



**RIN Research Communications Group**  
**NOTE FROM THE SIXTH MEETING – 9 DECEMBER 2008**

*Action points in italics*

Present:

Michael Jubb (Chair) (RIN)  
Jeffrey Aronson (University of Oxford)  
Juan Bicarregui (STFC)  
Nick Evans (ALPSP)  
Fred Friend (JISC)  
Jeremy Giles (British Geological Survey)  
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)  
Robert Kiley (Wellcome Trust)  
Ken Peach (University of Oxford and Royal Holloway College)  
Frances Pinter (London School of Economics)  
Debby Shorley (Imperial College London)  
Dan Sumners (UUK)  
Graham Taylor (Publishers Association)

Apologies:

Paul Ayris (UCL Library)  
Bob Campbell (Wiley-Blackwell and Publishing Research Consortium)  
Michael Mabe (International Association of STM Publishers)  
David Prosser (SPARC Europe)  
Ian Russell (ALPSP)  
Mark Thorley (NERC)  
Astrid Wissenburg (ESRC)  
Michel Woodman (Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform)

A welcome was extended to new members of the Group, Frances Pinter and Dan Sumners.

*This is a deliberately short agenda, to allow for a substantive discussion of the ambitious area described under item 3. As indicated in earlier correspondence with Group members, the RIN recognises that meetings should henceforth focus less on advising the RIN on its nascent or current projects, and more on airing views and seeking a practical consensus on broad issues and challenges relating to the scholarly communications process. At the same time, the RIN is keen to ensure that discussions have a purpose, leading to enhanced interaction and practical outcomes either for the RIN or other bodies represented around the table.*

**1. Minutes of the meeting of 10 June 2008 (paper RIN/RCG/13)**

These were approved. It was noted that Bob Ware's work, referred to under item 4, was not in fact related to Web 2.0.

**2. Matters arising**

There were none.

**3. The value of library and information services (paper RIN/RCG/08/14)**

Members noted that the paper was borne out of discussions with various stakeholders relating to the challenge of measuring the

value added of information service to *users* and *funders* (but not to those such as librarians that actually run the services), and the impact that evolution in these might have on issues such as research productivity and research performance. This challenge raises fundamental questions, to which answers at present are generally sketchy.

#### *The meaning of value*

In the first instance, the Group felt that there is a need for clarity about who might use the sort of information derived from work on the value of information services; what would be the purpose of such work and to whom should value be demonstrated? Even more fundamentally, how can value be defined? And at what level (e.g. institutional or national)? Value may not be immediately apparent, and may be quantifiable in different ways by different players; researchers may not have the same view of value as, say, Government – there is a need for a *quantifiable* definition of value that would be consensually accepted.

It may also be useful to define the opportunity costs of relying on certain types of information services (e.g. commercially-provided offerings such as Google) or even of ignorance or poor information.

At the same time, the point was made that value may only be part of the equation: impact, economic and societal, might also be considered as a measurable element. But this too presents huge challenges.

#### *Quantifying of value*

It was generally accepted that some form of metrics are required for attempting any quantitative analysis – but it is not clear what type.

Part of the way of addressing this might lie in providing institutions with the means to decide on competing claims for their funds: how can the value added of information services be compared to that provided by other types of funded services? How can the value of incremental increases in investment, at the margins, be demonstrated? What about the comparative value of different types of information service?

Should researchers themselves be asked what they value in information services? They may not always be well-placed to answer such questions, because of preconceptions they might have; it may be more appropriate to focus more specifically on how they actually use information, founded maybe on observational or ethnographic methodologies.

Some members suggested that the paper places much focus on bottom-up perspectives: evaluating the amount of time spent by researchers on information retrieval, as suggested by the listed performance indicators, may not say anything about the value of this work. Is there a need therefore to reflect more on an institutional or funders' perspective?

It was noted that there have already been some discussions with JISC, RLUK, HEPI and other organisations about how most effectively to proceed with work of this kind.

#### 4. Preservation of e-journals (*paper RIN/RCG/08/15*)

Members noted that the focus of this prospective work is on e-journals, not e-books – the former is deemed to be a more urgent priority at present. It also relates both to born-digital and digitised material. A number of points were raised in discussion:

- There is a perception in the mind of many that preservation is essentially a problem for the British Library. The BL does indeed run extensive preservation programmes, and is looking to extend the scope of the Legal Deposit Act to cover e-only publications – and at the same time, improve its procedures for handling and managing such titles (e.g. normalisation, access procedures...).
- There are important issues to be addressed with regard to post-cancellation preservation, and the need to provide warning signals if there is uncertainty about preservation following the cancellation of subscriptions to given titles.
- Any very long-term preservation strategy has to be underpinned ultimately by Government, since longer-term preservation of material is likely to be more secure within the public sector.
- The BL is aware of a long tail of smaller publishers who haven't thought through the implications of long-term preservation – much educational work is needed there.

Much is going on in the area of e-journal preservation, but it is not easy to gauge precisely what is happening across the sector. The Group agreed that there is a case for drawing up an information paper setting out the issues and explaining what is being done. This could be useful to publishers, librarians, university administrators as well as some (but probably not many) researchers. JISC is working on briefing material of this nature, and it was agreed that input into this should be allowed for external stakeholders.

- *RIN to co-ordinate input into the briefing material with JISC, BL, ALPSP and PA*

#### 5. Other business

##### *Fall in the value of Sterling*

The Group noted with concern the difficulties currently caused by the rapid fall in the value of Sterling against the \$ and €, and the adverse impact that this is having on library subscription budgets. Libraries are likely to be faced, next year, with the prospect of having significantly to increase their subscription budgets to keep pace with the cost of non-UK material, or alternatively of facing difficult choices about rationalisation. There could be awkward situations for publishers too, with smaller players being squeezed out and possibly some big deals being cancelled too. The Group might discuss this issue more substantively on a future occasion, to compare experiences from the different sectors. In the meantime, there was agreement about the usefulness of an evidence-gathering exercise on the impact of currency fluctuations, based for instance on SCONUL figures.

##### *Conference proceedings*

The Group agreed with the idea of a reflection on the place of

- *RIN to seek SCONUL's assistance in getting the library community's view on the impact of currency fluctuations.*

- *N Evans to draw up a short paper setting out the issues*

conference proceedings within the scholarly communications spectrum.

*Author-pays publishing model*

Members reflected on the implications of possible extension of author-pays open access model to areas other than journal articles, particularly monographs in the arts and humanities. Is there a case for examining possible business models? There is currently some movement with regard to the model, with the Wellcome Trust recently increasing the budget allocated to meeting author charges, and the possibility of RCUK soon adopting a more openly favourable attitude to author payment. It was noted that RIN and UUK are working on the preparation of guidance on publication charges.

*Future themes*

Members were asked to reflect on possible other future themes for Group to consider

*relating to conference proceeding.*

- *RIN to consider the future applicability of the author pays model as a possible discussion theme.*

- *All to provide views and ideas at the earliest opportunity.*

**Next meeting: date in April to be agreed**