



Collaboration Development Officer's Report

Dr Gaz J Johnson, March 2022

This is an update and overview of Collaboration activities relating to the Development Officer's work over the early Oct 2021 to mid-March 2022.

Page | 1

Governance

Since the last Board, the Steering Group met online twice (Nov '21 and Feb '22), with the Officer providing regular support in terms of convening and minute taking for meetings, alongside monitoring progress against actions. The Officer has also continued to offer particular support for individual members in their capacity as Collaboration officers. Additionally, one new director was met with informally to brief them on the Collaboration. Alongside this, the Officer has been involved in coordinating efforts to explore the potential relaunches of the Copyright and Marketing and Communications Groups, alongside engaging in exchanges with the (currently unaffiliated) Midlands Library Research Support Group as a potential new subgroups.

Research & Reports

Other than regular updates to Steering Group and subgroup committees, this period saw five substantive reporting activities.

- **Conference Evaluation:** Two post conference analytical reports – the first exploring member booking and attendance patterns, the latter offering evaluative insight into the delegate experience. Both reports have been made available publicly, following their presentation to Steering Group and Conference Group respectively.ⁱ
- **Member Survey:** Secondly, stemming from desires to explore member needs and expectations with respect to future Collaboration conferences, the Officer disseminated and analysed a member survey towards the end of 2021. Previously, presented to Conference Group, and shared with Steering Group for information, this has offered an evidence base to inform conference planning activities. It has also been made publicly available.ⁱⁱ
- **Annual Report:** The Annual Report 2021 was authored and edited by the Officer, along with the collation of entries from various member representatives.
- **Sponsorship Policy:** Following consultation with the Conference Group and ALN, the Sponsor Policy for 2022 was substantially revised and updated and brought closer in line with national norms. This has since been approved by Steering Group and is available online.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Risk Register:** At the request of Steering Group, the risk register was updated and amended to reflect the Collaboration's current operational environment.

Operations

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

As always, a large portion of this time was devoted to support for the Collaboration’s subgroups. Most notably, the post-Conference wash-up, evaluation and 2022 planning initiation period saw considerable time and attention devoted to support for the Conference Group. Subgroup meetings attended during this period included: Conference Group (Oct, Nov, Dec ’21 and Jan, Feb (2), Mar ’22), Deputies (Nov ’21), MDF (Nov ’21) and MSDG (Mar ’22). Facilitation and record keeping support for all subgroups continues as an ongoing task.

There were no event funding requests during this period.

Following outline enquiries related to a prospective new subgroup (see governance above), an updated and clarified version of the subgroup proposal template form was created. However, to date progress of exploring this new subgroup is pending their response to our initial request for further information.

With the two-year absence of activity from both the Copyright and Marketing and Communications Groups, an effort is being expended currently to examine if either or both groups can be reinitiated. It is notable interest in the latter is greater than the former. A Marketing & Communications Group meeting will have been hosted by the Officer 21/3/22 and the results shared with Steering Group for their decision.

Marketing & Promotion

The Officer has continued to operate promotional activities on behalf of the Collaboration. These have notably included four new editions of the Collaboration’s monthly newsletter^{iv} and various news items postings to the website. Alongside this, and external relation activity detailed below, the Officer has continued to promote subgroup events, and all Collaboration activities via our social media channels too.

With fewer events than the pre-Covid period, there have continued to be fewer news items relating to events. However, where possible Collaboration activities across the region have been highlighted in news items as shown below (**Table 1**). Additionally, all group meetings, as well as events, are now routinely added to the site’s events pages and displayed on the homepage to ensure maximum visibility of Collaboration related activity.

Table 1: Website News Items (past 18 months)

Theme/Topic	Oct 20-Mar 21	Mar 21-Oct 21	Oct 21-Mar 22
General Collaboration News	3	4	1
Conference Group	0	5	6
Deputies & Senior Staff Group	0	0	0
Marketing & Communications Group	0	0	1
Mercian Copyright Group	0	0	1*
Mercian Disability Forum	0	0	0
Mercian Metadata Group	1	0	0
Mercian Staff Development Group	5	2	3
Total news items	9	11	11

*Same item as Marketing and Communications Group

Our Twitter following ([@MercianCollab](#)) shrank marginally to 237 (238 at last reporting), although events, activities and announcements still regularly promoted through this channel. Interaction though, with the exception of the conference ([#Mercian21](#)), remains sporadic. The members only discussion list ([mercian-collaboration@jiscmail.ac.uk](#)), has seen a small overall rise in members to 194 (180 at last reporting). List traffic continues to be low, but the regular newsletter distributed via this channel reportedly has been successfully cascaded further within member teams.

Website Maintenance & Usage

Aside from the accessibility evaluative study, the site^v has been maintained with content and materials relating to groups being added. Considerable content has been added (audio-visual media and slides) as outputs from the conference '21. Notably, this is the first Collaboration conference where recordings of all sessions have been made openly available following the event. Materials from a number of MSDG events have also been added within news items. These have included some session recordings but also speaker slides.

As is traditional, site traffic for this half year is lower than that from Apr-Sept, when the speaker call, delegate bookings and conference itself boost it considerably. (fig 1 & 2).

Figure 1: Most recent 6 months website users (weekly, Oct 21-Mid-Mar 22)

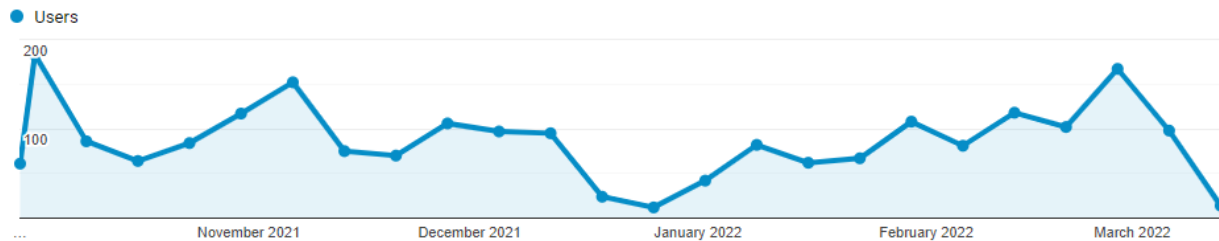
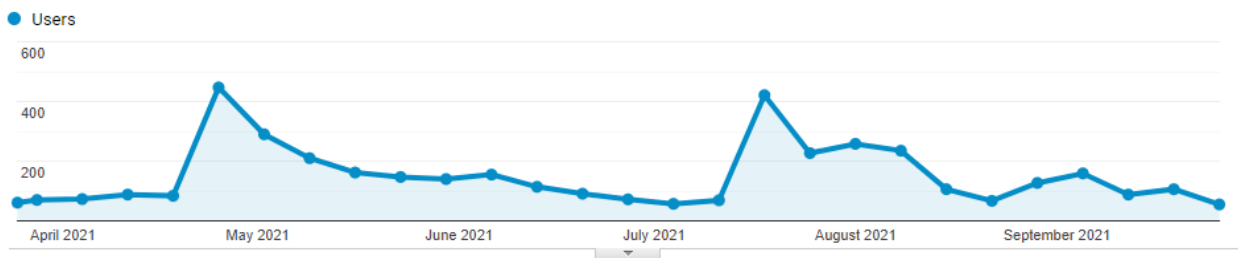


Figure 2: Previous reporting period website users (weekly, Apr-Sept 21)



Geographically, the UK remains the primary source of website traffic as expected, with England representing 83.5% of national access locations: down from 85.6% last reporting period (Table 1).

Table 2: Collaboration Site User Geo-Locations

Rank	Top Geographic Accesses	Previous Reporting Period
1	UK (50%)	UK (49.1%)
2	USA (7.1%)	USA (6.8%)
3	Netherlands (6.0%)	Indonesia (6.6%)
4	Indonesia (5.4%)	Netherlands (5.2%)
5	Finland (5.1%)	Finland (4.3%)

Relationship Management

SCONUL

Interactions with SCONUL staff remained low during this reporting period, beyond occasional requests for information, contract enquiries and responses to calls for involvement on behalf of the Collaboration.

External Relations

The regular ongoing liaison with other regional groups continued, with most notably weekly exchanges between the Officer's counter parts at ALN. On behalf of the Collaboration, the Officer convened and participated in the annual regional library groups colloquium in February, where representatives from SCURL, WHELP, and M25 were present. Members from ALN and White Rose were unavoidably detained elsewhere. Additionally, a meeting in mid-Dec '21 was hosted with ALN's representatives to explore particular areas of mutual interest – notably experiences relating to online conferences.

Workload

Overview

After many years of discussion, Steering Group finally made arrangements to increase the Officer's hours to 0.4FTE (from 0.2). This reflects the continued high demands made on his time by constituent subgroups and committees, and in the running of the Collaboration's ongoing operations. Notably, operational, administrative and strategic support for the Conference Group continues to be a substantial portion of this time. Other subgroups, alongside Steering Group and Board, continue as noted above to make use of the Officer's facilitation to varying degrees.

The Officer's job role was also rebadged during this process to Executive Officer.

Training and Development

Outside of some minor self-directed research and study, the Officer attended an Academic Libraries North (ALN) workshop on conference preparations on behalf of the Conference Group (March '22). A report on the event was shared with the group.

Endnotes

ⁱ See (1) Outline Analysis and Delegate Demographics and (2) Evaluation reports available here:

<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/cg-agendas-minutes-and-reports>.

ⁱⁱ Accessible via the above link, or directly at:

<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Conference%20Group%20Member%20Survey%202021.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Available at: <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sponsorship-policy>. Suggestions for sponsor leads also welcomed.

^{iv} Distributed during this period at the start of November and December '21, and February and March '22, via the mercian-collaboration@jiscmail list.

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