



Conference Group

Minutes

16th March 2022

Present: Deborah Munro (Chair, Birmingham), Laura Newman (Vice, Loughborough), Catherine Robertson (Birmingham), Christine Bradford (Warwick), Funmike Ifie (Loughborough), Matt Cunningham (MSDG, Loughborough), Andrea Kellett (Birmingham), Gaz J Johnson (Mercian Collaboration)

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Apologies: Ruth Houghton (Cranfield), Adrian Clarke (Loughborough), Jo-Anne Watts (Wolverhampton, Steering Group), Hamda Gharib (Birmingham),

Summary of Actions

ACTION: GJJ, Chris and Andrea to collaborate on planning and hosting speakers briefing events later this year

ACTION: Laura to rework conference timetable based on discussions and update group via email

ACTION: All to pass potential sponsor contacts to Adrian and Deborah

ACTION: GJJ to remind Board of sponsor suggestions call

ACTION: Laura to draft outline call for speakers with input from Deborah, Funmike, Catherine and Chris

ACTION: Laura to share call for feedback with group for feedback ahead of launch

ACTION: Laura and GJJ to launch call for speakers on Collaboration website and channels

ACTION: Deborah to send out poll for next meeting dates

ACTION: ALL to feedback to Laura thoughts on post-conference social event

ACTION: Deborah, Laura and GJJ to ask Cranfield about their social event facilitation options

ACTION: Laura to synthesise outline of social event and share at next meeting

ACTION: Deborah, Laura, Ruth and GJJ to explore pre-recorded content at Cranfield

ACTION: Laura to incorporate networking facilitation into call for speakers & draft conference programme

ACTION: GJJ to ask MSDG about moderation examples and best practice

ACTION: Chair and GJJ to develop moderation guidance later in the year

22/20 Assigning of Member Roles

Deborah welcomed everyone, and reminded them of their committee role assignments (see [MCG 22/14, pp. 3](#)).¹ She acknowledged many of these roles would have less to do currently than they would in the future. Deborah reminded everyone how the whole group should support each role when their particular activities increased.

22/21 Top Tips for A Successful Conference Contribution

Following from his earlier email, GJJ briefly reported on the ALN *Top Tips for A Successful Conference Contribution* event he had attended recently (4th March). This event aimed to improve potential speakers' confidence in contributing to conferences alongside offering insights into writing good abstracts and presenting in an engaging way. It also acted to promote ALN's call for conference speakers.

The first session looked at shaping activities to fit a conference theme alongside insights into contextualising session proposals and choosing between conference opportunities. The second session contrasted tips for writing abstracts, collaborating with other speakers and advice on how to create 'impactful' conference talks. The third session focussed on effective communication techniques, and the final session looked at presenting 'difficult' topics.

Following discussions with Deborah and Laura, GJJ had proposed the Conference Group host one or two 'speakers briefing' events, tied into our call for speaker's launch. These sessions would be targeted at inexperienced speakers, and would serve to hopefully encourage them to submit proposals but also offer some confidence boosting tips for speakers. It was agreed GJJ would lead on their organisation with Chris and Andrea volunteering to support this work. GJJ noted he had already prepared a draft outline, which he would share and arrange a follow-on meeting to plan for the events.

ACTION: GJJ, Chris and Andrea to collaborate on planning and hosting speakers briefing events later this year

22/22 Conference Format

Laura and Deborah had outlined a planned conference programme, which was shared with the group. Some key features in the plan included:

- Break-out sessions with time for 1x45 minute or 3x15 papers, plus time for Q&A.
- Coffee breaks planned as networking time, although an alternative name to 'networking' is preferred.
- Day one opens with a keynote (40 minutes plus discussions) and closes with a panel discussion (20 minutes plus discussions).
- The keynote would be invited to participate in the panel discussion.
- Collaboration Chair to introduce day one, and Conference Chair to introduce day two.
- Day two would close with a networking slot.

The group thanked Laura and Deborah for their work, and a short discussion followed. Chris advocated for a 'roundtable' rather than panel format, which when used at the RLUK conference had worked well in terms of audience participation and involvement. It was agreed this sounded a better format than the panel discussion and would be adopted as much as possible within the programme.

Funmike suggested even a 15-minute conference slot might be 'too long' a duration for a first time or more inexperienced speaker to fill. She strongly advocated for lightning (~5 minute) talks to also be an option. It was agreed to make this an option in the speaker/session proposal form to be more inclusive and welcoming to new speakers. It was also proposed and agreed to split the keynote and panel (roundtable) discussion over the two days.

Laura agreed she would lead on updating the programme and would share a new version for discussion via email. This would be finalised as part of the work in preparing the call for speakers.

ACTION: Laura to rework conference timetable based on discussions and update group via email

Note: An updated draft was shared following the meeting – see **Addendum** below.

22/23 Member Role feedback

Deborah explained GJJ had suggested including a report from each group role at every meeting. However, as there was limited activity for many roles now this would be skipped for today's meeting.

- **Delegate Liaison:** N/a
- **Programme/Communications:** N/a
- **Speaker Liaison:** See **22/25**
- **Sponsor Liaison:** See **22/24**
- **Venue/Platform Coordinator:** See **22/27(a)**

22/24 Sponsorship Update

Adrian was unable to attend today but sent a report. He has contacted all of the suggested sponsors (11 organisations) but as of yet hasn't heard anything back from any of them. A few of the email contact addresses bounced back so he has followed up with generic contact addresses for these organisations in the hope this might still generate a response. Deborah reminded the group if they had any suggested contacts to feed them to her or directly to Adrian. GJJ noted he would be asking the Board next week for further suggestions as part of his update on progress.

ACTION: All to pass potential sponsor contacts to Adrian and Deborah

ACTION: GJJ to remind Board of sponsor suggestions call

22/25 Call for Papers

The main item for discussion today was the call for papers (speakers) which was due to be launched next month, hence Deborah was keen to get this finalised. After some outline discussions it was agreed to adapt and develop the text from GJJ's news item (see **22/27(b)**) and the format of the ALN's conference call.ⁱⁱ

There were discussions about the subthemes, some of which were informed by input on the padlet shared by Deborah at the last meeting. Subtheme prompts had been agreed to play a key role in resonating with both the theme and stimulating individuals' areas of interest. Some of the suggestions of strong subthemes included:

- Empowering the library
- Fatigue (academic, library staff, students)
- Introducing new services

- Meeting the challenge of change
- Repositioning the library
- Reversing disengagement trends
- Working out new priorities

It was agreed that Chris, Funmike and Catherine would work with Deborah and Laura in drafting the call for speakers. It was also agreed that this would go live, with GJJ's assistance, on the Collaboration's various channels ahead of the Easter break. GJJ pointed out the call could be repromoted post-Easter and as part of the conference speaker briefing events to enhance its coverage and visibility.

ACTION: Laura to draft outline call for speakers with input from Deborah, Funmike, Catherine and Chris

ACTION: Laura to share call for feedback with group for feedback ahead of launch

ACTION: Laura and GJJ to launch call for speakers on Collaboration website and channels

22/26 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that unless there was a pressing need, the next group meeting would be held after Easter, ideally starting at 10am. Deborah would send out a poll for options.

ACTION: Deborah to send out poll for next meeting dates

22/27 AOB

a. Cranfield Site Visit

Deborah reminded the group that herself, Laura, Ruth and GJJ would be visiting Cranfield next month (8th) to discuss their systems and platform for the event. Laura was collating a list of questions, and would feedback to the group at the next meeting.

b. News Items

GJJ would be launching a news item on the conference theme following today's meeting.ⁱⁱⁱ He expected this to prepare the ground for the more detailed outline in the call for speakers. He had shared it with Deborah and Laura ahead of today's meeting for feedback.

c. Micro-Site

GJJ had created the outline conference micro-site on the Collaboration's webpages, and would formally launch this alongside the call for speakers.

d. Networking Social

Laura outlined she had been discussing the idea of hosting a post-conference event as a way to enhance the networking and offer some element of socialising to the conference. For example, it could be something informal and fun such as a quiz. She noted it would require planning and facilitation, and while not every delegate would want or be able to attend proposed it was worth exploring. It was agreed this was worth exploring. She asked group members to feedback their thoughts and she would report back on these ideas at the next meeting.

It was suggested asking Cranfield for their input would be important, as their ability to host this event after hours along with experience in facilitating other conferences' social programmes would have some bearing on what we could offer. GJJ noted that if the group brought in a lot of sponsorship income, this might be used to offer some element of social 'freebie' or prize, although tiny bottles of wine might not be achievable or permissible.

ACTION: ALL to feedback to Laura thoughts on post-conference social event

ACTION: Deborah, Laura and GJJ to ask Cranfield about their social event facilitation options

ACTION: Laura to synthesise outline of social event and share at next meeting

e. Recorded Playlist Content

Chris outlined her experiences at the RLUK conference where a dashboard of video content was available throughout the event, and could be accessed by delegates as wished. After some discussion the group agreed to explore the question of pre-recorded content with Cranfield, although noting the preference for live talks to be the main event focus this year.

ACTION: Deborah, Laura, Ruth and GJJ to explore pre-recorded content at Cranfield

f. Networking & Coffee Break Facilitation

Chris proposed our networking/coffee breaks could act as opportunities for special interest groups or areas of interest to gather people together. This might facilitate better exchanges of experiences than unstructured breaks. GJJ noted we could use the Collaboration's subgroups (e.g. metadata, staff development, disability forum) to facilitate each break. He suggested we could also explore if the willingness of anyone in the region who wanted to host a break for an area of interest not currently represented by a subgroup. It was agreed to add this option to the call for speakers.

ACTION: Laura to incorporate networking facilitation into call for speakers & draft conference programme

g. Moderation

There was a discussion concerning session moderation, which in 2021 had been done in a very reactive mode. It was agreed as a minimum we needed some agreed guidance as to what is expected from moderation and moderators. Additionally, some training or advice from external sources might be valuable to the group. It was agreed to explore this as the programme developed later in the year. Deborah noted while she encouraged all group members to be willing to moderate, she understood not everyone would find this suited to their skills. GJJ and Matt noted they were not aware of any particular guidance for event moderation from the MSDG, but they would discuss it with the group.

ACTION: GJJ to ask MSDG about moderation examples and best practice

ACTION: Chair and GJJ to develop moderation guidance later in the year

h. Forthcoming Activities

Deborah and GJJ pointed out that the timetable of activities was a good reference point for all in terms of where their role may need to be prepared to contribute. GJJ was updating this in the minutes after each meeting (see **22/28**)

22/28 Next Steps & Timetable

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

<p>January Initial Committee Meeting (14th)</p>	<p>February Collate, review and outline event theme Agree on committee role assignments Agree final sponsor offer Brief catchup meeting (16th Feb)</p>	<p>March Agree final event theme News Item: Theme Announce Draft call for papers/speakers News Item: Launch call for sponsors Committee meeting (16th Mar)</p>
<p>April Site visit - Chair/Vice (8th) News Item: Call for papers/speakers launched (pre-Easter) Conference Microsite Launch Committee meeting (post-Easter)</p>	<p>May Speaker briefing events (date TBC) Committee meeting (date TBC)</p>	<p>June Papers/Speakers call closes (Mid-June) Draft joining instructions Paper selection meeting (date TBC)</p>
<p>July Speakers & Keynote Confirmed (Early) Draft programme created News Item: Delegate bookings open (25th) Define moderation expectations & consider training Finalise joining instructions Committee meeting (date TBC)</p>	<p>August Weekly committee meetings from (15th Aug on, dates TBC) Bookings close (31st)^{iv} Joining instructions to delegates & speakers^v Final programme made available online Draft feedback form updated/created Sponsor invoices sent</p>	<p>September Pre-Event brief committee meeting (date TBC) Pre-Event Speaker Testing (5th) 6-7th Conference Hosted Post-Conference Social event (6th) Delegate feedback forms disseminated Sponsor thanks letters disseminated News Item: Conference Report</p>
<p>October/November 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>January '23 Annual report to Steering Group First Conference 2023 Meeting</p>	

Addendum

Laura shared an updated outline of the conference timetable following the meeting as below.

Figure 1: Draft Timetable for 2022 Conference (as 16/March/22)

Draft timetable

Day One 12.00 - 16.00

Time	Session	Notes
12.00 – 12.10	Welcome	Chris (Mercian Chair)
12.10 – 12.50	Keynote	
12.50 – 13.05	Keynote Q&A	
13.05 – 13.15	Break	
13.15 – 14.00	Parallel sessions	All parallel sessions either one 45 minute session, or three 15 minute sessions, or 5 minute lightening talks
14.00 – 14.15	Parallel sessions Q&A	
14.15 – 14.35	Coffee	
14.35 – 15.20	Parallel sessions	
15.20 – 15.35	Parallel sessions Q&A	
15.35 – 16.00	Coffee	

Day Two 12.30 – 16.30

Time	Session	Notes
12.30 – 12.40	Welcome	Deborah (MCCG Chair)
12.40 – 13.25	Parallel sessions	
13.25 – 13.40	Parallel sessions Q&A	
13.40 – 14.25	Parallel sessions	
14.25 – 14.40	Parallel sessions Q&A	
14.40 – 15.00	Coffee	
15.00 – 15.45	Parallel sessions	
15.45 – 16.00	Parallel sessions Q&A	
16.00 – 16.30	Round table discussion	

Endnotes

ⁱ Along with here: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/cg-current-members>

ⁱⁱ <https://academiclibrariesnorth.ac.uk/academic-libraries-north-2022>

ⁱⁱⁱ Find it at: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/conference-theme-2022-announced-redefining-engagement>

^{iv} 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

^v And where eligible, sponsor representatives