



RIN Advisory Board

NOTE OF THE FIFTH MEETING – 7 JULY 2006

Action points in red italics

Present:

Robert Burgess (University of Leicester) (Chair)
Michael Anderson (University of Edinburgh)
Rachel Bruce (JISC)
John Coggins (University of Glasgow)
Mike Cruise (University of Birmingham)
John Feather (University of Loughborough)
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
David Ingram (University College London)
Michael Jubb (RIN Director)
Roger Kain (University of Exeter)
Elaine Martin (University of Newcastle)
Will Naylor (HEFCE) (from item 6)
Jean Sykes (London School of Economics)

Apologies

Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)
Ed Pentz (CrossRef UK)
Lyn Pykett (University of Aberystwyth)
Malcolm Read (JISC)
Kevin Schürer (University of Essex)
Anne Trefethen (University of Oxford)
David Walton (British Antarctic Survey)
Jan Wilkinson (British Library)

Apologies for absence

See above.

Members noted the resignation from the Board of Judith Elkin and Mark Haggard, in both cases owing to pressure of work.

1. Minutes of the Advisory Board meeting of 4 April 2006 (*paper RIN/AB/06/06*)

These were approved.

2. Matters arising (*oral item*)

Joint meetings with Funders' Group: it has now been agreed with HEFCE that there will no longer be an annual joint meeting of the Advisory Board and the Funders' Group. However, in view of this decoupling, it will be particularly important to ensure that communication is maintained between the two committees, for instance through the circulation of respective meeting minutes.

Scholarly communications: Fred Friend has been confirmed as the JISC representative on RIN's scholarly communications group.

<p><u>Non-English bodies</u>: Michael Jubb attended the Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries' awayday in early June, and used the opportunity to meet also with the National Library of Scotland.</p>	
<p><u>Project on the policies and practice of major funders</u>: the draft report, commissioned by RIN from the Rightscom consultancy, has been improved significantly since the last Board meeting; more interviews were carried out, there is now a greater evidence base. However, the document still lacks clarity, and key messages have not been properly drawn out. For this reason, the latest revision was not circulated to the Board. Members agreed with the suggestion that re-writing is required to make the report more readable, albeit without altering the essential content. They felt that it would be inappropriate to ask Rightscom to undertake this additional work, and that such re-casting would benefit from a fresh pair of eyes. The RIN executive team does not have sufficient resources to undertake this task, and it was therefore agreed to outsource the work to a specialist writer; several members welcomed the suggestion of employing the Critical Thinking consultancy.</p> <p>RIN's intention is still to organise a workshop, in mid to late autumn, to present and discuss the conclusions of the report. The Board would need to see a final or near-final version of the document before then, if possible at the next meeting on 25 October.</p> <p>The shortcomings of the report led members to express concern about Rightscom's ability satisfactorily to complete the other RIN study for which they have been commissioned, on researchers' use of discovery services – although that particular project is characterised by significant survey work being undertaken in partnership by IRN Research. The Board noted that Rightscom has carried out good quality work for JISC.</p>	<p>▶ <i>Stéphane Goldstein to approach Jane Denholm, at Critical Thinking, to secure her services for the re-draft of the report.</i></p> <p>▶ <i>RIN executive team to ensure that a final or near-final version of the report is presented to the Board in advance of the proposed workshop.</i></p>
<p><u>Collaborative collection management</u>: the Board noted that the report from the recently-completed CoFoR evaluation study would serve as the basis for the work of the proposed joint RIN/CURL collections project officer post. The postholder's remit would include liaison with the five area studies/language centres newly-established by HEFCE, SFC, AHRC and ESRC in the context of a wider programme of support for strategically important and vulnerable subjects.</p>	
<p><u>Advisory Board awayday</u>: this is scheduled for 23/24 November. The agenda would include the forthcoming RIN review and a forward-looking item on 'the RIN five years from now'.</p>	<p>▶ <i>All to suggest other possible themes to be considered at the Board's awayday.</i></p>

3. Report from the Funders' Group meeting of 20 June 2006 (oral item)

<p>This meeting had been chaired by Rama Thirunamachandran. The Board noted the main issues covered by the Group (RIN one year on, business plan, RIN review). The next meeting would be chaired by David Eastwood, who by then will have taken up his position as HEFCE Chief Executive.</p>	
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4. The RIN one year on (paper RIN/AB/06/07)

The Board wished to record its appreciation for the impressive progress achieved by the RIN during its first year, especially bearing in mind the small size of its executive team. Members suggested that such a track record should make a good impression during the RIN review. Members also suggested that an updated summary of the one year on paper could be a useful reference document.

Communications Officer: in discussion, the Board focused on the forthcoming appointment of the RIN's Communications Officer. Members stressed the critical importance of making the right decision, not just in terms of ability to develop the website, but also in relation to the required networking and editorial skills. There was some concern that the BL's human resources team had given too low a grading/salary range to the post – this had been raised with BL, but they argued this was in line with existing communications posts within the Library. The Board was adamant that no appointment should be made if the skillset of applicants was not appropriate; it would be imperative in these circumstances to re-advertise, if necessary with an enhanced job profile and a grade to match.

► *RIN executive team to interview shortlisted candidates on 20 July, on the basis of the advert that appeared in 'The Guardian' on 26 June.*

Board papers: members used the opportunity to request that the RIN executive team be mindful of the need to keep Board papers as succinct and readable as possible.

5. Access for members of the public to digital content held in university and college libraries (*paper RIN/AB/06/09*)

The Board noted the issues and recommendations outlined in the expert group report. The following points were raised in discussion:

- The approach should take greater account of the role of publishers, who need to be brought into the debate more closely as part of an overarching approach to resolving access issues. The document's focus on technical issues was acknowledged, and it was recognised that the RIN's scholarly communications group could usefully engage with publishers and others on licensing issues.
- The document could set out more clearly the issues and questions as they relate to the different categories of stakeholders.
- Confusion often arises about the interpretation of licences as they relate to different categories of users – for instance, alumni or recently-retired staff members, who may be undertaking teaching duties for an institution, but without an employment contract – which affects their access rights.

► *Michael Jubb to refine the report in the light of comments.*

6. Collaborative storage (*oral item*)

The Board recognised that the key issue at present is the drawing up of the specification for phase 1 of the process of establishing a collaborative storage framework, i.e. identifying half a dozen 'early adopters' across the university library sector who would form part of a pilot. The purpose of this is to test the operational aspects and scalability of the initiatives, and the possible benefits in relation to deduplication and disposals. There will be a draft call for the pilot, which is expected to produce a significant number of bids in view of the level of interest generated by the initiative. A submission for HEFCE

strategic development funding is being made for phase 1; SFC and HEFCW are expected to provide funding as well.

7. Review of the RIN (*paper RIN/AB/06/08*)

The Board noted the views expressed at the recent Funders' Group meeting, and signalled a number of points:

- ▶ The timing of the review is not ideal, but pragmatically, members recognised that there is little leeway to change this. Nonetheless, it will be important for the reviewers to recognise that the RIN is a long-term undertaking, and that the 18 months leading up to the review does not properly allow the RIN's worth to be recognised. It would therefore be difficult to evaluate the organisation's impact – although the outputs from RIN's early programme of projects would be an important factor.
- ▶ The Board suggested that the benchmark for the reviewers should be the Strategic Plan, drawn up in 2005, rather than the memorandum of understanding, drafted a year before the RIN was formally constituted.
- ▶ One useful way of garnering views about the RIN would be to seek comments from the four consultative groups.
- ▶ The RIN executive team should have an opportunity to see the output of the review before it is submitted to the Funders' Group in June 2007.

On behalf of HEFCE, Will Naylor confirmed that he would be happy to provide the Board with the specification for the methodology of the review, including the measurement tools, before prospective reviewers are identified.

HEFCE has not yet decided whether the tender for awarding the review contract will be closed or open – although it was suggested that the latter is perhaps more likely. The Board felt strongly that it (or at minimum the chair) should be given the names of organisations submitting responses to the tender; there is a danger of conflict of interest in the event that the list of prospective reviewers includes organisations that have themselves tendered for RIN research projects and not been successful.

The Board also considered the possibility of having some sort of oversight of the review process, for instance by allowing for meetings between the review team and Board members (individually or collectively). Another unanswered question at this stage is whether a review steering group will be put in place.

- ▶ *Will Naylor to report the Board's views to HEFCE.*
- ▶ *RIN executive team to arrange for the review to be discussed more fully at the Board's awayday on 23-24 November.*

8. E-Infrastructure Steering Group (*paper RIN/AB/06/10*)

The Board considered the summary reports for the e-Infrastructure working groups were dense material upon which it was difficult to comment.

Members focused instead on those sections of the note from the Steering Group meeting relating to the preparation of a summary bid document for the comprehensive spending review. Members highlighted the following:

- ▶ *Michael Jubb to take forward the Board's views to the next meeting of the Steering Group on 28 July.*

- ▶ Bearing in mind civil servants from HM Treasury, and ultimately ministers, will be the key recipients of the bid, it is vitally important for the material presented in the bid to avoid over-abstractation. The focus should be on practical examples and possible outcomes, set out in clear and persuasive English – underlining the importance of communications expertise.
- ▶ Lack of vision in presenting the case is a further danger.
- ▶ There is a need for a synthesis that reconciles top-down and bottom-up approaches to defining funding priorities.

9. Consultation on reform of higher education research assessment and funding (*paper RIN/AB/06/11*)

The Board agreed that it would be premature for RIN to provide a response to this consultation. RIN would be better placed to comment on more specific proposals, for instance relating to the use of bibliometric data.

10. British Library Content Strategy (*paper RIN/AB/06/12*)

The Board noted the extent to which the strategy reflects the evolving view of the British Library, in particular in view of the document's recognition of the importance of (i) content, as opposed to collected material; and (ii) stronger links with the HEI research community. However, there was a feeling that the strategy creates the impression of a short-term reaction to the need for a purchasing strategy. There was also a question about the extent to which RIN could make a distinctive contribution to the debate.

- ▶ *Michael Jubb to incorporate the Board's views in the RIN's response to the strategy*

11. Reports from Consultative Group chairs (*oral item*)

The Board noted key points reported from the four most recent meetings.

Physical sciences group – 24 April (Elaine Martin):

- ▶ Importance of ensuring effective co-ordination and linkage between the four groups.
- ▶ Possible areas for future investigation: (i) examining how software developed by university-based researchers might be more effectively identified and indexed; (ii) investigating the impact of IPR on the dissemination of data; (iii) looking at the implication of the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act, in relation to research information outputs.
- ▶ Ability for RIN to develop a national policy framework for the development of information services for UK research.
- ▶ Difference of views on the importance of digitised journal content, with continued relevance for some niche areas of physical sciences research.

Basing the proposed digital data management principles on highlighting of best practice, i.e. bottom-up approach to establishing such principles.

Library & information sciences group – 4 May (Jean Sykes):

- ▶ Developing role of the consultative groups through such activities as horizon-scanning, awareness of the international context and developing links with the commercial sector.
- ▶ Possible areas for future investigation: (i) examination of standards for software management – specifically, that relating to information; (ii) preservation of images.
- ▶ Usefulness of involving academic data librarians (DISC-UK) in the process of defining digital data management principles.
- ▶ Need for great care in formulating approach and methodology for proposed study on researchers' use of academic libraries, including for instance piloting of possible questionnaire.
- ▶ Endorsement of proposed study on retroconversion.

Arts, humanities & social sciences group – 9 June (Michael Anderson):

- ▶ Taking forward the recommendations from the recently-published RIN/CURL report on CCM in areas other than that covered by CoFoR.
- ▶ Interest in supporting a pilot survey on researcher use and practice in relation to collaborative collection management, based on a proposal from a Group member; closely related to RIN's broad agenda on CCM development.
- ▶ Interest in supporting a pilot to develop a meta-research wiki, as a tool for fostering collaborative research activities at a national and international level; also based on a proposal from a Group member.
- ▶ Importance of ensuring qualitative approach to survey work as part of proposed study on researchers' use of academic libraries, e.g. in terms of evaluating libraries' policies towards arts and humanities researchers.

Life sciences & medicine group – 20 June (John Coggins):

- ▶ Need to ensure good channels of communication between the four groups.
- ▶ Importance of solid RIN web presence.
- ▶ Recognition that digitisation agenda is relevant to certain specific areas within the life sciences.
- ▶ Concern that the BL is not sufficiently aware of issues of concern to life scientists.
- ▶ Possible areas for future investigation by the Group: (i) examining the scope for public support for data tagging initiatives; (ii) developing interfaces with clinical research and the NHS; additional health/clinical researchers on the group would help with this.
- ▶ Critique of digital data management principles; concerns about potentially prescriptive nature of the proposed approach.

There was little time for the Board to discuss the breadth of the issues considered by the consultative groups, but it was already obvious that a number of common themes are emerging. Members agreed that there is a need to consider the opportunities that this commonality presents.

At the same time, the Board endorsed the suggestion that very short, bullet-point notes be produced from group meetings, to serve a dual

▶ *Stéphane Goldstein
to arrange for the*

purpose: (i) reporting to the Board; and (ii) posting information on the website.

drafting of short notes from consultative group meetings

12. Other business

There was none.

Next meeting: Wednesday 25 October, 11:00 -13:00, at the British Library