

# Research Information Network ADVISORY BOARD

## NOTE FROM THE MEETING OF 4 APRIL 2006

### *Action points in red italics*

#### Present:

Robert Burgess (University of Leicester) (Chair)  
Michael Anderson (University of Edinburgh)  
John Coggins (University of Glasgow)  
Mike Cruise (University of Birmingham)  
John Feather (University of Loughborough)  
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)  
David Ingram (University College London)  
Michael Jubb (RIN Director)  
Roger Kain (University of Exeter)  
Elaine Martin (University of Newcastle)  
Will Naylor (HEFCE)  
Kevin Schürer (University of Essex)  
Jean Sykes (London School of Economics)  
Anne Trefethen (University of Oxford)  
David Walton (British Antarctic Survey)  
Jan Wilkinson (British Library)

#### Apologies

Judith Elkin (University College Worcester)  
Mark Haggard (Medical Research Council)  
Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)  
Ed Pentz (CrossRef UK)  
Lyn Pykett (University of Aberystwyth)  
Malcolm Read (JISC)

### **1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed members.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

See above.

### **3. Minutes of the joint meeting of the Advisory Board and the Funders' Group, 8 December 2005 (*paper RIN/AB/06/01*)**

These were approved, with one minor modification, in item 4, paragraph 4: "in England" to be added after "...access funding has now been integrated into QR allocations".

#### 4. Matters arising

Joint meetings with Funders' Group: in the light of experience from the meeting in December, members agreed with the Chair that the practice of holding an annual joint meeting with the Funders' Group is not appropriate. The respective concerns of the two bodies are difficult to address in a single agenda, and the running of a joint meeting presents a number of practical difficulties. Members noted that the presence at Funders' Group meetings of five Advisory Board members/observers helps to ensure effective liaison between the two bodies.

- ▶ **Bob Burgess to write to Steve Egan, acting Chair of the Funders' Group, to suggest de-coupling of the annual joint meeting.**

#### 5. Director's report (*paper RIN/AB/06/02*)

Members focussed on a number of issues stemming from the report:

Scholarly communications: Michael Jubb confirmed that the new scholarly communications group is an initiative led by the RIN. Members were reassured that they would have an opportunity to provide input to the proposed working groups, which are unlikely to be set up before the summer. A request to include representation from the JISC Executive on the group was agreed.

- ▶ **Rachel Bruce to nominate an individual to represent the JISC Executive on the scholarly communications group.**

Collaborative storage: members agreed about the potential value of the proposed feasibility study into a "National Research Reserve" (NRR) – although there is a challenge in determining how the initiative lends itself to such a pilot. It was suggested that the study could shed light on the extent to which universities would be willing to dispose of low-use printed material, and how the saving in space might be used.

The study could also help to gauge the views of researchers; in this respect, members noted that it might usefully evaluate user behaviour as a prelude to undertaking anything in practice. The discussion at the recent Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Consultative Group had pointed to varying researchers' attitudes towards deduplication, with geographical factors (relative isolation of given institutions) being one determinant. It follows that researchers need to be kept on board when considering disposals or transfers to collaborative storage: gaining their acceptance, especially in disciplines heavily dependent on monographs, would be crucial.

At the same time, members concurred that there are dangers in moving too quickly or suddenly towards collaborative storage – especially in relation to monographs. However, there is a different perspective for serials, and it was agreed that useful and relatively uncontroversial first steps could be taken by focusing on long back-runs of journals, typically in the sciences. Members noted that, in general, geographical location factors are less important for journals – and the British Library's established document delivery service can provide desktop access to journal articles in as little as two hours.

In relation to funding the NRR, members reflected on the desirability of moving away from a transactions-based funding

- ▶ **All to provide any further comments to Michael Jubb.**
- ▶ **Michael Jubb / Jan Wilkinson to confer about how best to deliver views to the forthcoming meeting of HEFCE's Strategic Development Fund Panel.**

<p>system.</p> <p>In conclusion, members underlined the need for robust arguments to demonstrate the added value to researchers of moving towards a collaborative storage solution.</p>	
<p><u>Future of the RAE</u>: the review of the future of the RAE had only just been announced, but it is clear that the RIN has an interest in this inasmuch as any new evaluation framework will necessarily englobe information issues, notably relating to the categorisation of content and metrics to assess the categories. Members expressed their concern at a reliance on metrics, particularly in the arts and humanities, and the difficulty of evolving metrics that are useful, reliable and objective. In addition, it was felt that there is a danger in defining inputs as metrics to the detriment of output measures – although it was observed that the distinction between the two is sometimes blurred.</p>	<p>▶ <i>Michael Jubb to consult with a view to submitting an RIN contribution to the discussion paper, once this is published in May.</i></p>
<p><u>Non-English funding bodies</u>: it was recognised that contacts, notably with SFC and HEFCW, need to be established soon.</p>	<p>▶ <i>RIN executive team to arrange for meetings with SFC and HEFCW.</i></p>
<p><u>Relationship with university bodies</u>: in response to a question about relations with the Russell Group, it was agreed that limited resources meant that it is not possible to sustain regular meetings with all the university representative bodies (and with the universities that are members of no group). For this reason, the RIN’s approach should be to focus mostly on maintaining links with UUK</p>	

## 6. Meetings of Consultative Groups (oral)

<p>The Chairs of the three groups that have met to date reported from the inaugural meetings. The physical sciences group will meet for the first time on 24 April.</p>	
<p><u>Librarianship and information sciences group</u>: Jean Sykes commented on the great variety within the group’s membership and its ability to quickly grasp the strategic imperatives at the meeting on 2 February. Salient points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ agreement to establish RIN networking links based on group members’ membership of associations, committees, professional bodies, etc;</li> <li>▶ CCM: acknowledgement of the common sense approach epitomised by CoFoR, but also recognition of the barriers to development of other schemes;</li> <li>▶ collaborative storage: importance of overcoming cultural barriers, need for engagement with universities, dangers of supply-led approach.</li> </ul>	
<p><u>Arts, humanities and social sciences group</u>: Michael Anderson reported that the first meeting on 10 March had been lively and enthusiastic; salient points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ suggestion to develop the RIN web presence to include</li> </ul>	

interactive tools such as feedback facilities;

- ▶ addressing the over-use of acronyms and explaining jargon – possibly using the RIN website as an information vehicle;
- ▶ CCM: recognising the close link between books for research and for postgraduate teaching; identifying the sort of scattered niche areas that are most appropriate for CCM initiatives; striving to develop trust, to allow for CCM to operate effectively;
- ▶ problems associated with the management of digital video, especially in relation to standards and storage capacity (Board members noted the related issues around metadata description for biomedical pictures discussed at the life sciences group);
- ▶ in relation to digitised material, tension between the needs of scholarly researchers, undergraduates and general readers;
- ▶ importance of ethics issues such as anonymisation of data and informed consent for data usage by secondary analysis;
- ▶ importance of proper documentation for long-lived datasets that evolve and become enriched over time.

Life sciences, biology and medicine group: salient points from the meeting of 20 March:

- ▶ importance of promoting communication with the research community, hence need for the RIN to raise its profile;
- ▶ deriving of joint perspectives on information issues from the social and life sciences – hence the usefulness of expanding the group’s membership to include representatives of large-scale population studies such as VOTES or UK Biobank;
- ▶ challenge of educating life scientists about the evolving role of libraries, which many are not properly aware of;
- ▶ BioImageWeb: meeting research needs by linking images with good quality metadata;
- ▶ to further the RIN’s co-ordinating role, usefulness of organising events/conferences on specific themes (e.g. data webs – semantic web alternatives to databases) in emerging areas.

Members were told that the MRC had recently organised a meeting on data sharing/protection; this highlighted the importance of involving commercial organisations – in this instance, the pharmaceutical industry – thereby providing increased opportunities for partnerships.

General issues stemming from group meetings: members noted that, as they become more established, the groups are expected to generate a stream of ideas. Common themes emerging from two or more of the groups could in particular be pursued. Conversely, groups might take forward suggestions coming from the Advisory Board. For the RIN, all this raises the challenge of how to support the series of initiatives that might thereby emerge. A range of approaches is called for to achieve this:

- ▶ the executive team may take forward some such initiatives itself, for instance the development of the RIN’s web presence

▶ *Stéphane Goldstein to post the notes of consultative group meetings on the RIN website.*

▶ *All to consider which of the groups is better placed to cover geospatial activities.*

and web-based interactivity;

- ▶ RIN funding could be set aside to provide additional resourcing for specific projects;
- ▶ collaborating with partners such as JISC can help spread the load – opportunities for such collaborations should be actively sought;
- ▶ in addition, some outputs from consultative groups might be subsumed as part of activities in which the RIN is in any case engaged.

Nonetheless, members recognised that it would be impossible for the RIN executive team to take forward every idea emanating from the groups; prioritisation would be called for, and the goodwill of group members would be sought to assist with relevant undertakings.

Geospatial activities were identified as a cross-cutting area with no obvious home at present in any of the groups.

Board members recognised the usefulness of distilling key messages emerging from the groups, in particular for communicating and networking purposes. As a first step, notes from consultative group meetings could be posted on the RIN website.

## 7. Research outputs (*paper RIN/AB/06/03*)

Report on the policies and practice of major funders: members considered an early draft of this report, commissioned by the RIN last October.

The Board recognised the diversity of perspectives from the different categories of funders, and noted the extent to which many of them are at an early stage in the development of their corporate approach to the handling and management of data.

However, members were critical of the document in its current form and felt that it reflected badly on Rightscom, the consultant that had been carrying out the work. There would be a serious reputational risk for the RIN if the report were to be disseminated without significant re-working. Comments included:

- ▶ The draft appears superficial and provides few new insights; it creates the impression that its authors did not fully understand their brief, and did not probe adequately during the interviews.
- ▶ Salient issues are poorly prioritised and set out.
- ▶ Some information in the draft is either inaccurate or misleading. There are also some omissions, such as problems arising from anonymisation of data.
- ▶ The section on Research Councils seems to be unbalanced and does not reflect the reality of practice; members wondered whether interviews probed issues of implementation and practice as well as the development of policy.
- ▶ There was concern about the balance of universities included in the study, and in particular about the heavy focus on the

▶ *Michael Jubb / Stéphane Goldstein* urgently to discuss with Rightscom the need to further develop the study and re-draft the report, with a view to presenting a new version at the July meeting.

▶ *Stéphane Goldstein* to cancel all arrangements for the planned event on 15 June.

University of Glasgow, whose approach was deemed to be untypical.

Members suggested that the inadequacies of the draft seemed to indicate a lack of awareness and understanding of the key issues, and/or an inability to obtain, analyse and synthesise the necessary information from the desk research and the interviews.

It was agreed that the study should be re-focused to take on board the above concerns, with fundamental re-drafting of the report; a re-ordering of current contents would not suffice. In this light, it was unrealistic to contemplate the planned event on 15 June.

Principles and guidance on digital research data: members recognised the usefulness of setting out such principles, but commented that the intention of the guidance has to be made clearer. The key is to root the principles and the guidance in the reality of researchers' practice, and not to impose a burdensome set of procedures. Members suggested that institutions and bodies such as the Research Councils and the Russell Group might be approached to seek their views about the relationship of the stated guidance to practice in university settings.

There was a comment that the structure of this document might usefully serve as a basis for a reconfigured version of the Rightscom report.

## 8. Collaborative collection management (*paper RIN/AB/06/04*)

Now that the report on CoFoR has been finalised, the important questions are how to develop the collaborative collection management (CCM) agenda, and what role the RIN might play in the process. Members stressed that the RIN is well placed to act as a bridge between the information provider (library) and consumer (researcher) communities – in particular, in terms of raising researchers' awareness of what CCM might offer them. The Consultative Groups, particularly those covering library and information sciences and arts and humanities, have a role in providing that bridge. It has to be recognised that the perspective and engagement of the users/researchers, and also research strategies in given areas, are critical to the further development of CCM.

Members commented that generalisable practice has to emerge from the current specific schemes.

The Board recognised the difficulty of gauging the scale of transfers taking place between libraries as a result of CCM; there is a case for devising metrics to measure such interactions before taking decisions on any future schemes.

► *RIN executive team to seek views in particular from the LIS and AHS Consultative Groups.*

## 9. Operating Plan 2006-07 (*paper RIN/AB/06/05*)

This was noted.

## 10. Advisory Board awayday

Members agreed with the principle of holding an awayday during the next academic year. A possible agenda would be discussed at the next meeting.

▶ *RIN executive team to present a suggested awayday agenda at the July meeting.*

## 11. Search & navigation (*paper RIN/AB/06/06*)

This was noted without discussion.

## 12. Other business

There was none.

**Next meeting: Thursday 6 July, 11:00 to 13:00, at the British Library**