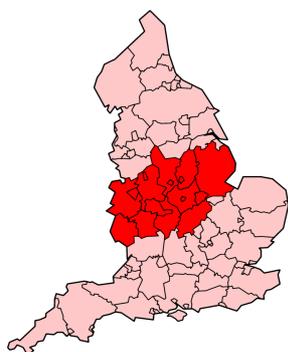




Launching Midlands African Studies Hub (MASH)

Thanks to everyone who came to the Researching Africa Day at the University of Birmingham on 20 September 2017. For those who were not there, it was a great event, and particularly rich and enjoyable because of the participation of researchers and faculty from across the Midlands. This led to discussions about trying to establish a network or hub to make it easier for those of us working on African Studies in the Midlands to stay in touch and share ideas and research.

To that end, I proposed that we might set up the Midlands African Studies Hub (MASH) to promote and coordinate research on Africa in the area. Two important advantages of MASH is that it will help us to connect students working in the Midlands into a larger and stronger community, and to better coordinate activities, which could include splitting the costs of inviting African speakers and building stronger partnerships with African research institutions – a key priority for many of us. To be clear: MASH is not intended to be a formal organization, or to cost any money to run, and we are very keen not to step on anyone's toes! The idea is simply to generate an email list so that we can circulate information, a very simple webpage with the names and profiles of researchers – so that we can all see who is working in a similar area to us – and potentially to organise a pan-Midlands event every year or so to bring us together. Such an event might oscillate between being focussed on faculty and graduate level researchers, and it is hoped that this event would rotate around different institutions in the Midlands.



Based on our discussion at the Researching Africa Day, MASH would have the following characteristics:

- Everyone working academically on Africa within the Midlands area is welcome to be a part of MASH.
- African studies is to be broadly understood and inclusive of different methodologies and subject areas.
- The email list would only be used to circulate calls for papers, promote larger events, and publicise MASH activities to prevent people from being inundated with new messages.
- A simple website will be put together (perhaps on WordPress) to house profiles of the people working on African studies in the Midlands. Only those who agree will be included on the email list and webpage.
- I am happy to coordinate MASH unless there is anyone else that would like to do so. Ideally, in the future this role would rotate around the different research institutions.

- Each research institution that would like to be involved is invited to nominate one person to be the “MASH point person”, ensure that emails and information is circulated, and feed back on issues such as suitable dates for any future meetings.

If you were not present at Researching Africa Day and would like to join the MASH email list or volunteer to be a “MASH point person” please send an email with your contact details and position to n.cheeseman@bham.ac.uk with the subject line “MASH”.

If you would also like your profile and contact details to be featured on the MASH website, please make sure that you include a picture, a short bio (up to 150 words), and your preferred contact details in your email. Please note: those who attended Researching Africa Day will automatically be added to the email list, but no one will be added to the website unless they contact me.

If you have any suggestions, please do get in touch.

I look forward to seeing everyone in the near future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nic Cheeseman', written in a cursive style.

Dr Nic Cheeseman
Professor of Democracy, University of Birmingham

29 September 2017