Conference Group

Minutes

Friday 13th May 2022

Present: Deborah Munro (Chair, Birmingham), Laura Newman (Vice, Loughborough), Chris Bradford (Warwick), Catherine Robertson (Birmingham), Adrian Clarke (Loughborough), Jo-Anne Watts (Wolverhampton, Steering Group), Ruth Houghton (Cranfield), Funmike Ifie (Loughborough)

Apologies: Gaz J Johnson (Mercian Collaboration), Andrea Kellett (Birmingham), Matt Cunningham (MSDG, Loughborough)

Summary of Actions

ACTION: ALL to encourage suitable staff to attend speaker briefing sessions

ACTION: Ruth to approach sponsors informally during the ESBLG Conference

ACTION: Adrian to approach SpringShare as potential sponsor

ACTION: Ruth to approach Tim Wales to invite him to attend the conference

ACTION: Laura to update the outline event programme to account for Cranfield technical limitations

ACTION: GJJ to review access information on 2021 content

ACTION: Deborah to approach Chris Porter to be on the panel

ACTION: ALL to suggest names to Deborah or via padlet for the panel discussion

ACTION: Deborah to speak to GJJ about his availability for the conference

ACTION: Catherine and Funmike to collate and share all speaker proposals to the group following deadline

ACTION: ALL to review paper submissions ahead of next meeting

ACTION: ALL to attend review meeting/offer feedback on paper suitability

ACTION: Deborah to test recording breakout sessions with colleagues.

22/29 Cranfield Report

Ruth and Laura had been at Cranfield yesterday for a meeting and tour around the conference studio venue. Deborah and GJJ had attended online to contribute to the discussions with David Metcalfe and Toby Thompson. Additionally, the other backroom team members who will be supporting the event were met. The meeting was very positive and illustrated the professionalism of the Cranfield team, and while many questions were answered, because of the options available to us there are quite a few further questions and decisions to be made. This will be discussed later in the meeting.

22/30 Speaker Sessions: Feedback

Chris reported back on the first of the two events which had taken place on Tuesday (10th May). The event had gone well and there had been a very positive response from the delegate in the room, and in supporting feedback afterwards. Chris had set a follow-up conversation with one delegate who was keen to talk over her ideas for a speaker session with a committee member. There were representatives from a number of different institutions there on the day.[i] It was thought more people would be coming forward for support from the group. Chris suggested that group members should continue to encourage any staff who might benefit from attending the final event to sign up for it. Deborah noted it would be useful for the review meeting to match attendees to any session applications and review their submissions in a supportive manner. Deborah thanked Chris, Andrea and GJJ for their efforts in running this event.

ACTION: ALL to encourage suitable staff to attend speaker briefing sessions

Adrian suggested that people involved in the speaker sessions, who present at the conference, should be invited to speak at the 2023 speaker briefing events. It was agreed that this would be a good idea to pursue. Deborah suggested if we are low on submissions for lightning talks we could invite the speaker session delegates to reflect on their experiences at these events – to broaden the representation at the conference.

22/31 Call for Papers

Catherine reported that we have had three submissions so far.[ii] While it was only a low number it was noted there was still a month to go to the deadline, and Catherine reported she was aware of colleagues who considering submitting. Catherine had been in touch with the applicants to acknowledge receipt of their submissions. Deborah noted that where people had submitted proposals for short/lightning talks there was the potential to invite them to deliver longer papers. It was acknowledged that many submissions are often sent in closer to the deadline, and the team was not too concerned by current levels. Additionally, the speaker sessions will also hopefully encourage more submissions too.

22/32 Round Table Proposal

Chris suggested inviting speakers for a session wherein they have a professional conversation, e.g. an archivist talking to someone in academic services. This could work as an inspirational piece of content where the participants could discuss someone's career journey rather than a formal presentation. Jo-Anne commented SCONUL had run something like this recently with heads of service talking informally about their career journeys. She noted it was a very interesting session, and the format worked well. It was suggested the group could set the topic, related to the conference's engagement theme, and moderate the conversation.

It was agreed while this sounded like an exciting idea, Deborah noted the experience of talking to Cranfield's team suggested a need for keeping content as simple as possible to fit within their requirements. Potentially, there might be a way within the networking/coffee breaks to facilitate a semi-curated conversation there. However, it was agreed this was a good idea to return to for future events, possibly at a hybrid/physical conference in 2023.

22/33 Sponsorship

Adrian provided an update on the sponsorship activities. Unfortunately, despite repeated efforts there had been no successes, although he thanked everyone for passing along additional contacts and suggested avenues to pursue. Deborah noted that perhaps the interest in supporting online events has waned over the last two years, and this fatigue is represented in the level of interest in sponsoring the conference. She thanked Adrian for his efforts.

Deborah suggested, given Cranfield's involvement we should recognise them formally as an event sponsor. She considered if we could ask them for further support, but it was felt this would be unlikely. Jo-Anne suggested talking with GJJ and reviewing who we have approached as sponsors, with a mind to comparing them with services member libraries make considerable purchases from. In this way, we might be able to nudge one or two organisations into contributing support for the conference. Ruth noted she was attending the ESBLG Conference, which was very inexpensive for a four-day residential event as the rest was funded by sponsors. Ruth offered to informally chat to some of the sponsors and explore their interest in the Collaboration's event. This was agreed as a good tactic which might yield at the very least avenues to explore for sponsorship for conference 2023.

ACTION: Ruth to approach sponsors informally during the ESBLG Conference

Deborah asked if there were any more sponsor suggestions. Jo-Anne made a suggestion that she would follow up. Birmingham had extended their deal with SpringShare significantly, and they would be a potential to approach as a result.

ACTION: Adrian to approach SpringShare as potential sponsor

22/34 Keynote Speaker

Deborah noted there had been ideas shared on the padlet, and after a discussion with Laura, Ant Brewerton (formerly Warwick) had been identified as a prime candidate.[iii] Chris had informally approached him before he started his new role, but had now followed this up via a colleague and would be meeting him at a Warwick social event on Fri 20th May in person to discuss the possibility. It was agreed he was a good fit for the conference theme. The Collaboration would be willing to cover transport expenses as needed.

ACTION: Chris to approach Ant Brewerton to invite as keynote speaker.

It was agreed that if Ant was unable to offer his services, the group would need to seek an alternative speaker. Simon Bevan (Cranfield) had been suggested, but as he had just retired he would be unlikely to be interested. It was suggested the new director at Cranfield, Tim Wales, might be suitable, and should be approached as a speaker in some capacity at the conference anyway, perhaps to open or close the event at least or participate in the panel discussion.

ACTION: Ruth to approach Tim Wales to invite him to attend the conference

Liz Jolly, at the British Library had been another suggestion, as was Masud Khokar (Leeds) who had spoken at SCONUL about engagement. Deborah noted GJJ was a little concerned that a keynote had yet to be booked. Jo-Anne agreed we might be somewhat late if we were seeking a commercial speaker. However, it was hoped one of these options from academia would agree to be our keynote.

22/35 Cranfield Feedback & Discussion

Deborah, Laura and Ruth reported back further on their discussions with Cranfield. Laura reported how her and Ruth had sat on the sofa in the main studio setup for the facilities. There are questions currently about the formats for sessions we've proposed and how feasible they are for the Cranfield team to support. Some of these can't be addressed until we have selected the papers.

a. Platform & Parallel Sessions

In terms of platform, Cranfield are willing to run it on whatever platform we prefer, although it would be broadcast on Zoom. However, this meant it was not feasible to record parallel (breakouts) sessions, which was an issue as it had been hoped to record the whole event. Additionally, Cranfield were unable to easily move people between two parallel sessions run consecutively, which would mean the programme structure would need to be amended to account for this. Delegates would need to declare ahead of attending which parallels they wished to attend and would not be able to change this on the day. Because of the manual processing needed to send people to the right sessions, this might require the scheduling of a coffee break ahead of any parallel sessions to allow for the non-trivial time required to achieve this changeover.

Teams could be used as an alternative, and would permit recording of parallels, but Cranfield were less keen to use it because they had diminished control and felt the audio quality was poorer.

b. Programme

It was noted that as we were unsure how many submissions we would receive, it was not possible to answer these concerns as of yet. With a smaller number of accepted sessions, we might not need parallel sessions at all for example, which would make any questions over platform moot. Deborah noted that while Cranfield might desire a very professional output, a less 'slick' approach might better suit our content delivery needs. E.g. we could run the parallels in a separate platform instance to the main conference (an institutional or MC account), to allow us to record them. However, it was thought Cranfield would not be keen on this option. It would also mean more labour for the conference team, but would answer the question of recording both streams.

Chris noted the 2021 programme included direct links for all sessions, to allow people to access whatever content they wanted. However, on Teams we had a series on channels rather than the one or two sessions streams proposed for this year. Deborah noted that a simpler programme format might be desirable and acceptable to delegates, and that in 2021 we perhaps went for too complex an option. However, if we reduce the streams to one, this would reduce the number of papers we could offer considerably.

> **ACTION: Laura to update the outline event programme to account for Cranfield technical limitations**

c. Keynote

Conversely, running the keynote from the studio would be extremely slick and professional, and it would be possible include on-screen banner text, branding etc in addition to being able to showcase the speaker and their slides. There was some thought still needed in practical terms of gathering questions for the keynote from delegates.

d. Session Recording

Deborah asked how important recording the sessions was for the conference. Jo-Anne noted at earlier physical events some recording took place, and where this wasn't possible, slides and sometimes voiced-slides were shared after the event. The question of how accessed last year's recorded content was raised. It was suggested people could pre-record and present live as a way to capture all content, as had been an option for some speakers in 2021. It was noted that while live presentation is the preference for 2022, the Cranfield studio could play video content very easily.

It was agreed not to record the lightning talks, so as to reduce stress for less experienced speakers. It was also agreed to ask speakers to provide a recorded version of their papers as a backup option for technical glitches and internet dropout on the day.

ACTION: GJJ to review access information on 2021 content

e. Panel (Day 2)

Laura noted the planned panel would require some people to be in the studio. Tim Wales would be ideal to be a member of the panel, plus perhaps others who may be online or live in the studio. It was agreed that it was time to identify who to speak on the panel and approach them. Senior staff members would be ideal, as mid-low staffers were more likely to submit papers. Jo-Anne noted she was willing to participate on the panel as a speaker. Funmike suggested finding a library school academic as a panellist. Jane Seeker at City University was another potential person to approach as was Derick[iv]. Fumike also suggested invited someone from a SU education executive (student) to speak. Ruth suggested a post-graduate student might be beneficial. An archivist might also bring another useful perspective. The hope was to offer as diverse a panel as possible with different perspectives. Chris Porter as MC chair would also be a good person to have involvement (opening for the first day). In the panel if she was available.

Jo-Anne sounded a noted of caution, in that many of the names suggested would make good keynotes, but getting them on site on the same day would be very challenging. Although, it was noted for the panel they could be primarily online. Laura added that while Toby at Cranfield could host the panel, he had suggested we needed to provide an additional facilitator panel chair. Deborah thanked everyone for comments asked everyone to contribute panellist names to the padlet feedback.

ACTION: Deborah to approach Chris Porter to be on the panel

ACTION: ALL to suggest names to Deborah or via padlet for the panel discussion

22/36 Onsite Facilitation

The question of who would be at Cranfield on the day from the team was raised. It was noted Ruth would be present by default. Chris was willing, but it was suggested it would be best for one of the Speaker Liaison members to be present instead, and Catherine agreed she could attend in person. It was noted that it would be an overnight visit, but Cranfield had facilities to stay over. Jo-Anne noted the first source of costs should be from institutional budgets, but the Collaboration could cover costs if needed. Ruth noted she might be able to offer catering from Cranfield for on-site guests and facilitators.

Ruth noted that on the day, it would not be possible for delegates to contact the studio as they operated a closed-door policy. As such there was a need for someone to take technical and support questions. It was agreed this might be quite an intense role. GJJ might be able to provide this role, and Deborah would talk to him about this.

> **ACTION: Deborah to speak to GJJ about his availability for the conference**

22/37 Speaker Training

Laura noted that Cranfield wanted speakers to commit to a training session in the three weeks leading up to the conference.[v] This would need to be highlighted in the acceptance letters to speakers by Funmike and Catherine, as essentially it was a compulsory requirement. Ideally this would be one or two 15-20 minute sessions rather than individual briefings. The Cranfield Studio will provide availability information to the group on the format and content of these, ahead of hosting them.

22/38 Review Meeting

Deborah noted it was time to plan for the paper submission review meeting. The meeting would follow around a week after the closing date for submissions, and Funmike and Catherine would circulate the collated submissions to all as soon as possible after this. It was noted all group members should come to the meeting (22nd June) prepared to discuss which were the best submissions, and then a decision could be made as to which ones to accept. Chris noted that identifying if any came from the speaker briefing sessions would be a good idea, so as to support first time speaker representation.

> **ACTION: Catherine and Funmike to collate and share all speaker proposals to the group following deadline**
>
> **ACTION: ALL to review paper submissions ahead of next meeting**
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> **ACTION: ALL to attend review meeting/offer feedback on paper suitability**

22/39 AOB

f. Record Breakout rooms

Ruth noted if we can potentially record in the breakout rooms we need to potentially trial it. Deborah agreed to explore this within her local Zoom platform. Deborah also noted that in an emergency we could fall back on Zoom as a backup.

> **ACTION: Deborah to test recording breakout sessions with colleagues.**

g. Conference Email

Funmike asked to confirm the email address/account - this is *mercianconference*, on Gmail. The password was shared via a direct message.

22/40 Next Steps & Timetable

January	February	March
~~Initial Committee Meeting (14th)~~	~~Collate, review and outline event theme~~	~~Agree final event theme~~
	~~Agree on committee role assignments~~	~~News Item: Theme Announce~~
	~~Agree final sponsor offer~~	~~Draft call for papers/speakers~~
	~~Brief catchup meeting (16th Feb)~~	~~News Item: Launch call for sponsors~~
		~~Committee meeting (16th Mar)~~
April	**May**	**June**
~~Site visit - Chair/Vice (>May)~~	~~Site Visit (Cranfield)~~	Papers/Speakers call closes (13th June)
~~News Item: Call for papers/speakers launched (pre-Easter)~~	~~Speaker briefing events (10th & 19th)~~	Draft joining instructions
~~Conference Microsite Launch~~	~~Draft/update moderation guide~~	Paper selection meeting (22nd June)
~~Committee meeting (postponned)~~	Keynote(s) & panel identified	
	~~Committee meeting (13th May)~~	
July	**August**	**September**
Speakers & Keynote Confirmed (Early)	Weekly committee meetings from (15th Aug on, dates TBC)	Pre-Event brief committee meeting (date TBC)
Draft programme created	Bookings close (31st)vi	Pre-Event Speaker Testing (5th)
News Item: Delegate bookings open (25th)	Joining instructions to delegates & speakersvii	**6-7th Conference Hosted**
Define moderation expectations & consider training	Final programme made available online	Post-Conference Social event (6th)
Finalise joining instructions	Draft feedback form updated/created	Delegate feedback forms disseminated
Committee meeting (date TBC)	Sponsor invoices sent	Sponsor thanks letters disseminated
		News Item: Conference Report
October/November	**January '23**	
Review/Washup Meeting (date TBC)	Annual report to Steering Group	
Conference feedback analysis report	First Conference 2023 Meeting	
Older committee members standdown		
Handover Chair/Selection new Vice Chair		
Call for new committee members		
News Item: Conference feedback report		

Endnotes

[i] GJJ note: We had 10 bookings and 9 attendees on 10th, and there are 12 bookings for the session on the 17th. In total pre-registrations for both events saw people from 10 different institutions present.

[ii] Closing date, 13th June.

[iii] Associate Director for Academic Library Services, and Keeper of Collections, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford University

[iv] Last name unclear.

[v] From 15th August – 2nd September, 15 minute session

[vi] The exact date should be as late as possible, but may depend on the requirements of the Cranfield team to have access details for speakers and delegates

[vii] And where eligible, sponsor representatives