Midlands Libraries Group meeting

**2nd floor meeting room, Betty Boothroyd Library,
The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA**

Wednesday 15th January 2014 10.30am-3.30pm

MINUTES

Agenda
1. Introductions, welcome and apologies
2. Minutes of the previous meeting
3. The Northern Collaboration Experience: Richard Heseltine, Director of Library and Learning Innovation and University Librarian, University of Hull
4. Discussion around framework/collaboration for a joint East/West Midlands Group
   - Shall we do it?
   - Draft ToRs (strawman from Robin)
   - Subscription or not?
   - Areas to focus on
   - Steering group? Chair?
5. Libraries and outsourcing: the public library experience
   Aileen Cahill, Head of Libraries, Culture and Adult Education, London Borough of Croydon (Caroline Taylor to chair)
6. Open Access: round the table views and issues
7. Round table (news, queries, issues)

Papers attached: Minutes of the last meeting
                         Draft ToRs

Attendees:
Chair: Nicky Whitsed (Open University)
Phil Brabban (Coventry University), Debs Findlay (University College Birmingham), Robin Green (University of Warwick), Pat Johnson (University of Derby), Judith Keene (University of Worcester), Dave Parkes (Staffordshire University), Fiona Parsons (University of Wolverhampton), Chris Porter (Newman University), Chris Powis (University of Northampton), Enid Pryce-Jones (Birmingham City University), Paul Reynolds (University of Keele), Nick Smith (Aston University), Caroline Taylor (University of Leicester), Emma Walton (Loughborough University), Elizabeth Warner-Davies (University of Birmingham), Jo Webb (De Montfort University), Caroline Williams (University of Nottingham)

Apologies:
Kathryn Greaves, (Harper Adams University), Emma Sansby (Bishop Grosseteste University), Ian Snowley (University of Lincoln), Mark Toole (Nottingham Trent University)

1. Minutes of the last meeting
All actions are complete, with the exception of circulation of the FutureLearn (FL) presentation. NW will forward the most up-to-date presentation after the next FL libraries meeting on 7th FebruaryMatters arising – RG reported that a Research Data Management (RDM) Catalyst bid from the M5 group will be submitted to HEFCE; this will include shared storage.

2. The Northern Collaboration
Richard Heseltine, University of Hull gave a presentation on how things have worked in Northern Collaboration

Richard described how from the start in 2009 the collaboration included 27 libraries and has had a clear statement of purpose and principals. He stated that members did not have to participate in everything, and that Director level engagement is vital. He went on to describe the small number of projects which were identified early and pursued by different groups of members, they included research into out of hours enquiry services, and sharing best practice in purchasing. Momentum was established and maintained by a core group of five Directors

Richard went on to describe the consolidation activity over the last 12 months including the move to a subscription model (£300 - £750) and being constituted as a region group of SCONUL. He described the success of first annual conference in September

Challenges and issues going forward are maintaining momentum, and losing track of projects owing to the competing workload priorities of the Steering Group. Specifically, looking to the future, Richard has identified three priorities:

1. Keeping up momentum and expanding activities including learning exchanges, shared repository services, and pursuing other ideas identified at the conference
2. Making connections with other collaborations
3. Collaborative bidding for national funding, particularly in the context of the digital library.

The discussion included:
- SCONUL have offered to extend the support offer to the Northern Collaboration to the Midlands Collaboration
- working out how to work with other groups is important
- building up trust between members is vital
- projects started so far have been small and they not yet looked at shared services
- research undertaken has been shared
- the Steering Group is made up of five members including a Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer
- a key element of success was the determination to work as a group, and to try things out
- the name Northern Collaboration is great - it suggests rebellion and movement, something for us to think about when we talk about our name.

When asked "what advice would you give us?" Richard replied "be exploratory about it, go into it knowing it's an experiment. Have a shared belief that it's worth having a go, establish director level of engagement, and find three or four people who really want to take it forward. You are modelling commitment."

3. Draft ToR for the collaboration

RG posed a number of questions: "do we still want to take this step?", "what is it that we are committing to?", "what is it that we are trying to achieve over time?".

Discussion points included:
- the benefit of learning from other collaborations
- the aims of the Group including efficiencies and training and development
- working with EMALINK and WESLINK
- regional collaboration as an enabler of labour flows, supporting succession and workforce planning through exposure to different cultures, understanding best practice, and critical reflection.

It was agreed that we should start with a light touch, with a ToR that can be refined over time and used as an umbrella concept, with any legal agreements drawn up separately for ventures/projects as required. Membership was discussed and in order to keep the ground as common as possible it was also agreed that the group should be made up of Directors of HE libraries in the Midlands

Discussion continued on the ToR and built on the information shared about the Northern Collaboration. The group agreed to follow the Northern Collaboration model and to invite Ann Rossiter, SCONUL to the next meeting to discuss how we could work with SCONUL. The Midlands Collaboration would need a SCONUL Executive Board member'; it was suggested (in his absence) that as Mark Toole from NTU was on SCONUL Executive he would be appropriate to act as a link between the Collaboration and SCONUL.

Management of research data and publications was discussed as a potential area for shared service infrastructure development. It was suggested that the Northern and Midlands Collaboration get a group together interested in this, and then to take it forward to plug into national initiatives Subscriptions and a Midlands Collaboration fund were discussed. Views expressed ranged, and there was some concern that we should be clear about the purpose of the fund.

The Group discussed how to set about creating a Steering Group, and on Richard's suggestion agreed that RG act as ad hoc secretary and that the Group send him nominations and expressions of interest in joining the Steering Group. Elections would then follow
It was agreed that members would meet twice each year, with three meetings to get it off the ground and to build momentum, and that the next meeting be before Easter.

It was also agreed that the Group expects Directors to attend meetings but that if a Director was exceptionally unable to attend a deputy could act as substitute.

The Group discussed the status of EMALINK and WESLINK and confirmed it was expected that both groups would continue at least until the Collaboration is established

4. Libraries and outsourcing: the public library experience
Aileen Cahill, Head of Libraries, Culture and Adult Education, London Borough of Croydon (Caroline Taylor Chair)
Aileen Cahill gave a presentation which described the process, challenges and reality of outsourcing a public library service. The whole initiative took two years. Aileen described first establishing that there is a market for providers of library services and the creation of a specification of the service across two boroughs. The process followed the OJEU procurement and use competitive dialogue route. All within the context of huge funding cuts, growing demand for services, and intense public interest and resistance to any potential closure of libraries.

Group discussion included:
- complexity in establishing level of savings secured
- development and innovation important and were built into the contract
- assets including stock and buildings will transfer back when the contract ends
- introduction of new IT and Wi-Fi had a really big immediate positive impact
- staff and staff morale – improved when the outsource contract was awarded as it was the end of the uncertainty, and the contractor has been very honest from the start i.e. that staff levels were going to reduce
- One big issue has been the move to wearing uniforms.

The discussion then moved to savings. Aileen described how savings had been achieved with the introduction of self-service, combining back-office activity, combined management, and reducing professional posts by focus on - coordinating, planning, making everything ready for delivery.

5. Open Access
The OA discussion included:
- Funds allocated by RCUK to OA in many institutions were not yet close to being spent, largely because everyone has been focused on REFMembers shared experience of OA policy and mandatesJW asked whether anyone had a data curation strategy. RG reported that Warwick had appointed a digital preservation officer who was currently working on an architecture model. NW reported that the OU has a preservation policy, and has a digital archive projectEW reported that Loughborough have a week long impact festival which includes workshops where high rated academics talk about impact, and where the Library has a stand as a focus for OA advocacyDouble dipping was discussed.
FP asked whether there was any interest in taking shared approaches to advocacy, and suggested that this could be one of our early opportunities for collaborative work. CT raised the need for different kind of behaviours and competencies required of library staff in order to undertake advocacy work
The discussion moved to identify other areas of focus for the Group, first as meeting agenda items. It was agreed that for each area identified there should be lead member to put together some information on each item including suggestions for collaborative action. Items identified included:
- OA advocacy

- training and development
- copyright legislation changes
- workforce planning including skills sets for the future.

It was also suggested that we have a conference to identify further opportunities for the Collaboration.

6. Round table (news, queries, issues)
Leicester – in the midst of a period of strategic change and awaiting a new VC. The newly established research support team was proving successful.
Coventry – building a "disruptive media lab" in the library, for academics to experiment with new pedagogies.
Wolverhampton – has been through a major period of restructuring, including a restructured administration. A new department of student support and lifelong learning had been formed.   The University has made decision to invest heavily in sciences particularly pharmacy engineering, and new science centre had been built which does not provide conventional classrooms or labs; the concept of the flipped classrooms was being introduced.
Birmingham City - achieved Customer Service Excellence (CSE) in December.
Loughborough – achieve IIP
Stafford – recently renewed CSE. The University has sold a library to create a primary school on campus

Next meeting: **tbc (before Easter if feasible)**

Future agenda items: Working with SCONUL, learning analytics, LAMP project, technology and e-content delivery (publishers to join the meeting), shared collaborative services e.g. RDM and OA advocacy, training and development and workforce planning including skills sets for the future, and copyright legislation changes.

ACTION	RESP	COMMENTS
Invite Ann Rossiter, SCONUL to the next meeting	RG	Done
Send to RG nomination and expressions of interest for the Steering Group	All	Completed
NW will send round a FL presentation with stats about learners and their profiles.	NW	
Next meeting date to be arranged	RG	2 April 2014