

# MERCIAN RDM Support Group Report

**Authors:** Gareth Cole, Ben Veasey, Laurian Williamson

## Background

On 7th June 2016, a Mercian badged event on Research Data Management (RDM) was held at the University of Leicester. This event brought together Librarians and other Professional Services staff who were either working in RDM roles or where interested in developments in the area.

The event highlighted that there was a broad spectrum of knowledge, awareness and resource across the Mercian Group members. Part of the feedback from the event was that attendees would like to have more chances to connect and network (both virtually and in person) with other Mercian institutions. It was agreed that a Mercian RDM Support Group would have benefits for the Institutions involved (for example, by reducing duplication across multiple Institutions) as well as for the professional development of interested staff.

Consequently, on 24th August 2016, Laurian Williamson, Grant Denkinson (both Leicester), Gareth Cole (Loughborough), Ben Veasey (now Nottingham, previously NTU) met with Gaz Johnson to discuss possible options for the Support Group.

## Aims & objectives of the group

The Mercian Steering Group approved the establishment of Mercian RDM Support Group in October 2016, on the understanding that the group will:

- Enable members to **exchange** experiences, knowledge, shared problems etc. with other practitioners working within the Mercian area in a safe, supportive, and friendly environment. It will include those institutions and practitioners not currently actively involved in RDM staff but who are looking to get involved.
- Conduct and commission **research** into best practice in RDM.
- Enable **training resources** to be created and shared (potentially via the Mercian website). These will include training for end users as well as train the trainer sessions and could **reduce duplication**, freeing up staff time.
- Investigate what **comparator** Institutions are doing in the RDM arena and collate an overview of this work. It can also signpost to existing resources and help for those members who are less experienced in the RDM area.
- Investigate options for working at scale (training materials etc.) as well as looking for potential **funding opportunities** to help build such collaborative resources.
- **Develop a possible buddy system where more experienced practitioners act as a more personal support network for those who are new to the area.**

## Recent activity in support of the aims & objectives

The creation of a MERCIAN RDM Support Group is developing rapidly. The three authors of this report have met in person on a number of occasions (see timeline below) and are in regular contact via email.

A first event under the Support group is planned for late April 2017. This will be hosted at Loughborough. In addition to face-to-face meetings of the support group (anticipated to be twice a year) the co-ordination group members have considered other avenues of support. A number of these are concrete, such as a private Jiscmail list to discuss ideas and ask questions which participants may not want to ask on a larger list (e.g. RESEARCH-DATAMAN). Other ideas are subject to take up and approval by future Support Group members. One of these is the idea of a buddying or mentoring system where inexperienced RDM colleagues can be partnered with more experienced colleagues who can assist with specific questions or concerns on a private 1:1 or 1:2 basis.

At the meeting in April we plan to launch the Jiscmail list and hope to have at least one external speaker (ideally a researcher) to discuss their perspective on research data management. We shall also look to ask for at least one volunteer to join the co-ordination group. It is hoped that this volunteer will be from a less research intensive university to provide a different viewpoint on the group.

Also at the meeting in April we plan to re-run the CARDIO (<http://cardio.dcc.ac.uk/>) exercise which was run at the event in June 2016. This will give an indication of how the MERCIAN institutions are progressing with RDM services. This is something which could be run once a year and would complement similar exercises and surveys run by, e.g. the Digital Curation Centre (DCC).

The authors of this report have also agreed with Gaz Johnson that we will present on the Support Group at the MERCIAN conference in 2017.

## Timeline

- 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016 – “Research Data Management: challenges and opportunities”. Initial event hosted at Leicester University and arranged under the auspices of the MERCIAN Staff Development Group.
  - Arising out of discussions on the day was a proposal to create a MERCIAN RDM Support group
- 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016 – Gareth, Ben, Laurian and Gaz Johnson met to discuss what could be done under the MERCIAN umbrella and how a RDM Support Group could function.
- October 2016 – MERCIAN Steering Group approves the setting up of RDMSG
- 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017 – Gareth, Ben and Laurian meet to discuss next moves (see appendix A). The main moves were:
  - An event would be hosted at Loughborough in April (provisionally w/c 24<sup>th</sup> April) where the RDM SG would be officially launched
  - A mailing list would be set up on Jiscmail. This would be a private list but open to interested RDM people at MERCIAN institutions (Library, Research Office and IT staff)
- 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017 – Jiscmail list created (MERCIAN-RDM@jiscmail.ac.uk)

# Appendix A: Minutes of Mercian RDM Sub-Group Planning Meeting

9<sup>th</sup> January 2017 - Loughborough University

Gareth Cole (Loughborough), Laurian Williamson (Leicester), Benjamin Veasey (Nottingham)

## Mailing List

- It was proposed that the Mercian RDM Sub-Group make use of a private mailing list to allow members of the group to interact with each other. It would offer group members a forum to raise RDM related questions, share useful resources and discuss latest developments.
- It was proposed that the Jiscmail platform be used to host the mailing list.
- It was proposed that the first post(s) be used as a way of introducing group members.
- It was agreed that there needed to be a broad commitment to populating the mailing list fairly frequently in order to encourage participation. A new post at least once per week or once every other week was proposed.
- Initial promotion of the existence of the mailing list would be done by contacting attendees of the Mercian RDM workshop held in the summer of 2016.

**ACTION – BV to set up Jiscmail mailing list and share administration permissions with GC & LW**

## Events

### Mercian Conference

- The coordination group were under the impression that the RDM Sub-Group were to be invited to attend and present at the Mercian Conference later on in the year.
- It was agreed that the form that this presentation should take would be as follows:
  - The rationale behind forming the RDM Sub-Group
  - The intended audience of the RDM Sub-Group
  - What the RDM Sub-Group will offer its members
  - Possibly an activity based on CARDIO.

### RDM Sub-Group Kick-Off Event

- It was proposed that the RDM Sub-Group hold an event to launch the group and that this could be 'branded' as a lunch with some presentations either side.
- It was agreed that we should aim for this event to be held in the week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.
- GC indicated that Loughborough would be happy to host the event.
- The coordination group discussed a list of possible speakers to invite to present at the event, including:
  - Matthew Partridge (Cranfield) or Georgina Parsons (Cranfield)
  - Gareth Knight (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine)
  - Representative from the UK Data Archive (Libby Bishop?)
  - Representative from the Digital Curation Centre (Martin Donnelly/Angus Whyte?)
- The coordination group discussed potential budget for the event.
  - It was agreed that we would want clarification on the potential budget for holding such an event so that we would be able to invite expert speakers by covering travel expenses and put on a lunch buffet.

- LW highlighted that the Mercian RDM event held in the summer of 2016 cost in the region of £1200. However, it was noted that there were quite a few external speakers invited to that event and so the budget for the proposed launch event for the RDM Sub-Group may be smaller based on the fact that fewer speakers would be invited to present.

**ACTION – LW to collate a list of potential speakers**

**ACTION – LW to contact Gaz Johnson regarding potential budget for the launch event and when we would need to apply for funds from Mercian.**

**ACTION – GC to confirm whether Loughborough would be able to host a launch event W/C 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.**

## Training Resources

- It was agreed that the coordination group should not create new training resources at present but should instead share pre-existing resources that members have found to be useful.
- It was discussed that resources highlighting researcher workflows would be helpful in order to understand how RDM would feature within them.
- LW highlighted that it might be useful to coordinate an updated activity around CARDIO with the intention of benchmarking progress over time.

**ACTION – All to share useful resources via the mailing list once this is setup.**

**ACTION – All to consider how a CARDIO based activity might be incorporated into the Mercian Conference event.**

## Mercian Website

- It was thought that there was potential in creating and managing a page on the Mercian website so that contact information, upcoming events and useful links (such as the mailing list) could be posted.

**ACTION – LW to contact Gaz Johnson regarding information on the CMS used and potential editing rights for LW, GC and BV.**

## Buddy Offering

- It was agreed that a buddy offering should be developed to provide members of the RDM Sub-Group with the ability to seek advice and guidance from more experienced members around the topic of RDM.
- It was agreed that the RDM Sub-Group mailing list should be used to as an initial point to understand and engage with interested individuals.

**ACTION – LW to provide a brief description of what is meant by a buddy offering**

**ACTION – All - Description and request for signalling of interest to be posted on the RDM Sub-Group mailing list once this has been set up.**

## Working at Scale/Investigating Funding Opportunities

- It was agreed that the RDM Sub-Group would monitor the latest developments within the Higher Education sector, including any potential funding opportunities. Potential areas for inclusion of RDM based advocacy/support
  - Midlands Engine (it could be argued that RDM falls within the 'skills' element)

- Midlands 3 Cities Doctoral Training Partnerships (it was highlighted that the RDM Sub-Group should have a presence within this)
- CENTA (NERC) – Continue (as LW is currently doing) to be involved in PhD training. It was highlighted that there would be room for the RDM Sub-Group members to be invited to training activities provided as a development exercise in which they could learn about what RDM training covers, how it is delivered and what sort of questions are asked by attendees.

**ACTION – LW to share information around her work with CENTA and think about opportunities for delivering training but also to raise awareness about local contacts for RDM within participating institutions.**

## Report for Mercian

- An update report is due to the Mercian Directors by the 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2017.
- The deadline for submission is 9am 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2017.
- It was agreed that the report should report on:
  - the rationale behind forming the Mercian RDM Sub-Group and who the target audience is for membership
  - formation of the RDM Sub-Group mailing list
  - the proposal of the buddy offering
  - our intention to hold a launch event in the week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.

**ACTION – All to contribute to the development and review of the report via a Google Drive folder set up by GC**

## Coordination Group

- It was agreed that the coordination group would seek an additional member from a non-research intensive institution.

**ACTION – All to post invitation for signalling interest via the mailing list once this has been set up.**