



Collaboration Development Officer's Report

March 2017

The following is an update on activities conducted by the Mercian Collaboration (MC) Development Officer (MCDO), covering the period Oct 2016-2017.

Website

One of the major activities of this period has been the development, testing and 20th Jan 2017 launch of the MC's website¹. The site, built in collaboration with SCONUL and Adaptive, has now been live for a number of weeks. Reception to the site has been overwhelmingly positive, both within the MC and from other collaborations. The site's existence has been promoted through internal MC distribution routes, and also via social media, as well as being submitted to major web-crawling services. Additionally, member libraries have been encouraged to link back to the Mercian site to increase search engine relevance ranking. Traffic to the site is being monitored through Google Analytics, and is currently maintaining a relatively low but steady access rate.

The site continues to be developed and new content, including meeting materials, are being regularly added². In particular, links to member library social media accounts are now incorporated³, with information on forthcoming events also being recently updated. It is hoped to shortly introduce new graphical front-page content, featuring all member libraries. However, material for this is still pending from some members. Content for the news section is an area targeted for particular development, as this is key for generating perceptions of the MC as an active organisation. Hence, it is anticipated that subgroups, and the Steering Group will be providing suitable material for inclusion in the news section, including event reports as well as announcements, to continue generating impressions of the breath of MC's activities. Hence, the MCDO welcomes offers of news, reports and items of interest to be shared via this channel with the membership.

Governance

While previously the configuration of the SG's membership has been more informally decided, the SG agreed for the 2017-2019 period of office, formal election procedures would be enacted. Consequently, the MCDO drafted nominations and elections protocols, along with the supporting documentation. Following SG approval, a call for nominations was opened for one month from mid-December to late January. A subsequent calendar month was allowed for Directors to return completed election ballots, with the results formally announced during the March Directors meeting. The new SG will take office from the conclusion of this meeting. In preparation for this handover the MCDO has been developing supporting documentation and information, to allow the new Chair and SG to begin the task of steering the Mercian in as effective a manner as possible. It is anticipated that a formal handover meeting with the outgoing and new Chairs will be convened asap following the Directors meeting, and likewise a SG meeting shortly afterwards.

¹ <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/>

² Notably a number of SDG members have yet to supply profile photographs

³ <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/about-collaboration/member-institutions>



Logo & Branding

With the assistance of graphic designer based at Loughborough University, a logo was designed for the Mercian Collaboration as a whole, and also for the Staff Development Group (SDG). Following a number of rounds of discussion by the Directors and Steering Group (SG), final designs were approved, and are now displayed on the website. They are also increasingly being incorporated into all MC publications and records. High quality versions of the logos are available from the MCDO.

Conference Group

Working with the MC Conference Group (MCCG) Chair, Emma Walton, the MCDO has been supporting this groups' activities, in their facilitation of the first Mercian Conference. This support has largely been configured through facilitating communications, obtaining comparator market intelligence and continued close liaison with the Group Chair. The group has held a planning workshop, a teleconference and a number of face-to-face meetings, which were also attended. A formal report on progress will be received from the Group's Chair at the March 2017 Directors meeting. A formal announcement of the conference date and venue, along with a call for papers, is expected to follow shortly afterwards.

Special Interest Groups

The MCDO has continued to support and liaise with other MC special interest groups, most notably the SDG and the newly configured Research Data Management (RDM) Support Group. In tandem with the website development, he has provided information on these group's activities, as well as resolving their questions and where appropriate representing these to the SG. He has also been engaged in an ongoing dialogue concerning the potential for new MC SIGs with groups of regional library staff and the SG, notably in the area of special needs/disability support.

Director Visits

As part of his role in fostering collegiality, and to provide input to the SG on the challenges, aspirations and expectations from member libraries, the MCDO has continued to personally visit all library directors. These visits finally concluded in November, and are in the process of being reviewed and analysed. Originally it was anticipated that a report from these visits, focussing on operational and strategic commonalities as well as collaboration aspirations, would have been presented to the March 2017 Directors Meeting. Regretfully, the data loss resulting from the Mercian laptop's HDD failure in November 2016, set the timetable for this work back by a number of months. Nevertheless, notes from these visits have now been re-transcribed, and a report is expected to be presented in the coming months to inform the SG's considerations, before being made generally available.

Communications

Throughout this reporting period the MCDO has continued to facilitate and coordinate communications between Directors, the SG and SIGs, in particular in aspects of operational organisation and administration. These activities have been enabled through eMail, tele-conferences as well as attendance at various meetings throughout the Mercian region. In particular, he has continued to be in frequent contact with the SG Officers, in supporting the fulfilment of their own Collaboration duties. Additionally, with the website's launch, the MCDO now also has an expanded role in enabling communications, organisational recognition and promoting the MC's activities, with external audiences.



External Collaboration

The MCDO has continued to support, and be supported, by other regional collaboration officers and executive managers throughout the UK. This connection has facilitated answers to various questions and requests for information on areas including collaboration governance, conference planning, finance and administration. Notably, he attended a tripartite meeting during November 2016 to exchange experience, resolve mutual concerns and develop collegiality between officers. He has also been supporting advising on issues relating to other collaboration's web presences.