



## Mercian Collaboration Steering Group

Online, 10:00am-12noon, Tue 1st December

### Agenda

**Present:** Diane Job (Chair, Birmingham), Chris Porter (Vice-Chair), Simon Bevan (Cranfield), Gaz J Johnson (Officer)

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**Apologies:** Mark Toole (Treasurer, NTU), Susan Ackermann (Nottingham), Emma Walton (Loughborough)

### 20/11 Governance

#### a. [Minutes of previous meeting: 13<sup>th</sup> August 2020](#)

These were agreed with the proviso that members not present should confirm their acceptance.

**ACTION: Emma and Sue to confirm acceptance of the minutes**

#### b. [Outstanding Actions](#)

***Diane to speak to Robin and Paul with respect to Treasurer role as a matter of urgency***

Diane noted she had had brief conversations, beyond the discussions at October's Board. GJJ confirmed he had checked for any end of year reporting or audient requirements with the past treasurers, and that there were none.

***Chris and Diane to revise and update Tangible Values document by October Board meeting***

It was agreed this would be rolled forward for the incoming (21/23) Steering Group (SG) to address and update to reflect the changing HE/library policy, financial and environmental considerations. Reviewing this document would additionally serve as a useful induction resource for new SG members to reflect on the Collaboration's role. The Chair noted in a time of strained budgets, the Collaboration's training programme provided a cost-effective and important contribution to the sector.

**ACTION: Tangible Values document to be reviewed and updated by incoming Steering Group members**

***MSDG Sarah to attend next deputies meeting to initiate discussions between the groups***

GJJ noted Sarah had agreed to attend the next D&SSG Meeting in Feb/Mar 2021.

#### c. [Elections 2021](#)

It was noted that [role descriptions](#) had been updated to reflect changes in the Collaboration's activities. GJJ noted he had spoken to a few Directors about their potential future membership of the Steering Group. It was agreed to launch the call for nominations today.

**ACTION: GJJ to send out Steering Group self-nomination notifications to all Directors**

#### d. Membership Approaches

As had been discussed online, an approach had been made by a prospective member. While not currently a SCONUL member and following the discussions at Board ([DB 20/19\(a\), p3](#)), this had prompted the SG to consider the implications for future Collaboration membership applications. GJJ had also prepared a paper outlining some of the concerns and considerations which had been distributed ahead of the meeting, while Chris contextualised some of the discussions at SCONUL Board.

It was agreed, as previously noted, there is strength in membership diversity which would serve to help enrich our training and experience exchange activities. It was agreed ideally where other eligible member libraries sought to join us, we would desire their full involvement in all activities, no matter their SCONUL membership tier: from subgroup committees, to Board and Steering Group membership too. It was agreed SCONUL's concerns, which promoted the associate membership tier, would not preclude membership of the Collaboration. However, scrutiny would be required of any interested associate members to ensure there were no potentially identifiable conflicts of commercial interest, before membership could be agreed.

It was agreed therefore our membership policy would be revised to continue to permit regionally based, full-members of SCONUL would continue to be eligible to join under our current arrangements, provided they paid the appropriate membership dues. Associate members would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by SG and approved by the Board, provided they met key criteria<sup>1</sup> and no conflicts of interest could be identified. They would be levied the same level of fee tier as comparably sized full-SCONUL members. A statement clarifying our terms of membership would be agreed and added to the website.

**ACTION: GJJ to draft wording on membership joining criteria and share with SG to amend and agree online**

**ACTION: GJJ to amend membership terms on Website**

**ACTION: Membership criteria policy to be added as item for report to the Board**

#### e. SCONUL Representation

Diane had an exchange over the summer with the NoWAL and NC Chairs on this issue and reported shared concerns were aired. It suggested there is now a conversation to be held with the SCONUL Board concerning the role of regional collaborations, spurred in part by the changes to membership and how these impact on the regions. It was reaffirmed that a formal, at least annual, representation on the Board by the regional collaborations would be invaluable going forward to address some of these concerns and impacts.

**ACTION: Chair/Vice to continue discussions with other regional collaborations with respect to SCONUL relationship and representation**

**ACTION: Chair/Vice to discuss regional collaborations role and representation with SCONUL Director/Board**

## 20/12 Officer Reports

### a. Financial Update

GJJ reported as acting treasurer. All figures were valid as of 24/11/20

Income 2020:	£18,821.00
Expenditure 2020:	£14,284.14
Balance:	£26,216.22

The invoice from Birmingham (see SG 20/13(a) below) would mean an additional £3,625 expenditure this year which was not currently accounted for in these figures. This would bring the 2020 outgoings to date to £17,909.14.

### b. Development Officer Update

This had been shared ahead of the meeting and was noted for information.

## 20/13 Operations

### a. 2018 Conference Invoice

This had been received by SCONUL accounts in Oct 2020, despite previously having been written off by the Collaboration at the end of 2019, despite repeated efforts to have it issued by the Conference Group and SG. It was noted that while legally a contracted payment is valid for six years, morally the late generation was questionable. It was agreed that Diane and Chris would write to Birmingham conferences on behalf of the Collaboration to note the 'unreasonable' nature of the late invoice, while noting it was likely most or all of the fee would need to be paid.

**ACTION: Diane and Chris to formally write to Birmingham Conference over 2018 invoice expression concerns**

### b. Officer: Salary & Contract

The failure to instigate the previously approved automatic annual salary rise, within grade, had yet to be addressed. The additional issue, as approved by the Board ([20/19 \(c\), p4](#)) of an increment in the Officer's contracted hours also remained outstanding. It was agreed that Diane and Chris would need to discuss in private and would then return to GJJ with a proposal early in the new year.

**ACTION: Diane and Chris to discuss Officer contractual details in private and report back**

**ACTION: Chair and GJJ to discuss salary and contract as a matter of priority**

### c. Annual Report 2020

GJJ noted he had received three submissions so far from Directors but would be reminding them all in January. The Chair noted while it might be difficult to find things to report during a challenging year, the hope would be to use this opportunity to create a positive perception of what libraries have achieved in 2020. This would be of value in creating a document to share with executive institutional management. GJJ also noted the Chair and Vice foreword and afterword sections remained outstanding.

**ACTION: GJJ to remind Directors in January of requested contributions**

**ACTION: Diane and Chris to supply their annual report contributions as Chair/Vice**

d. [Board March 2021: Speakers/Discussion themes & Agenda Items](#)

Potential topics for speakers/discussion at the next Board were discussed. From the Board ([DB 20/21](#)) the following had been mooted:

- Retirement planning – succession planning
- Reinventing libraries/services
- Evaluating online experience (impact, engagement, assessment)
- Access, participation & technology
- Decolonising/diversifying reading lists

Additionally, it was suggested issues relating to Plan S, UKRI's policy and other transitional publishing deals would likely be of interest. The topic of EDI<sup>ii</sup> and libraries' roles in promoting freedom of speech was also suggested. It was agreed to ask the Board for (a) preferences on topics (b) suggested speakers and (c) whether speakers were need, or if facilitated discussion only would be favoured.

**ACTION: GJJ to survey Board for confirmation of topics/speakers for next meeting**

**ACTION: Chair and Steering Group to agree and invite speakers to Board, as required**

**ACTION: GJJ to find date for next Board**

e. [External Facilitator Approaches](#)

GJJ noted we had been approached by an external consult (Diana Edmonds, Bridgeford Consultants) who seems keen to offer us charged for training . Sarah Pittaway (Worcester, MSDG Chair) has been exploring the options with her, and how they related to the MSDG's planned programme. Diana's costs were comparable to previous external trainers, although the Chair noted a need for caution in costs given the reduction in income for the Collaboration in 2021. It was agreed, as per prior policy, any requests for external speakers would need to be approved by the SG ahead of subgroups hiring them.

f. [Activities 2021: Overview](#)

GJJ highlighted the outlook for events in 2021 was very low, especially in contrast to the offerings from the Collaboration's comparators (NoWAL, Northern Collaboration etc). Although a limited number of events from the MSDG were planned, these were numerically fewer than normally. While the reduction was understandable, given the uncertainties of the current year (pandemic, Brexit etc), the Chair hoped all subgroups would look to the new year to reignite their programmes and engagement across the region.

GJJ emphasised the virtual networking events, instigated and helmed by himself, would continue into 2021, increasing the offering of events tied to the Collaboration. These had received excellent feedback from participants and were a noted success for the Collaboration in 2020.

#### g. Risk Register

The Chair agreed to revisit and update this with the input of the SG ahead of the March 2021 Board meeting. In the light of any changes to membership arrangements, there may be a need to consider revising the mitigating actions for some issues,

**ACTION: Chair and SG to revisit Risk Register ahead of next Directors meeting and re-present for consideration.**

### 20/14 Subgroups: Activity Update

#### a. Conference Group

This met last week (25/Nov) with new group chair (Damian Pugh, Nottingham) and vice (Deborah Munro) stepping in, as Claire Browne (Birmingham) stood down. Plans for the 2021 event are for a dual physical and online event, to facilitate flexibility and adaptability for attendees in the light of the changing higher education environment. The theme of 2020 was 'inclusivity and diversity', and the group would appreciate a steer on whether to pursue this once more or seek another.

**ACTION: Steering Group to feedback on conference 2021 topic**

#### b. Mercian Staff Development Group

Following the recent meeting of the MSDG, an update on events and plans for 2021 programme was provided:

- 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020: Customer Service Accreditation (booking)
- Jan 2021: Online Induction During Covid
- April 2021: Online Staff recruitment
- TBC: All the Same, But Different virtual visits (x3)
- TBC: Implementing Booking Systems

As noted above fewer events are currently scheduled but the group hopes to add more to this programme, in response to community demands. Particular interest was noted with respect to the planned Online Staff Recruitment and virtual *All the Same...* events, although noting any of the latter category had yet to be scheduled.

**ACTION: GJJ to feedback comments on events programme to MSDG Chair**

#### c. Copyright Group

There was nothing to report, and some concerns were expressed as to the subgroup's lack of engagement and activity in 2020. This would be followed up by Chris and GJJ.

**ACTION: Chris and GJJ to discuss plans for future Copyright Group activity with group chair and vice**

#### d. Deputies & Senior Staff Group

GJJ reported on the meeting held 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2020, where matters of research support and operational services in a Covid era were discussed. It was reported the meeting was well received, and a further event will be scheduled for March 2021.

e. [Marketing & Communications Group](#)

GJJ noted he had spoken with the group chair, and while there have been limited activities in 2021 they hope to 'relaunch' a programme of meetings in early 2021.

f. [Mercian Disability Forum](#)

One of the more active groups in 2021, and at their most recent meeting (24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2020) topics discussed included: masks in libraries, accessibility/services during Covid/online, RNIB Bookshare and inadvertent discriminatory actions. A meeting is planned for Feb 2021, where a new chair is likely to take over, as Laura Waller (Warwick) stands down.

g. [Mercian Metadata Group](#)

Following their eForum in August 2020, their activity has been limited this term. However, expect to launch their next even in early 2021.

h. [Discontinued: RDMSG](#)

As reported at Board ([20/20, p6](#)), the Chair acknowledged the discontinuance of this group. She noted her thanks to all those involved in its activities.

## 20/15 AOB

a. [Date of next Steering Group meeting \(Feb 2020\)](#)

It was agreed to schedule a final meeting for this iteration of the SG in mid-Feb 2021, ahead of the handover Board meeting.

**ACTION: GJJ to coordinate with Diane and all to arrange next SG meeting date**

b. [SCONUL/Mercian plans](#)

Chris highlighted an email from SCONUL Director Ann Rossiter, seeking clarification on the Collaboration's plans for 2021, including information on financial commitments and legal liabilities. After a brief discussion Diane agreed as Chair to respond on behalf of the Collaboration to Ann. She would seek information from our officers as needed to clarify points.

**ACTION: Chair to draft reply to questions from SCONUL Director**

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<sup>i</sup> It was proposed these would include the possession of a suitably sized full-library service

<sup>ii</sup> Equality, Diversity & Inclusion