



Collaboration Development Officer's Report, March 2018

Dr Gaz J Johnson, March 2018

This report is an update on activities conducted by the Mercian Collaboration (MC) Development Officer (MCDO), covering the period Nov 2017 – Mar 2018. While administrative functions form a significant part of the committed time, the following are matters of interest which the MCDO wishes to bring to Directors' attention.

Annual Report

While this will have been presented elsewhere, the collation, coordination and configuration of the first Mercian Annual Report was conducted by the MCDO during this period. Anticipated readership includes member organisation library staff, comparator collaborations, potential conference sponsors and SCONUL stakeholders. The report made extensive use of pre-existing source materials, notably drawing on the website and meeting minutes. However, some new material was solicited from the Steering Group and SIG members, with overall editorial processing falling to the MCDO. The Annual Report is intended to provide an overview of the Collaboration and its activities, along with providing a benchmark against which to compare future developments.

Collating and coordinating the report's contents in a timely manner from multiple groups and directors, alongside the MCDO's limited availability, was a moderately challenging endeavour. Consequently, the anticipated late Jan/early Feb publication date proved impractical, and its formal presentation to Directors in March, represents its official release. Notably, with the Collaboration's increased organisational alignment with SCONUL, subsequent Reports will need to demonstrate how activities relate to 'SCONUL's Charitable Objectives'¹. This may also introduce new requirements on the Collaboration, in terms of production deadlines.

Governance

The Steering Group met via telcon twice during this period (24th Nov, 23rd Jan) with the next scheduled meeting in April/May to be confirmed following the Director's March meeting. With the joining of Cranfield, a site visit was conducted with their Director and his senior staff (21st Nov) to discuss Mercian activities and involvement.

Issues tackled during this reporting period included support for SIG governance and constitution of new groups, prospective revisions to event funding protocols (cf. Treasurer's report), development of a Mercian sponsorship policy (in support of #Mercian18 and beyond). Event funding will be discussed by Directors in March, and following outline approval from the SG and operational feedback from Conference Group, the sponsorship policy will be finalised and implemented.

¹ SCONUL, 2016. *Annual Report 2016*.

<https://www.sconul.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Annual%20report%20and%20audited%20accounts%2016.pdf>, pp. 6.



SIG

The Conference Group met twice during this period, although only one meeting could be attended (2nd March). However, the CG Chair spoke directly to and met with the MCDO in support of #Mercian18 preparations, especially concerning sponsorship arrangements, on a number of occasions. The Mercian Copyright Group (MCG) met officially for the first time (17th Jan), after their approval by Directors in Nov 2017. The MCDO was in attendance as their terms of reference were updated, committee officers convened and plans for future events and activities discussed. The first MCG event (*'Preparations for GDPR and Copyright'*), was hosted at Leicester (2nd Feb), with the MCDO and ~40 delegates attending.

The MDF met during this period (13th Nov, Warwick), although the MCDO was unable to attend. However, he has engaged in extensive correspondence in support of the group's plans to host an event on 'Inclusion' in mid-2018. He has also corresponded with the RDMSG periodically, especially in relation to their proposed RDM/DPC event to be hosted at Loughborough in mid-Sept 2018. Finally, the MSDG met once during this period (13th March, Loughborough) with the MCDO in attendance, to help support the election of their new committee officers, as well as provide regular liaison and support. The MSDG Chair also remains a frequent source of contact and information for the Officer on regional activities.

Marketing and Communications²

The Website celebrated its first birthday in January 2018, and continues to grow in content, especially relating to SIG meetings and activities. New sections have been created for the MDF and MCG, with the events programme continuing as the most dynamic section. Security updates by Adaptive continue in the background, and the site has remained stable and accessible throughout this period.

Website

Populating the news section with fresh content remains an ongoing challenge, with only 9 new items added in the reporting period (~ 5 months)³. Encouragement to subgroup members has yielded a few event reports suitable for publication, for which the MCDO is most grateful. However, the number of event reports produced does not currently accurately reflect the range and extent of MC activities.

Mercian Section	Number of News Items
Development Officer	2
Conference Group	4
Copyright Group	1
Mercian Disability Forum	0
RDM Support Group	0
Mercian Staff Development Group	1

As SIG and MC activities continue, more event reports or outcomes produced for the site would comprise a developing experiential knowledge base, while also serving to cascade information to those staff unable to attend. Additionally, increasing this form of content on the site, would serve the dual purpose of increasing the web traffic to the site, and demonstrating the Mercian's breadth of activities to its broader audiences⁴.

² <http://merciancollaboration.org.uk>

³ News items

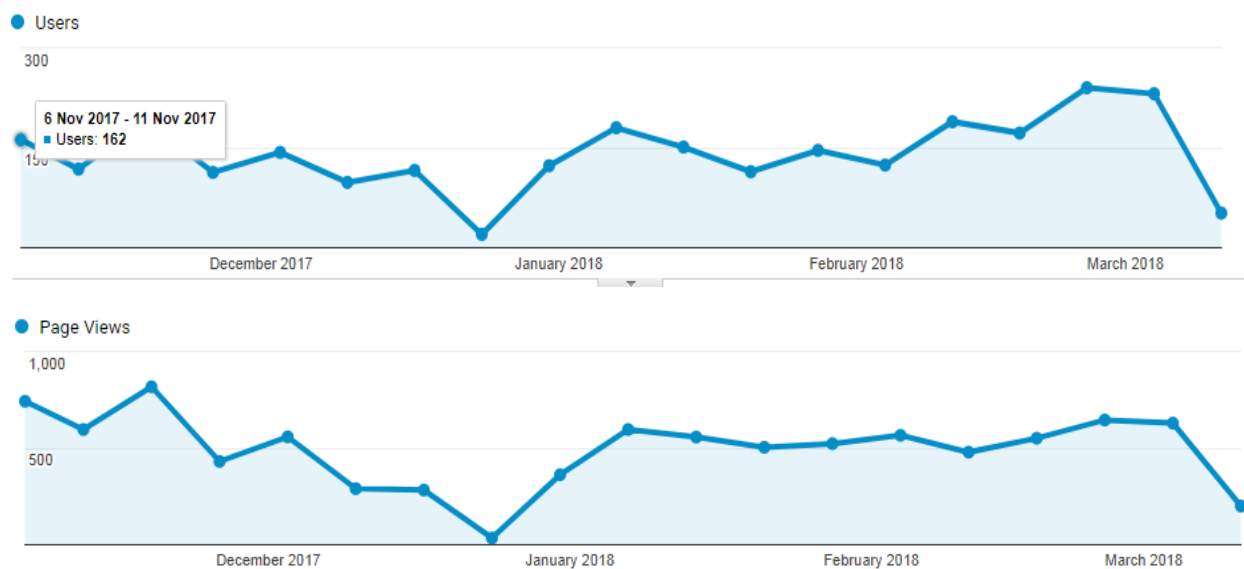
⁴ See Johnson, G.J., 2017. Mercian Website Audiences.

<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Website%20Audiences.pdf>



Ideally, event reports and write ups from hosts or participants, should comprise an essential part of the post-event programme for organisers, and this may well be an area for SIG sponsors to address with their groups. Notably, for all news articles, the MCDO provides a light-touch sub-editor functionality, to ensure readability and provide linkage to other sections of the site.

Weekly accesses remain relatively low but steady, with less than 200 unique weekly on average users, 80.2% of whom originate in the UK (96% within England)⁵, as would be anticipated given the site's audience. Page views vary between 600-800 pages accessed weekly, with noticeable a post-conference bump in traffic. In both cases use of the site over the festive vacation period dipped dramatically, as might be anticipated. Efforts to increase the visibility of the Collaboration's activities and drive traffic to the website with unengaged areas of the member community remain ongoing.



Other Channels

The Mercian Twitter account (@MercianCollab) has grown to 122 current followers, and while interaction and retweets remain limited, there has been some engagement from delegates to MC events. Content and alerts are pushed through this channel by the MCDO during working days, and on other occasions as time allows. Additionally, a new 'open to all Mercian member staff' discussion list (mercian-collaboration@jiscmail.ac.uk) was launched in early March to increase awareness of events, activities and developments by the Collaboration. While discussions may grow organically on the list, for now it serves as a channel for the MCDO to distribute regular updates and will be especially of value for those not following the Twitter account. After one-week (13th March) list membership stands at 20, and it is hoped it will grow as SIG and Directors make their staff aware of its existence.

⁵ (1) UK: 80.2% (2) US: 10.3% (3) South Korea: 2% (4) India 1.4% (5) Germany (0.6%)



Sector Intelligence

A survey for Directors was distributed, following discussions at the Nov 2018 meeting, to collate information and views regarding the relative importance of digital preservation (DP) within member libraries, along with any potential for pursuing digital preservation training (DPT) as a regional endeavour. A report based on the findings has been produced, which indicates limited interest in formal training, but a recognised library staff skills gap and a slowly developing priority within services.

Following the Regional Collaborations' Executive Manager meeting (Feb 2018, see below) outcomes and insights were reported to the SG. Notable points of interest included discussions around staffing, sponsorship, disaster recovery, events and conference programmes along with demonstrating tangible member benefits. These insights will serve to inform into the Collaboration's future strategic and operational considerations. Issues of specific interest to SIG, will be shared through the normal committee meeting programme and informal discussions with subgroup chairs.

Training and Development

The MCDO attended the *GDPR and Copyright* event (Leicester, 2nd Feb 2018) hosted by the Mercian Copyright Group. He also attended a meeting between three other of his regional counterparts (SCURL, NoWAL and M25 Group) in mid-February (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, 13th Feb 2018), for an exchange of strategic, operation and practical experience.

Workload

During this period the working split between home office and traveling to/attending meetings or events on Collaboration business has been almost precisely 50:50. Notably, as the Collaboration's activities swell in size an increasing proportion of time is devoted to administration, routinely approaching 30-40% of weekly time expended. This represents a challenge for supporting current and new activities, and is exacerbated when external meeting attendance is required. However, the SG have been made aware, and are taking this into consideration within future activity planning and defining the MCDO's core priorities.