Mercian Collaboration Review

Types and Definitions of groups

This document outlines some proposals related to Mercian groups (currently Operational, Special Interest and Communities of Practice)

Board members are asked to comment on the proposals and approve or amend for action.

It is noted that a review of Mercian groups was proposed and agreed at that time, however, subsequent discussions along with the Mercian finances challenges have had an impact on the nature of the proposals outlined and may require a roll back of some agreed actions.

1. **Mercian Operational Groups**

   Current position

The Conference and Staff Development groups have been recognised as 'operational' rather than 'special interest' subgroups of the Collaboration. This is to reflect their special focus in delivering on a tangible value in terms of membership outputs (through their respective programme of events).

Proposal

- Retain the existing definition for this type of group as above
- Reframe Disability Forum to become a broader EDI/Accessibility Mercian group and then provide support for this group to move into this category from being a SIG.
- Rename this type of group to signify their significance for the value and benefits of Mercian membership and to show change. Suggested name changes –Core or Strategic to highlight their significance
- Update and amend operating conditions for this type of group.

  These groups will:

  o   meet regularly at least twice a year
  o   have elected officers (min of two roles Chair/co-chair and treasurer) with other roles being agreed within the group membership as appropriate to the primary activity of the group.
  o   provide an annual update, including an evaluation of work and overview of costs incurred.
  o   have a Sponsor[1] from the steering group
  o   have a jiscmail list
  o   be provided with support from the Executive officer if needed (standard offer to be created with additional support to be agreed subject to availability)

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[1]The Sponsor will provide further support, insight and communication and is a link to the work of the wider Mercian collaboration.

- Have a presence at the annual conference -at least a poster presentation and representation.

2. Special Interest Groups

Current position

Special Interest Groups, in contrast to Operational Groups, are chiefly tasked with being regularly hosted forums for experiential exchange which enables library staff working in particular roles to develop and update their personal knowledge base. Special interest groups may, and many choose to, organise successful events for their members and other interested library staff. However, it is not expected nor a requirement of their operations.

Current groups

- Copyright Group
  For staff with interest or responsibility for copyright guidance and advocacy at their institutions.

- Deputies & Senior Staff Group
  For staff with senior operational and strategic library responsibilities, but below director level.

- Marketing & Communications Group
  For staff with interests in the marketing, promotion and reputational enhancement of academic libraries to staff, students and the wider community.

- Mercian Disability Forum
  For staff with an interest in, or responsibility for, supporting disabled students. (see above recommendation to reframe and become an "operational group".

- Mercian Metadata Forum
  For staff with an interest in around the creation and management of metadata.

Proposal

- Alter the current definition to include the slight change relating to events

Special Interest Groups, in contrast to Operational Groups, are chiefly tasked with being regularly hosted forums for experiential exchange which enables library staff working in particular roles to develop and update their personal knowledge base.

Whilst events may be organised it is not an expectation or a requirement. If events are organised members should to do so using guidelines provided.

- Either retain the name or change to Mercian Forum
- Update and amend operating conditions for this type of group

  These groups will:

- o hold a minimum of 2 meetings per year
- o have elected officers (a minimum of one role, a chair or co-chairs)
- o provide an annual update
- o have a jiscmail list for members
- o receive support for jiscmail administration and management only from the Executive Officer
- o need to organise from within the membership for note taking, meeting organisation etc, this support will **not** be provided by the Executive officer.
- o be expected to provide a presence at the annual conference at least a poster presentation
- o Organise events subject to event conditions (see below)
- o be subject to review if activity falls below expected levels
- o will have a Sponsor from the steering group (please note your sponsor may not attend all meetings but will be available to support your activity)

Event organisation conditions.

SIGs/Forums can choose to organise successful events for their members and other interested library staff. However, it is not expected nor a requirement of their operations. If an event is being planned the chair/co-chair should discuss or possible collaborations with the staff development group either directly with the SDG or via their sponsor. Communications and publicity should be discussed with the Executive officer and sponsor.

 Events would need to incur no costs.

Mercian Communities of Practice

Current position

Based on decisions made at the Board meeting in December 2023 it was agreed that we look at CoPs and as an outcome a new CoP was formed.

[Mercian Library Systems & Technologies - Community of Practice](#)

The idea to introduce Communities of Practice was agreed as a way of providing a mechanism for groups to exist under the Mercian Collaboration umbrella but with reduced interventions from the Steering Group and the Executive officer. However, as the review has moved on, and taking the financial context into account, support levels are also being reviewed and there seems to be few differences between CoP and SIG/Forums.

The Board is asked

- If proposals above are accepted do we still need CoPs?
- If so does the proposal below provide enough difference or clarity of difference for colleagues to decide on the type of group they want to be?
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Proposal

CoPs

- can decide how they organise themselves, will be mainly self-managed,
- will **not** receive any support from the Executive officer other than jiscmail support. NB In order for there to be a jiscmail list for a CoP a member will need to act as a co-administrator.
- Governance from Mercian Steering Group will be minimal and consist of an evaluative review every two years to ensure that it is still active.
- Will **not** have a sponsor.
- Are encouraged to share emerging ideas or issues that might emerge from the CoP that could support the wider Mercian membership via the Executive officer.

Next steps

If proposals are agreed the steering group will contact groups (either via officers/chairs or attend a meeting) to discuss changes and work on a timeline with them.

A standard offer from the Executive officer for "operational" groups will be discussed with groups and agreed by steering group.

Once completed the Mercian website information will be updated.

Emma Walton – August 2024