



Collaboration Development Officer's Report

Dr Gaz J Johnson, March 2020

This is an update and overview of Collaboration activities, relating to the Development Officer's work over the period e.Oct 2019-E.Mar 2020.

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Governance

The Steering Group has held one telcon in the past 6 months (Dec 2019), with a second anticipated meeting in February/March cancelled due to Chair unavailability.ⁱ However, the Steering Group have continued to discuss activities and policy matters online in the interim. Support, coordination and liaison with SIG chairs has also continued on an ad hoc/as needed basis during this period. Updates and briefings on the Collaboration have been made available to incoming Directors during this period.

Two policy documents were drawn up and approved by the Steering Group during this period. Firstly, the previously proposed tangible member benefits briefing, which is available online.ⁱⁱ Secondly, a risk register was created, and approved by the Steering Group. The register is available for consultation by Directors but has not been made publicly available. Furthermore, two intelligence briefings were drawn up to support the work of the Conference Group. These were an investigation in delegates at the 2019 event, and a comparative analysis of the NoWAL, Northern Collaboration and Mercian Collaboration's events. Both reports are available online.^{iii & iv} Finally, following SIG feedback, the officer revised the strategic plan for re-consideration by the Steering Group.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

A number of SIG Committee meetings were attended during this period, including the Conference, Marketing & Communications and Metadata Group meetings. Supporting the Conference Group, its chair and sponsor, has continued as a significant and regular ongoing coordination activity. Regretfully, attendance at all SIG events or meetings remains impractical, with many events scheduled for different days in the same week. This make attendance impossible within the limited Officer time resource. However, priority is given to groups where either physical attendance has not been possible for some time, or where particular support needs are evidenced. Attendance at SIG events has continued to be seen as not a priority for the Officer's time.

Notably, following Board requests and subsequent feasibility studies, a new SIG, Deputies & Senior Staff Group (D&SSG) has been established. This met for an inaugural exploratory meeting (27th Nov 2019) at Birmingham, and following a positive outcome, will have met again recently (6th Mar 2020, Leicester). Particular support for this group with respect to its formalisation of purpose is anticipated to continue through the next reporting period.

Alongside this, SIG ongoing related activities have included liaison with group officers, maintaining the online events list, providing governance advice, promoting events, maintaining membership lists and overseeing discussion groups. Notably, with respect to SIG events, calls for central Collaboration funds from SIGs have continued to be few in number, although a number of outline enquiries have been fielded.

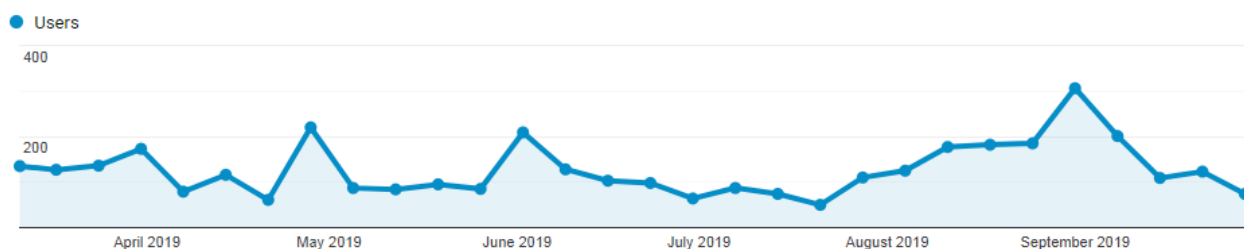
Website, Marketing and Communications^v

The Collaboration website has been maintained and grown with more materials relating to SIG meetings, membership and events being added, with notable additions including a new SIG section (D&SSG) and a microsite for the 2020 Conference. Recent (Feb 2020) planned security updates by the web hosting company caused a minor and temporary degradation to the visible service, which was rapidly rectified. However, bugs within the back-office editing suite took longer to resolve, with hands-on service testing required. Nevertheless, these errors were corrected by late February. Traffic to the site continues at a comparable level to previous reports (**figs 1 & 2**).

Figure 1: Most recent 6 months weekly website users (1.Oct 19-L.Feb 20)



Figure 2: Previous 6 months weekly website users (e.Apr 19-E.Oct 19)



Geographically, the UK remains the primary source of website traffic as expected, with England representing 96.9% of UK access locations (**table 1**).

Table 1: Collaboration Site User Geo-Locations

Rank	Top Geographic Accesses	Previous Reporting Period
1	UK (62.8%)	UK (64.5%)
2	USA (17.8%)	USA (23.1%)
3	Finland (3.8%)	South Korea (3.2%)
4	Netherlands (3.54%)	Netherlands (1.5%)
5	South Korea (2.8%)	Argentina (1.4%)

Marketing & Promotion

Populating the site's news section with fresh content remains largely unrepresentative of the Collaboration's activities (**table 2**), although the Officer has provided a number of press-release items for the news site on key developments (e.g. conference sponsors, D&SS Group). As other items emerge from member staff, event organisers and SIG chairs continue to be encouraged to submit post-event reports, albeit with limited success. Questions over the visibility of the news items, and perhaps the site as a whole, within member organisations remain unclear.

Table 2: Website News Items (past 18 months)

Theme/Topic	News Items (Oct 18-Mar 19)	News Items (Mar-Oct 19)	News Items (Oct 18-Mar 20)
General Collaboration News	0	2	0
Conference Group	0	3	2
Deputies & Senior Staff Group	N/a	N/a	1
Marketing & Communications Group	N/a	0	0
Mercian Copyright Group	0	0	0
Mercian Disability Forum	0	0	0
Mercian Metadata Group	N/a	0	1
RDM Support Group	0	1	0
Mercian Staff Development Group	4	2	2

Our Twitter presence ([@MercianCollab](https://twitter.com/MercianCollab)) grew to 211 followers (200 at last reporting), with events, activities and announcements regularly promoted through this channel. The ‘members only’ discussion list (mercian-collaboration@jiscmail.ac.uk), has risen very slightly in members to 150 (134 at last reporting). List traffic continues to be low, comprising the Officer’s monthly newsletters, plus occasional events or vacancies promoted by other members. An email list has been introduced for the D&SSG.

Training and Development

The respective officers from NoWAL and the Northern Collaboration met with the Officer (27th Nov 2019, Salford), for their annual experience exchange.

External Relations

Regular contact and exchanges of experience with our comparator organisations continues on matters of shared interest. Notably, SCURL and M25 have recently appointed new personnel. Contact with SCONUL continues to be sporadic, and largely concerned with annual subscription queries, Officer admin and website support matters.

Exchanges with CILIP on matters of mutually interest have, following Oct 19’s Board, been followed up. While there are no currently ongoing specific dialogues, members with interest in reforming a regional chartership support group were introduced to staff at CILIP to facilitate their activities. Follow up discussions with MUAL have generated an item on the Board’s March 2020 agenda.

Workload

With the Collaboration now comprising eight SIGs, along with the Board and Steering Group, the Officer’s efforts in coordinating and supporting groups and personnel continues to increase and diversify. During this period 47% of working days included travel to attend meetings or events, mostly within the region.^{vi} This is down on the previous period, and consequently working hours were closer to the salaried norm.

Endnotes

ⁱ The next meeting is a scheduled telcon, 10th May 2020

ⁱⁱ <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/MC%20Tangibles%20and%20Value%20-%20v1.0%20Jan%202020.pdf>

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<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Conference%20Delegate%20Analysis%202019.pdf>

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<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/MC%20NC%20%26%20NoWAL%20Conference%20Analysis.pdf>

^v <http://merciancollaboration.org.uk>

^{vi} 9/19 working days (the Christmas 'quiet' period reducing active travel requirements)