

RIN Research Communications Group

NOTE FROM THE SECOND MEETING – 29 MAY 2007

Action points in italics

Present:

Michael Jubb (Chair) (RIN)
Paul Ayris (UCL Library)
Bob Campbell (Blackwell and Publishers' Research Consortium) – from item 5
Sarah Chaytor (UUK)
Fred Friend (JISC)
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
Robert Kiley (Wellcome Trust)
Ken Peach (University of Oxford and Royal Holloway College)
David Prosser (SPARC Europe)
Debby Shorley (University of Sussex)
Graham Taylor (Publishers Association) – from item 6
Mark Thorley (NERC)

Apologies:

Jeffrey Aronson (University of Oxford)
Juan Bicarregui (CCLRC)
David Brown (British Library)
Jeremy Giles (British Geological Survey)
Michael Mabe (International Association of STM Publishers)
Ian Russell (ALPSP)
Astrid Wissenburg (ESRC)
Michel Woodman (Department of Trade & Industry)

1. **New members and introductions**

Three new members were welcomed to the Group: Debby Shorley, who replaces Tom Graham as one of the librarian representatives; Ken Peach, who fills the physical sciences research slot; and Sarah Chaytor, from UUK.

2. **Minutes of the meeting of 31 January 2007** (*paper RIN/RCG/07/04*)

These were approved.

3. **Matters arising**

Update on membership: there are four vacancies remaining to be filled, for the following slots:

- Arts & humanities researcher: members suggested Michael Worton, Deputy Provost at UCL.
- Social sciences researcher: some possibilities are currently being investigated.
- Researcher from the commercial sector: the RIN had made several unsuccessful approaches to date, for instance to Microsoft: it was suggested that the National Physical Laboratory, which is set up as a company, might usefully be

■ ***RIN Executive Team to approach Michael Worton and possibly the National Physical Laboratory.***

approached.

- Representative from a Government Department other than DTI.

4. Strategic goals in public policy for scholarly communications – next steps (paper RIN/RCG/07/05)

Members noted that, over the past three months, there had been some progress in taking forward this document, notably through sign-up by additional organisations. However, to date, its overall impact has been small; there is a real challenge in finding ways of increasing the impact; avenues to pursue might include for instance:

- further advocacy, using the good offices of signatories and other interested bodies;
- project work, to examine what individual key players are doing in relevant areas covered by the statement; this could include ‘longitudinal’ work to look at what is happening now, and how the situation may develop in the near future;
- seeking international (particularly European) sign-up.

However, the RIN’s human resources are small, and there is a clear limit about what it can realistically achieve.

Comments and discussion:

Members recognised that the document has at least had an initial impact, as demonstrated by the collaborative manner in which it was drawn up. Moreover, it was suggested that the short-term impact of such a statement is less important than what might result in the longer term.

How might this now be taken forward?

It was generally agreed that the group needs to have a clearer idea about the purpose of document. It would also be important to find ways of establishing how the principles are being adhered to: could a system for verifying this be established? Is there a case for awarding some sort of kitemark for adherence to the principles, along the same lines as the [Investors in People](#) scheme? Such approaches would represent a big challenge, especially with regard to:

- adherence at the level of individuals, such as researchers – which is another facet of the general difficulty of engaging with the research community on research information issues;
- the tension between the need to protect organisational reputation and academic freedom; this suggests that, for the sake of clarity, organisations should have in place a well-defined scholarly communications policy, akin to say their policy on freedom of information, with identified officers in an overseeing role.

The group suggested some practical courses of action:

- Organising a workshop, possibly before the main summer break, to look at the issues (or perhaps just a selection of issues) that stakeholders are confronting when addressing the principles; based on that, considering the procedures that could be used to underpin the development of policy. The workshop could draw one or two representatives from each

- **RIN Executive Team** to investigate the possibility of organising a workshop asap.

signatory or stakeholder.

- Deriving from the statement a simplified checklist of issues to address at a corporate/institutional level. This could be tested at the proposed workshop.
- Enlisting the assistance of Universities UK in promoting / publicising the statement, and perhaps also the checklist.
- Considering a ‘longitudinal’ approach: setting a current baseline of corporate/institutional practical attainment against the checklist, and charting progress in say a couple of years time.

- *RIN Executive Team to draw up a simple, draft checklist of practical issues to be addressed by institutions in order to comply with the statement; checklist to be circulated to the Group asap.*

5. RIN-JISC-NERC study on publications and quality assurance of research data outputs – an update (*paper RIN/RCG/07/06*)

The RIN Executive reported on progress with this project, which has now been commissioned, which JISC and NERC have recently agreed to contribute to.

Membership of the expert panel still needs to be completed. From a biomedical perspective, Tim Hubbard or Graham Cameron ([European Bioinformatics Institute](#)) were suggested as possible members. Astrid Wissenburg should be able to supply the name of a social science researcher.

The Group noted also that there are several current projects on linkage of journals to datasets. The study will need to take account projects, in order to avoid the risk being isolated from relevant developments. Would an audit of researcher behaviour be beyond the scope of the study? This will happen to an extent, through the projected focus group work and small-scale interviews; such in depth-discussions should greatly help to tease out researchers’ behaviour with regard to their use of data.

It was suggested that the study should make more explicit reference to long-term digital curation. Curation forms part of the scope, but members were reminded that the work is not intended as anything more than an empirical study that describes the current landscape; it will not be an overview of technical practice – nor a policy setting exercise, which would be the subject of follow-up work.

One particular issue that the study might consider is the selling of clinical research data to the pharmaceutical industry.

Members also highlighted the issue of custodianship vs. ownership of data: this will clearly be picked up by the study, and is also relevant to the RIN’s consultation on its draft principles on data stewardship.

- *RIN Executive Team to finalise membership of expert panel, in consultation with JISC and NERC.*
- *Bob Campbell to provide details of current projects relating to linkage of journals to datasets.*

6. Proposed study on activities, costs and funding flows in the scholarly communications process (*paper RIN/RCG/07/07*)

Members noted the rationale for this proposed work, and asked about the imperative for undertaking it so quickly. The RIN Executive pointed out that the idea of the project had been discussed for several months now, not least at the last Group meeting. The precise timing also reflects the need to conform to the RIN’s overall schedule of projects.

- *All to suggest the names of consultants or research groups for RIN to approach as possible contractors to undertake the work.*

Questions and issues raised in discussion:

- Is the project specification clear enough, and is its scope sufficiently well-defined? There was some concern that prospective consultants might find it difficult to establish what is required. The RIN Executive's view is that the wording on the specification is intended to allow contractors to indicate their vision of what the study represents, and their interpretation of the scope.
- One possible problem might be the obtaining of relevant data from publishers. It was suggested that they would probably be willing to provide these at a macro-economic level, although it is not entirely clear precisely what information might be supplied, and there is a danger that much of this information might be too 'soft'. At an accounting level, there may indeed be problems in obtaining data, as identified at the previous meeting.
- Who are the 'customers' for this study, and what will they do with the output? It was agreed that, essentially, these are research institutions, funding bodies and publisher
- What cost savings might follow from HEFCE undertaking research assessments purely on e-publications? This could be of significant interest to publishers.

The Group considered whether other stakeholders might join the RIN in sponsoring the project. The [Publishers' Research Consortium](#) (PRC) could be interested; this would be a good way of getting publisher buy-in to the project. It could also be expedient for library bodies and JISC to be associated to the study, at the very least through representation on the expert panel. The Group noted the importance of dovetailing with JISC's programme of relevant activities.

- **Bob Campbell** to enquire whether PRC might wish to support the project.
- **Paul Ayris and Debby Shorley** to contact CURL and SCONUL respectfully with a view to seeking co-sponsorship, perhaps with a respective contribution of £5k.
- **Mark Thorley** to check whether Research Councils may be interested in co-sponsorship.

7. Funders' metadata for journal articles (paper RIN/RCG/07/08)

The key question is how the working group's recommendations might be promulgated particularly with publishers and key funders. There is a strong consensus on the working group for encouraging momentum around a set of simple guidelines – simplicity is recognised as very important.

Members noted the difficulty that Research Councils have in enforcing their own existing regulations. The Group concurred with the view that author information is part of the metadata, and not of the article. It also recognised the important role that [CrossRef](#) is likely to play in helping publishers to take up the recommendations.

8. Plans for future work: research/publication ethics, and researcher behaviour in the use of journals (paper RIN/RCG/07/09)

Research/publication ethics and research integrity

This strand of work might be opened by a workshop. Wiley Blackwell has noted much interest stemming from its own document on publication ethics. The Royal Society is also interested in this area – they might usefully host such an event. However, in view of the RIN's heavy commitments for the

foreseeable future, it was understood that this general area might not be a strategic priority for the present, and might be more usefully left to other organisations with a more specialist interest.

Other relevant factors highlighted by members:

- There is a [international conference on research integrity](#) organised by the Portuguese presidency of the EU on 16-19 September; should the RIN be represented?
- The [UK Research Integrity Office in Health and Biomedical Sciences](#) (UKRIO) has been launched, but it has not been very active to date – although it has set up a helpline.
- David Nicholas (UCL) is working on a study on use of e-books, and also on the British Library/JISC commissioned study on the needs of the researcher of the future.
- The ethics of meta-analysis (with the dangers that this represents if not undertaken/interpreted properly) is another area worthy of investigation.

Researcher behaviour in use of journals

There was agreement that this is an area more central to the RIN's concerns than research/publication ethics.

- *RIN Executive to develop proposals for a project.*

9. Other business

RIN project capacity

As a point of information, it was noted that, given current staffing resources, the RIN's capacity is currently limited to commissioning and managing about six or seven projects a year.

Journals data baseline study

The consensus from discussions is that there should be an interval of about two years between the original study, published in November 2006, and a further study to update its findings – which implies commissioning this new work during the summer of 2008.

Next meeting: Wednesday 26 September, 14:00 – 16:30, at the British Library