



RIN Advisory Board

NOTE OF THE SEVENTH MEETING – 25 APRIL 2007

Action points in red italics

Present:

Robert Burgess (University of Leicester) (Chair)
Michael Anderson (University of Edinburgh)
Sue Boorman (Alan Brickwood and Associates) (*for item 1 only*)
Alan Brickwood (Alan Brickwood and Associates) (*for item 1 only*)
John Coggins (University of Glasgow)
John Feather (University of Loughborough)
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)
Michael Jubb (RIN Director)
Roger Kain (University of Exeter)
Malcolm Read (JISC)
Jean Sykes (London School of Economics)
David Walton (British Antarctic Survey)
Jan Wilkinson (British Library)
Jo Wood (University of Leicester)

Apologies

Mike Cruise (University of Birmingham)
David Ingram (University College London)
Elaine Martin (University of Newcastle)
Ed Pentz (CrossRef UK)
Lyn Pykett (University of Aberystwyth)
Kevin Schürer (University of Essex)
Anne Trefethen (University of Oxford)

1. RIN review – topics addressed (*paper RIN/AB/07/01*)

Alan Brickwood and Sue Boorman advised the Board that the review is still ongoing, and therefore this meeting was not intended as a feedback session. Provisional findings will be drafted and presented to the review steering group on 11 May, with a full discussion at the next Board meeting on 27 June; this will be an opportunity to influence the final report before it is presented to the RIN's funders at the end of July.

The consultation is based on a number of questions framed by the funders. The number of individuals consulted (face to face or by phone) will be greater than originally expected: 70 individuals / organisations, including the RIN executive team, libraries, intended end-users (HEIs, Research Councils, LIS professionals), professional bodies such as JISC, public and other bodies (such as publishers, the Wellcome Trust, etc).

There will also be a focus group meeting, with about ten people representing various stakeholders, on 24 May, to discuss the provisional findings paper. Telephone conversations will be held soon with the chairs of the four Consultative Groups.

The conduct of the review was then opened up for discussion. At the outset, the Board stressed that, given its current resources, the RIN has

delivered more than might have been expected across a wide range of areas. Early indicators of the RIN's impact include factors like the number of downloads of RIN reports, and the scale of participation at RIN events. The forthcoming case studies could provide some very useful material as well. However, it is difficult to measure impact, in the short term, for an organisation that does not provide an identifiable service.

Board members emphasised that a crucial issue for the RIN is its **capacity to engage with and represent the views of researchers** – a laborious process; it is a long-term and ambitious endeavour, but also a unique selling-point for the RIN, along with the organisation's neutrality in an environment with competing interests. It is therefore very important for the review to highlight the steps that are either being taken or anticipated to achieve this goal. Members suggested that such steps might include the identification of gatekeepers (i.e. spreaders or 'multipliers' of information, e.g. deans of arts, research and LIS managers), as well as existing tools like *RINews* and the RIN website. The Consultative Groups also represent noteworthy bridges to the community.

However, it is understood that it is unrealistic to expect meaningful engagement with most of the research community. A major difficulty for the RIN, which the review should recognise, is that most researchers do not have well-developed views on the issues that form part of the RIN's remit. The community, in its nebulous and complex state, generally has a low awareness of challenges in the research information field, and of the principles underpinning them; researchers tend to be interested only in what is useful for them. There is much ignorance about the potential represented by library and information science. This may even apply to the senior research managers in the North West Universities Association that the consultants will be talking to.

Although these have a strategic responsibility for research, even they may not be sufficiently familiar with research information issues. The Board worried that this could be a limitation for the review, and had doubts about the usefulness of talking to a group of people whose awareness of the RIN is likely to be low. Alan Brickwood suggested that such limitations may have to be accepted in view of the time constraints of the review process.

He also indicated that these constraints will not allow an opportunity to talk to **Consultative Group members**, other than chairs – although email feedback will be sought from them. The Board expressed its serious concern about this, because the Groups are crucial and engaged intermediaries who are well-placed to offer an informed view.

Other more specific matters raised in discussion included access to research resources for small commercial organisations and for the NHS community. The Board noted that the National Library for Health and Wellcome Trust have been among those interviewed. The Board recognised that the NHS represents potentially a critical constituency for the RIN, but effective engagement with it requires significant resources – this is important when considering the future direction of RIN.

It was agreed that the consultants should attend the next meeting, in June, to present their draft report. The meeting will also consider the RIN's own forward look document.

► *Jean Sykes informally to alert the group of North West England librarians, so that they may prime the relevant Pro Vice Chancellors in anticipation of the meeting with the consultants.*

► *Bob Burgess to request from consultants that the draft report (preferably in pdf form) is made available well in advance of the next meeting, to allow enough time for its proper consideration.*

2. Minutes of the meeting of 25 October 2006 and of the awayday of 23-24 November 2006
(papers RIN/AB/07/02 and RIN/AB/07/03)

These were approved.

3. Matters arising (oral)

There were none.

4. RIN review – next steps (paper RIN/AB/07/04)

The Board reiterated its concerns, from the above discussion, about aspects of the evidence base used for the review, particularly (i) the ability of the North-West Universities Association research managers to offer useful views about the RIN, and (ii) the failure to consult with at least a selection of individual Consultative Group members. The Board agreed that these concerns should be taken up urgently and formally with Alan Brickwood.

More generally, the RIN was commended for the production of its very useful self-assessment document.

► **Bob Burgess** *urgently to write to Alan Brickwood to express these concerns on behalf of the Board.*

5. Membership of the Advisory Board (oral)

Members noted that there are two vacancies on the Board at present, following the departures of Mark Haggard and Judith Elkin. It may not be appropriate to issue invitations to new members until the outcome of the review. Consequently, it was agreed to carry these two vacancies for the time being, but views from the Board about who might fill them would be welcome, particularly to build up the Board's expertise in the sciences.

► **All** *to start reflecting on which individuals might fill the two vacancies on the Board.*

6. RIN programme 2007-08 (paper RIN/AB/07/05)

The programme reflects the RIN's priority, in its observatory role, of developing an evidence base. There are clear limits to the amount of work that the RIN can undertake in this area, particularly in the light of its other developing activities relating to advocacy and follow-through of previous work.

Members noted the forthcoming CURL-Russell Group response to HEFCE's call for expressions of interest for its shared services initiative; the response relates to a feasibility study on the hosting and life-cycle management of research data. It reflects the importance of a national and strategic approach to the management of this data.

The RIN's forthcoming data publication study will help to address some of the issues to be considered by the above. It would be important to tease out the perceived usefulness of large datasets that exist in different forms – the RIN's case study approach could be particularly useful for this purpose. Another important issue is that of appropriate standards for data management and suitable funding (e.g. from the Research Councils) to allow researchers time and resources for the effective

management of their data.

Finally, given the importance of advocacy, it was suggested that the RIN may need to invest into the development of strategies for the effective dissemination of the outputs of its studies.

7. The RIN and research in library and information science (*paper RIN/AB/07/06*)

The rationale for this paper is that the RIN is keen to develop its relationship with that part of the LIS research community that is most concerned with the needs of researchers.

Over and above such a dialogue, it is opportune for the RIN's needs to be made more explicit, to allow the LIS research community to provide the most appropriate information.

It was agreed that this area could usefully be revisited after the review, in the light of RIN's resourcing.

8. RIN update (*paper RIN/AB/07/07*)

Members commented favourable on the appearance of *RINews*, whose second issue has just been sent out. However, it was suggested that, to increase the visual impact, the RIN might consider reducing the proportion of text in the publication. Care should also be taken to minimise jargon and abbreviations. The Board noted that the distribution list had increased to about 1000, but it was felt that work could be done to make this significantly larger.

The Board noted that the size/coverage of the physical sciences Consultative Group remains too small, in spite of efforts to recruit new members.

It was felt that the update paper is a well-constructed summary of recent RIN activity, which could usefully be sent to review consultants.

▶ *RIN to reflect on suggestions relating to RINews and to consider ways of further increasing the size of the distribution list.*

▶ *All to suggest the names of individuals who might be approached to join the PTE Group.*

▶ *RIN to send a version of the update paper to Alan Brickwood.*

9. Other business

There was none.

Next meeting: Wednesday 27 June, 11:00 – 13:00 (to be followed by a sandwich lunch), at the British Library