



RIN Advisory Board

NOTE OF THE TENTH MEETING – 19 DECEMBER 2007

Action points in red italics

Present:

Robert Burgess (University of Leicester) (Chair)
 Michael Anderson (University of Edinburgh)
 John Feather (University of Loughborough)
 Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
 David Ingram (University College London)
 Michael Jubb (RIN Director)
 Roger Kain (University of Exeter)
 Ed Pentz (CrossRef UK)
 Malcolm Read (JISC)
 Kevin Schürer (University of Essex)
 Jean Sykes (London School of Economics)
 Jo Wood (University of Leicester)

Apologies

John Coggins (University of Glasgow)
 Mike Cruise (University of Birmingham)
 Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)
 Elaine Martin (University of Newcastle)
 Lyn Pykett (University of Aberystwyth)
 Anne Trefethen (University of Oxford)
 David Walton (British Antarctic Survey)
 Jan Wilkinson (British Library)

1. Minutes of the meeting of 3 October 2007 (paper RIN/AB/07/22)

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| These were agreed. | |
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2. Matters arising

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| <p><i>[from item 3]</i> Kevin Schürer had spoken informally to Ian Diamond, who was non-committal about the prospect of increased Research Council contributions to RIN; it was concluded that it would be best to raise the issue in the first instance either with Astrid Wissenburg or the new chair of RCUK's Research Outputs Group. Members noted that RIN will be making a presentation to the RCUK Research Directors Group in May – this could be a good influencing opportunity, and more of these should be sought.</p> | |
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| <p><i>[from item 4]</i> The RIN Executive Team was now aware of members' preferences with regard to their future Board membership; a matrix has been drawn up to help manage the turnover in membership during the period 2008-10. The Funders' Group was content to let the Executive Team identify potential new members; the Board underlined the importance of ensuring a good balance between scientists, social scientists and arts/humanities members.</p> | |
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At the same time, the Funders' Group was reviewing the memorandum of understanding as well as the RIN grant agreement between the British Library and HEFCE.

The Board wished formally to express its thanks to Jan Wilkinson, who

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| was about to leave the British Library, for her work on the Board over the past 3 years; the Library was currently considering who her replacement should be. | |
| <i>[from item 5]</i> The Board noted that the future of the Consultative Groups will be one of the items to be considered at the awayday on 5-6 February. | |
| <i>[from item 6]</i> The Board noted that a final version of the RIN's data stewardship document will be issued early in the New Year. | |
| <i>[from item 6]</i> The Board agreed to Jean Sykes' suggestion of regular progress reports from the UK Research Data Service feasibility study (previously referred to as the CURL-RUGIT feasibility study). | |

3. RIN Plan 2008-11 (*paper RIN/AB/07/23*)

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| <p><i>Introduction</i></p> <p>The Board noted that the Funders' Group had approved the Plan at its meeting on 7 December, with some minor modifications. RIN would now welcome ideas from the Board about areas of engagement, building on the ambitious plans for activity during the first half of 2008. Input would also be welcome on evaluating the impact of RIN, and more broadly the impact of changes in information handling and provision for the research community.</p> | |
| <p><i>RIN impact</i></p> <p>The Board agreed that the qualitative assessment of RIN's impact was very important, particularly in the light of outcome measures that might form part of the organisation's next review. The difficulty of undertaking this should not be underestimated; for instance, how might RIN's impact on senior institutional managers be measured? In spite of the difficulty, such assessment should be treated as a key task for the Executive Team. It was suggested that RIN might use external expertise to help undertake it.</p> | |
| <p><i>Intermediaries</i></p> <p>Identification of the right intermediaries/surrogates for the research community was crucial as well; these might include for instance some of the larger learned societies and academies. It was important to ensure that the more influential organisations were touched; these were power bases in their own right, and could usefully be influenced. However, the Board recognised that intellectual credit does not automatically follow from influence – seeking a linkage between the two in itself represents a major challenge.</p> <p>It was noted that individual Research Councils frequently developed forward-looking programmes in strategic areas which have important implications for information and data management. There was significant investment in these programmes, and RIN could do well to engage with project leaders in these areas – these too could be seen as important surrogates. The Group reflected on whether there were opportunities for setting up thematic/methodological RIN consultative structures (conceivably with a finite remit), to tap into particular types of research activity.</p> | |
| <p><i>RIN staffing</i></p> <p>The Funders' Group had agreed the proposal to increase RIN's staffing level. RIN had consequently elaborated a revised staffing structure, along with new job profiles for the proposed posts and refined ones for existing members of staff. The relevant documentation had</p> | <p>■ RIN Executive Team to circulate the proposed job profiles.</p> |

now been passed on to the British Library's Human Resources Department for it to initiate a recruitment exercise at the earliest opportunity – realistically, not until January.

In the light of the above discussion about intermediaries, members highlighted the particular importance of the new RIN advocacy post (along with the upgraded communications post); recruiting the right individual would be crucial. The RIN Executive Team was committed to ensuring that new staff were graded and appointed at a suitable level, with a salary in the region of £40k. However, Board members suggested that, for a London-based advocacy post, a level of about £45k may be more appropriate, bearing in mind the gravitas and high-powered marketing skills required. Members felt that the researcher post might also benefit from similar upgrading. Bearing in mind the relative shortness of the appointments, RIN might reflect on the possibility of seeking secondments.

It was also suggested that the additional administrative post might be re-branded so as not to create the impression that RIN was setting up a heavy administrative structure for an organisation of its size.

It was recognised that the Board itself could play a helpful role in the process of identifying suitable new staff – for instance, to help RIN ensure that the British Library's HR Department sets appropriate job bands. Subsequently, Board members might also be involved in the interview process.

■ *RIN Executive Team to keep Board advised of recruitment timetable, with a view to possible involvement by members at interviews.*

■ *RIN Executive Team to seek practical advice from Sarah Porter, at JISC, about what might constitute appropriate remuneration.*

4. RIN Operating Plan and Financial Statement (paper RIN/AB/07/24)

The Board noted that much of the current RIN programme of projects had been subject to significant delay, which had impacted on the expenditure profile and therefore led to **increased levels of underspend** for FY 2007-08. Delivery of expenditure was clearly an area where RIN needed to improve its performance; the Funders were aware of this, and consequently will probably not allow carry forward in future. The additional staffing complement should considerably help to ensure that expenditure is committed in a timely fashion. However, in the short term, there was a heavy programme of activity during the first half of 2008, much of it taking place before new staff members are recruited.

A number of points were raised in discussion:

- RIN's project work to date had essentially been commissioned in a top-down manner. RIN might consider taking a fundamentally different approach to some of its future work by running competitions to seek research proposals from the research community in **responsive mode**.
- There were questions about whether RIN had **under-budgeted for some of its commissioned work** – and consequently had not always attracted the best possible research groups (although it was acknowledged that that much of the surveying and analytical work has been extremely difficult). This, combined with the problem with project over-runs, suggested a crucial role for the new research post with regard to programme management and liaison with consultants. Might this post thus be redefined as research programme manager?
- The Board suggested that **dissemination activities** (particularly events) should be built in as a constituent part of commissioned projects – this would also have the advantage of contributing to reducing project underspends.

- Outputs of commissioned work were directly relevant to advocacy activities – hence the importance of producing **strong and succinct messages** (including short, punchy abstracts and pamphlet-like material) from this work for key audiences such as VCs, who have to face an enormous flow of information and whose attention therefore needs to be grabbed. In many cases, RIN’s activities would only come to VCs’ attention if it engaged with administrators in their offices. It was understood that identifying the right individuals was not easy within the increasingly complex structures of HEIs.

■ *RIN Executive Team to discuss dissemination strategies to VCs with Jo Wood.*

5. Research Excellence Framework (paper RIN/AB/07/25)

The Board noted that there were two key issues stemming from the Funding Body proposals of particular interest to RIN:

- The means to measure the **impact of non-journal research outputs**, such as grey literature and conference proceedings.
- The place of **data as a measurable output of research**. The Board agreed that the problem here was that there is not at present a good measure of the impact of data *per se*; data themselves are not usually cited – which raises powerful questions about their accessibility and hence their management. It was also recognised that most data have little secondary use: in another instance of a long tail, their usage tends to be limited beyond the individuals or teams that created them in the first place.

Further issues included the place of institutional repositories as a means for HEIs to manage their research outputs; and the possibly over-heavy reliance on Web of Science data as a basis for undertaking citation analyses.

Underlying this was the rapidly changing information environment, associated with new ways of disseminating research outputs. In this context, the assumptions behind the Funding Bodies proposals might appear conservative.

What role might RIN play to help develop the emerging assessment framework? Two ideas were suggested:

- Investigating usage of content (RIN’s newly-commissioned study on usage and impact of e-journals was relevant here).
- Investigating ways of improving proxies for measuring usage – on the understanding that there are many such possible measures (including even Google page rankings). RIN activity in such an area could help to encourage cultural change.

The Board agreed that, in spite of its shortcomings, the REF was certainly an improvement on the original proposal to base assessment largely on such metrics as levels of research income. RIN should therefore guard against being too critical in its response to the consultation.

- *RIN Executive Team to take these points on board in RIN’s response to the Funding Bodies’ consultation.*
- *RIN Executive Team to encourage information professionals to respond to the consultation.*

6. Researchers’ use of academic library services: taking forward the conclusions of the RIN-CURL report (paper RIN/AB/07/26)

The Board noted that RIN’s intention was to produce well-focused recommendations (and it was suggested that this could even take the form of a series of very short, tailored statements) aimed essentially at senior HEI managers. Members agreed therefore that it would be important to ensure that such **conclusions ultimately stem from the views and requirements of researchers themselves** – this is something that had to be understood by librarians. Membership of the

working group included researchers, senior librarians and subject librarians, so it was well placed to produce recommendations that would reflect different perspectives.

Members underlined that there were different institutional models for the channelling of funds to library services; the variety of approaches would need to be considered when drawing up the recommendations.

7. Advisory Board awayday, 5-6 February 2008 (paper RIN/AB/07/27)

The Board asked whether the focus of the first session should not be about articulating a **vision for the research information landscape**, rather than promoting change.

It was agreed that the discussion should incorporate a consideration of new/changing roles within the RIN Executive Team; this could be addressed during the session on improving RIN performance.

As with the 2006 awayday, it was agreed that sessions should be introduced by Board members; Jean Sykes and Malcolm Read volunteered to lead on two of these, without any preference for which ones at this stage.

■ ***RIN Executive Team to liaise with Board members about assigning roles for introducing sessions.***

8. Other business

Data sharing review

Members noted the recently-announced consultation under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice. The Board agreed that an RIN response to the consultation seemed appropriate.

**Next meeting: Advisory Board awayday, 5-6 February (precise timings to be confirmed)
Middlethorpe Hall Hotel, York**