this scheme is a way for new or relatively new library staff to find an experienced and informed colleague at one of the other member institutions. Coordinated by the MSDG on behalf of the Collaboration, participants, or buddies, are partnered up for a six-month period of peer-to-peer support. Unlike mentoring, which comes with far more formal arrangements for monitoring and reporting, buddying is designed to be light-touch, flexible and mutually beneficial for all participants. There are no formal expectations on how often or where buddies will meet during their partnering period, and they're free to choose whether an in-person, online or over the phone meeting scheme works best for them.

There have been 6 matched pairs in the buddy scheme since it started in September 2017, with 3 matches over 6 months old and 3 current. One pair is currently being matched. The MSDG Secretary had surveyed the 3 pairs over 6 months old and a fourth, which it emerged was only newly established. This took the form of a personal email to those being buddied and those acting as buddies asking what worked well, what had been gained/learnt, what could be improved and whether the scheme would be recommended to a colleague. Responses were received from all those acting as buddies, but none from those being buddied. The feedback was largely positive with all respondents indicating they would recommend the scheme and found participation rewarding, insightful and good for their self-confidence. Suggested improvements were to formalise the scheme further, to provide clearer aims and objectives and to consider timing to avoid the busy Autumn term.

The MSDG Committee has agreed various actions to promote the scheme, which will be implemented during 2019.

- Ask reps of those buddied and surveyed about the experience in light of lack of response.
 - Revise and enhance the buddy scheme description on the website.
 - Look to create case studies of successfully buddying experiences.
 - Check if a mention of the scheme has been included in new staff inductions and PDRs/appraisals at respective institutions, by institutional MSDG representatives.
 - Include a strong mention or highlighting of the scheme within the 2018-19 programme flyer, and promote at the conference by MSDG representatives present.
 - Consider seeking or providing further admin support for the scheme, should applicant levels increase further.
-

Membership Highlights

New for this year's report, we asked all member libraries to submit brief reports on activities, events and challenges faced during 2018. The idea was to provide a thumbnail sketch of the diversity and capability in play across the Mercian Collaboration region, while also highlighting nodes of expertise and practice. Submission of a report was not a membership requirement, and as such the following vignettes represent only a taste of the full spectrum of regional activities. Readers are advised to approach the appropriate Collaboration Director to learn more.

<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/about-collaboration/member-institutions>

Aston University

Among new activities at Aston, a highlight has been the development of evening events, with a wellbeing focus on anti-procrastination and studying healthily. There have been advice sessions from Information Specialists and colleagues in writing support; inspirational talks from academics; taster sessions of yoga and meditation; and free fruit and healthy snacks. Other activities that promote relaxation are always under consideration. There has been some experimentation with the best time of day, which currently sits at 3.00-8.00pm. This has been a great opportunity for inter-departmental working and demonstrates the pivotal role that libraries can play in enhancing student wellbeing.

Allied to this activity has been the development of a new Wellbeing Collection of books for students. The collection consists of not just "crisis management" or "dealing with difficulties" books, but also books about cookery, study skills and financial management, so that wellbeing is perceived to be part of normal activities. Student recommendations for purchases are welcome, as are reviews of books they have read.

**Conquer Exam and Study Stress:
Study Night of Anti-Procrastination**

**Thursday 8 March 2018
From 18:00 to midnight
The Library**

- > Drop-in sessions with Information Specialists
- > Academic writing support
- > Sitting yoga
- > Mini mindfulness
- > Café Libro open until 22:00
- > Remedy Roots tea tasting

Dr Frank Eperjesi
19:00 - 19:30
"Thoughts on procrastination"

Dr James Brown
20:10 - 20:40
"Brain food: can nutrition improve exam performance?"

Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln

Standard business-as-usual activities aside, at Bishop Grosseteste University Library there were important developments in reading list management, wellbeing activities and project planning. The Library led a university-wide Reading List Task Force, designed to address various issues of inconsistency with reading list provision. This resulted in a recommendation to acquire Talis Aspire; implementation began in June 2018 and will continue incrementally until 2020.

A number of wellbeing initiatives were developed, including a Wellbeing Collection of self-help books, feel-good films and feel-good fiction; Happy Hours events; and the creation of two individual 'quiet spaces'. One of the most significant developments of 2018 was the completion of a feasibility study into reclassifying the entire

Library and, at the same time, implementing RFID. The project was approved in Summer 2018 and will be completed by the end of Summer 2019. On a much smaller scale, but equally successful in terms of the conversations it generated, we went old-school in 2018, hand-delivering a single-sheet library newsletter to the offices of all academic staff at the start of each semester.

Open University

2018 has been a year of change and challenge for The Open University. Following the (unanticipated) change in Vice Chancellor in March the University strategy has been through a critical review. A wide-spread transformation programme has been paused and refocused, reducing the speed and scope of changes set to be delivered, whilst still delivering a voluntary severance scheme. Within the Library specifically the news has been fairly positive. We completed a large project reviewing our content and collections to ensure they remain aligned to changing curriculum demands whilst achieving best value for money from the Library content service. A 'Library needs' evaluation in the spring helped the senior team identify the key priorities based on customer expectations leading to a new business plan and operational objectives for the year ahead. We are continuing our focus on delivering digital capabilities for the organisation as a whole, whilst also leading a University-wide project to improving our referencing policy and working with Estates on a building refresh project. Towards the end of 2018 new operational structures were under consideration, with a change in Library Director announced, indicating that 2019 will be another year of organisational change.

University of Birmingham

Between April and May 2018 a digital exhibition about the Birmingham Quran manuscript, held by the Cadbury Research Library, took place at Dubai Design District as part of a wider tour of the UAE for the UK-UAE Year of Creative Collaboration. The exhibition was combined with an education programme including talks, workshops and tours to engage school pupils and the general public, as well as a massive online open course (MOOC), called 'The Birmingham Qur'an It's Journey from the Islamic Heartlands'. The manuscript is part of the University's Mingana Collection of Middle Eastern manuscripts. Library Services also contributed significantly to planning for the opening of the new UoB campus in Dubai, training Dubai staff and students, developing new online tools and providing licenses for online subscriptions. On the Birmingham campus, with its remit for centrally managed learning spaces, the library was much involved in the project to centralise and refurbish 49 large and medium sized teaching rooms formerly managed locally by Schools.



As well as implementing the Alma library management system, the Library moved to Primo 5 in July 2018, delivering a new, next generation interface. The new catalogue provides easy access to 4 million archive documents, including the Chamberlain papers, and in another highlight for our archives, 2018 saw a grant of

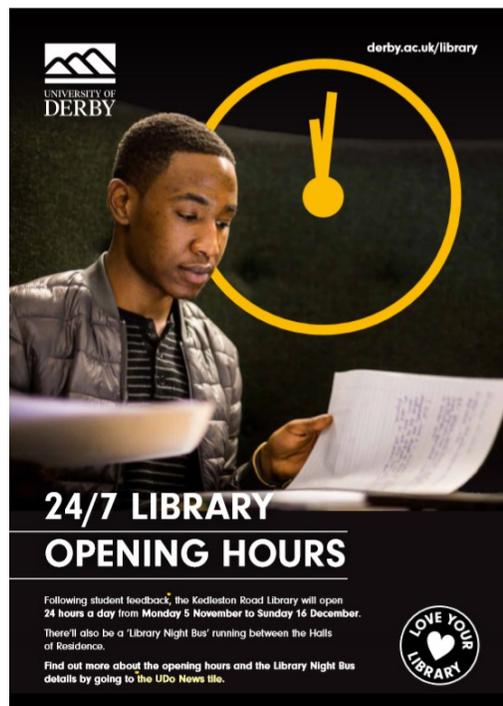
£187,000 from the Wellcome Trust's Research Resources Award scheme, to undertake a two-year project to fully catalogue and preserve the extensive archive of Save the Children UK.

On the resource lists front, a surge in take-up saw well over 2000 lists 'adopted' by schools and students cited resource list links in Canvas as their number one way to access course materials.

September was a busy month as Library Services hosted two conferences. The U21 Conference, titled *Mantra or myth? Complex change and the future of libraries*, gathered Library professionals from across the globe to talk about the challenges and opportunities facing the academic library in the future. Just one week later, the Mercian conference took place at the campus' new Conference centre. As the year closed, work on a cultural probe came to fruition with a detailed report on the student experience, and a new interactive, highly customized mobile application was developed, with Estates and ITS, providing wayfinding around the campus and information about facilities and real time study space availability.

University of Derby

It's been an exciting year which has culminated in our first ever block of 24/7 Library opening. Students have been overwhelming positive about it and given us some terrific feedback such as "Love the 24/7 – might end up spending more time in the Library than at home!" Online fines payment was introduced in January. The Library has been successful in securing an £300k annual increase to the information resource budget. This has enabled us to add several databases to our collections, including SCOPUS and Jstor. We are working in partnership with the Colleges to ensure high levels of student awareness and usage with the new resources.



Zombies invaded our main Library, as we worked with students to co-create an Escape Room approach induction (You can catch a workshop on this at LILAC). Two students were employed to design the concept and then one of our Subject Librarians turned it into a reality – feedback from lecturers and students as been fantastic. Students have played a large part other aspects of our service this year; we've worked with three students appointed into internship roles working on social media projects, accessibility of e-resources and ethnography research, as part of our Library Student Journey project. Working with EBSCO and colleagues across the Library

to improve access to resources, conducting Library Plus usability testing with students and implementing changes which improved ease of searching and relevancy of results. Derby's Library Plus profile is now used by EBSCO to demonstrate how Discovery tools can be developed and customised to improve student and user experience. James Kay, E-Resources Librarian, presented on the development of Library Plus at the UKSG conference and at EBSCO's annual Discovery Conference. Work has begun on our new Library student co-creation project and will come to fruition in 2019.

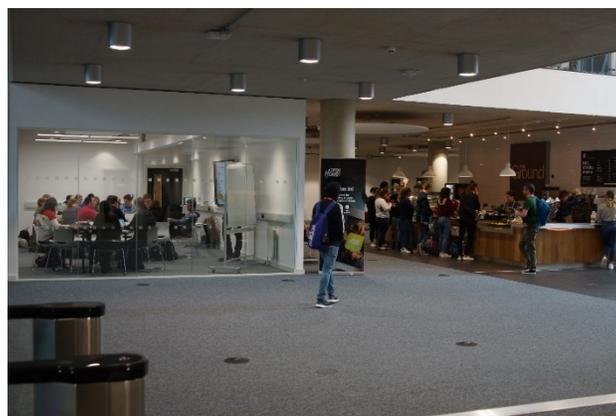


University of Keele

It has been a busy but successful year for the Library at Keele, with a very good outcome in the National Student Survey and another joint top score nationally for the Library question in the Times Higher student experience survey. Student numbers at the University continue to grow so, in response, we've added a further 140 study spaces in the main Campus Library this year, an increase of more than 10%. We also finished making good our Archives following a very serious flood early last year. As well as increasing the amount of storage available for our special collections, the overall environment is greatly improved. Use of almost all our services is up year-on-year. Like most HE libraries we face growing pressures every year but thanks in large part to the continuing commitment of Library staff, we continue to develop the support we provide for both education and research.

University of Northampton

2018 was consumed almost entirely by the move to our new Waterside campus. This has required us to weed around 43% of our print stock over the past three years, resulting in a collection that is well over 80% online, and then move and integrate the remaining books from our old campuses. This took place over August (when we also kept the service running) and we welcomed the first students to the Learning Commons at Waterside on 3rd September.



The Learning Commons is one of just three 'academic' buildings at Waterside and contains all of the university's student facing services, all of the academics and just over half of the general teaching rooms plus food outlets. The services and spaces are integrated throughout the building rather than concentrated in particular areas and

no-one person or team 'controls' it. On top of the change to the physical environment everyone now all hot desks, we are paperless (my office is my locker) and the teaching and learning strategy is built around active-blended learning (so no lecture rooms).

We have also instituted a new Integrated Learning Scheme which embeds library, academic skills and employability sessions into every level of every course. Do come and visit – we are either mad or visionary – you decide.



University of Warwick

Putting the 'map' into 'stakeholder mapping'

The University of Warwick Library's Aims 1 and 2 are "to support the 'whole student' to succeed" and "to be an essential partner in teaching and learning". As is common across the sector, relationship management and stakeholder management are key to what we do. But – being realistic – these topics can feel a bit dry ...especially when chosen as the theme for a staff Away Day. So how do you make this more engaging?



A small group of staff from across the Library's Academic Services planned a day which would actively involve staff and resonate with all learning styles, including visual and kinaesthetic learners. We produced a massive map of campus and traffic light cards to represent departments/staff where relationships are 'go' (light green) and areas where we want to build relationships but they are still at 'stop' (light red). The cards could carry the name of the Library staff member, the stakeholder and how we are working with them or would like to. Library staff then ran around 'the campus' filling in cards and distributing them onto the relevant 'buildings'. This proved more fun than filling in matrix grids on flip charts (!) and really got colleagues talking about challenges and solutions. We now have a spreadsheet with red and green columns so colleagues 'at stop' can go to their 'go' colleagues to find in-roads into hard to reach departments/stakeholders.

More Books!

Early in 2018, the University of Warwick Library piloted a 'More Books' scheme (whereby students can suggest book purchases to support their studies) in response to NSS free-text comments such as *"not enough books in the Library"*. 'More Books! – Your Books!' was a great success, with 190 requests received from students from a range of Departments and for a range of purposes (reading list texts, wider reading, dissertation/research support).



Around £11,000 was spent during the campaign and we received some really positive feedback: e.g. *"This is cool indeed. It is my pleasure to contribute to the Library."*

'More Books' involved close working across the Library. Protocols were agreed in advance to speed up the ordering process and to prefer high speed delivery methods. The scheme focussed on swift and friendly communication, developed a sense of the importance of the student voice and encouraged a dialogue. It was time-consuming but the feedback showed it was worth it.

The success of the pilot has led to 'More Books! – Your Books!' being incorporated into the Library's on-going approach to book purchasing, confirming the importance of the student population in building the Library collections. It will run twice a year in future, in Terms 2 and 3, with regular reviews to ensure it meets need.

Creating Information Skills Videos with Our Students

As a fellow of the Warwick International Higher Education Academy (WIHEA), I (Kate Courage, Academic Support Librarian) received funding this year to work with undergraduate humanities students on co-creating resources to support students' independent research. We held eight hours of workshops to encourage the students to share and develop their ideas about the importance of independent research in their degrees. They then created three short videos to support their fellow students at three key stages in their research journey:

- Starting your research journey (for students making the transition to University): youtu.be/FoW4xoPcx18
- Top tips for first year research (to help students with their first assignment): youtu.be/rFXwVMwNDJY
- Finding your path through honours level research (to help students make the transition from first year to honours level research): youtu.be/5qU4rZpSeOA

The videos have been used in induction sessions, lectures and seminars in term 1, and have received very positive feedback from staff and students. We also filmed an evaluative video, where students involved in the project discussed the process and the final videos. It was wonderful to hear how much they had got out of the experience. Academic staff have also seen the project as a model for group assessment, getting the students to work in groups to share, distil and disseminate ideas.

University of Worcester

2018 has been a great year at Worcester. After celebrating 5 years of The Hive in summer 2017, we've gone from strength to strength with some of our highlights including:

- Our highest ever NSS score of 90.79, ranking us at 15 out of 151 institutions for learning resources – a great testament to all the work undertaken by
 - Being accredited with the Customer Service Excellence standard
 - Winning the Talis Award for Excellence in Marketing & Engaging Academics
 - Winning a Students Choice Award for Sustainability from our Student Union
-

Looking Ahead

In preparation for writing this closing section for our 2018 annual report, I went back to read what I wrote last year. I could hardly believe my own eyes and had to double check I'd got the right year!

I wrote about:

- The “new” Office for Students – it seems to have been with us forever and it I'm sure a day doesn't go by without some discussion about them;
- The “new” minister- who has of course been replaced with a “new”, “new” minister;
- “new” GDPR legislation- which of course was followed by an avalanche of emails asking me to confirm I was happy to continue receiving messages (from organisations I never remember signing up to in the first place).



*Diane Job
Vice Chair (2017-2019)
Director of Library Services,
University of Birmingham*

As we look forward to another year of collaboration across our region some things we knew about last year are just a little bit closer...the fees review and the next REF are just two.

However, perhaps more telling is what was absent like BREXIT planning (there, I said it! and will say no more) and Plan S (who knew!).

Clearly, we have another “interesting” year ahead, and if our collaboration felt important last year it feels even more so now. Sharing good ideas, best practice and offering mutual support is valuable at the best of times, as we face so much uncertainty it feels not just valuable but imperative.

The number of special interest groups has grown and the ones that already existed have gone from strength to strength. We held another hugely successful conference and planning for this year's event on the 10 September 2019 at the University of Nottingham, is underway. A fabulous programme of staff development activities is also already underway.

Finally, on behalf of us all I'd like to say “thank you” to the members of the steering group whose term ends in March. Special thanks must go to Dave Parkes, our outgoing chair. We are all immensely grateful for the time and energy he has put into making our collaboration as successful as it is.

Diane Job, *Vice-Chair (2017-2019) and incoming Mercian Collaboration Chair, (2019-2021)*



The Mercian Collaboration is a regional library network based in the UK Midlands. Originally founded as the Midlands Academic Library Group in 2014, it currently comprises 23 academic libraries.

Contact

For more information, visit our website or contact the Development Officer.

Email: mercianlibrariescollaboration@gmail.com

Tel: +44 (0)7825-813393

Website: merciancollaboration.org.uk

Twitter: @MercianCollab

Mailing List: mercian-collaboration@jiscmail.ac.uk

Contributor Acknowledgements

Editor: Dr Gaz J Johnson, Mercian Collaboration Development Officer.

With thanks to all contributors, including: Angela Brady, Ant Brewerton, Yvonne Budden, Maria Carnegie, Kate Courage, Matt Cunningham, Helen Curtis, Andy Dodds, Karen Jackon, Diane Job, Selena Killick, Beck Maguire, Lydia Matheson, David Parkes, Sarah Pittaway, Chris Powis, Paul Reynolds, Emma Sansby, Emma Walton and Laurian Williamson.