

Research Information Network ADVISORY BOARD
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NOTE FROM THE FIRST MEETING – 27 JULY 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)
Pat Crocker (JISC)
Judith Elkin (University College Worcester)
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
Mark Haggard (Medical Research Council)
Michael Jubb (RIN Director)
Roger Kain (University of Exeter)
Elaine Martin (University of Newcastle)
Will Naylor (HEFCE)
Lyn Pykett (University of Aberystwyth)
Jean Sykes (London School of Economics)
Jan Wilkinson (BL)

Apologies

Mike Cruise (University of Birmingham)
John Feather (University of Loughborough)
Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)
Ed Pentz (CrossRef UK)
Malcolm Read (JISC)
Kevin Schürer (University of Essex)
Anne Trefethen (University of Oxford)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed members, who used the opportunity of this first meeting to introduce themselves briefly.	
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2. Membership of the Board and terms of reference (paper RIN/AB/05/01)

The terms of reference were noted.	
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	▶ <i>Stéphane Goldstein to circulate summary details about members once Board membership is complete.</i>
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3. Background to the establishment of the Research Information Network

In his presentation, MJ outlined the history, rationale, structure, mission/scope and relationships of RIN. Members commented that engagement with users is crucial, and emphasised the importance of rapidly establishing effective relationships with stakeholders that are genuinely representative of the research community. It was recognised that identifying such organisations could represent a challenge.

It was suggested that the list of learned societies with which RIN should establish a dialogue might be extended to include, for instance, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society of Chemistry.

▶ *Michael Jubb to circulate his Powerpoint presentation, including a link to the RSLG Final Report.*

▶ *All to suggest (i) any further Learned Societies with which RIN could engage, bearing in mind the limitations of RIN resourcing, and (ii) key events where useful engagement with learned societies might take place.*

4. Strategic Plan and Operating Plan (papers RIN/AB/05/02 and RIN/AB/05/04)

Strategic Plan: MJ introduced the document and explained that a number of factors accounted for the delay in producing this, notably the lack of precedent for an organisation such as RIN; the tensions in drawing up a strategy for an organisation endowed with a leadership role; and the limitations in RIN resources. Furthermore, RIN would inevitably be dependent on the work carried out by its partners and stakeholders. The Plan, which would be revised regularly, outlines a long-term vision that reflects RIN's key role in drawing up a national framework. Within that context, the Strategic Plan sets out shorter-term priorities with a programme of work that is further developed in the Operating Plan.

Points raised in discussion:

- ▶ Is the Plan over-ambitious? Perhaps, but that is not a bad thing, as long as there are sound mechanisms for decision-making on specific tasks. Furthermore, the Plan is flexible and has the potential for making redundant those activities that, in due course, might be less viable. There was agreement that six broad aims represent a good balance.
- ▶ Basic indicators of success may be required – but their elaboration can wait until RIN methodologies are better established.
- ▶ There is a need to define how RIN will cater for the needs of the HE research community in all its diversity. RIN must address the risk that researchers might perceive its activities as not being sufficiently concrete.
- ▶ At the same time, RIN must retain the goodwill of the LIS community.

▶ *Michael Jubb to adjust the Strategic Plan to reflect the thrust of key points raised during the discussion.*

- ▶ Crucially, and with particular reference to aim 2, RIN will have to ensure that its engagement with researchers is real. This means engaging with the ‘rank and file’, not just with perceived research leaders and representative bodies. The RIN must identify with younger researchers, and their style and preferences. This is a challenging task, and the Advisory Board must help to identify opportunities in the coming months, for instance in relation to attracting front-line researchers to the RIN Consultative Groups (see below).
- ▶ RIN’s positioning is important: it must focus on areas where it can add value and make a real difference, and not simply latching onto or duplicating the work done by others – such as JISC, CURL and SCOUNL.
- ▶ One possible niche role for RIN would be to support given research communities in their development of linkage and interoperability between data stores; organisations such as the Wellcome Trust might help in this respect.
- ▶ More broadly, the Advisory Board should help to identify disciplines or sub-disciplines as exemplars for case studies examining practice relating to information discovery, access and linkage. On the basis of the documented experience of the relevant disciplines, such case studies could yield useful information on variations in outlooks between research communities.
- ▶ Semantic point: the use of verbs such as ‘integrate’ (see aim 4) for some of the key objectives should be reviewed.

▶ *Michael Anderson, in time for the next meeting on 12 October, to advise on standard criteria to be used for selecting case studies.*

Operating Plan: MJ emphasised that this document remains open to change, but nevertheless RIN had already undertaken early preparatory work in relation to some of the projects set out therein; there has also been initial discussions with stakeholders about areas such as collaborative storage and COPAC. MJ undertook to report regularly on progress regarding implementation of the Plan and developments on individual projects. Such updates will be important features of future Advisory Board meetings, so as to seek advice and views from members.

Points raised in discussion:

- ▶ It is important to define the complementarity between the distinct missions/remit of JISC and RIN, and for RIN to co-ordinate its programme of activities with JISC, notably because JISC operates some of the services (e.g. SUNCAT) that may be the focus of RIN-commissioned work. Joint planning between JISC and RIN may be needed in order to avoid duplication of work, even though this might lengthen relevant project timescales. The Advisory Board must remain alert to any tensions between JISC and RIN, so as to help to minimise or eliminate them.
- ▶ Key task 3: it would be better to refer to engagement, rather

▶ *Michael Jubb to amend*

than consultation, with a wide range of stakeholders; this would help emphasise the imperative for joint working with organisations such as CURL and JISC.

- ▶ Key task 9: the Board noted the paucity of studies on the behaviour of researchers and therefore particularly welcomed future RIN activity in this area. It was agreed that this should be discussed in more detail at the next Board meeting.
- ▶ Key task 19: the Board noted the difficulty in obtaining full sets of annual returns from the 48 libraries participating in the RSLP Access Fund scheme. HEFCE's records are incomplete, but it is possible that SHEFC might have a complete set of returns.

key task 9, so that it refers to engagement rather than consultation.

- ▶ **Stéphane Goldstein** to contact SHEFC to try to obtain fuller sets of library returns.

RIN Consultative Groups: in the light of the agreed imperative to engage with the 'rank and file' of the research community, MJ stressed the major role that the proposed Consultative Groups could play in establishing a dialogue with younger, active researchers who are developing research methodologies that reflect the new opportunities of the information age – and furthermore, with those who do not just represent their own immediate sectoral interests. The Advisory Board's help is needed to capture this audience, both by identifying individuals that might serve on the Groups and by highlighting events and other opportunities where engagement with such researchers may best be achieved.

Board members commented that the titling of the Groups would need to be made clearer, notably to ensure that medicine and engineering are more explicitly referred to in the titles of the two relevant Groups. The suggested structure of the Groups might also be re-examined – although the Board had to be mindful about the limit to the number of Groups that the RIN executive team is able to support.

- ▶ **All**, by end of August, to identify (i) possible members of the Consultative Groups conforming to the criteria suggested in the discussion, and (ii) events/opportunities where engagement with such individuals might take place.
- ▶ **All**, by end of August, to make suggestions about possible changes to the structure of the Groups.

5. Communications and launch event

Communications: the Board suggested that stakeholder analyses could help to ensure that RIN communicates effectively. The following form part of current communication efforts:

- ▶ The Strategic Plan provides an important basis for communication; glossy, well-designed versions of both the full document and the two-page summary will be produced shortly.
- ▶ Preparations are underway with a view to setting up a RIN website in the coming weeks.
- ▶ There have been discussions with selected journalists (THES, Research Fortnight), and more will take place during the autumn.

- ▶ **Michel Jubb** to present a draft of the glossy version of the Plan to the next meeting on 12 October.
- ▶ **All** to advise on journalists / publications that RIN might usefully contact.

Launch event: this would be an important marker for RIN. The

- ▶ **All** to suggest names of

evening of 8 December has been earmarked as the date for this event – i.e. following that day’s joint meeting of the Funders’ Group and Advisory Board. The RIN executive team is seeking to identify a keynote speaker.

[NOTE: since the meeting, Lord Rees (until recently Sir Martin Rees) has confirmed his willingness to give the keynote address, and the 8 December date has been confirmed. This will be just a few days after Lord Rees formally takes up his appointment as President of the Royal Society]

individuals that RIN might invite to the launch event.

6. Date of meetings for 2005-06 (paper RIN/AB/05/05)

The dates of meetings for 2005-06 were noted. Members were reminded that the 8 December meeting would be held jointly with the Funders’ Group, at a venue to be confirmed.

7. Other business

There was none.

Next meeting: Wednesday 12 October, 11:00 to 13:00, at the British Library