



Action points in red italics

Present:

- Robert Burgess (University of Leicester) (Chair)
- Michael Anderson (University of Edinburgh)
- Margaret Attack (University of Leeds)
- John Coggins (University of Glasgow)
- John Feather (University of Loughborough)
- Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
- Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)
- David Ingram (University College London)
- Michael Jubb (RIN Director)
- Roger Kain (University of Exeter)
- Malcolm Read (JISC)
- Kevin Schürer (University of Essex)
- Jean Sykes (London School of Economics)
- Sarah Thomas (University of Oxford)
- David Walton (British Antarctic Survey)
- Evelyn Welch (Queen Mary London)
- Jan Wilkinson (University of Manchester)

Apologies

- Joanna Newman (British Library)
- Ed Pentz (CrossRef UK)
- Martin Richardson (Oxford University Press)
- Mary Ritter (Imperial College London)
- Tom Rodden (University of Nottingham)
- Nigel Weatherill (University of Birmingham)
- Jo Wood (University of Leicester)

1. Welcome to new Board members

Three new members were welcomed at their first Board meeting: Margaret Attack, Sarah Thomas and Evelyn Welch. The Board noted that a further two members, Martin Richardson and Mary Ritter, had recently been appointed, but were unable to attend on this occasion.	
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2. Minutes of the meeting of 29 April 2009 (paper RIN/AB/09/10)

These were agreed.	
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3. Matters arising

From item 4 – report from RIN Funders’ Group meeting:

From a RIN funders’ perspective, Paul Hubbard stressed the importance of engagement with RIN. He underlined the value of developing an understanding of researcher behaviour, all the more so in the context of any strategic reprioritisation resulting from the current financial climate. However, it was difficult for the funders to set out precisely what might be expected of RIN in a context where support for special projects was less certain. Nevertheless, dissemination and sharing of research outputs	
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Paul Hubbard formally to set out the views of RIN funders on what might be expected from RIN.

was an area where the Funders' Group acknowledged that further work needed to be done. RIN's activity in this context was thus extremely valuable; its ability to generate and sustain debates in areas such as open access could be very helpful to policymakers.

From item 6 – follow-up to e-infrastructure roadmap

The Board remained concerned about the short timescale of the e-infrastructure study and the extent of high-level buy-in from the Department for Business, Innovation and Science (BIS).

4. RIN disciplinary case studies in the life sciences (paper RIN/AB/09/11)

The Board noted the emerging conclusions from the studies, and very much welcomed this research. Further work would take place to explore the implications of the findings for institutions and other stakeholders; and to establish a taxonomy of different sorts of researcher behaviour and associated divisions of labour within research teams.

Members enquired whether the purely Scottish perspective of the studies might skew the results. RIN's view was that there was no danger of this; the spread of subjects and types of institution ensured that a representative range of behaviours within and between teams had been identified.

Points from the discussion:

- It was recognised that the report's conclusions – including some findings which could serve to question the very ability of some researchers to manage information – could prove very useful for institutions and funders. Inasmuch as the report highlighted concerns and failings in the research cycle, the Board felt that it would be valuable for RIN to investigate how these might be resolved, for instance with regard to training.
- One area which was not apparent from the emerging findings was a feel for the age of researchers; more information about their profile would help to get a better understanding of the behaviours that have been highlighted.
- Members stressed the importance also of drawing out the practical implications for the various recipient constituencies: institutions, funders and researchers themselves.
- It was suggested that looking at the impact of research could be a useful adjunct to the behavioural components of this work.
- Although the project was focused on the life sciences, it was noteworthy that many of the findings were equally relevant to humanities researchers. It was agreed there were certainly grounds for undertaking such studies in other disciplinary areas, to extend the body of evidence across the research spectrum. RIN was planning to do this, and it was likely that the next round of studies, starting in the autumn, would focus on the humanities.
- There was a linguistic issue around the interpretation of the meaning of such important concepts as data. In the context of commissioning future case studies, it was therefore important to adapt the language of the studies' questions to different disciplinary settings.
- The Board reflected on whether participants in case studies might be asked about their expectations of UKRDS – and more broadly, of the information environment in general.

5. RIN project on publishing behaviour of researchers (paper RIN/AB/09/12)

The Board noted the highlights from the study's early findings. RIN was expecting to provide HEFCE with a draft of the report in mid-July; this would give them an opportunity to use the preliminary conclusions to inform their ongoing thinking on the formulation of the REF. The final report would be published in early September, in time to feed into HEFCE's next round of REF consultations.

Points from the discussion:

- The Board was interested to note the fragmentation of researcher behaviours, not only within disciplines, but also within given research teams. There was a huge richness of such information both in the survey data and stemming from the focus group discussions, reflecting the variety of different cultural settings.
- Researchers' perceptions of RAE and REF could be useful subjects of further investigation, to help dispel misunderstandings and urban myths about research assessment.
- The Board noted that the study pointed to views across disciplines about the perceived importance of journal articles as a means of disseminating research findings. The extent of reliance on journal articles as principal research outputs, and how this reliance might evolve in the future, was in itself a matter worth investigating.

The Board emphasised once again the importance of this work in the context of RIN's programme of activities. It was in RIN's interest to prepare well thought-out briefing material in a judicious and timely manner. Comments and views from the Board would need to be provided quickly once the draft was issued next month.

RIN Executive Team to circulate the draft report as soon as it is ready, and to seek comments from the Board thereafter.

6. RIN performance indicators: outputs, outcomes and impact (paper RIN/AB/09/13)

The Board noted the significant differences in approach between charting quantitative outputs and outcomes, and qualitative evaluation of impact and influence. It was well understood that such qualitative evaluation was much the more challenging task.

It was felt that the fundamental issue in gauging RIN's success was the extent to which it could meet the needs of its stakeholders, not least research funders in the context of a tight financial environment. Support and engagement from RIN's own funders was important to help identify and address these needs.

Points from the discussion:

- The Board recognised the difficulty of measuring the impact of an organisation whose purpose was largely to influence longer-term cultural change. One way of doing this might be to re-visit and follow up from some of RIN's earlier work, and establishing what had changed during the intervening period.
- However, there was a case for drawing a distinction between evaluating the impact of individual projects, which could be relatively easy, and the more difficult notion of a broad evaluation of RIN's overall impact. A focus on individual projects could be associated with charting perceptions of given groups of stakeholders – and using the opportunity to ask such organisations what they might expect from RIN. There was strong support on the Board for seeking views from stakeholders in a systematic way
- Nonetheless, there was a real possibility that charting perceptions of RIN might not lead to a recognition of its specific contribution to given spheres of activity. Would RIN necessarily be recognised as

RIN Executive Team to refine the framework of monitored measures to reflect comments made by the Board.

RIN Executive Team to further investigate how best to address measurements of impact, with a view to reporting back to the Board by the end of the year.

the influencer?

- Arguably, the meaningfulness of RIN's quantitative indicators was best appreciated if benchmarked against the performance of other organisations; however, the Board understood the difficulty of achieving such benchmarking.
- Members underlined the importance of good presentation of quantitative information, so as not to obscure messages. It could also be valuable to enrich such information with comments and context, to make it less dry.

The Board suggested some ideas which might help in refining the indicators:

- RIN should consider identifying and setting out instances where it had been solicited, and where RIN expertise and know-how had resulted in calls for it to act. This could be an important indicator of influence, and should not be difficult to categorise. Although much of this information was implicit in the list of measures monitored by RIN, there was a strong case for making it more explicit.
- How could goodwill towards RIN, particularly from service providers, be measured? One practical way might be to identify where RIN featured in strategic plans and other corporate documents and websites.
- RIN could usefully point to the relatively small resources deployed to produce its outputs. Value for money, and RIN's ability to punch above its weight, could therefore also feature as an argument for the organisation's effectiveness.
- The Board reflected on whether Research Councils, which expend much effort in evaluating their own performance, might be a useful source of advice to RIN.

The Board agreed that it would need to revisit the issue in say six months, perhaps at the same time as an early discussion about the next RIN review.

7. Report from Consultative Groups awayday (paper RIN/AB/09/14)

The format of the event was experimental, but nevertheless was clearly successful, with impressive contributions and healthy participation from 40 Group members (two thirds of the overall membership), who were highly engaged and enthusiastic throughout the event. Moreover, the meeting led to practical outcomes which were currently being pursued by the Executive Team.

There was much interest in particular in the idea of undertaking work to investigate the prospects for national licensing. RIN had since been in touch with JISC Collections, which has an obvious interest in this area, This was an area of obvious interest to JISC Collections, with a view to defining a collaborative project.

RIN Executive Team to pursue discussions with JISC Collections, to define a joint activity relating to national licensing.

8. UKRDS update (paper RIN/AB/09/15)

Jean Sykes provided this update, and the Board noted the imperative for UKRDS to move towards proof of concept and to deepen the hitherto weak level of engagement with RCUK notably. It was well understood that Research Councils were key to the success of the enterprise.

The Board agreed that, in order for UKRDS to be presented and promoted convincingly, there was an urgent requirement (i) to explain what was understood by data; (ii) to provide greater clarity about what

the proposed investment would be spent on; and (iii) building on the findings of the feasibility study, to explain how UKRDS would actually work, and how it would relate to other existing initiatives. At the same time, it was understood that UKRDS could not afford to be prescriptive and necessarily needed to reflect the views and aspirations of researchers themselves.

The Board considered how RIN might usefully engage with UKRDS. It was felt that RIN could help point to the very rapidly-changing nature of the information environment and how this might impact on the formulation of UKRDS.

The Board agreed that the issue of ownership of the initiative was critical; this was not clear at present. The agenda had moved on since the feasibility study, and there were still unanswered questions about UKRDS' governance and accountability to a wider range of stakeholders. These and other issues needed to be addressed at the forthcoming stakeholders' meeting on 16 June.

9. Other business

RIN Annual Review:

Members were highly impressed by this newly-produced document, and the RIN Executive Team was commended on its production.

Retiring members:

On behalf of the Board, Bob Burgess expressed his thanks to the three members whose term was coming to an end on 30 June, Roger Kain, Ed Pentz and Jean Sykes. The Board was particularly grateful for the vital contribution that they had made to RIN's development during its formative period.

Next meeting: Friday 16 October 2009, 14:00 – 16:00 (light lunch at 13:30)