



Steering Group

Online, 27th May 10.30am 2022

Minutes

Present: Chris Porter (Chair, Newman), Laura Pilsel (Harper Adams), Judith Keene (Worcester), Jo-Anne Watts (Wolverhampton), Helen Curtis (Aston), Chris Powis (Northampton), Gareth J Johnson (Mercian Collaboration)

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Summary of Actions

ACTION: GJJ to raise MSDG event on Procurement at MSDG Officers' meeting

ACTION: Chair to send GJJ final Strategic Plan document

ACTION: GJJ to make Strategic Plan public and promote to membership

ACTION: Chair to formally invite Ann Rossiter to attend next Board Meeting

ACTION: GJJ to poll Board members on the topic of physical attendance at future Board meetings

ACTION: Chair & GJJ to approach Sue Ackermann (Nottingham) as potential host for autumn meeting

ACTION: Chair and GJJ to inform members of plans for partnership discussions at the Autumn Board meeting

ACTION: GJJ, Chair and Vice to outline draft agenda for Autumn Board meeting

ACTION: GJJ to share progress report of Inclusivity Task & Finish Group with Steering Group

ACTION: GJJ to explore BAME event progress with MSDG Chair and Officers

ACTION: ALL to have sponsor conversations with commercial representatives as opportunity permits

ACTION: GJJ to follow up again with MMG officers on provision of minutes or notes from their April meeting

ACTION: GJJ to send poll around for potential dates to Steering Group

ACTION: GJJ to invite group representatives to August Steering Group once a meeting date is agreed

22/07 Previous Meeting

a. Minutes of previous meeting: [11th Feb 2022](#)

These were accepted as an accurate record with no corrections.

b. Outstanding Actions (not on agenda)

The Chair went through the actions of the previous meeting, noting they were all complete, in progress or on the agenda with one exception:

ACTION: Propose an MSDG event on procurement to explore development needs in region

It was noted that as Laura and GJJ weren't at the last MSDG meeting (March), and the Chair couldn't recall if it had been discussed that this might need to be revisited. GJJ agreed to bring it to the group's attention when he met with its officers 6th June.

ACTION: GJJ to raise MSDG event on Procurement at MSDG Officers' meeting

22/08 Governance

a. Strategic Plan Update & Approval

The Chair noted this had been shared with the Board in March, and she had received no further comments. It was agreed therefore that the Plan had now been finalised and could be made public. It would be next revisited in two years' time by the next iteration of Steering Group (2024).

ACTION: Chair to send GJJ final Strategic Plan document

ACTION: GJJ to make Strategic Plan public and promote to membership

b. Subgroup Under Review: Copyright Group

GJJ reported that following a successful revival meeting last week (17th May)ⁱ the group has relaunched with a new four-person committee.ⁱⁱ The group is keen to recruit new members, and welcomed anyone with an interest in rights related activities, which GJJ had communicated to the Directors' list. The Chair noted this was a very commendable result, and as group sponsor especially applauded the efforts of all involved. The group's next meeting would be in July, date TBC following a member poll by GJJ.

22/09 Officer Reports

a. Financial Update

Helen reported that beyond regular costs there were only limited additional outgoings to report. She noted how approximately £4k had been expended to date (Jan-May '22), with reserves sitting around £42k. GJJ and Helen highlighted there may be some costs for transport and accommodation relating to the Conference, being hosted at Cranfield but with some speaker and group presence on site. It had been noted by Jo-Anne that institutions would be normally expected to pick up these costs for Conference Group members, but the Collaboration would cover expenses for GJJ and any invited speakers on site. Helen noted any return to physical events by the subgroups or the hiring of external speakers would of make a bigger call on our funds, but there had only been a single physical event this year (MMG, Aston, April) and no requests for external facilitators. As such, Helen reported our finances are in excellent shape.

b. Executive Officer: Update

GJJ reported his focus had recently been on the Conference Group, alongside facilitating the relaunch of both the Copyright and Marketing subgroups. This was alongside his regular facilitation and administrative activities across the Collaboration's portfolio, and work supporting the other subgroups, Board and Steering Group's needs. Additionally, he had attended the M25 conference to feed the experience from this online event into our own conference planning, and had also led on organising and hosting the two highly-successful recent speaker briefing events. He noted had also recently spoken with the Loughborough Director on SCONUL related matters.

22/10 Operations

a. Preparations for Autumn Board

The Chair noted SCONUL Director Ann Rossiter has offered to address the Board meeting on the topic of SCONUL strategy review. She hopes to 'ensure that we [SCONUL] are meeting member priorities with library consortia as well as being efficient and delivering on value for money.' It was agreed to formally invite Ann to attend to engage the Board in these discussions at the autumn meeting.

ACTION: Chair to formally invite Ann Rossiter to attend next Board Meeting

There followed a debate on the desirability, efficacy or benefits from returning to a face-to-face meeting for the Board in the autumn. Acknowledging issues such as cost and impact from losing an entire day to the meeting, the Steering Group also acknowledged the benefits of engaging socially around the meeting for directors. However, increases in rail costs and decreases in training budgets did offer obstacles. It was agreed to poll the members on the potential return to face-to-face meetings, with a note that Steering Group hoped to return to physical events for the reasons stated above.

ACTION: GJJ to poll Board members on the topic of physical attendance at future Board meetings

It was noted that Sue Ackermann had offered Nottingham some time ago as a hybrid host. As this suggestion had been made some time ago, there was no guarantee it was still on the table. Hence, it was agreed to discuss with her the possibility of hosting the autumn meeting, should it be held in a physical capacity.

ACTION: Chair & GJJ to approach Sue Ackermann (Nottingham) as potential host for autumn meeting

The Chair highlighted how any return to face-to-face Boards would facilitate a longer meeting and thus provide space for more content. For example, a second speaker or further discussion topic alongside informal discussions between directors. She proposed therefore to plan for the autumn Board to incorporate a discussion topic around one of the three themes suggested at the last Board: (1) ***lending policies & stock circulation***, (2) ***partnerships*** and (3) ***skills development***. After discussions by Steering Group partnerships was agreed a suitable and engaging topic, although the risk of it becoming a 'moaning slot' would need to be avoided. While an external facilitator was considered, it was agreed that no one had entirely 'solved' the challenges thrown up by partnerships, and so the Chair would facilitate the discourse at the meeting. To help provide a positive discussion framing and practical output, it was agreed that all members would be challenged to bring one 'fix' or 'success story' relating to partnerships.

ACTION: Chair and GJJ to inform members of plans for partnership discussions at the Autumn Board meeting

ACTION: GJJ, Chair and Vice to outline draft agenda for Autumn Board meeting

Judith suggested a future topic for the Board could be UKRI policy and open monographs. She noted that some regional exploration of practical and policy issues would be of particular interest to our smaller and medium-sized members. Helen suggested Peter Barr (Head of Content and Collections, University of Sheffield) might be a suitable person to shape the debate effectively. Additionally, it was agreed that inviting someone from Jisc to this end would also be of value. It was agreed to consider this topic as a potential for the March 2023 Board meeting.

b. MSDG/MDF Working Group on Event Accessibility

After initial discussions in 2021, Ann-Marie Lee (BCU/MSDG) and Simon Satchwell-Files (Newman/MSDG) have formed a task and finish group, comprising members from both subgroups, to develop guidance around event inclusivity practice. They had met recently (23rd) and were planning to present on their work at the conference, and additionally at a potential second event within the region.ⁱⁱⁱ Alongside this the group were researching advice and tools from elsewhere to disseminate across the Collaboration's members. GJJ was collating notes from the meeting and would share with Steering Group members after the meeting. The Chair noted how pleased she was to hear of this progress, and wished the group well in their efforts.

ACTION: GJJ to share progress report of Inclusivity Task & Finish Group with Steering Group

c. SCONUL: EDI Discussions Update

A meeting had been set for Friday 24th June, with the Chair and GJJ in attendance, although further details on the format and expectations for it remained pending. It was expected our contribution initially would be largely listening and learning. It was noted ALN, RCUK, CILIP, among others, would be represented at the meeting. The Chair noted her hopes for a useful and informative exchange, and both would report back to Steering Group on any relevant outcomes.

d. BAME Event Approach

It was noted that ALN are hosting an event for BAME staff 10th June^{iv} and as per email discussions Steering Committee were approached by Kaye Towlson (DMU). Kaye was keen to explore if we had plans for a similar event. In the absence of this, Kaye was happy to lead on organising something. As had been previously agreed, GJJ had facilitated introductions to the MSDG as the best body to help with any event organisation. As such, GJJ would pick up on any progress to date, when meeting with the MSDG Officers in early June.

ACTION: GJJ to explore BAME event progress with MSDG Chair and Officers

22/11 Subgroups: Activity Update

a. Conference Group

JAW and GJJ reported that progress continues towards the September 2022 event. Key recent developments have included:

- There have been numerous formal and informal meetings for the group and subsections of it over recent months, and active engagement from members.
- The call for speakers and sponsors went live in April/March respectively^v, with 6 submission to date. The speaker submission deadline is 13th June, and a meeting on 22nd June will be held to review and agree the papers selected to advance to the conference.
- To date, there has been no interest in sponsoring the event despite continued efforts.
- It is hoped to offer parallel streams, although this may not be technically feasible based on discussions with the Cranfield team.
- Two speaker briefing events were held (10th and 19th May, with 23 delegates) for inexperienced/new speakers. The feedback had been positive and a number of attendees have followed up with the committee for further support and advice. It is hoped to repeat these sessions in 2023, and potentially invite some of 2022's first-time speakers to offer their insights.
- A briefing visit was held with the Cranfield Conference suite hosts (12th May). While useful it also raised some new questions on event format requirements, and the choice of host may impact on the programme's configuration. The Conference Group is still discussing the issues here, but are confident that a very professional online event will be offered.
- A keynote speaker has been identified and invited to speak at the conference. While we await their formal confirmation, a number of back up suggestions have been made in the event they are unable to attend.
- A draft moderation guide was created by GJJ to help clarify the role of individuals facilitating sessions, although this will likely require updating in light of the Cranfield visit.

Overall, the group reports that things seem to be on track for the 6-7th September event date, assuming enough papers are submitted to the call. The Chair noted that perhaps members of the Steering Group could encourage any representatives they speak to about major purchasing deals if they are interested in becoming sponsors. However, it was noted the degree of interest for sponsors in online events is diminished in contrast to physical events.

ACTION: ALL to have sponsor conversations with commercial representatives as opportunity permits

b. Marketing & Communications Group

GJJ and Helen reported that this group is live once more and has a committee of four leading it forward. This follows an initial meeting earlier this year (21st March) facilitated by GJJ, and a first discussion meeting held subsequently (6th May). The next meeting will be held July 22nd, and all library staff with an interest in marketing and/or communications are welcome to attend.^{vi}

c. Mercian Staff Development Group

Sarah Pittaway (Worcester) had stood down due to a departure from the region, and Ann-Marie Lee (BCU) had taken over as new group Chair. She was joined by Kate Marshall (NTU) as Vice-Chair. The MSDG will next be meeting 21st June, with a pre-meeting for Officers and GJJ on 6th June. A number of events had come in for high-praise from delegates, and increasingly outputs (including recordings) were being shared on the Collaboration's website and YouTube channel. However, it was noted the 21/22 MSDG's event programme had ended earlier than normal as a handful of planned sessions had failed to come to fruition for various reasons. However, Steering Group hoped there would be an opportunity to incorporate some of these events or themes within the sessions planned for the MSDG's 22/23 programme.

d. Deputies & Senior Staff Group

The group had met (7th April) for discussions on the national student survey, and the future of print collections. As no one was willing to chair the meeting, Chris Porter stepped in as sponsor as a one-off. It was noted the next meeting was set for 14th June, looking at induction and staffing related issues, and would be chaired by Anne Knight (Cranfield).

e. Mercian Disability Forum

Chris reported on the group's most recent meeting (7th April), at which he, GJJ and Ann-Marie Lee (MSDG Chair, BCU) had been in attendance. The main focus had been on the kick off of the inclusion/accessibility task & finish group activities. Other topics discussed included RNIB Bookshare, the conference, and member updates. Chris noted how impressed he had been at the meeting with the degree of genuine, and encouraging, sharing of experiences between members. A further meeting is planned for later this year, in the autumn. The Chair noted how good it was to see the Task & Finish group starting its work towards some tangible outputs, and thanked them for their participation in these efforts.

f. Mercian Metadata Group

The group met in person, with a hybrid attendance option, 27th April at Aston University. Judith and GJJ were unable to attend although outline agenda^{vii} for the day is online. Judith reported the event was hosted at Aston with ten members in attendance. No future events are currently planned as far as she was aware, but the group is looking to recruit more members for future meetings and discussions. Additionally, while the group does have a new secretary, to date no outputs or minutes of the meeting have been available.

ACTION: GJJ to follow up again with MMG officers on provision of minutes or notes from their April meeting

22/12 AOB

a. Date of next Steering Group meeting (Aug/Sept 2022)

It was agreed to meet in Early August, and as has been recent tradition to invite representatives of the subgroups to attend to offer updates on their progress and activities.

ACTION: GJJ to send poll around for potential dates to Steering Group

ACTION: GJJ to invite group representatives to August Steering Group once a meeting date is agreed



There were no other AOBs.

ⁱ Minutes available at: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/copyright/group-agendas-minutes>

ⁱⁱ Copyright Group committee members are at: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/copyright/committee-members>

ⁱⁱⁱ Notes from this task & finish group meeting are available here: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Inclusivity%20-%20Task%20%26%20Finish%20May%202022.pdf>

^{iv} ALN's BAME event: <https://www.academiclibrariesnorth.ac.uk/thriving-your-career-free-face-face-event-bame-colleagues-and-students>

^v For sponsors call see: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/call-conference-sponsors-%E2%80%93-redefining-engagement>; for speakers call see: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/news-call-for-speakers-2022>

^{vi} Committee members and minutes from these meetings can be found here: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/marketing-communications-group>

^{vii} The MMG Aston event agenda can be found here: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sites/default/files/agendas/27%20April%202022%20MMG%20Agenda.pdf>