



## Mercian Collaboration Directors Board

Thu 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021: Reports

The following are reports, submitted for information for the Directors Board (25<sup>th</sup> March 2021, item 6). The Chair welcomes specific questions or comments, or suggestions for related actions. However, it is not anticipated the following reports will be discussed in depth during the meeting.

### a. Steering Group Minutes

The Steering Group has met twice since the last Board [1/Dec/20](#) and [2/Feb/21](#). Topics for discussion have included: membership criteria in the wake of proposed changes by SCONUL, regional representation to SCONUL, the Officer’s role, topics for the Board, and the Annual Report. Alongside this, a review of activities of the Collaboration’s subgroups have been a regular feature. The minutes from both meetings are available online, and the Chair welcomes any comments, questions or requests for additional information.

### b. Current Finances Update

Prepared by the Officer, as interim Treasurer. I am currently awaiting an update from SCONUL accounts to follow ahead of the meeting. However, figures to the best of my knowledge as follows (estimates marked \*).

• Income 2021:	£18,821.00	
• *Expenditure to date (1/Jan- Mid.March 2021):	£5,017.80 <sup>i</sup>	
• *Anticipated expenditure (Mid.March-31/Dec/21):	£8,614.53 <sup>ii</sup>	
• Balance 31/12/20		£24,685.02
• *Current Balance (Mid.March/21):		£38,489.22
• *Anticipated Year End Balance (31/Dec/21):		£29,874.69

The reduction (7%) to subscriptions took effect this year, reducing the Collaboration’s income. Additionally, the bill for the 2018 conference (Birmingham) was finally invoiced, and was satisfied at the cost of £3,723.20, reducing the Collaboration’s balance by slightly more than was expected. An external event facilitator, at a cost of £650 for the MSDG in April was also agreed by Steering Group, and is included in the future expenditure costs. As is the agreed modest increase for the Officer’s salary.

Anticipated, additional costs for 2021 may include: external event facilitators/speakers, and conference costs (keynote fees, external facilitators, platform costs). However, at least part of the latter may be offset by conference sponsorship income. No accommodation for increased salaried Officer hours is included in the above calculations.

Nevertheless, assuming a continued reduced physical need for travel, venue hire, refreshments and associated costs for physical events for much of 2021, we remain in a relatively strong financial position. Any return to physical meetings and events later in the year, will increase our outgoings, but it is not anticipated to a level beyond where we could currently meet them and still remain within our minimum reserve operating funds buffer. However, as past Treasurers have noted, we remain a relatively low-income organisation in contrast to our comparators, and a careful watch must be maintained on our finances by the incoming Steering Group, especially as post-pandemic activities increase a call on our reserves.

c. Operational Groups Updates

As agreed at the Board ([DB 20/11\(d\), p5](#)), the Conference and Staff Development groups have been recognised as ‘operational’ rather than ‘special interest’ subgroups of the Collaboration. This is to reflect their special focus in delivering on a tangible value membership outputs through their respective events programme.

<p><a href="#">CG</a> <a href="#">(Conference)</a></p>	<p>The 2021 Conference (exact title TBC, but currently being formulated along the lines of ‘Adaptation and Growth in times of Adversity’) will be hosted online in early September. The hope is to incorporate elements of the diversity theme of the postponed 2020 event, especially within the body of the keynote speaker. The event will aim to use a blend of live and recorded media and seek ways to facilitate delegate interaction. As in previous years, no fee will be charged for attendance, and the hope is the online format will facilitate attendance by delegates who may have been disinclined to travel to previous physical events. The intention is for the 2022 event to return to a largely physical format, although hybrid elements may still be embraced as part of its delivery. However, the decision will be influenced by prevailing public health and financial considerations within the Collaboration. <i>[GJJ]</i></p>
<p><a href="#">MSDG</a> <a href="#">(Staff Development)</a></p>	<p><b>Events</b></p> <p>Rather than booking in a firm programme in the summer of 2020, this year the MSDG decided to have an indicative programme that allowed us to respond both to the ever-changing external circumstances relating to Covid and the capacity of our teams to deliver events. We have still managed to deliver an exciting and useful programme of events, all of which have had a Covid lens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">All the Same But Different* coffee morning: reopening libraries in a virtual world</a> (Aug 21)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Customer Service Excellence Award</a> (Dec 20)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Online induction during Covid</a> (Jan 21)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Booking systems and managing occupancy</a> (Mar 21)</li> <li>• Managing difficult customer interactions (planned Apr 21; external speaker)</li> <li>• Online recruitment of staff (planned for Apr/May 21)</li> </ul> <p>We are also exploring the possibility of running a session on Trans Awareness, facilitated by an external speaker. Although the MSDG discussed the possibility of running All the Same But Different events in a different format during Covid, it has proven challenging to find staff with capacity and confidence to develop and deliver these.<sup>iii</sup></p> <p><b>Buddying</b></p> <p>We have had a couple of ad hoc buddying requests during the last year, but the scheme has not been formally promoted. The MSDG will discuss this with a view to re-promoting in the new academic year. <i>[Sarah Pittaway, Group Chair]</i></p>

#### d. Special Interest Groups Updates

Special Interest Subgroups, represent communities of practice within the Collaboration, wherein meetings and events provide an opportunity for participants to exchange experience and best practice. Some SIGs also seek to enable an events programme with a wider delegate catchment, although this is not seen as a core activity

<p><a href="#"><u>D&amp;SSG (Deputies)</u></a></p>	<p>The Deputies group has met twice (25/Nov/20 &amp; 2/Mar/21) since the last Board. Using a rotating volunteer chair - Phil Vaughn (Coventry) and Ant Brewerton (Warwick) respectively – the meetings have focussed on current matters of interest including: research support, scholarly communications, service lessons from lockdown, evolution developments and future developments. Notes for these meetings are available on the web, drafted by the Development Officer who facilitates the meetings.</p> <p>An informal approach concerning convening an event, with an aim to spin off a scholarly communications and research support group, was made as a consequence of D&amp;SSG discussions in late 2020. However, to date no further progress in this respect can be reported. [GJJ]</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>MarComms (Marketing)</u></a></p>	<p><i>Requested – none received.</i></p>
<p><a href="#"><u>MCG (Copyright)</u></a></p>	<p><i>Requested – none received.</i></p>
<p><a href="#"><u>MDF (Disability Forum)</u></a></p>	<p>The Disability Forum has met twice (Nov 20 and Mar 21) to exchange experiences and update one another on local developments. Issues around library services and facilities during the current pandemic period have been a particular focus in discussions, as well as how to meet the unanticipated challenges faced. It should be noted the current chair (Laura Waller, Warwick) is expected to standdown from this role shortly, and it is hoped another member of the Forum will step forward to keep the group active. Additionally, the group has co-facilitated a number of the virtual networking events, with a particular focus on accessibility. [GJJ]</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>MMF (Metadata)</u></a></p>	<p>The Metadata Group met in Feb 21, to review their activities over the past year and to plan for 2021. A number of events and eforums are planned on topics including: RDA/RIMMF, MarcEdit and eBook management. An event relating to special collections is also under tentative discussion. Minutes from the <a href="#"><u>most recent meeting are available.</u></a> [GJJ]</p>

#### e. [Officer's Update](#)

A report from the Officer on activities since the previous Board is available online.

<sup>i</sup> Officer Salary, phone costs and previously unsatisfied 2018 conference fees for U.Birmingham (the latter being the largest single component)

<sup>ii</sup> Officer salary, phone costs, back pay and internet costs, Adaptive web charges, external facilitator (MSDG, April) and Zoom annual subscription. Does not include any conference costs as these are at time of going to press unclear.

<sup>iii</sup> The MSDG is meeting 15<sup>th</sup> March to review and plan activities.