



Conference Group Meeting Minutes Thursday 25th November 2022 @ 10:30 - Online

Summary of New or Outstanding Actions

Action: Ruth to send NBF the studio recordings via WeTransfer or similar programme for NBF to have a go at editing.

Action: NBF to add new members for Conference Group JiscMail list and edit Ruth to be a list owner.

Action: Chair to put out another call for additional new Conference Group members via JiscMail lists.

Action: NBF to announce call for additional new Conference Group members of the Mercian website.

Action: Chair and Vice-Chair to look a sponsorship policy. Chair requested additional support /input from Jo-Anne as Steering Group sponsor.

Action: Paul, Grace and Jodie to look at Group Roles and contact Chair with their preferred roles.

Action: Chair to confirm with all absent group members on their role preferences.

Action: Once all preferences have been logged, Chair and Vice-Chair to allocate roles

Action: Chair to send Survey Feedback report out to Conference Group members

Action: Funmike to decide on deadline for speaker briefs and other speaker information and publicise this in the call for papers.

Action: Laura to create a padlet, for team to make theme suggestions.

Action: Conference Group members to come up with ideas and suggestions for conference theme - All suggestions to be added to the padlet by Christmas, with a formal decision to be reached after discussions with Steering Group in Jan 2023.

Action: Laura to send NBF Teams recording of this meeting to aid writing of meeting minutes.

Action: NBF to send minutes to Chair and Vice Chair to be checked before being uploaded on website.

Action: Laura to email Catherine to move forward on using Birmingham as the venue. Jo-Anne offered to liaise with Claire on behalf of the conference Group, if Catherine is not comfortable to make initial approaches

Action: Laura to send doodle poll for next meeting date.

22/93 Welcome and Apologies

Group welcomed to Conference Group meeting. All members introduced themselves and chair ran through apologies.

Present: Laura Newman (Chair, Loughborough), Ruth Houghton (Vice Chair, Cranfield), Jo-Anne Watts (Wolverhampton, Steering Group Sponsor), Funmike Ifie (Loughborough), Chris Bradford (Warwick), Grace Troth (BCU), Paul Cavanaugh (Nottingham), Natalie Baker-Fosker (Mercian Collaboration),

Apologies: Andrea Kellett (Birmingham), Catherine Robertson (Birmingham), Matt Cunningham (MSDG, Loughborough), Jodie Heap (Staffordshire)

22/94 Outstanding actions from 2022 conference

Chair ran through list of outstanding actions from last meeting:

- No invoice received from Cranfield for services rendered. Chair has emailed Toby and he is chasing with Cranfield's Finance team.

- Previous conference Chair, Deborah Munro (DM) sent all thank you notes, and gifts as discussed.
- Keynote speaker, Ant Brewerton has declined to share his slides online as they require additional context. We plan to upload the recording of the keynote presentation as soon as it is received from Cranfield.
- We have access to the conference zoom recordings, but Cranfield asked us not to share these due to low quality. We have requested the studio recordings from Cranfield; however, they require editing/cropping and are very large files.
We are welcome to edit these ourselves if we have time and software to do so. NBF offered to have a go at editing the recordings (with no promises).

Action: Ruth to send NBF the studio recordings via WeTransfer or similar programme for NBF to have a go at editing.

- If it's possible for NBF to edit recordings, NBF to upload recordings to website.
- NBF has sent book vouchers to 4 prize winners and advertised this on the website.
- NBF completed Delegate Analysis report. Deborah Munro and Laura Newman have written Delegate Feedback report.

Chair summarised that while there are one or two outstanding items from the 2022 conference, we are ready to move onto planning the 2023 conference.

22/95 Welcome to new members

Chair welcomed new members of the conference planning team: Paul Cavanaugh, Grace Troth and Jodie Heap (not present).

Chair shared that Ruth Houghton has agreed to step up to Vice-Chair.

Action: NBF to add new members for Conference Group JiscMail list and edit Ruth to be a list owner.

Action: Chair to put out another call for additional new Conference Group members via JiscMail lists.

Action: NBF to announce call for additional new Conference Group members of the Mercian website.

22/96 2023 Conference Hybrid/Online/In person

Steering Group sponsor, Jo-Anne gave a brief account of discussions at the recent Directors Board meeting:

- Jo-Anne provided the Directors with updates on how 2022 conference went, including a summary of the delegate analysis report and feedback report.
- Discussions around corporate sponsors tending to prefer networking with budget holders, so Jo-Anne reminded Directors that they should commit to attending next year's conference.
- Directors agreed that they would like to return to an in-person conference to facilitate better networking opportunities.
- Treasurer agreed we have enough reserves for an in-person conference but need better sponsorship to support it financially.
- Directors agreed that host venue should be a central location that is easy to get to via public transport links. Given that the last in-person conference was hosted by Nottingham, the next in-person would likely be at Birmingham. (This is yet to be officially confirmed but is expected).
- Directors didn't discuss potential conference themes. But rather, they had more niche discussions about organisational development, staff development, challenges around recruitment and upskilling.



Following Jo-Anne's update, Chair stated that we would definitely look to return to an in-person conference, given that the Directors are clearly steering towards this, and other similar conferences are returning to in-person too. Networking and engagement are vital parts of the conference experience.

Changing the timing of the conference came up during the delegate feedback analysis. Jo-Anne noted that this is suggested each year but all other alternatives produce their own set of unique issues. Group agreed that when the new Executive Officer is in post, and they have an adequate amount of time to investigate it, maybe we can revisit the idea of changing the timing of the conference.

NBF gave brief update on progress of recruitment for the new Executive Officer.

Group discussed the associated costs for delegates to attend the conference. Chair noted that conference admission is always free to all member institutions. The Mercian Collaboration does not limit the number of delegates who can attend, although the individual institutions may limit attendance, based on cost of travel and library staff cover.

Online conferences have previously been across two half days, but as in-person conference, it would go back to being on one day.

Expenses were minimal in 2022 due to being an online event, but associated costs will increase in 2023, so it is more important than ever to have decent sponsors, as the event will cost more this year.

22/97 Group membership and roles

Ex-officio members are: Interim Executive Officer (currently NBF), Staff Development Group sponsor (Matt Cunningham) and Steering Group sponsor (Jo-Anne Watts).

Chair shared the official [Group Roles document](#) and talked through the roles available. Chair requested that all group members have a think about which open roles they would like to take on for the 2023 conference:

- **Chair and Vice-Chair:** Laura Newman and Ruth Houghton are taking on these roles respectively and have both offered to pair up with group newer members to offer additional support where necessary.
- **Venue / platform coordinator** – Leads on all venue related tasks, and so would ideally have links with the host institution. Chair informed the group that she has approached Catherine Robertson to take on this role. (Catherine is employed at University of Birmingham).
- **Communications & Programme Coordinator** – Chris Bradford requested to continue in this role. This is a large role, so Chris requested that the Executive Officer assist with communications again this year.
- **Delegate Liaison** – Andrea took on this role last year, and is happy to continue in this role if needed.
- **Speaker Liaison** – This is a large and varied role so ideally requires two people, sharing the tasks. Funmike volunteered to take up this role again and welcomed another member to join her.
- **Sponsor coordinator** – This year, the sponsorship policy needs revisiting. Sponsor coordinator is a vital role to secure the much-needed financial support for the conference, therefore whoever takes on this role must be willing to commit time in early 2023 –

preferably January/February – to securing a sponsor before the end of March, i.e., the current fiscal year for a commercial sponsor.

Action: Chair and Vice-Chair to look a sponsorship policy. Chair requested additional support /input from Jo-Anne as Steering Group sponsor.

Chair asked group for initial thoughts on what roles they might be interested in.

New members gave their initial feelings but requested some time to read through the roles in more details

Action: Paul, Grace and Jodie to look at Group Roles and contact Chair with their preferred roles.

Action: Chair to confirm with all absent group members on their role preferences.

Action: Once all preferences have been logged, Chair and Vice-Chair to allocate roles.

22/98 Survey feedback

NBF reported that Feedback report and Delegate Analysis report needs to go to Steering Group before being publicised online. Chair gave brief overview of largely positive feedback as summarised in the Feedback report.

Action: Chair to send Survey Feedback report out to Conference Group members.

Group agreed that having a student included in the round table discussion was beneficial, and would look to include a Birmingham University based student on the panel in 2023.

Group discussed timely dissemination of speaker briefs and initial programme details to be publicised much earlier in 2023, with the suggestion that we include a deadline in the original call for papers, or indeed, ask for a speaker brief and/or session abstract in the initial call for papers, so that all information is collated at the point of submission.

Action: Funmike to decide on deadline for speaker briefs and other speaker information and request this info in the call for papers.

Based on feedback received, Chair noted that the Q&A sessions should be extended to at least 15 minutes in 2023, and we would look to have parallel sessions again as this was very popular according to feedback received.

22/99 Initial theme ideas for 2023 conference

Group discussed ideas for 2023 conference themes, (from suggestions received through the feedback forms and themes suggested at the meeting today):

- Research support or teaching support
- Beyond libraries
- Innovations
- Engaging mature or distance students
- Librarians as researchers
- Global links in the profession
- Accessibility
- Academic Liaison
- Professional MOT
- Small and specialist libraries
- Future proof ourselves as library - Resilience in the industry
- What should a library look like - Post pandemic.

- EDI in staff recruitment and retention (encouraging different people into the profession, including LGBTQ+ community) / Diversifying the library (with brief discussion about key phrases such as decolonisation, inclusion and diversification).

While all the above suggestions were gratefully received, it was thought that they are possibly a little too niche to carry an entire conference. However, most of these suggestions could be easily incorporated into a wider subject theme. Group discussed the concept of finding a theme that will engage all sectors within the library, from Directors and Professional staff to Librarians and Service Delivery team.

Action: Laura to create a padlet, for team to make theme suggestions.

Action: Conference Group members to come up with ideas and suggestions for conference theme - All suggestions to be added to the padlet by Christmas, with a formal decision to be reached after discussions with Steering Group in Jan 2023.

Chair recommended frontloading a lot of the early decision making, to ensure a timely and decisive set of actions as early as possible. The theme, location and call for papers should be completed before spring, followed shortly by securing the keynote speaker and sponsor(s).

22/100 AOB

No other business recorded.

Team thanked for contributing to today's initial discussions and chair advised on next actions to be completed before next meeting.

Action: Laura to send NBF Teams recording of this meeting to aid writing of meeting minutes.

Action: NBF to send minutes to Chair and Voice Chair to be checked before being uploaded on website.

Action: Laura to email Catherine to move forward on using Birmingham as the venue. Jo-Anne offered to liaise with Claire on behalf of the conference Group, if Catherine is not comfortable to make initial approaches

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