

Research Information Network

RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

NOTE FROM THE FIRST MEETING – 31 JANUARY 2007

Action points in italics

Present:

Michael Jubb (Chair) (RIN)
Jeffrey Aronson (University of Oxford)
Paul Ayris (UCL Library)
Juan Bicarregui (CCLRC)
James Brown (RIN)
Nick Evans (ALPSP)
Fred Friend (JISC)
Jeremy Giles (British Geological Survey)
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
Robert Kiley (Wellcome Trust)
Michael Mabe (International Association of STM Publishers)
David Prosser (SPARC Europe)
Graham Taylor (Publishers Association)
Mark Thorley (NERC)
Michel Woodman (Department of Trade & Industry)

Apologies:

David Brown (British Library)
Bob Campbell (Blackwell and Publishers' Research Consortium)
Chris Hale (UUK)
Ian Russell (ALPSP)
Astrid Wissenburg (ESRC)

1. Welcome and introductions

Members introduced themselves, following a welcome from Michael Jubb to this inaugural meeting of the reconfigured group.

Members were reminded about the antecedents to the Group: the DTI's Research Communications Forum, set up in 2004; and the RIN's own *ad hoc* scholarly communications group, which met four times during 2006. The new Group, which replaces the two other committees, aims to be a means of generating practical, collaborative activities, with tangible outputs, in the realm of scholarly communications, building on some initial work undertaken under the auspices of the *ad hoc* group.

2. Membership of the Group

Members were reminded about the current constitution of the Group, its various 'constituencies' and the current gaps in coverage, particularly in relation to researchers. Tom Graham has recently resigned from the Group, so there is also a vacant slot for librarians.

Mark Patterson, from PLoS, recently contacted RIN to ask why the Group does not include any open access publishers. There

- *All to suggest names of possible additional members, to fill the relevant gaps.*
- *Paul Ayris to suggest possible replacements for Tom Graham.*
- *Publisher representatives to ensure that lines of*

was some discussion about the appropriateness of including representation on the basis of particular publishing models: some members were wary of this, others felt that it might be useful. It was pointed out that open access publishers are in effect represented through such bodies as ALPSP and STM, which do not champion any particular model. In addition, there was concern about further expanding the size of an already fairly large committee. On that basis, it was agreed not to offer a place specifically to an open access publisher, although this could be reviewed at some point in the future. Nonetheless, it would be beneficial to seek the input of additional stakeholders, on an *ad hoc* basis, for particular roles such as serving on expert panels.

communication are kept open with their open access members, so that their views can be represented during the Group's discussions.

- **MJ** to contact Mark Patterson to let him know the outcome of this discussion.

3. Taking forward the statement of principles on strategic goals for public policy (paper RIN/RCG/07/01)

The statement has been signed up to by a critical initial list of organisations and is now ready to be published, with the current signatories; the issue now is how to take the statement forward.

Possible additional signatories:

The document was discussed at RCUK's Research Outputs Group meeting on 30 January, where the idea was welcomed. It is not yet known whether sign-up would be by RCUK collectively or Research Councils individually; a corporate RCUK approach is currently being explored. It is hoped that this will be considered fairly quickly.

The Wellcome Trust will also consider the possibility of signing up.

Further suggestions about organisations that might be worth approaching: the [Association of Medical Research Charities](#), the [National Library for Health](#), the [Biosciences Federation](#), the [Academy of Medical Sciences](#), the Department of Health and/or NHS... Support would also be welcome from member organisations whose representative bodies have already signed up.

International support:

Is there a case for setting out an adapted, international version of the statement? The Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche ([LIBER](#)) has expressed an interest in signing up to such a document. Paul Ayris reported on the recent discussions at the LIBER Board, which felt that the statement does indeed have pan-European scope. LIBER is willing to work with other European partners, including funders such as DFG in Germany, to ensure a wide range of signatures. Other bodies that might help with promotion include INSERM in France and the International Council for Scientific and Technical Information. Although the varied national circumstances might warrant different wording and approaches, the principles are sufficiently fundamental to serve as a common core which individual countries could build on.

However, members raised a number of problems and risks:

- By relying to particular interest groups such as LIBER, there

- **Research Councils** to decide what form their sign-up would take.

- **Robert Kiley** to raise the issue of sign-up within the Wellcome Trust.

- **RIN Executive Team** to approach further organisations as suggested.

- **RIN Executive Team** to draft a version of the statement adapted to a pan-European context.

- **RIN Executive Team** to identify, with the help of members, a small number of European organisations that might be contacted to take the document forward as discussed.

is a risk of upsetting the carefully balanced range of stakeholders that have signed up so far; there is no ‘honest broker’ that could serve as the international equivalent of RIN – this could be problematic. Any encouragement to international sign-up must address these concerns.

- RIN, whose remit covers only the UK, may not be the right body to advocate such internationalisation. At the same time, there is a case for RIN to retain some sort of ownership of the statement, to help safeguard its credibility. There is a tension between these two views. One possible approach is for LIBER to take the document forward, but on the basis of RIN (i) re-casting the statement as appropriate and (ii) limiting its role to approaching a small number of representative organisations at European level.
- There is a risk also of the UK impact of the statement being undermined by any international effort.

Members also reflected on whether extending the initiative beyond Europe is too ambitious. It was agreed that an EU focus would be more appropriate.

Advocacy:

Who should the document be sent to? Crucially, how might it be advocated, over and above publicity undertaken by the various signatories (on their websites, etc)?

Members suggested a number of organisations that might be the subject of promotion and advocacy:

- Government Departments.
- Parliamentarians; is there scope for a public meeting under the auspices of the [Parliamentary and Scientific Committee](#)?
- University bodies such as UUK and Russell Group.
- The Royal Society.
- The [Science Media Centre](#) (contact: Fiona Fox).
- The media generally: proselytising with them is important for developing coverage of the research agenda; might RIN consider launching the statement at a press briefing? Or is this too much of a niche issue to warrant such an approach?
- Advocacy groups such as [Sense about Science](#) (contact: Tracy Brown)

The Group recognised the fundamental importance, for any promotional effort, of underlining why the statement is useful and emphasising the collective weight of all the signatories.

More generally, members noted the idea of case studies to look at how collaborative initiatives such as this might be developed in other areas.

- ***RIN Executive Team*** to take forward advocacy along the lines suggested by the Group and to draw up plans for contacting relevant organisation and liaising with the media.

4. Proposed project on publication and quality assurance of research data outputs (paper RIN/RCG/07/02)

Members noted draft specification, and agreed that this is a very important area of investigation for RIN to undertake on behalf of the Group.

- ***RIN Executive Team*** to revise and refine the spec in the light of the discussion, using expert

In discussion, members suggested that the scope of the project might place greater emphasis on IPR inasmuch as it relates to primary data. There is an issue of trust here: researchers want to know that their data outputs are being used in a trustworthy way and is being protected from misuse, whilst at the same time might not always want to share it with all. But who owns the data? IPR only relates to the collection and presentation of data, but not to data *per se*. Absolute ownership may be difficult to determine in law, although there are national and EU frameworks that could serve to regulate this area. Is there scope for the [Patent Office](#) to be consulted over the project?

Another area not well covered by the current scope is roles and responsibilities in relation to data curation, and the significant differences in practice in this area between research disciplines.

The Group made a series of suggestions to help refine the project specification:

- There is a need for focus and selectivity: the study cannot cover the whole field of data publication. Members pointed to distinction between the normative aspect of the proposed specification (‘what needs to happen’) and a review of what is actually happening. Should the initial focus be on the latter?
- It is important to understand the feelings and views of researchers themselves and to shed light on current research practice. On this basis, the outputs of the study could help underpin the dissemination and implementation of the sort of principles being developed by research funders and RIN itself.
- At the same time, the study needs to complement and possibly review the work being done in related areas by others such as JISC. To avoid duplication, RIN should consider seeking partners for this project, for instance ALPSP, the International Association of STM Publishers, the Research Councils, as well as JISC itself.
- There is still much confusion about the definition of data; the study could usefully seek to clarify this.
- Finally, there is a need to reflect on the appropriate level of resource needed for such an ambitious project.

views if appropriate.

5. **Proposed study on cost and income flows in the scholarly communications process** (*paper RIN/RCG/07/03*)

Members noted that this specification is at an earlier stage of preparation than the data publication project.

The Group considered the output of the study, and suggested that this should be as clear an identification as possible of the costs incurred in the different parts of the scholarly communications chain, in the range of activities undertaken by the various players. The emphasis should be very much on life cycle costs, at a macroeconomic rather than a purely accounting level. The data produced could be help to present a picture of the dynamic nature of the scholarly communications process, in the light of the significant changes in practice that have taken place over the past 10-15 years. The output might also help to inform

- ***RIN Executive Team to further develop the specification in the light of comments.***

public policy, by giving an indication of the spread/balance of relevant costs for public agencies.

Further comments included:

- As with the data publication study, relationships and complementarity with other ongoing projects is very important.
- Don King has a long-standing interest in this area; there is a strong case for seriously considering him as someone to undertake the work – even though he is based in the USA.
- The scholarly communications chain varies significantly according to disciplines; there may be a case for focusing on one or two areas.
- Randomisation might be appropriate for undertaking studies such as this.

6. Publication ethics

There are interesting parallels between efforts to codify publication ethics and initiatives to set out wider research ethics frameworks. Although these are distinct processes, are there similarities which could be exploited? Could some common issues be addressed collaboratively, or in conjunction between the sets of players? Is this an issue worth exploring?

Is there a case for a setting out a broad statement on publication ethics? This is starting to happen: members noted that Blackwell isn't the only publisher to have set out a position. However, the absence of an overarching international body with an overview of research information makes it difficult to define a broader code.

Members agreed about the usefulness of drawing up an annotated list of currently existing codes/guidelines, internationally, particularly those that clearly set out responsibilities of the various players (including for instance on IPR management).

- *RIN Executive Team to consider how to take forward the drawing up of codes and guidelines.*

7. Follow-up to the RIN/DTI/RCUK evidence-based analysis of data on scholarly journal publishing

The study's main conclusion was to highlight the great gaps in current knowledge, particularly in areas – of interest to RIN – such as:

- economics (as discussed above);
- usage at article level, including possibly analyses of how downloads are used;
- citation, about which work is currently being undertaken in the USA (in addition, this is an area in which Richard Oppenheimer has expressed an interest).

The drawing up of an annotated list of such identified gaps could be a useful exercise.

There could be usefulness in repeating detailed studies to get a feel for how evidence has evolved. In particular, there is a case

for updating parts of the EPS study (for instance, areas relating to references, bibliographies...) or adding new relevant information every couple of years or so. Future revisions of the study could also benefit from a glossary, to clarify the definition of terms such as data and open access.

Usage of particular journals could be a pointer to value for money, notably from the point of view of libraries. This raises the question of the added value of journal articles beyond the peer review stage (i.e. the difference between publicly-available post-review author manuscript, and the publisher's final version of the same).

8. Group workplan and future activities

Other than the projects described above, members suggested that there could be work on the place of informal communication in the research process. The development of social networking poses new and interesting questions about how such information is preserved. A review of current practice and trends in this could be useful

- ***RIN Executive Team*** to prepare a paper on how the issue of information stemming from informal communication and social networking might be approached..

9. Other business

Research assessment:

There was scepticism about the usefulness, for RIN and the Group, of trying to influence the nature and methodology of revamped future Research Assessment Exercises. Conversely, there could be more value in passing on information from Funding Bodies to the Group, in order for the different 'constituencies' to be briefed about emerging thinking.

Publisher referencing systems:

RIN's Life Sciences Consultative Group had recently raised the issue of multiple reference systems and resulting problems in cross-referencing in journals. Members noted that, in fact, attempts have been made in the past to reduce differences between systems, but these had been resisted by researchers themselves – largely because of attachment to habits. Members concurred with the Consultative Group that obstacles to change are cultural and historical, and that the focus of any solution might be through the promotion of interoperability between systems rather than harmonisation.

- ***RIN Executive Team*** to report back to Life Sciences Consultative Group.

Next meeting: dates to be fixed for next two meetings