



## Conference Group

### Minutes

16<sup>th</sup> February 2022

**Present:** Deborah Munro (Chair, Birmingham), Laura Newman (Vice, Loughborough), Andrea Kellett (Birmingham), Matt Cunningham (MSDG, Loughborough), Adrian Clarke (Loughborough), Catherine Robertson (Birmingham), Christine Bradford (Warwick), Funmike Ifie (Loughborough), Jo-Anne Watts (Wolverhampton, Steering Group), Gaz J Johnson (Mercian Collaboration)

Page | 1

**Apologies:** Ruth Houghton (Cranfield), Hamda Gharib (Birmingham), Catherine Robertson (Birmingham)

### Summary of Actions

**ACTION: GJJ to speak to ALN about their sponsors plans for 2022**

**ACTION: GJJ to ask Board for sponsor contacts and suggestions**

**ACTION: Chair to create and share padlet for theme and subtheme suggestions**

**ACTION: All to add ideas, comments and feedback to padlet**

**ACTION: GJJ to share email account details with Adrian, Chair & Vice**

**ACTION: Chair to add options for engaging event delegates to padlet**

**ACTION: All to add networking session ideas to the padlet**

**ACTION: Chair and Vice to outline a draft programme schedule ahead of the next meeting**

**ACTION: All to share ideas of potential keynotes via padlet**

**ACTION: Matt and Chris to informally sound out Ruth and Ant as potential keynotes**

**ACTION: GJJ to sound out Chris Porter's availability to be on site for conference day one**

**ACTION: Ruth to coordinate date for site visit with Deborah, Laura and GJJ**

**ACTION: Deborah to add panel discussion options for feedback to padlet**

**ACTION: All to add thoughts on discussions to padlet**

**ACTION: Chair to circulate poll for next meeting date (March)**

## 22/11 Updates

### a. Group Membership

Deborah updated everyone on the group's membership. Andrea had volunteered to join after Nial's departure to keep the group numbers up. The group made brief introductions and welcomed Andrea. The chair encouraged that where people were under work pressures or where group activities were providing challenging to accommodate, they should seek support from the rest of the members.

### b. Minutes & Actions of last meeting

The following were unresolved actions following the last meeting

**ACTION: Ruth to arrange follow up meeting for Chair, Vice, GJJ and herself with the Cranfield events team**

This was in progress, as Ruth was unable to attend today, and would be set for the near future. GJJ reported Steering Group were delighted by Cranfield's generous offer of hosting the conference.

## 22/12 Officer Update

GJJ reported back that Steering Group had met last week (11<sup>th</sup> Feb) and had been updated on the sponsor policy, outline theme and general direction of travel for the event. Steering Group strongly supported the group's decisions and rationale for the sponsor policy, noting elements of the offer may be revised in the light of what Cranfield's suite can accomplish. It was suggested that GJJ speaks to ALN about their sponsors for 2021, but the Steering Group were also asked for sponsor suggestions. GJJ agreed to broaden the call for potential sponsor contacts to the Directors Board.

**ACTION: GJJ to speak to ALN about their sponsors plans for 2022**

**ACTION: GJJ to ask Board for sponsor contacts and suggestions**

Steering Group also agreed that *'Redefining Engagement'* was a broad and appropriate theme, and hence also supported the group's choice in this respect. They noted they were pleased with activities, observing progress seemed ahead of last year against a similar delivery date for the event. GJJ added the Steering Group had also thanked the group for their annual report contribution.

GJJ had also met in early Feb (2<sup>nd</sup>) with his counterparts at the other regional academic library collaborations. With respect to their own conference plans, which he briefly summarised:

- **M25 (London/SE):** Theme *All things being equal: the regional contribution of libraries*. Hosted online Wed 11<sup>th</sup> May. Speakers only from within their collaboration, but will be open to attendees from outside the region.<sup>i</sup>
- **SCURL (Scotland):** Theme TBC, but will be held online Wed 15<sup>th</sup> June. Further details to follow.<sup>ii</sup> Probably open to external delegates.
- **WHELF (Wales):** Date and theme of annual conference TBC, likely open to external delegates.
- **ALN (Northern England):** Theme *The time is now: active approaches to inclusivity*, #ALN2022. To be hosted online 6-7<sup>th</sup> July, and will be open to delegates from outside the region. Uses a handy sub-topic breakdown scheme that we could 'adopt' in our own call.<sup>iii</sup>

GJJ's noted his employed hours are being doubled, in part to better support the conference and the group. This was noted as a good thing by the group.

A question re the other region's events was raised, and GJJ confirmed they were all online events in 2022.

## 22/13 Theme

As discussed last time the theme, *Redefining Engagement*, had been proposed – and Steering Group supported this idea. It was agreed therefore this would now be the theme for the 2022 conference. It was suggested adding a subtitle, e.g. 'How best to serve our communities' but after discussion this was discounted. It was agreed instead to include clearly articulated subthemes, as per ALN's example, to encourage a diversity of speaker applications.

Page | 3

Initial subthemes suggested during the meeting included:

- **Data:** How are users are engaging, the NSS, use of statistics and metrics in value for money calculations, making use of data driven decisions etc
- **Gamification:** It was noted this was an area being used to engage students a lot currently, and would appeal strongly to academic/support librarians especially.
- **Collections & and customer service:** It was highlighted in prior feedback that topics of interest to library assistants, and front of house staff, were key in attracting a diverse range of speakers and experience.
- **Research support:** Additionally attracting library staff working to support researchers as speakers was important for similar reasons.
- **EDI:** It was highlighted this was an area of particular interest in feedback and survey results from the membership, and should be included if at all possible.<sup>iv</sup>

It was agreed that everyone would continue to share their ideas online following the meeting, and Deborah would collate them for agreement ahead of the next meeting.

**ACTION: Chair to create and share padlet for theme and subtheme suggestions**

**ACTION: All to add ideas, comments and feedback to padlet**

## 22/14 Member Roles: Assignment

Deborah thanked everyone for getting in touch. Following this, the Chair and Vice had proposed the following breakdown of group roles.

- **Delegate Liaison:** Andrea + Hamda, & Jo-Anne in support
- **Programme/Communications:** Chris + Deborah, & GJJ providing marketing support
- **Speaker Liaison:** Catherine + Funmike
- **Sponsor Coordinator:** Adrian + Laura, & Debora in support
- **Venue/Platform Coordinator:** Ruth + Laura

The group members were reminded that the whole group membership is there to help support all the roles, as levels of work will vary through the year. Some of the roles (sponsor, venue, speakers) are more 'front-loaded' than others. The Chair, Vice and GJJ were notably available to lend particular aid in supporting the group members. GJJ noted he would share the conference email account<sup>v</sup> with the Sponsor Liaison team.

**ACTION: GJJ to share email account details with Adrian, Chair & Vice**

## 22/15 Conference Format

### a. Networking

The group discussed the outline format for the conference programme. Following feedback, it was proposed to make networking and engaging delegates with each other more of a priority for the 2022 event. Suggestions included a dedicated networking slot, rather than during tea breaks, using an ice-breaker session or hosting a pre-event networking slot ahead of the conference launch. It was also noted the success from the small-group breakout sessions in 2021 in getting people talking. Given the conference theme, engagement was a key aspect to ensure within the programme. Hence, it was agreed to consider these ideas, and any other suggestions from the group, as part of the programme.

**ACTION: Chair to add options for engaging event delegates to padlet**

**ACTION: All to add networking session ideas to the padlet**

### b. Programme

Having a draft programme was essential ahead of making the call for speakers, as session length would determine what we sought from presenters. It was agreed the variety of options in 2021 was confusing for delegates, speakers and organisers and a simpler solution for 2022 was ideal. There was some discussion of ideal session lengths, with the 10 minute slots being seen as too short. It was suggested 12-15 minute papers might be ideal for short sessions, and for first time speakers. Deborah and Laura agreed to take today's discussions on board and outline a draft programme.

**ACTION: Chair and Vice to outline a draft programme schedule ahead of the next meeting**

### c. Live vs Recorded

In 2021 we offered speakers the chance to be live or recorded. It was agreed that the preference for 2022 was live papers, with recorded being an option where speakers were for some reason unable to deliver in person on the day. The 'moments of joy' videos from 2021 were briefly mentioned, and would be reconsidered as a possible option for pre-recorded content outside the main programme. These elements would be highlighted within the call for speakers.

### d. Session Moderation

It was noted moderation of panels was arranged last minute in 2021. This year the Chair expressed a preference for drawing up some outline guidance ahead of the conference, and ensuring all moderators were trained in how to close down speakers who ran overtime. It was noted that all group members were strongly encouraged to participate as session moderators. The topic and arrangements for moderation though would be returned to at a later meeting, as they would be informed by discussions with the Cranfield team.

### e. Keynote Speaker

The Chair noted that as the theme was coming into view, the next major goal was to agree and invite a good keynote speaker, able to speak to the topic. Ant Brewerton (currently Warwick, shortly Cambridge) and Ruth Stubbins (DMU) were both suggested as possibilities to sound out. The Chair asked all to add further suggestions to the padlet she would share after the meeting. Herself and Laura would draft a shortlist for discussion at the next meeting

**ACTION: All to share ideas of potential keynotes via padlet**

**ACTION: Matt and Chris to informally sound out Ruth and Ant as potential keynotes**

The Chair asked a question about keynote fees. GJJ noted that while a reasonable fee could be paid, subject to Steering Group approval, speakers from within the library community normally waived this, save for covering any reasonable expenses.

## 22/16 Feedback from Cranfield

As Ruth had been unable to attend Laura and Deborah reported back. Cranfield's conference team had sent a list of questions we needed to answer, which would in turn shape the conference programme in terms of what we can do. Laura and Deborah had discussed these, and would be talking to Cranfield following today's meeting, but wanted input from the committee members first.

Page | 5

**Timings:** The Cranfield team were not keen/able to start on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> Sept, making a 12 noon conference start the earliest practical time for day one. After some discussion it was agreed we would host both days as afternoon events. Additionally, there was a need to clarify the best start time for both days – given demands on people for lunch, childcare and other arrangements.

**Keynotes:** Did we want one keynote, or one on each day? It was generally agreed one was preferable.

**Seminar Numbers:** The number of seminar sessions would evolve as a result of the outline programme

**On Site:** Cranfield allows some staff to be on-site to help coordinate the event, although their own staff can also perform these duties. It was agreed ideally having the Keynote speaker, and some of the conference team present was desirable. It was also suggested that the Collaboration Chair could be invited to be on site as well, to open the event and support the activities.

**ACTION: GJJ to sound out Chris Porter's availability to be on site for conference day one**

**Panel Discussions:** The question of panel discussions had been raised by Cranfield. It was agreed we may want these, possibly for the event closing. In any case a member of Cranfield's conference team could act as compere for these sessions. It was agreed to discuss this more in the light of the draft programme.

**Site Tour:** We had been invited to visit the facilities, and the Chair, Vice, GJJ and Ruth were arranging a date for this. They would report back to the rest of the group after this had taken place.

**ACTION: Ruth to coordinate date for site visit with Deborah, Laura and GJJ**

**Technical Set Up:** There were various questions concerning the technical set-up, which would affect the programme and the sponsor offer. These would be addressed during the site visit.

**ACTION: Deborah to add panel discussion options for feedback to padlet**

**ACTION: All to add thoughts on discussions to padlet**

## 22/17 Next steps & Timetable

Table 1: Conference Planning Timetable (updated Feb '22)

<p><b>January</b> Initial Committee Meeting (14<sup>th</sup>)</p>	<p><b>February</b> Collate, review and outline event theme Agree on committee role assignments Agree final sponsor offer Brief catchup meeting (date TBC)</p>	<p><b>March</b> Agree final event theme News Item: Theme Announce Draft call for papers/speakers News Item: Launch call for sponsors Committee meeting (date TBC)</p>
<p><b>April</b> Site visit - Chair/Vice (8<sup>th</sup>) News Item: Call for papers/speakers launched (18<sup>th</sup>) Conference Microsite Launch Committee meeting (date TBC)</p>	<p><b>May</b> Committee meeting (date TBC)</p>	<p><b>June</b> Papers/Speakers call closes (13<sup>th</sup>) Draft joining instructions Paper selection meeting (date TBC)</p>
<p><b>July</b> Speakers &amp; Keynote Confirmed (4<sup>th</sup>) Draft programme created News Item: Delegate bookings open (25<sup>th</sup>) Finalise joining instructions Committee meeting (date TBC)</p>	<p><b>August</b> Weekly committee meetings from (15<sup>th</sup> Aug on, dates TBC) Bookings close (31<sup>st</sup>)<sup>vi</sup> Joining instructions to delegates &amp; speakers<sup>vii</sup> Final programme made available online Draft feedback form updated/created Sponsor invoices sent</p>	<p><b>September</b> Pre-Event brief committee meeting (date TBC) Pre-Event Speaker Testing (5<sup>th</sup>) <b>6-7<sup>th</sup> Conference Hosted</b> Delegate feedback forms disseminated Sponsor thanks letters disseminated News Item: Conference Report</p>
<p><b>October/November</b> Review/Washup Meeting (date TBC) Conference feedback analysis report Older committee members standdown Handover Chair/Selection new Vice Chair Call for new committee members News Item: Conference feedback report</p>	<p><b>January '23</b> Annual report to Steering Group First Conference 2023 Meeting</p>	

As noted above (see *Summary of Actions*), the Chair summarised the key actions ahead of the next meeting

- Laura and Deborah will meet to plan the outline event programme, and will circulate to all.
- They will also draft the call for speakers, in conversation with Catherine and Funmike, and share with all.
- Adrian, Laura and Deborah will meet to discuss their planned outreach to sponsors.

Other members are always welcome to attend any of these sub-meetings if interested, but it is not required.

## 22/18 Date of Next Meeting

Deborah would circulate a poll for the date of the next meeting, which would be March. As per the plan time-table, it was hoped to finalise the theme, as well as outline the call for speakers and sponsors at this meeting.

**ACTION: Chair to circulate poll for next meeting date (March)**

## 22/19 AOB

None.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> See: <https://www.m25lib.ac.uk/virtual-annual-conference-2022/>

<sup>ii</sup> See: <https://www.scurl.ac.uk/events/>

<sup>iii</sup> See: <https://www.academiclibrariesnorth.ac.uk/academic-libraries-north-2022>

<sup>iv</sup> It was also the theme of the cancelled 2020 conference, and this would be an excellent chance to revisit.

<sup>v</sup> [mercianconference@gmail.com](mailto:mercianconference@gmail.com)

<sup>vi</sup> 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

<sup>vii</sup> And where eligible, sponsor representatives