



Collaboration Development Officer's Report, Nov 2017

Dr Gaz J Johnson, 31st October 2017

This report is an update on activities conducted by the Mercian Collaboration (MC) Development Officer (MCDO), covering the period April-Oct 2017. While a moderate, and slowly increasing, portion of time continues to be devoted to general administrative matters and query resolution, the following developments are one to which the MCDO wishes to bring to the Directors' attention.

Website (<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/>)

Traffic

Traffic to the website considerably increased in the wake of the announcement, and hosting of the first Mercian Collaboration Conference (#Mercian17) on 12th September. Subsequently the traffic to the site after this date has continued at a moderately higher level¹, indicating an increased awareness of the site, and hopefully the Mercian Collaboration's activities.



Access to the site has been (in diminishing degree) a result of: direct access, online search, social media reference, referral from other sites and email. An analysis of website audiences was also conducted, with an aim to continuing to appropriately develop the Mercian house-style and authorial tone, and to continue ongoing awareness raising of the Collaboration's activities².

Content

Site content has been developed over this period, including new group sections (MDF), menu augmentations, events and news items, along with routine addition of minutes and other governance related materials. Prior to the conference, an extensive section was created and populated with programme, speaker and details in support of the event. Post-event, session recordings and presentations have also been added to provide a rich source of content for delegates, as well as those unable to attend on the day³.

Following Steering Group requests, a new online calendar has also been introduced, providing an 'at a glance' overview of past, present and planned future events and meetings⁴. This includes links to special interest subgroup meeting dates. The intention is that all elements of the Collaboration should refer to this calendar ahead of selecting dates for meetings and events to avoid potential clashes within the region.

¹ Unique users weekly average: May/June: 65, L.Sept/Oct 161

² See: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/key-documents>

³ See <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/conference-group>

⁴ For the periods 2016-2018. See <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/events-calendar>



Unanticipated Costs

As will be noted more fully by the Treasurer in his report to Directors, unanticipated additional support costs from the website service hosts have reduced the ability of the MCDO to develop the site's functionality and appearance, or to resolve any minor faults. As such, any functional or cosmetic development of the site is unlikely for the foreseeable future, to avoid incurring any costs.

Governance

Following the finalised election process, governance activities have mostly revolved around briefing and updating the incoming Steering Group officers, and providing support to the Steering Group in general. Additionally, some work has been committed to supporting the developing governance and reporting structures of the Mercian SIGs. It is anticipated in the next business period that, drawing other collaboration best practice, an outline Collaboration sponsorship policy will be developed. Work on normalising subgroup governance practices will likely also continue, seeking to more closely align and standardise them across the collaboration. A brief paper on this has been provided for agreement at today's meeting.

Special Interest Groups

The MCDO has continued, wherever possible, to attend meetings of Mercian SIGs and to provide support to their committees outside of this time. He is especially pleased to report the facilitation of the new Mercian Disabilities Forum (MDF) in July, alongside support for the other SIGs. It should be noted that while special interest subgroup support demands vary, and are often minor, over the past two years the number of Collaboration SIGs constituted has quadrupled⁵. As a result, anticipating continued SIG developments and potential future growth, support for these groups will continue to make noticeable increased demands on the MCDO's time⁶.

Conference Group

A considerable portion of time during this period has been devoted to supporting and facilitating the work of the Conference Group, in planning, organising and delivering on the Mercian Conference. While a successful endeavour, it was notable that this support resulted in, at times, an unanticipated higher demand on the MCDO's considerably limited time-resource⁷, impacting his ability to support other Collaboration activities. While it was anticipated supporting the conference would make noticeable demands on his time, further consideration of how this is managed in future years is required, and will be reviewed by the SG.

Steering Group & Directors

During this period, the MCDO has personally met with the Treasurer on one occasion, the Chair on three instances and the Vice Chair once. These meetings were to facilitate handover, governance and support Steering Group meetings.

⁵ Nov 2015: SDG, Nov 2017: CG, MDF, RDMSG and SDG

⁶ Comparatively, other regional officers not only attend meetings but also SIG events, to facilitate communications and promote collaborative activities. Such a degree of engagement by the Officer for the Mercian remains, currently, unviable alongside other priorities.

⁷ On occasion, noticeably exceeding salaried weekly hours by a considerable margin



The Officer has also, finally, found time to complete the full evaluative analysis report based on the visits to Directors conducted during 2015-2016. The purpose of this report was to establish areas of potential synergy or collaborative focus, while also providing a critical view of the perceived and desired member value conferred through Mercian membership. This has been submitted to the Chair for initial review, before anticipated further distribution and initial discussions by the SG.

Communications

The MCDO has continued to facilitate and coordinate communications between Directors, SG and SIGs, particularly relating to aspects of operational organisation and administration. Tweets on behalf of the Collaboration promoting news items, new web content and events have seen a gradual increase in the Mercian social media presence's followers (**@MercianCollab**). This increased to a moderate degree in the wake of #Mercian17 related tweets, and likely are contributing to the website's continued traffic.

An annual report for the Mercian Collaboration is currently planned, and will be developed in tandem with the Chair and SG, while drawing on content provided by the SIGs. This is envisaged as a promotional in tone and anticipated readership, but will also allow a modicum of reflexive practice. In a related professional capacity, the MCDO has recently submitted an article on the Collaboration to SCONUL Focus.

External Collaboration

The MCDO has continued to support, and be supported, by other regional collaboration officers and executive managers throughout the UK via their private distribution list. He met with his fellow SCONUL Regional Officers for NoWAL and the Northern Collaboration in June (Sheffield) to exchange experiences and updates, as well as to pool knowledge relating to operational concerns. Informal meetings various officers (M25, NoWAL, White Rose) was also facilitated during attendance at the NoWAL Conference (Lancaster, July).

A meeting with all regional collaboration officers, SCONUL and non-SCONUL, is planned for late 2017/e.2018.

Notably, contact and liaison with SCONUL during this period has continued at a minimal level.