



## RIN Advisory Board

### NOTE OF THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING – 16 October 2009

#### *Action points in red italics*

#### Present:

Robert Burgess (University of Leicester) (Chair)  
 Margaret Attack (University of Leeds)  
 John Coggins (University of Glasgow)  
 John Feather (University of Loughborough)  
 Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)  
 David Ingram (University College London)  
 Michael Jubb (RIN Director)  
 Roger Kain (University of Exeter)  
 Joanna Newman (British Library)  
 Malcolm Read (JISC)  
 Kevin Schürer (University of Essex)  
 Sarah Thomas (University of Oxford)  
 Evelyn Welch (Queen Mary London)  
 Jan Wilkinson (University of Manchester)  
 Jo Wood (University of Leicester)

#### Apologies

Michael Anderson (University of Edinburgh)  
 Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)  
 Martin Richardson (Oxford University Press)  
 Mary Ritter (Imperial College London)  
 David Walton (British Antarctic Survey)

#### **1. Minutes of the meeting of 9 June 2009 (paper RIN/AB/09/16)**

These were approved.	
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#### **2. Matters arising**

##### *From item 3 – matters arising:*

RIN had still not received a letter from HEFCE formally setting out the views of its funders on what might be expected from it.

■ ***Robert Burgess to write to Paul Hubbard to enquire about this communication.***

##### *From item 8 – UKRDS update*

Members enquired about any progress with UKRDS. RIN has had no news since a stakeholders' meeting in June. Malcolm Read reported that he had had a more recent meeting with John Milner, where the prospect of drawing from HEFCE's Strategic Development Fund was discussed.

#### **3. Board membership**

It was noted that there are now five vacancies on the Board, not least three slots for physical scientists. RIN efforts over the past few months to recruit at individual PVC or departmental head level have not succeeded. Because of these difficulties, the Board was sympathetic to the idea of seeking to recruit members at a more junior level within

■ ***RIN Executive Team to trawl for new prospective members at a more junior level.***

institutional hierarchies.

It was additionally suggested that John Wood might make a suitable member; he was already engaged with research information issues through his membership of BL Advisory Council and JISC's Support for Research Committee.

■ *RIN Executive Team to approach John Wood.*

#### **4. Communicating Knowledge – RIN report on the publication behaviour of researcher (paper RIN/AB/09/17)**

It was understood that the issue here was to see how the conclusions of the report might usefully inform the development of the Research Excellence Framework. In the first instance, RIN was looking for views to help it to formulate a response to the REF consultation, particularly regarding the quality assessment component, but also to an extent with respect to the assessment of impact; this was likely to be challenging, because of current lack of clarity about impact criteria.

The Board noted two areas where evidence from the report could provide some very valuable input into the consultation: (i) the use of citation data, with particular reference to its variability between disciplines; and (ii) the issue of double weighting, especially in the humanities. Points raised in discussion:

- Another important and relevant conclusion from the report was the confusion caused by mixed messages received by researchers about research assessment, notably because of the extent to which funding bodies' guidance was mediated and differently interpreted by HEIs. Members suggested that the funding bodies underestimated the influence of this confusion. The Board reflected also on whether the funding bodies underestimated citation game-playing too.
- In years to come, baseline metrics (including citation analyses) will become much more available, and therefore more exposed to scrutiny; this will inevitably impact on the use of such metrics in research assessment.
- The Board emphasised the importance of variability of information life-cycles across different disciplines.
- Also relevant was the relative influence of institutional and environmental factors.

The Board suggested that RIN consider producing, as rapidly as possible, a two-page factsheet aimed at PVCs research, as a means of setting out evidence from the report in a clear and easily-digestible form. This needed to be factual and neutral, and sent out if possible by the end of October.

■ *RIN Executive Team to draft a briefing note setting out the report's conclusions*

#### **5. Joint portfolio of activity on transitions in scholarly communications (paper RIN/AB/09/18)**

The Board recognised the importance of a collective approach on the part of the various stakeholders to build the evidence and examine the implications of the transition processes. Such a collective approach would certainly add value, but achieving it would be challenging because of contrasting world-views from the different communities.

Members noted that the outline statement had now been agreed by the relevant constituencies, who had been asked to make a simultaneous announcement about this in early November. Also in the near future, work would be required on detailed scoping for the third project, on the dynamics of improving access to research papers, with a view to initiating this in January 2010.

Members enquired about the drivers behind the proposed work on transitions to e-only publishing. RIN had received strong messages from librarians and publishers that they would like to move more quickly to an e-only environment. However, there were misunderstandings and misconceptions on either side about why this move was not progressing more rapidly; the study could help to dispel these. But what about the researcher perspective in this area? It was agreed that this would need to be spelt out when this project came to be more fully defined.

The Board also thought that it would be useful for copyright to be built into the portfolio, particularly in the light of current campaigns by the British Library and others with regard to copyright for electronic material.

RIN and JISC were seeking sponsorship for different aspects of the work from as many organisations as possible. The Board suggested that judicious targeting of given organisations could help to leverage financial support – although it was recognised that the resources of the different potential players varied significantly.

## **6. E-Infrastructure review (paper RIN/AB/09/19)**

The Board noted that the issue of securing high-level buy-in from RCUK and especially from BIS had not been satisfactorily resolved; it was proving difficult to find appropriate individuals to engage with. However, Doug Kell, the BBSRC Chief Executive, could be a useful interlocutor; RIN had secured a meeting with him on 26 November – this would be an opportunity for this and other issues to be raised.

## **7. Libraries of the Future initiative (paper RIN/AB/09/20)**

The Board noted that there had been a long gestation period for this project. A key factor would be to secure high-level participation from libraries and users. The project made no presupposition about the way that this future might be defined.

The Board agreed about the importance for the project to lead to practical outcomes; abstract future-gazing would not suffice. RIN offered reassurance that the consultants were fully aware of this need. Nevertheless, members expressed their concerns on a number of counts:

- They reflected on whether the document may be neglectful of information services other than libraries. Was the outlook of the project too traditional? Was it framed too much from the perspective of librarians?
- There was concern about the vagueness of aspects of the project plan's structure. RIN recognised this, and given the significant effort put into specifying this work, it was conceivable that the specification had been over-manufactured. It was critical therefore to get the research design right, and to ensure that it will deliver at the end of the project.
- The emphasis now lay on the consultation, to ensure that the project was firmly evidence-based. But what was the nature of the evidence that the study will produce? Some members felt that the scope was over-ambitious, and wondered whether the work packages might be split into two broad successive blocks of activity: (i) defining the landscape, and (ii) developing the methodology for moving forward
- What researchers wanted was access to material and advice about information-handling. Researchers needed library services, but many

had little or no need for library buildings. Did the initiative address this? Was there not a danger of simply going over ground which had been amply covered in recent years?

- Was there too much overlap with BL's 2020 Vision? There was a need to focus on the complementarity between the two initiatives.

Whatever the concerns, it was agreed that the key aim was to derive new vision of how library services should evolve in the longer term.

## 8. Review of HEFCE related bodies (paper RIN/AB/09/21)

This review had to be seen in the context of a difficult financial situation, and the Board was asked to reflect on the implications for the role of RIN as a policy body. There was also an obvious relationship with the next RIN review, now not likely to take place until the second half of 2010.

The Board recognised that RIN's submission demonstrated impressively the progress achieved since the last RIN review in 2007 – although it was suggested that more could perhaps have been said about value for money.

The Board reflected on how RIN might fare in the face of potential cuts in expenditure.

- Could it now not look beyond the UK environment and try to secure funding internationally (for instance, through EU Framework Programmes)? This would imply the adoption by RIN of a less UK-centric stance, albeit one that was focused on targeted objectives.
- It was suggested that other possible sources of income existed even within the UK, for instance from the Technology Strategy Board.
- RIN's activity to date had evolved around the commissioning of research. RIN might consider the alternative approach of also bidding for relevant work. This would imply new ways of interfacing and collaborating with partner organisations, and also conforming to rather different expectations.

- **RIN Executive Team** to present a paper to the December meeting, exploring possibilities for securing additional funding and developing novel partnerships

## 9. RIN 2010 conference (paper RIN/AB/09/22)

The Board noted the early plans for this event, and was generally supportive about the rationale for organising this; it was understood that a showcasing opportunity such as this was timely in advance of the next RIN review.

- **Timing:** members strongly felt that May 2010 was not a good time to hold this, because the minds of many of the target audiences would be too focused on the forthcoming General Election. Although no time of year was ideal, it was agreed that late June or early July might represent the best choice.
- **Scope:** the Board suggested that more work was needed to define the theme of the event; to provide better focus; and to imagine a title to deftly convey the essence of the meeting. It was important to cover issues that politicians could relate to, for instance questions around value for money, potential cost savings or the economic implications of collaboration.
- **Audiences:** it was felt that judicious targeting (for instance, through the identification of real influencers) could be more effective than attempts to draw in the largest possible crowd. It was understood that this could imply a re-think about the nature and shape of the event.
- **Speakers:** the conference would benefit from the presence of

- **RIN Executive Team** to present more refined proposals for the conference at the December meeting.

inspirational speakers, with the ability of promoting new agendas and/or of placing RIN's own agenda in a political context. Suggested names included, from rather different perspectives, Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Sir John Sulston.

**10. Half year budgetary update** (*paper RIN/AB/09/23*)

This was noted.

**11. RIN update** (*paper RIN/AB/09/24*)

Members commented on the impressive range of RIN activities, which said much about the scale of the organisation.

**12. Other business**

Members were notified that RIN's Research Officer, Aaron Griffiths, was about to leave the organisation. A recruitment process was under way to appoint his successor who, it was hoped, could be in post towards the end of the year.

**Next meeting: Thursday 17 December 2009, at 14:00**