



## Steering Group

Online, 11 Feb 2pm 2022

### Agenda

**Present:** Chris Porter (Chair, Newman), Helen Curtis (Treasurer, Aston), Chris Powis (Northampton), Jo-Anne Watts (Wolverhampton), Judith Keene (Worcester), Gaz J Johnson (Mercian Collaboration)

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Apologies: Laura Pilsel (Vice, Harper Adams)

### Actions

**ACTION:** Helen to resolve issue over missing conference sponsorship income

**ACTION:** Propose an MSDG event on procurement to explore development needs in region

**ACTION:** All to review and feedback on strategic plan to Chair ahead of Board meeting.

**ACTION:** Chair to present finalised version of plan to Board at March meeting

**ACTION:** GJJ to finish collating the annual report and publish as part of March Board meeting

**ACTION:** GJJ to contact Copyright Group list members to seek new committee to revitalise group activities

**ACTION:** GJJ to remind Stewart of urgency to relaunch Marketing and Communications Group

**ACTION:** GJJ to facilitate/explore relaunch and handover of group officers

**ACTION:** All to send suggested sponsor contacts to GJJ

**ACTION:** Helen to provide detailed accounts report to Directors Board

**ACTION:** GJJ to approach Paul and Libby to invite to attend Board as speakers

**ACTION:** GJJ to draft agenda and share with Directors

**ACTION:** GJJ to share poll for date and agree final arrangements with Chair/Vice

**ACTION:** GJJ to contact Chairs of MDF & MSDG for an update on outlined joint event planning progress

**ACTION:** Judith to follow up with MMG group to check on their forthcoming plans.

**ACTION:** GJJ to share Doodle Poll to set date of next Steering Group meeting

**ACTION:** GJJ to share reserves statement with Board ahead of next meeting

**ACTION:** GJJ to confirm Collaboration's interest in new EDI/BAME subgroup

**ACTION:** Representative to EDI/BAME subgroup meeting be nominated by Chair when date set

**ACTION:** All to feed concerns over NSS to regional SCOUNL Board members

## 22/01 Previous Meeting

- a. Minutes of previous meeting: [26 Nov 2021](#)

Approved, no corrections.

- b. Outstanding Actions (not on agenda)

All items were listed as resolved or on today's agenda – with the following exceptions.

### **ACTION: Helen to resolve issue over missing conference sponsorship income**

Helen confirmed this had been resolved with the final income for the conference 2021 standing at £700. GJJ noted for Conference 2022 sponsorship would be closely overseen by the group chair.

### **ACTION: Propose an MSDG event on procurement to explore development needs in region**

Discussions with the Chair and Emma Walton (see below) may have superseded this item in terms of regional progression.

## 22/02 Governance

- a. Officer Hours

The Chair reported the formal proposal to extend the Officer's hours to 0.4FTE had been submitted to SCONUL, with an expected start date of 1<sup>st</sup> March. As part of this, it was agreed to revise the job title to Executive Officer, effective immediately. GJJ and the Chair would confirm other working arrangements ahead of the anticipated start date.

- b. Strategic Plan Revision & Update

The Chair had shared this ahead of the meeting, in a revised, and textually reduced mode to make it less dense, and more of web document. No substantive changes had been made (e.g. five themes remained), but rather clarification had been added. It also was designed to accommodate the impacts from Covid working practices. It was agreed this was an improvement and the Chair invited final comments ahead of formally presenting to Board in March for approval.

**ACTION: All to review and feedback on strategic plan to Chair ahead of Board meeting.**

**ACTION: Chair to present finalised version of plan to Board at March meeting**

- c. Risk Register Update & Approval

This had been shared for final updates ahead of the meeting. As none were received it was approved for 2022. It would be revisited for an update annually every Nov/Dec.

- d. Annual Report 2021

The draft had been circulated by GJJ ahead of the meeting, and while a minor edit and final proof was needed, the report was essentially complete. The Chair noted it was good to see the reports from the region's members, even if not all were represented. It was agreed to finalise the report and launch as part of the Board meeting in March.

**ACTION: GJJ to finish collating the annual report and publish as part of March Board meeting**

e. [Subgroup Under Review: Copyright Group](#)

GJJ had made various efforts to contact the chair, Yvonne Budden (Warwick) with no success. Having set a deadline of this meeting for any group action, the Steering Group agreed to mail the group list to seek a new nucleus to take the group forward as a preferred route. However, if no tangible activity could be spurred by the Board meeting (March '22), then the Copyright Group would be decommissioned from our active subgroups.

**ACTION: GJJ to contact Copyright Group list members to seek new committee to revitalise group activities**

f. [Subgroup Under Review: Marketing & Communion](#)

In a similar vein, GJJ had approached the group chair Stewart Sandilands. Stewart had responded noting he had hoped to relaunch the group, but would actively seek to spur some new effort. However, currently GJJ was unaware of any new activity. Some interest by other staff in the group were noted, and it was suggested there was a strong potential to find a new lead for the group. As such, it was agreed to encourage Stewart's efforts, and offer support to find new members to take the group forward. However, if there had been no new activity by the next Steering Group (April/May) the group would be decommissioned from our active subgroups.

**ACTION: GJJ to remind Stewart of urgency to relaunch Marketing and Communications Group**

**ACTION: GJJ to facilitate/explore relaunch and handover of group officers**

g. [New Subgroup Proposal: Library Research Support Group](#)

GJJ noted as per email correspondence he had been approached by the current chair of the Midlands Library Research Support Group, Selena Lock (Leicester), to consider the Collaboration adopting the group as a subgroup. He had fed back the mechanisms and requirements, which Selena was discussing with her other committee members. It was noted the Steering Group was in favour of the group's adoption, although the need for a viable committee to take it forward as an active proposition was highlighted. GJJ will continue to liaise and facilitate as needed, ahead of any formal submission to Board.

h. [Conference Sponsor Offer '22](#)

A revised offer to sponsors for this year's conference had been developed by the Officer in concert with the Conference Group. The details may need to be tweaked based on platform/venue host, but in essence three tiers of sponsorship were on offer: (1) Single headline platinum sponsor (£1,250, delegate access plus channels) (2) unlimited Gold (£750, delegate access) and (3) unlimited Silver (£400, marketing media only). The levels were informed by other collaboration's levels and offers, bringing the Collaboration more in line with the sectoral norm. The offer was approved by the Steering Group.

GJJ added the Conference Group are keen to hear any suggested sponsors, and especially contacts, to directly approach with the offer.

**ACTION: All to send suggested sponsor contacts to GJJ**

## 22/03 Officer Reports

### a. Financial Update

Helen reported that beyond our usual ongoing costs, there had been very few outgoings. As a result, a healthy reserve had been maintained by the Collaboration. Even with the forthcoming increase in GJJ's hours, the financial position was healthy. However, Helen noted with an eye to the future, any income from the conference would be valuable in terms of being able to support additional activities, shifts back to more physical events or to account for rising costs/inflation. She reported all subscriptions had now been invoiced.

**ACTION: Helen to provide detailed accounts report to Directors Board**

### b. Development Officer: Update

Due to time pressures GJJ submitted an oral report. He noted his key activities since the last Steering Group meeting had included: support for the conference group, conducting and reporting on the member survey w.r.t. conferences<sup>ii</sup>, support for the MSDG events and activities, facilitating the Deputies Group meetings, collating materials and editing the 2021 annual report, supporting and facilitating the Board and Steering Group, liaising with SCONUL and attending meetings with other regional collaborations to share experiences.

GJJ reported back on the key elements from his recent meeting with SCURL, WHELF and M25 (2<sup>nd</sup> February) which included progress towards a Scottish OA Press (SCURL), increased EDI subgroup activity (SCURL, M25 & WHELF), conference plans (SCURL, WHELF and M25), staff wellbeing initiatives (M25), mentoring (M25), and the discontinuation of 'Search-25' (M25). ALN had been unable to attend this meeting, but GJJ had met with their representatives late in 2021 (16<sup>th</sup> Dec) for an update on their conference and other regional activities. He remained in regular contact with their Officers on an ad hoc basis, given they were our sister collaboration.

The Chair noted that following her previous useful interaction with other regional collaboration chairs, another meeting had been proposed, but to date no progress towards setting a date had been made.

## 22/04 Operations

### a. Preparations for March Board

As previously discussed, the Chair agreed we would invite Paul Mahoney (Staffs) and Libby Homer (ARU/Peterborough) to speak to a theme of 'Collection vs Content'. A poll will be circulated for potential dates to directors, as will a draft agenda and call for items.

**ACTION: GJJ to approach Paul and Libby to invite to attend Board as speakers**

**ACTION: GJJ to draft agenda and share with Directors**

**ACTION: GJJ to share poll for date and agree final arrangements with Chair/Vice**

There was discussion that Jisc could be approached to send a speaker as a reserve option, although there were concerns their focus has moved away from academic libraries. However, their work on 'big deals' was relevant to library interests at least - although the SCONUL Content Forum may already cover this ground. It was agreed to approach Jisc to address and update the Board if the other speakers were

unable/unwilling to attend the March meeting. Alternatively, they may be potential speakers to address the Autumn meeting.

## 22/05 Subgroups: Activity Update

### a. Conference Group

GJJ reported he had met with the Chair and Vice of the group earlier today for some advanced strategic planning ahead of the group's next meeting (16<sup>th</sup> Feb). A venue/platform (Cranfield's broadcast/media suite) had been offered and accepted, and due to its availability, a date of 6-7<sup>th</sup> September had been set for the event. Cranfield had generously offered their support at no cost to the Collaboration, and the Steering Group commended this exceptional generosity. As in 2021 the event will be online, and hosted across two-half-day slots, likely the mornings. This had been well received in delegate feedback and had also contributed to a higher pre-booked attendance than any previous conference.

An outline event theme - 'Redefining Engagement – had been proposed at the group's last meeting. It was suggested this could entice speakers who wished to explore how different service branches are responding to the challenges of engaging/re-engaging with their customer base (staff, students, external etc). It was hoped this would offer some valuable lessons and shared experiential outcomes for all delegates. Additionally, this theme could successfully embrace the popular themes of EDI, changing leadership and work practices as subthemes. Steering Group noted their approval of this theme.

GJJ had also presented an updated sponsor offer (discussed above).

The Chair thanked the Conference Group for their ongoing efforts, noting that positive progress seemed to have been made far earlier than in 2021, which was commendable.

### b. Mercian Staff Development Group

The group was next meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> March which will be the last meeting for current chair Sarah Pittaway who is departing for a new job at Gloucester. Vice Chair Annmarie Lee (BCU) has agreed to step up earlier than planned as chair, although the group was now looking for a new Vice and also Evaluations Officer ahead of this meeting. A number of events have taken place recently (Collaborative Partnerships [9<sup>th</sup> Dec], Implementing a LMS [7<sup>th</sup> Dec]. Scheduled and announced event are currently: Recruiting Online and Being Recruited Online [1<sup>st</sup> March], but there is a further event under active development: ILL & Digitization [March/April], Building on the Wins [26<sup>th</sup> April].<sup>iii</sup>

### c. Deputies & Senior Staff Group

The next meeting was scheduled to be held online (Thu 7<sup>th</sup> April) with themes of National Student Survey and the future of print collections to be discussed. A poll for a meeting date and call for a meeting chair had been put out on the group mailing list.

#### d. Mercian Disability Forum

GJJ reported that while this hadn't met this year, it had met last 26<sup>th</sup> November, and hence was likely due another meeting in the near future. He had recently contacted group chair Simon Satchwell-Giles (Newman) to seek an update on his plans. Chris noted the group had been talking with Sarah Pittaway (MSDG) about convening a working group with MSDG/MDF in early 2022 to plan for future joint events. As GJJ and Chris were unsure this had gone forward, GJJ would check in with both chairs as to their plans.

**ACTION: GJJ to contact Chairs of MDF & MSDG for an update on outlined joint event planning progress**

#### e. Mercian Metadata Group

GJJ and Judith noted while activity with the group is currently in a fallow period, after a productive 2021, there was a reasonable expectation they would organise a meeting or event within the next few months.

**ACTION: Judith to follow up with MMG group to check on their forthcoming plans.**

### 22/06 AOB

#### a. Date of next Steering Group meeting (Apr/May 2022)

It was agreed with Easter falling mid-April, that the next meeting should fall towards the end of the month or into May. Chris asked to avoid the first week of May if possible.

**ACTION: GJJ to share Doodle Poll to set date of next Steering Group meeting**

#### b. NEYAL and ALN

The Chair noted Emma Walton (Loughborough) had been in touch to express concerns over changes to NEYAL membership, related to the formation of ALN. Prior discussions on the future of MUAL had already raised issues around procurement in the region. It was noted there was a staffing resource issue for procurement, and an expertise that might otherwise be lacking in the region without these group(s) although it was unclear how NEYAL was resourced or configured. Any Collaboration subgroup might only form a talking shop, although as a regional body we remain an oddity in lacking a procurement arm.

It was agreed to continue to watch the situation to develop an informed stance, which in the event that NEYAL membership arrangements change or MUAL's activities alter, may mean action will be required. In the meanwhile, GJJ has volunteered to attend a meeting on the topic and will report back.

#### c. Reserves Statement

Helen has created this in line with SCOUNL's requirements, and it is reflected within an indicative statement in the MoU. The detailed statement including the actual figures are for internal use only and held by the Treasurer and Officer. It would be shared with the Board ahead of the meeting in March, for information.

**ACTION: GJJ to share reserves statement with Board ahead of next meeting**

d. EDI/BAME Group SCONUL

GJJ noted the follow up email from Ann, after our initial expression of interest. It was agreed to reply in the affirmative, and to identify who would be the right person to attend once a meeting date for the new group was set.

**ACTION: GJJ to confirm Collaboration's interest in new EDI/BAME subgroup**

**ACTION: Representative to EDI/BAME subgroup meeting be nominated by Chair when date set**

e. National Student Survey: Sectoral Response

Judith asked if, with respect the consultation on the NSS questions, there was any traction in a formal, regional response. She had though spoken with Ann at SCONUL, which would likely respond for the sector. While the NSS has different visibilities across the membership, it was suggested interpretation was key. It was noted any influence over the OFS' decisions would likely be limited, but it was agreed taking an active stance could be to the benefit of the Collaboration's membership. As such the Chair advocated that Steering Group members with any concerns should approach the regional SCONUL Board members (Gary and Emma) to feed comments to SCONUL Board.

**ACTION: All to feed concerns over NSS to regional SCONUL Board members**

f. SCONUL Organisational Development Group

Helen highlighted the recruitment life-cycle questions which Ann had distributed on the SCONUL list, and encouraged everyone to respond where possible.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> See: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sponsorship-policy>

<sup>ii</sup> See:

<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Conference%20Group%20Member%20Survey%202021.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> All forthcoming events are listed here: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/events>