



## Steering Group

Wed 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

### Minutes

**Present:** Chris Porter (Vice, Newman), Simon Bevan (Cranfield), Emma Walton (Loughborough), Gareth J Johnson (Mercian Collaboration)

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**Apologies:** Sue Ackermann (Nottingham), Diane Job (Chair, Birmingham)

#### 21/01 Remembering Mark

The meeting was chaired by Chris in Diane's absence. The meeting opened with reflections and remembrances of Mark Toole, personally and professionally. The Steering Group members expressed their considerable sadness and regret at the news of his passing, noting in particular his long contribution and support of the Collaboration, along with wider academic library sector. Diane had shared two condolence letters ahead of the meeting which she would be sending to the NTU Library and Vice-Chancellor later today, following input from the Steering Group members.

**ACTION: Diane to send condolence message to NTU Library staff, and Vice Chancellor**

#### 21/02 Governance

a. [Minutes of previous meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020](#)

One typo: p1 'audient requirements' should read 'audit requirements'. Other than this these were accepted as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

b. [Outstanding Actions](#)

- **20/11(a) Emma and Sue to confirm acceptance of the minutes of August meeting**

It was agreed these were now accepted.

- **20/13 (a) Diane and Chris to formally write to Birmingham Conference over 2018 invoice expression concerns**

It was noted the payment had now been actioned. It was agreed while the situation had not been ideal, to now draw a line under this issue and move on.

c. [Nominations/Elections 2021](#)

5 nominations had been received, and it was proposed to accept all 5 for the vacancies (2 officer plus 3 ordinary). As none of the nominations were for the officer posts of Vice-Chair and Treasurer, it was proposed the incoming Steering Group elect a Vice Chair and Treasurer from among themselves. This will be proposed for the Board's approval at the March meeting. Emma and Simon noted they were happy with ending their terms, but as Sue wasn't present it was suggested to double check she was still okay with standing down.

**ACTION: GJJ to update candidates for the Steering Group of their success and next steps**

**ACTION: Check Sue is okay with standing down from Steering Group at the end of March**

#### d. Membership Terms & Wording

As previously discussed ([SG 20/11\(b\): p2](#)) a form of words concerning revised Collaboration membership terms had been distributed, although there had been no feedback via email. It was agreed to re-send these words, and for the SG members to make any final suggested tweaks by **Wed 3<sup>rd</sup> March**. Following this revision period, the phrasing would be taken to Board for comment and approval.

**ACTION: GJJ to reshare membership wording for comment**

**ACTION: ALL to send comments on membership terms to GJJ by 3/March/21**

#### e. SCONUL Representation

It had been planned ([SG 20/11\(e\): p3](#)) for the Chair and Vice-Chair to discuss the issue with SCONUL and other collaborations. However, this had not occurred. Emma noted that other collaborations (e.g. WHELP, SCURL) had representation to SCONUL Board, which made the English regions an oddity. Some of the issues to be resolved included: reporting requirements, workload impacts, overlap with communities of practice and accountability (on both sides). Following discussion, it was agreed to brief the new Steering Group on the issue, and for them to take a position going forward. Despite standing down from SG, as a SCONUL Board member Emma volunteered to continue as a conduit for any discussions.

**ACTION: Incoming Steering Group to be appraised of SCONUL relationship and MoU as part of induction**

**ACTION: Incoming Steering Group to take position relating reporting and representation alignment with SCONUL Board by the Collaboration**

### 21/03 Officer Reports

#### a. Financial Update

As interim treasurer, GJJ updated on the current state of finances.

*Income 2021: £17,502.62, Expenditure 2021: £750.64. Account balance £41,438.00.*

With anticipated expenditure of around £19k, assuming no additional costs, this would leave the Collaboration with a healthy balance in excess of the £5k reserve balance minimum set up by the original Steering Group. However, the conference may have additional costs for keynote speakers or were external platforms/facilitation companies hired. Any sponsorship income would, as normal, help alleviate these costs.

#### b. Development Officer Update

This had been shared with the agenda for information, with all substantive matters on the agenda. No questions were raised. Emma highlighted Gareth's invaluable support for the Conference Group during her 4 years as a SG member and thanked him for his many efforts in keeping an 'active' subgroup functioning throughout this time.

It was commented with the changing of the Steering Group membership, increasingly GJJ represented the organisational memory for the Collaboration, having been with the organisation since 2015.

## 21/04 Operations

### a. Officer: Salary & Contract

Chris and Diane had met the previous day to resolve the salary incremental issue (as identified and discussed previously [DB 20/13\(i\): 10](#), [SG 20/08 \(b\): 3,4](#), [DB 20/19\(c\): 4](#) & [SG 20/13\(b\): 3](#)). They had agreed to use the national spine points as annual increments, with a modest raise to point 35, backdated to Aug '20. Automatic raises by one point would occur each 1<sup>st</sup> August, with the next due later in 2021.

**ACTION: Chris and Diane to contact SCONUL to amend GJJ's salary terms**

The matter of extending the FTE days of employment was held over for the next Steering Group, in the light of developments in the regional and national environment. A discussion would be need to be held with GJJ as part of this, to check any changes were in line with his own expectations and capacity.

**ACTION: Add Officer employment hours discussion point for future SG meeting**

GJJ noted he had been in touch with SCONUL to resolve the tax on his salary, which continued to be incorrectly calculated, resulting in a large personal bill for advance payments. Via Ann he had been notified he would need to approach the HMRC personally to align his tax codes for his two jobs, as the University of London (SCONUL's outsourced salary agent) declined to resolve this on his behalf.

### b. Annual Report 2020: Update

Other than the Chair's introduction, this report was now complete, although there had been fewer than hoped for contributions from member libraries. The report will need to be finalised by the March Board meeting, and so any final contributions could be included up until the start of that month. Chris noted she was pleased to see the updates from members and commended them for striking the right tone at a difficult time; something she noted for the opening and afterword sections likewise. A question about access numbers for the report was raised, which GJJ will investigate.

**ACTION: GJJ to check downloads on 2019 report**

**ACTION: Diane to provide introduction/opening remarks to Annual Report**

**ACTION: GJJ to facilitate sharing of annual report with Board, membership and SCONUL**

### c. Board March 2021

Following GJJ's survey of directors, three areas of interest had been identified: (1) Evaluating online experience (2) Reinventing Libraries/Service (3) Access, participation & technology. Most respondents were ambivalent to format, and no suggestions for speakers had been received. It was agreed that 2-3 directors would be sought to present brief case studies to initiate discussions based on the first two topics, with the Chair and Vice-Chair facilitating outline questions before opening discussions up to the rest of the Board. GJJ would draft a 'call for contributions' and share via the mailing list.

As needed, preparations for the handover to the new Steering Group would also feature, as would continuing conversations with respect to membership and SCONUL representation as detailed elsewhere in these minutes. As per tradition, the new Chair and Steering Group would begin their term of office at the end of the Board meeting.

**ACTION: GJJ write call for speaker contributions to Directors**

**ACTION: GJJ to draft Board agenda and share for input from Directors ahead of the Board meeting**

## 21/05 Subgroups: Activity Update

### a. [Conference Group](#)

Plans for an online conference in early Sept '21 are advancing. GJJ has been facilitating discussions between the Northern Collaboration's conference team for advice on this format, ahead of a second consultation meeting in February. The outline theme for the event is a development from the 2020 conference and currently has the working title of: *Adaptation and Growth in times of Adversity*. Emma asked that she be sent the link to the consultation meeting.

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**ACTION: GJJ to send Emma link to NC conference meeting.**

### b. [Mercian Staff Development Group](#)

It was noted there was currently a more limited programme of events planned by this subgroup, although it was hoped more would be forthcoming in the next few months. The use of an external consultant to deliver a session on 'difficult customers' relating to COVID operations had been mooted and was favourably received by the SG. GJJ noted he had had outline discussions with LIEM recently concerning overlaps of training programme needs, although nothing concrete had emerged as of yet. It was suggested wellbeing was an area of staff development which could be developed, with GJJ noting the MDF's similar interests in this area. Chris commented that she planned to continue on the MSDG as the Newman representative while Chair, although the Vice-Chair would be invited to take on the role of group sponsor.

### c. [Copyright Group](#)

This subgroup lacked any specific activity since late 2019, although the group's Vice-Chair had suggested a meeting might be hoped for in the coming months. The SG noted how the copyright role was rarely a specific one at many libraries, and hence this might have impacted on the group's inactivity. However, work and discussions relating to copyright continued to be busy, reflecting a need for discussions locally to continue.

### d. [Deputies & Senior Staff Group](#)

This had met most recently towards the end of the last year (24 Nov 20) to discuss research support related matters. A meeting was planned for early March (date TBC shortly) and planned to discuss topics including 'things libraries have learned from lockdown/COVID' and 'how might our services have changed (post-COVID)?'. The SG noted this was an active subgroup and demonstrated that the decision to develop it was a valid one.

### e. [Marketing & Communications Group](#)

This subgroup had been inactive throughout most of 2020, although it was acknowledged this might be as a result of demands on group member's time. It was noted, reflecting on discussions at the [most recent virtual networking event](#), there were some areas of potential interest to the members relating to balancing strategic and operational communication of key messages during the pandemic. Additionally, issues around balancing communications with students on and those off campus were potentially ones of interest to the group and might form the basis of a useful experience exchange.



**ACTION: GJJ to contact Marketing Group and highlight areas of potential interest for future activities.**

f. [Mercian Disability Forum](#)

The group had met ([24 Nov 21](#)) and also sponsored one of the Virtual Networking events ([21 Jan 21](#)) on an 'accessibility & online developments' theme. The next committee meeting was planned for Feb/March 21 (date TBC) with Laura Waller (Warwick) planning to stand down as group chair at this point after two years in the post. It was noted that over the past 12 months this had been one of the most regularly active Collaboration subgroups, which the SG commended.

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g. [Mercian Metadata Group](#)

After a relatively quiet 2020 the group is looking to '21 for a period of renewed activity with a number of meetings/events in planning. Hosting a committee/experience exchange meeting ([10 Feb 21](#)). They are also looking to collaborate on a MarcEdit Training event, host a RDA workshop (which was previously planned for '20 but postponed due to COVID), along with more of their eForum themed discussions. It was noted this was a commendable level of planned activity.

## 21/06 AOB

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

Chris noted this was last meeting of the current Steering Group, and thanked all members on behalf of the Chair, for their contributions. Emma it was noted was standing down after a four-year period, and her work with the Conference Group was especially highlighted. GJJ noted he would seek to arrange a briefing meeting for the new Vice-Chair, with himself and the Chair following the March Board meeting, and then look towards the end of April/early May for the first Steering Group meeting of the new cycle.

**ACTION: GJJ to sort meeting with incoming Chair and Vice-Chair**

**ACTION: GJJ to schedule date for next Steering Group meeting**