Research Information Network
ADVISORY BOARD

NOTE FROM THE SECOND MEETING – 12 OCTOBER 2005

Action points in red italics

Present:
Robert Burgess (University of Leicester) (Chair)
Michael Anderson (University of Edinburgh)
Jackie van Bueren (RIN)
John Coggins (University of Glasgow)
Alice Colban (JISC)
Mike Cruise (University of Birmingham)
John Feather (University of Loughborough)
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)
David Ingram (University College London)
Michael Jubb (RIN Director)
Ed Pentz (CrossRef UK)
Lyn Pykett (University of Aberystwyth)
Kevin Schürer (University of Essex) (items 1-6)
Jean Sykes (London School of Economics)
Anne Trefethen (University of Oxford)
David Walton (British Antarctic Survey)
Jan Wilkinson (British Library)
Jo Wood (University of Leicester)

Apologies
Judith Elkin (University College Worcester)
Mark Haggard (Medical Research Council)
Roger Kain (University of Exeter)
Elaine Martin (University of Newcastle)
Malcolm Read (JISC)

1. Welcome

The chair welcomed members, particularly those attending for the first time.	

2. Apologies for absence

See above.	

3. Minutes of the meeting of 27 July 2005 *(paper RIN/AB/05/06)*

These were agreed.	

4. Matters arising

Dialogue with learned societies: a couple of suggestions had been received about which learned societies RIN might interact with. Members were asked to provide further ideas if they wished.	

Strategic Plan: this has been amended as discussed at the previous meeting. Members were shown near-final drafts of the glossy versions of both the full document and the summary. The reaction was favourable, and it was noted that the Plan would be widely circulated (including to Pro Vice-chancellors for research) by the beginning of November, along with invitations to the RIN launch event on 8 December. Pdf versions of the documents would also be posted on the RIN website.	▶ *Stéphane Goldstein to arrange for completion, printing and distribution of Strategic Plan, by early November.*

5.   Report from the Director

Project on research funders' policy and practice: following a recent invitation to tender, the successful consultant should be appointed by around 25 October; this would allow for project commencement in early November and overall completion around March 2006. MJ underlined that this would be a more ambitious undertaking than originally envisaged, with over 30 organisations as subjects of the investigation.	
Project on RSLP access funds: this was on course, and a short report would be ready by early November. Given RIN's limited resources, the survey is intended as a snapshot, looking at reports from participating institutions from two of the scheme's six years of operation. A more in-depth investigation might follow, in the context of RIN's forthcoming project on retro-conversion and full disclosure. Indications were that university libraries had used the funding to achieve significant additional investment of notable – but by no means exclusive – benefit to these institution's external users. There had been a major focus on developing bibliographic services (retro-conversion, digital cataloguing…) and extending opening hours, both of which had involved the use of access funds to support additional staffing. To a lesser extent, the funding had also benefited conservation work and improvements in library environments/user services. Points raised in discussion: ▶ It would be useful to find out how many catalogues had been thus converted, and the level of investment used to achieve this. ▶ There was concern about the impact of ending the access funding stream. HEFCE remain committed to continued investment in this area, even though there is not yet an agreement about the precise form that such investment might take. It was noted that access funding has not been withdrawn in Scotland. ▶ It was felt that, on the basis of the report, RIN could play a useful advocacy role. In this light, the Board agreed that the report should be presented for discussion at the joint Funders' Group / Advisory Board meeting on 8 December.	▶ *Stéphane Goldstein to complete the project report by early November, in anticipation of a discussion at the joint Funders' Group / Advisory Board meeting on 8 December.*
RIN grant to SCONUL Research Extra scheme: members noted the recent award of this small (£7.5k) grant. RIN is now represented on the SCONUL group overseeing access issues. One of the areas of interest to RIN is the extent to which linkage might be developed between Research Extra and the two related access schemes, UK Libraries Plus and INSPIRE.	

Collaborative collection management: alongside CURL, RIN is looking at the potential for extending the existing CoFoR CCM scheme beyond its existing framework covering Russian and East European Studies (REES). In due course, this could represent a very important strand of activity for RIN. The importance of what had been achieved with REES was acknowledged – but the Board noted that achievements in this area must not be overstated, and RIN would need to be ambitious about extending the boundaries of CCM.	► *Michael Jubb to continue consultations with CURL and others to inform the development of a RIN-led framework for extending the scope of CCM.*
Relationships with other bodies: MJ emphasised the importance of such networking. Recent highlights include: ► Initial contact with the NHS Libraries and Knowledge Development Network, whose agenda resembles RIN's in some respects. ► RIN involvement in RCUK's newly-constituted Research Outputs Information Group (ROIG); in the near future, the focus of this committee's work will be the implementation of measures in RCUK's much-heralded position statement on research outputs. ► RIN contribution to the CultureGrid project proposal, as part of the EU Framework Programme 6. RIN is one of 25 partners, and the outcome of the proposal should be known in November. KS used the opportunity to update the Board about the European Roadmap for Research Infrastructures, overseen by ESFRI. KS is the UK representative on the initiative's working group on social sciences and humanities (SSH), one of three such committees taking forward the roadmap by aiming to identify research infrastructure needs. The SSH working group has produced a questionnaire as part of its current consultation, which KS invited Board members to respond to. The EU Commission will use the roadmap to inform the strategic priorities for Framework Programme 7, so the consultation is an opportunity to influence the European agenda.	► *Kevin Schürer to circulate ESFRI questionnaire to Board members and to confirm UK representation on the two other roadmap working groups.*
RIN website: the idea of working with the British Library's web team had proved impractical, so, following a tendering exercise, RIN had appointed an external web development consultant. A basic but well-presented RIN website (www.rin.ac.uk) should be operational towards the end of October. This would be a prelude to a more ambitious, virtual communication tool, which for instance would incorporate extranet functionality for the use of the Advisory Board and consultative groups.	
Visit to Australia: MJ reported on his recent visit, highlighting in particular the leading role played by the Australian Research Information Infrastructure Committee (ARIIC). Many key issues in Australia reflect the sort of priorities that RIN would like to see addressed in the UK.	► *Michael Jubb to circulate further information on ARIIC.*

6. Resource discovery: strategic issues for the RIN *(papers RIN/AB/05/08 and RIN/AB/05/09)*

Strategic issues: RIN has started the process of formulating a strategic view about practice and needs about the use of discovery services. RIN is planning a workshop, on 20 October, on the future of key services such as SUNCAT, COPAC and ZETOC; this will bring together stakeholders such as JISC, CURL and the British Library. Shortly afterwards, RIN will commission a study	► *Michael Jubb to consider the possibility of RIN sponsorship of regional training workshops for younger researchers.*

on user behaviour, perceptions and needs. This work will inform the development of the OST-sponsored e-Infrastructure strategy, specifically the strand (one of six) covering search and navigation – which, logically, RIN has agreed to lead on. In this light, the discussion at the Board covered the following: ▶ Importance of focusing on the reality of users' needs – and also their frustrations; these have to be properly understood, with no prior assumptions made about users' actual requirements. ▶ It follows that any resource discovery strategy should address and reflect the evolving (and sometimes rapidly-changing) research habits of users, bearing in mind the growing influence of the 'Google generation'. The way that researchers come to adapt their search strategies needs to be documented and understood. ▶ However, it was recognised that users do not always know what they need, because they are not aware of the information resources that might help them define their needs in the first place. Conversely, they may know what they require, but are not able to find it – which is an obvious frustration. These problems underline the importance of good-quality training in information-seeking, notably for graduate students. However, they also raise the question about the large amount of library material (particularly non-digital) that is extremely under-used largely because it is difficult to find or access; retro-conversion has helped to make such material more visible, but the issue remains about the extent to which users need it in reality. ▶ The Board highlighted the usefulness of quantitative studies, for instance to gauge the type and quantity of information being accessed by given sectors of the research community. Such evidence is needed to underpin the development of a strategy. It was noted that some institutions (for instance, the School of Library, Archive and Information Studies at UCL) have started to gather evidence in this area. The Board recognised that the imperative to evaluating user needs represented a great opportunity for RIN to foster novel and radical ideas. There is much scope for RIN to advance the agenda. One practical idea might be to sponsor regional workshops to address the training requirements of younger researchers.	
<u>Commissioning of RIN study</u>: following on the consideration of broad strategic issues, the Board discussed the draft specification for the RIN study on user behaviour, perceptions and needs. ▶ In the light of the above discussion, it was agreed that the study would have to investigate explicitly the contrasting research habits (and frustrations) of all categories of researcher, across different research cultures, as a basis for identifying gaps in resource discovery provision. The specification would be tightened to underline the requirement to cover the full research spectrum. ▶ One obvious manifestation of different research cultures is the extent to which certain communities (e.g. many physicists) depend for their information needs more on a rapid turnover of constantly updated data than on retrospective research information. The study should be careful not to neglect to investigate this particular behaviour. ▶ More clarity may be required about what the proposed large-	▶ ***All** to provide any additional comments on the specification by 21 October.* ▶ ***Stéphane Goldstein** to modify the specification in the light of comments, prior to going out to tender before the end of October.*

scale map will contain.	
▸ It was agreed that there should be a clear reference to data collection, alongside analysis, as one of the defined project outputs.	

7. Collaborative storage of low-use research publications *(paper RIN/AB/05/10)*

The Board engaged in a broad discussion to inform the definition of RIN's role in relation to collaborative storage. Substantive points as follows:	▸ ***Michael Jubb** to consult as appropriate to prepare an informed view of RIN's possible role, in anticipation of a more detailed consideration by the Advisory Board early in the New Year.*
▸ It was suggested that two key issues are governance and charging: any national resource on collaborative storage would need to be truly national and organised on a contractual basis; it should be established as an independent undertaking, distinct from existing institutions. Clearly, the British Library would play a leading role in developing the initiative, but it has recognised that aspects of the resource's governance (albeit not its management) could be handed to RIN.	
▸ At the same time, it would be important to address any university library concerns about ceding stock to a national framework – although universities are mindful about the potential for future capital savings stemming from release of badly-needed space. The Board felt that efforts are needed to persuade university governing bodies that the development of collaborative storage is in their institutions' interest.	
▸ The ceding of stock should be seen in the context of changing user expectation, with the increasing focus for everyday purposes on desktop availability and the development of such services as JSTOR. The fact that British Library document supply is now entirely electronic illustrates this trend, and there is a case for wider dissemination of information about desktop document delivery – again, this is a training issue. There is a need for a perspective about the potential (but also the risks, e.g. relating to security) of new technologies. In this general context, it is opportune to encourage libraries to stop buying hard copies of new/current serials.	
▸ The setting up of a national resource would require much investment, which implies the need to agree the nature of, and the basis for providing, additional funding. The impact of Full Economic Costs also has to be considered. HEFCE had expressed interest in investing in such a scheme, on the understanding that the investment would ultimately generate savings, and that the resource would operate on a national (either UK or devolved government) scale.	
▸ The Board noted the usefulness of keeping abreast of developments and tapping expertise in the commercial sector, where large-scale investment in information management is taking place.	
The challenge for RIN is how to take a lead in this area. It was agreed that RIN should gather relevant information over the next few months, for instance in relation to possible cost savings, in order to influence the shape of RIN's role in collaborative storage.	

8. Establishment of RIN consultative groups

The Board noted the nominations received so far for the four groups. To date, the number of names put forward for the three 'thematic' groups had been disappointing – most Board members had not yet provided names, and more nominations are urgently required. The Board reiterated the importance of encouraging younger and enthusiastic researchers onto the groups – although there was a suggestion to include at one 'sceptic' in each group, to allow for a more balanced range of views.	▶ *__All__ to nominate possible consultative group members by 21 October.*

9. Update on operating plan *(paper RIN/AB/05/11)*

The update was noted. On behalf of HEFCE, PH confirmed that he is keeping the non-English Funding Bodies abreast of developments in RIN's agenda.	

10. Date of future meetings 2006/07 *(paper RIN/AB/05/12)*

The Board noted that the RIN executive team is seeking to finalise 2006/07 meeting dates by the end of the year.	▶ *__All__ to provide information about their availability around the broad dates indicated in the paper.*

11. Other business

Board members were reminded to provide any changes or updates on their details contained in their brief biographical notes.	▶ *__All__ to provide any changes to their biographical notes, if appropriate.*

Next meeting: joint meeting with Funders' Group, Thursday 8 December, 14:30 – 16:30 Senate House, University of London

To be followed at 18:00 by RIN's launch event, also at Senate House, with a keynote address by Lord Rees (formerly Sir Martin Rees). Advisory Board members will receive a formal invitation.