



RIN Research Communications Group
NOTE FROM THE SEVENTH MEETING – 25 MARCH 2009

Action points in italics

Present:

Michael Jubb (Chair) (RIN)
Juan Bicarregui (STFC)
Bob Campbell (Wiley-Blackwell and Publishing Research Consortium)
Lee-Ann Coleman (British Library)
Fred Friend (JISC)
Jeremy Giles (British Geological Survey)
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
Neil Jacobs (JISC)
Barbara Kalumenos (International Association of STM Publishers)
Robert Kiley (Wellcome Trust)
Frances Pinter (London School of Economics)
David Prosser (SPARC Europe)
Ian Russell (ALPSP)
Debby Shorley (Imperial College London)
Graham Taylor (Publishers Association)
Astrid Wissenburg (ESRC)
Michel Woodman (Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform)

Apologies:

Jeffrey Aronson (University of Oxford)
Paul Ayris (UCL Library)
Rachel Bruce (JISC)
Davina Foord (UUK)
Paul Gemmill (RCUK - BBSRC)
Michael Mabe (International Association of STM Publishers)
Ken Peach (University of Oxford and Royal Holloway College)
Mark Thorley (NERC)

1. Minutes of the meeting of 9 December 2008 (paper RIN/RCG/09/01)

These were approved, with minor modifications:

- Rachel Bruce and Lee-Ann Coleman had been inadvertently omitted from the list of attenders.
- Under item 4 (preservation of e-journals), it is the Department of Culture, Media and Sports, not the British Library, that is looking to extend the scope of legal deposit.

2. Matters arising

From item 5 – other business, fall in the value of Sterling

A copy was circulated of RIN's newly-published briefing document on the risks to scholarly journals and books caused by the global economic crisis. This is clearly impacting on all stakeholders, not least libraries, whose budgetary margins are being constrained, and publishers, who face uncertainty about their subscription trends. It is recognised that although the crisis

- *All to suggest ideas about how the briefing document might be used to raise awareness of the problem within the various constituencies.*

is indeed global and transcends national contexts, the UK is being particularly hit because of the fall in the value of the Sterling against the \$ and €.

RIN, JISC and others are organising a meeting during April to address the issues raised in the brief.

From item 5 – conference proceedings

A note is still awaited from Nick Evans about the place of conference proceedings within the scholarly communications spectrum.

- **Ian Russell** to chase up Nick Evans.

3. **The economics of scholarly communications** (*paper RIN/RCG/09/02*)

Introduction

The Group noted that the scope, coverage and methodology of the two reports is not identical, which largely explains the different figures and conclusions that they carry. Straightforward comparisons are therefore not necessarily possible or appropriate.

Rather, therefore, than undertaking lengthy comparative analyses of these two pieces of work, the key challenge now is how best to take forward the respective conclusions. There is much scope for moving forward, on the basis of a reaching a common understanding of priorities. The paper identifies some possible strands of investigation and activity.

Next steps

It was recognised that the many suggestions in the paper could not all be pursued, and that a selective approach was therefore required. The Group focused on four areas which it felt warranted further work.

1. Transition process

Much of the discussion centred on the significant challenge of identifying means of achieving transition (or change, as some would prefer to call it) from one scholarly publication model to another, even in the absence of irrefutable evidence – which in any case may not be forthcoming – about costs and benefits. The challenge is heightened by a lack of consensus about precisely what any transition is supposed to lead to. Publishers do not oppose change *per se*, and are experimenting for instance with open access and hybrid journals, but they insist that transition has to lead to a model that is financially sustainable.

Members agreed that neither report deals in detail with transition paths and mechanisms. In order to achieve this, there is a need for a clearer view on (i) cash costs; (ii) time (or opportunity) costs; and (iii) benefits as they might arise during a transition process. The interpretation of costs and benefits may not be the same for the various interested parties. Nevertheless, the Group felt that further work towards achieving such a transition would be desirable in a context where the landscape is in any case already changing.

2. Access deficits

Members agreed that there is a strong case for providing more systematic evidence about the extent to which research outputs

are available, or not, to different sectors of the research community; and how barriers to access might be overcome. Finding ways of addressing such gaps could be particularly valuable if clear benefits for the research process were demonstrated.

3. Barriers to moves to e-only

A further useful strand of enquiry would be to investigate, identify and propose ways of overcoming barriers to moving to e-only formats for journals and books. Members agreed that there are potentially significant savings to be achieved by adoption of e-only solutions.

4. Entry into scholarly communications

Members noted that smaller learned societies in particular are vulnerable to changes in publication models, while at the same time there is a need for informed advice to researchers who wish to establish new journals. Some useful work might be done therefore in developing , or pointing societies and researchers towards, existing guidance on these issues.

Other issues raised in discussion

- The Group noted that RCUK will shortly be publishing its report on open access to research outputs, which will be accompanied by a covering statement. Over the following few months, RCUK intends to reflect on how it might evolve its position in the light of the report's conclusions.
- It was suggested that there should be more awareness of issues relating to other e-outputs, notably e-books or book chapters (see below).
- There was a brief discussion on the issue of 'green' open access solutions. Publishers members signalled that they remain confused about the ultimate purpose of repositories: safety-net, add-on or substitute for conventional publishing? Deposit practices vary widely across disciplines, and there is no overarching 'grand plan', and often much lack of clarity, regarding moves to a 'green' model. It was also noted that repositories perform functions other than allowing open access; increasingly, their development is driven by such issues as research management, showcasing and research assessment.

Conclusion

A collaborative approach to addressing these issues is indispensable; joint formulation and promotion of relevant projects would greatly increase the credibility of emerging solutions. RIN is well-placed to broker such collaborations. The priority now is to consult parties on how collaborations can be achieved.

- ***RIN Executive Team to liaise with members with a view to explore how the suggested strands of activity might be taken practically.***

4. Current issues in scholarly communications (paper RIN/RCG/09/03)

Members noted the emerging RIN programme of activities. Research Councils underlined their interest in work on exploring the value and benefits of research data sharing. Research Councils are also currently working on the quantification of

their outputs and outcomes; there is therefore scope for engagement with RIN over proposed work on assurance and evaluation for research outputs throughout the scholarly communications cycle.

E-books

Most of the discussion focused on the outline proposal, from RESCOLINC and JISC Collections, on e-books. There was some interest in principle in investigating this area, on the basis of a researcher behavioural study and/or an examination of barriers to the development of e-books as a medium. However, the idea would need to be fleshed out before it could be considered as a persuasive project.

Other issues

- With regard to the formulation of future activities, it was suggested that RIN considers the value of undertaking longitudinal work, founded on baselines provided through the sort of behavioural studies¹ recently undertaken by RIN, JISC, the British Library and others. Bearing in mind the interest of these agencies, there may be a case for a more co-ordinated approach to this type of work.
- It was felt that RIN's initial evaluation of the impact of the guidance on acknowledgement of funders could provide a 'good news' story – although it was recognised that future follow-up evaluations, charting the take-up of the guidance over time, could provide an even more interesting narrative. This reinforces the above point about the value of longitudinal work.
- Members noted that RCUK is now looking again at follow-up from the 2007 e-infrastructure roadmap. The Research Councils are considering a review of progress against the roadmap's thematic conclusions, with a view to deciding which areas will require future action on the part of interested parties.

- ***RIN Executive Team*** to feed back these comments to RESCOLINC and JISC Collections, and suggest that the proposal requires fleshing before it can be considered as a viable project.

5. Other business

There was none.

Next meeting: date in July to be agreed

¹ The example cited was the British Library's recently-commissioned 'Generation Y' project.