



Tangible Membership Value



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Executive Summary

The Mercian Collaboration is a professional membership network formed from twenty-three higher education libraries and their staff based in the English Midlands region, which has operated since 2014. This document highlights the benefits deriving from membership.

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Member Contributions

The Mercian Collaboration's activities are funded by members through direct annual subscriptions and contributions in kind, in terms of providing facilities and staffing support for activities. Subscription fees are levied based on a sliding scale relating to organisational size, reviewed and agreed annually by the Collaboration's governing Board. Membership fees (2020) vary from £130 to £1939p.a., with only the three largest institutions paying the top level [1].

Collaboration Objectives

As stated in its Terms of Reference the Collaboration principally seeks to '*facilitate professional development and seek efficiencies*' [2] on behalf of its membership, and their institutional stakeholders. These are delivered through a programme of experience exchanges, buddying scheme and enabling of specific communities of practice (special interest groups) in key strategic service delivery arenas.

Governance & Coordination.

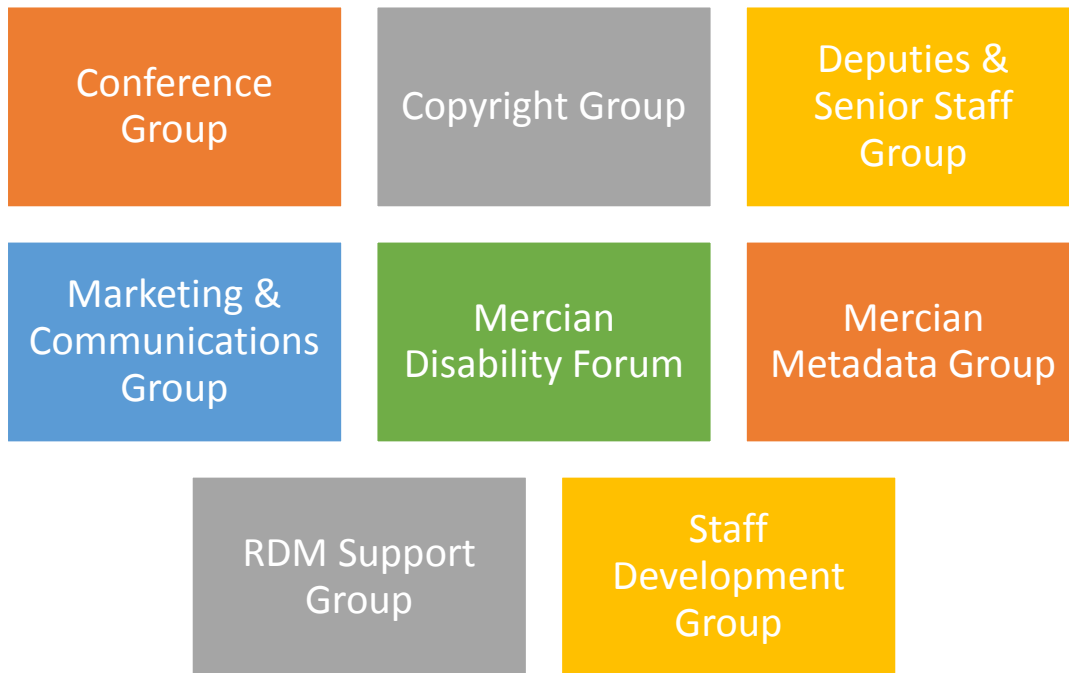
The delivery of these objectives are overseen by a governing Directors Board, comprised of member library service directors (or equivalent) [3]. A Steering Group, comprising a biennially elected Chair and Officers, who are a subset of the Board's membership, prioritise operations and lead on strategic development. Practical implementation is enabled through a series of special interest groups, composed of member library staff representatives. The Collaboration's activities as a whole are coordinated by a part time (0.2FTE) Development Officer, who manages operations, communication, liaison and group relationships. SCOUNL acts as the parent body of the Collaboration, and provides financial management, website hosting and strategic insight [4].

Member Benefits

The Collaboration has a diverse portfolio of activities. Members and the Collaboration share the resource costs, with involvement recognised region wide as beneficial to individual institutional staff development agendas.

- **Developmental opportunities** facilitated through involvement in and coordination of special interest group activities, offering staff the opportunity to upskill themselves for more senior managerial and operational roles.
- **Multiple active special interest groups (Figure 1)** driven by membership demand and strategic requirements and enabled by institutional staff [5]. Draw together regional experts to consider current sectoral trends, share best practice and collaborate on professional developmental activities for the wider membership community.

Figure 1: Collaboration Special Interest Groups



- **A flagship annual conference**, accessible by all member staff with delegate fees covered from Collaboration funds. Staff at all levels able to experience best practice and exchange knowledge with colleagues doing similar activities at other libraries [6].
- **Annual events programme** across the region including professional development workshops, discussion forums and workplace visits. Organised by special interest groups, with fiscal support from Collaboration funds, permitting external trainers to deliver expert training [7].
- **Senior managerial briefings** from nationally recognised sectoral figures and bodies provide service directors with biannual strategic updates and raise awareness of future challenges. Additionally, sectoral intelligence, benchmarking and comparator study reports provide empirical data for service developmental activities.
- **A buddying scheme** which facilitates specific peer-to-peer learning exchanges for staff at all seniority levels and speciality. Partnered with experienced workers across the region, participants obtain practice insights outside of their normative working environment [8].
- **Members' expert knowledge and practice excellence** represented within Collaboration formal reporting outputs raising public and sectoral awareness of achievements. Contributions to library and institutional best practice additionally emphasised within a growing online resource bank and social media presence, and events programme.
- **Sectoral representation to external bodies collaboratively** enabled by the Board and Steering Group, providing a consortial agency on national and international agendas.

Further Information

For more details on any of the above activities, or the Collaboration in general, please contact one of the following Steering Group members.

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Document Control

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