



RIN Advisory Board

NOTE OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING – 25 JUNE 2008

Action points in red italics

Present:

Robert Burgess (University of Leicester) (Chair)
 John Coggins (University of Glasgow)
 Sally Curry (RIN)
 Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
 Aaron Griffiths (RIN)
 Michael Jubb (RIN Director)
 Malcolm Read (JISC)
 Ed Pentz (CrossRef UK)
 Kevin Schürer (University of Essex)
 Philip Steer (Imperial College)
 Jean Sykes (London School of Economics)
 Nigel Weatherill (University of Birmingham)
 Jan Wilkinson (University of Manchester)

Apologies

Michael Anderson (University of Edinburgh)
 Mike Cruise (University of Birmingham)
 John Feather (University of Loughborough)
 Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)
 David Ingram (University College London)
 Roger Kain (University of Exeter)
 Elaine Martin (University of Newcastle)
 Lyn Pykett (University of Aberystwyth)
 Tom Rodden (University of Nottingham)
 Terry Threadgold (Cardiff University)
 Anne Trefethen (University of Oxford)
 David Walton (British Antarctic Survey)
 Jo Wood (University of Leicester)

Bob Burgess opened the meeting by offering congratulations to John Coggins on the recent award of an OBE.

1. Minutes of the meeting of 1 April 2008 (paper RIN/AB/08/07)

These were agreed.	
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2. Matters arising

From item 3

Owing to pressure of time, the report from the Board's April awayday had still not been distilled into a more succinct account. This would be done in anticipation of a substantive discussion on progress since the awayday, as agreed, at the Board meeting in October.

■ *S Goldstein to draft refined note and post it on the RIN website*

From item 4

Most members had still not contacted the RIN with their declaration of interests.

■ *S Goldstein to circulate reminder to members about the need to record their interests.*

From item 5

No comment had been received on the circulated first draft of the training of researchers report. Bearing in mind that the final report would be published in a few days, it would be interesting for members to compare the draft and final versions, so as to get a feel for the evolution of RIN reports from the time that they are delivered by contractors.

- *S Goldstein to re-circulate draft report, along with final version.*

3. Report from Funders' Group meeting of 16 April 2008 (paper RIN/AB/08/08)

Members noted the report. Four issues were highlighted:

- RIN confirmed that the **carry forward stemming from the cumulative underspend** incurred during 2005-2008 had been fully integrated into its current budget. It was well understood, not least by the Funders' Group, that timely delivery of projects, and corresponding meeting of expenditure plans, was crucial for the future credibility of the RIN.
- This credibility was also dependent on the challenging question regarding the **measurement of the RIN's impact** on development of the research information environment. This was likely to be a major factor in the RIN's next review, only two years away from now, and would therefore benefit from some more in-depth airing at the Board's next awayday. It was recognised that demonstrating any direct effect of the RIN's activity on the behaviour of the research community was almost impossible to achieve.
- Members noted the continued uncertainty faced by RIN given the **Scottish Funding Council's** (SFC) inability to commit to more than one year of funding at a time – which made it difficult for the RIN formally to publish its Business Plan. The situation was unlikely to become clearer for several months at least.
- Members asked whether was a danger that a move to a **once-yearly meeting** would lead to greater remoteness for the Funders' Group. Was there a case for some sort of forum to allow for joint discussion with the Advisory Board? Although this idea had proved unsuccessful when tried in practice during 2005, a single joint meeting might be opportune at the time of the next RIN review and would be kept under review.

- *M Jubb to include a discussion on the measurement of the RIN's impact at the next Board awayday, in March 2009.*
- *RIN Executive Team to formally publish its business plan, with a modification to reflect that the SFC is yet to commit to RIN's three-year funding.*

4. Taking forward the conclusions of three recently-completed RIN projects (paper RIN/AB/08/09)

For all three projects, irrespective of their specific findings and conclusions, priorities now revolved around the effective **implementation** of such conclusions and the **influencing** of those actors most directly concerned.

The Board emphasised the importance of ensuring effective **targeting of project outputs**, so that any RIN material or initiatives should clearly set out the purpose of these outputs and the audiences to be addressed. At times, it may be difficult to achieve this, but failure to do so could lead to the risk of undermining the relevance of the work.

Means to deploy to achieve this might include:

- Production of short **briefing/summary notes** from RIN work that reflect the above imperatives. It was suggested that information notes produced by Universities UK might provide a useful model.
- **Presentations at conferences** – something that the RIN has been

actively engaged in; for this purpose, the RIN might consider, for given reports, producing short Powerpoint presentations that might be used, or drawn from, by Board members and others.

- **Publication of RIN research results in relevant scholarly journals**; again, the RIN has had some success in this area.
- Setting up of **small, high-powered expert groups** (say, 10-12 people) to look carefully at how significant conclusions from projects can be taken forward in a practical sense. This would underline the RIN's role as driver of policy. Experimentally, the RIN might try this approach with one particular project report, for instance cost and income flows, as a means of gauging influencing possibilities. The Board could have a more substantive discussion on this option at its October meeting.

This sense of focus underlined the importance of establishing the purpose of RIN studies at the outset, when projects are defined, and ensuring that this was followed right through the development of projects. On this basis, and further to discussions at previous Board meetings, RIN was now starting to incorporate implementation plans in its project specifications.

5. RIN Collaborative Collection Management programme update *(paper RIN/AB/08/10)*

An important challenge is to ensure that information provision strategies were built into plans for the development of research resources – this often did not happen, and Board members noted for instance the importance of addressing the information needs of researchers in strategic language-based studies.

The Board's attention was retained particularly by the **project on bibliographic data flows**, and members were reminded about the rationale for this work. Some members questioned whether there was actually a problem to address, and there was also concern that the project was too library-focused, to the detriment, for instance, of archives and museums, which face acute problems in this area. However, members noted that, beyond the library realm, the project would look at the bibliographic practices of publishers, and would seek to draw from their experiences.

Members noted that the usefulness of undertaking such a project was highlighted at an expert seminar organised by the RIN in 2007, where the sheer complexity of current bibliographic practices was discussed, and the need for a mapping exercise was recognised. The project itself would be overseen by an expert panel, which would draw its membership from various contexts, including cataloguers, aggregators, publishers and representative bodies such as RLUK.

It was agreed that questions about who would benefit from this research, and what might be the practical outcomes, could usefully be raised at the interviews scheduled with the bidders for this project, on 30 June.

From a particular perspective, one practical outcome might be the setting out of cataloguing advice/guidance for the purpose of deposit of digital objects in repositories; current practice in this area was very haphazard. JISC was investing in this area, and there could be scope for joint approaches with RIN.

- *S Curry to circulate the successful bid for the bibliographic data flows project*

6. Forthcoming RIN projects (*paper RIN/AB/08/11*)

The discussion focused on the proposed work around the **Research Excellence Framework** (REF). Members agreed about the usefulness of undertaking work on the impacts on researcher behaviour of research assessment methodologies, and were keen to be kept informed of progress with the definition of the project and discussions with HEFCE.

The Board recognised that this work could prove extremely useful, as its conclusions were likely to be of considerable interest to Vice-Chancellors. As such, the project could be particularly important for the RIN's potential impact and at the same time could highlight the RIN 'brand'. The usefulness of the work could be emphasised by underlining the extent to which the RIN would be working on behalf of the HE Funding Councils.

Members noted that JISC is also working on REF-related issues, and it would therefore be appropriate to liaise accordingly.

■ *M Jubb to liaise with Neil Jacobs, at JISC.*

7. RIN update (*paper RIN/AB/08/12*)

The RIN's new posts would be crucial in helping ensure that RIN can sustain and develop its activities, particularly with regard to implementation of outputs.

The extension of individual RIN projects, to include more thorough implementation schedules, was likely to have cost implications, in terms of further follow-up work, the salaries of staff dedicated largely to outreach work and expansion of the RIN's communications budget.

Members agreed with the suggestion there was a strong case for the RIN to produce a highly newsworthy item to coincide with the launch of the expected review in early 2010. This could form part of a communications plan to be developed by the new Communications Officer, and which could be discussed at a forthcoming meeting of the Board.

■ *M Jubb to include the RIN's future communications plan on the agenda of one of the Board's forthcoming meetings.*

8. Update on UK Research Data Service feasibility study (*paper RIN/AB/08/13*)

Members noted the recent progress with this project, and underlined the importance for the feasibility study of taking stock of the findings and conclusions of the RIN's recent data publication report.

Within the realm of clinical research, members noted the potentially serious implications of the increasing tendency of NHS Trusts, through their R&D offices, to claim ownership of research data; this was part of a trend by Foundation Trusts to become protective with regard to the availability and dissemination of the research data that they produce. Arguably, this was a manifestation of Trusts' increasingly competitive stance and commercialisation.

■ *J Sykes to note, for reporting to the feasibility study, the stance taken by NHS Trusts towards ownership of research data.*

9. Other business

On behalf of the Board, Bob Burgess recorded thanks to the four Board members who are stepping down at this point: Mike Cruise, Elaine Martin, Lyn Pykett and Anne Trefethen.

■ *R Burgess to write to the retiring members.*

Next meeting: Friday 10 October 2008, 14:00 – 16:00