



## Collaboration Development Officer's Report

**Dr Gaz J Johnson, October 2021**

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

Page | 1

### Governance

Since the last Board, the Steering Group met online twice (April and July), with the induction and support of the new Chair and Group members forming part of the Officer's activities. With the appointment of a Treasurer, these responsibilities have also been handed over, although ongoing advice for the post-holder remains a consideration. Interactions with SCOUNL staff remained low during this reporting period, beyond occasional requests for information. Discussions with respect to the Collaboration's Terms of Reference, Strategic Plan and MoU with SCOUNL have also formed elements of focus.

### Research & Reports

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

- At the request of the Steering Group, a major evaluative exercise reviewing the Collaboration's website in terms of accessibility was performed. This was conducted alongside the Officer's development of a familiarity with tools and standards in this area, alongside running various evaluative tests on the site. See the July '21 Steering Group minutes ([SG: 21/16\(c\)](#)) for the conclusions from this work. The development of accessibility protocols for web content remain pending time to develop.
- Secondly, there has been a range of reporting activity relating to Conference Group activities. Alongside designing and overseeing the distribution of the evaluative feedback, the Officer is currently in the process of collating two evaluative reports based on (a) delegate feedback and (b) attendance. Thanks to the online format, a richer dataset has been accessible, although time limitations prevents deeper analysis. Once finalised these reports will be circulated to the Board and Conference Group.
- Finally, a survey and brief analysis on behalf of the Deputies & Senior Staff Group to establish themes and scheduling for future meetings was also conducted.

### Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Notably throughout this period a large portion of the Officer's time has been devoted to supporting the Conference Group and its activities. Additionally, as normally encountered, not all group meetings or events could be attended during this period, although the majority of them were. Meetings actually attended included: Steering Group (April & July), Conference Group (April (\*2), June and August (\*2)), Deputies (May) and MSDG (June (\*2), October).

No meetings or events were hosted by Disability Forum, Metadata, MarComs or Copyright Groups, although representatives were engaged with around the July Steering Group meeting. Where time allows the Officer has continued to provide a minute taking service for subgroups. The request for funding from the MSDG for one event (TransAwareness) was supported during this period.

## Website Maintenance & Usage<sup>1</sup>

Aside from the accessibility evaluative study, the site has been maintained with content and materials relating to groups being added. A new section dedicated to the Conference was added in the early summer, and as of this report audio-visual materials relating to the event continue to be added to the site (mainly hosted externally).

Traffic to the site has been modest if moderately healthier than in the previous half-year, although notably the two main spikes relate to the launch of the conference call for speakers and the opening of delegate bookings for the same (**fig 1 & 2**).

Figure 1: Most recent 6 months website users (weekly, Apr-Sept 21)

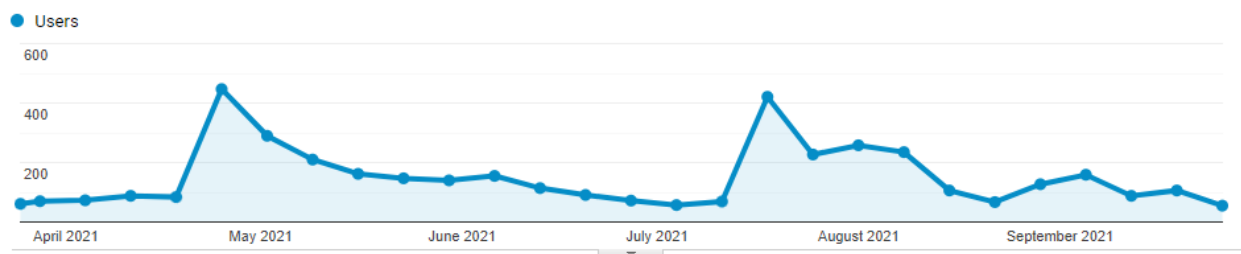
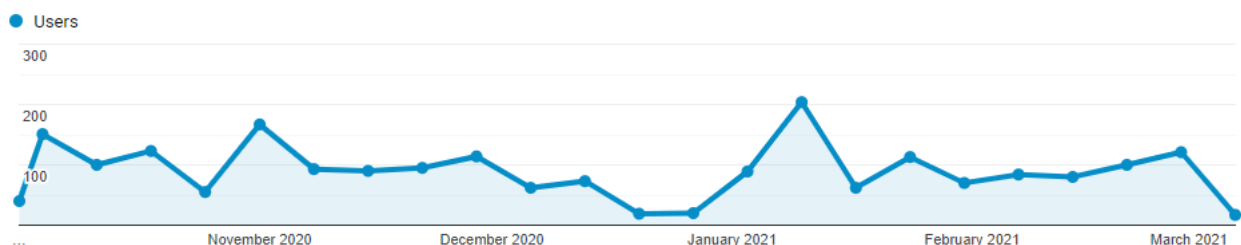


Figure 2: Previous reporting period website users (weekly, Oct-Mar 21)



Geographically, the UK remains the primary source of website traffic as expected, with England representing 85.6% of national access locations: up from 80.1% last reporting period (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Collaboration Site User Geo-Locations

Rank	Top Geographic Accesses	Previous Reporting Period
1	UK (49.1%)	UK (55.0%)
2	USA (6.8%)	USA (9.9%)
3	Indonesia (6.6%)	Finland (8.4%)
4	Netherlands (5.2%)	Netherlands (7.7%)
5	Finland (4.3)	China (7.3%)

## Marketing & Promotion

The lockdown and remote working period has continued to significantly impact on the Collaboration's subgroup activities, with notably a more modest offering of events. Those arranged were largely organised by the MSDG. A healthy number of news items were added to the website (**Table 2**), albeit biased towards general Collaboration and conference event activities. Regrettably, no external reflection on the conference has been arranged, but the Officer will draft a summary promotional in the light of the ongoing evaluations and an additional one linked to recruitment to future organising committee members.

Table 2: Website News Items (past 18 months)

Theme/Topic	Mar 20-Oct 20	Oct 20-Mar 21	Mar 21-Oct 21
<b>General Collaboration News</b>	4	3	4
<b>Conference Group</b>	3	0	5
<b>Deputies &amp; Senior Staff Group</b>	0	0	0
<b>Marketing &amp; Communications Group</b>	0	0	0
<b>Mercian Copyright Group</b>	0	0	0
<b>Mercian Disability Forum</b>	0	0	0
<b>Mercian Metadata Group</b>	1	1	0
<b>Mercian Staff Development Group</b>	2	5	2
<b>Total news items</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>

Our Twitter presence ([@MercianCollab](https://twitter.com/MercianCollab)) grew slightly to 238 followers (232 at last reporting), with events, activities and announcements regularly promoted through this channel. Interaction though, with the exception of the conference ([#Mercian21](https://twitter.com/#Mercian21)), remains sporadic. The members only discussion list ([mercian-collaboration@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:mercian-collaboration@jiscmail.ac.uk)), has seen a small overall rise in members to 180 (168 at last reporting). Due to the low level of events, list traffic also continues to be low.

The Officer has maintained a regular newsletter to the general discussion list promoting forthcoming and recent events, Collaboration news and activities, along with some matters of wider sectoral interest.

### Events

Alongside contributing as a speaker to the conference, the Officer acted as the host for the second day, in place of the subgroup chair who was on vacation. This included delivering the welcome and chairing the wrap up session, alongside behind the scenes coordination. Additionally, in this reporting period, one final virtual networking event was hosted in April. While this event was well received, more pressing demands on the Officer’s time made it impossible to run any more for the foreseeable future.<sup>ii</sup> However, the format has been noted by a number of subgroups as one they would like to adopt for future events of their own.

### Training and Development

Outside of some self-directed research and study related to web accessibility, none.

### External Relations

A continued periodic liaison with the other regional collaborations’ officers has been maintained throughout this time, alongside a meeting with the ALN Officers hosted online in July. There has been a continued exchange of experience and queries relating to workload and conference organisation as part of these conversations. A further end of year meeting, focussing especially on online conference experiences, is planned for early December.

### Workload

The Officer continues to work on a 0.2FTE arrangement, with this reporting period contains 24 working days, plus 4 vacation days taken.<sup>iii</sup> Notably within this reporting period, the 2021 Conference saw the largest demand on the Officer’s time since the first such event (2017). While the online format was part of this reason, a more frequent need for active steer, advice and active task assistance to enable the group to their event successfully were also encountered.



Despite the continued lower level of subgroup activity, demands on the Officer's time have remained high. Concerns have been discussed with the Chair regarding the impacts any uptick in either subgroup activities and a necessity to travel to physical events will have on the Officer's availability and outputs. Additionally, increasingly it is notable scant 'quiet' time exists during the summer period, due to the proximity of the conference, for vacation time to be taken without impacting on progression to the event.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>i</sup> <http://merciancollaboration.org.uk>

<sup>ii</sup> It is hoped an increase in subgroup events (online/hybrid/physical) will provide a richer level of member engagement in the forthcoming year.

<sup>iii</sup> Or 28 working weeks in total