

A YEAR IN NUMBERS

Our impact

A snapshot of the impact of our work in 2010.



As an independent voice, the Research Information Network can create debates that lead to real change.

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Research Information Network
96 Euston Road
London NW1 2DB

Email contact@rin.ac.uk
Telephone +44 (0)20 7412 7946
Facsimile +44 (0)20 7412 7339

<http://www.rin.ac.uk>

Research Information Network Annual Review 2011

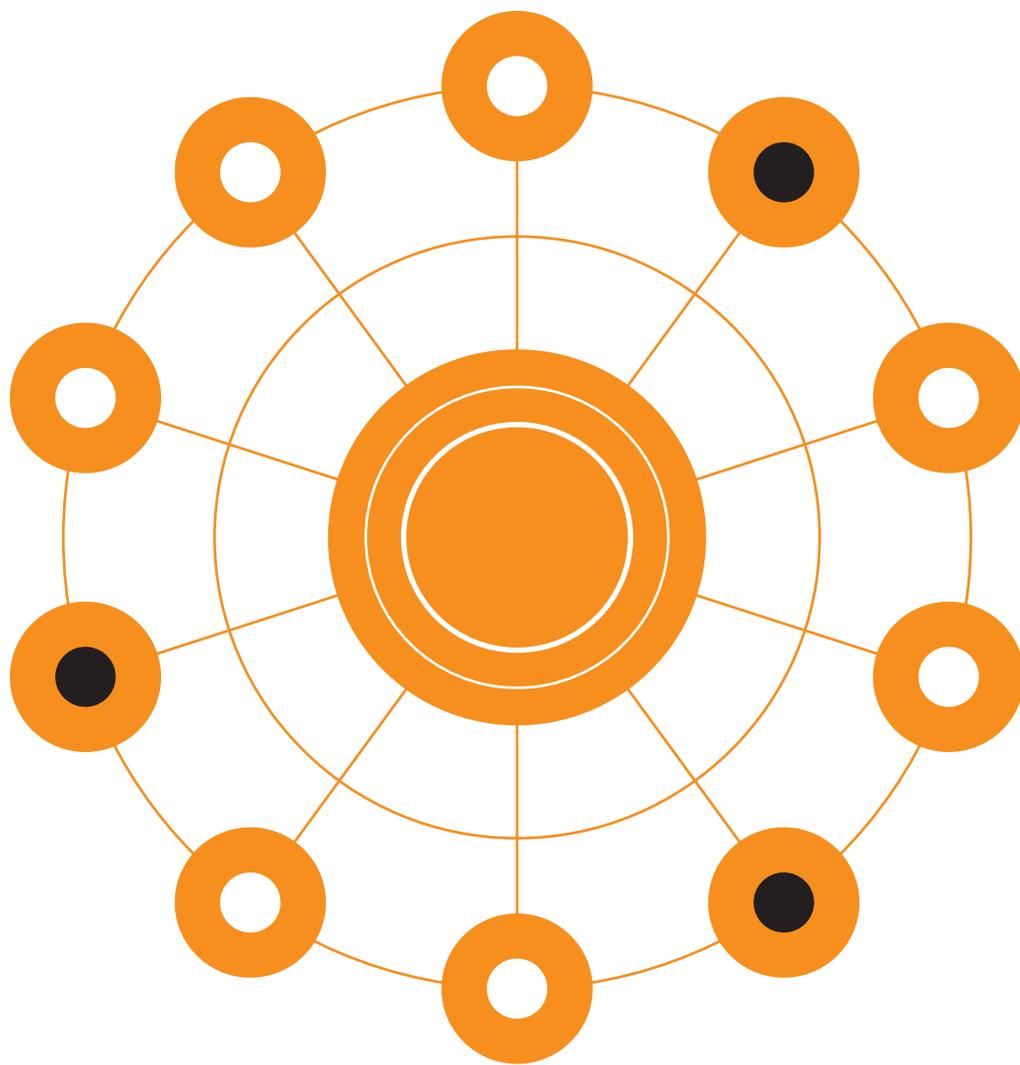


Annual Report

2010/11



ABOUT THE RIN



The Research Information Network is a policy unit funded by the UK higher education funding councils, the seven research councils and the three national libraries. We aim to enhance and broaden understanding of how researchers in the UK create and use information resources and services of all kinds. We support the development of effective policies and practices for researchers, institutions, funders, information professionals and everyone who is involved in the information landscape.

In this challenging economic climate, the higher education and research sectors are facing a renewed and intensified period of financial stringency. Yet we can't afford to let budget cuts undermine the UK's position as a provider of world-class information services, nor stop us from embracing new opportunities.

It's particularly important that we take advantage of the wealth of opportunities for innovation, collaboration, networking and openness created by the internet and new technologies. Much of our work in 2010 explored how the library, information and research communities can respond to financial challenges while also continuing to adapt to the rapidly changing information environment.

If you build it, will they come? How researchers perceive and use web 2.0 investigates the use of web 2.0 services such as blogs and social networking sites, while *Open to all? Case studies of openness in research* identifies the benefits and barriers to using 'open science' methods. We also turned our attention to the issues surrounding electronic access to scholarly journals, in the reports *E-only scholarly journals: overcoming the barriers* and *One year on: evaluating the initial impact of the Scottish Higher Education Digital Library*.

Two of our reports took an in-depth look at the financial situation of higher education libraries. *Challenges for academic libraries in difficult economic times: a guide for senior institutional managers and policy makers* provides practical guidance on responding to budget cuts, while *Trends in the finances of UK higher education libraries: 1999-2009* offers a helpful insight into the financial landscape over the past decade.

The past year has been a challenging one for the RIN as well as for the higher education and research sectors as a whole. Our current funding will come to an end in December 2011, but we hope to sustain at least some of the RIN's work beyond then. We are strong believers in evidence-based policy and we believe that the reports and guides we have published over the past year make a valuable contribution to the development of effective policies and practices for researchers, funders, universities, libraries, publishers and others involved in the research information landscape.

And there is more on the way. We will shortly publish reports on the dynamics of changes in access to scholarly journals; the usage and value of research data centres; and patterns of information use in the humanities and the physical sciences. We are also continuing our work on training and skills for researchers; the challenges of collaboration; the future of research libraries; and on key issues such as Freedom of Information.

Dr Michael Jubb

Director

TWO THOUSAND AND ELEVEN PREVIEW

A look ahead at projects and activities that we'll be working on between May 2011 and the end of the year.



Benefits of research data centres

We'll be publishing the findings of our research data centres study at the end of summer 2011. The report will analyse the usage and impact of research data centres in the UK and demonstrate the benefits of effective sharing and curation of research data. We hope that the evidence will help to build a case for improving data sharing practice in the UK.

Researchers in the physical sciences

We'll be adding another title to our series of case studies on the information needs and behaviours of researchers. Having already published case studies on researchers in the life sciences and the humanities, we'll be extending the series to cover researchers in the physical sciences.

Information literacy

In the UK, the promotion and development of information literacy for researchers has mostly been the responsibility of university librarians. This year we're continuing the work we started in 2010 to establish greater collaboration between organisations and individuals interested in information literacy, beyond the library sector.

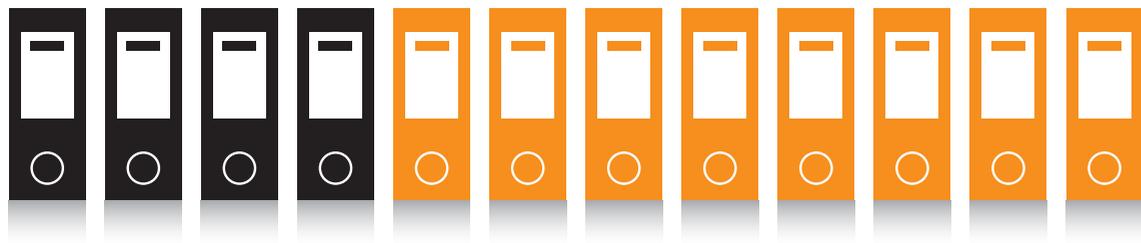
Our work on information literacy involves a coalition of partners, including information professionals, graduate school personnel, data management specialists, research supervisors and researchers. Examples of the work that the coalition is undertaking include fostering the development of regional information literacy networks and investigating how research supervisors impart information literacy skills to their students.

Dynamics of transition

We're collaborating with JISC on a broad portfolio of activities aimed at developing the evidence base on transitions – changes in practice, business models and organisational culture over a specific timeframe – in the scholarly communications process. During 2011 we'll examine ways of improving access to research papers and investigate gaps in access to journal articles and other research outputs.

TWO THOUSAND AND ELEVEN SO FAR

A first look at reports and other work that we published between January and April 2011.



The value of e-journals

In January we published the final part of our report *E-journals: their use, value and impact*. In the first report, published in April 2009, we found that researchers are savvy when it comes to using e-journals, finding the information they need quickly and efficiently.

The final report examines the reasons underlying the behaviours identified in the first phase of the study. It explores questions such as why users spend so little time on each visit to an e-journal and whether high levels of use imply high levels of user satisfaction. It also investigates how information-seeking behaviour and usage varies according to research status, seniority and subject or discipline, as well as institutional size and research strength.

Social media guide

Researchers have a huge amount to gain from engaging with social media in various aspects of their work. Following on from our report *If you build it, will they come?* we joined forces with the International Centre for Guidance Studies to produce a handy guide to social media.

Launched in February, the guide contains information to help researchers make informed decisions about using social media and choose from the wide range of tools that are available.

Freedom of Information

Until recently, very few UK researchers have been aware of the need to comply with Freedom of Information (FoI) laws, the related but distinct FoI Act in Scotland and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR). These laws require researchers to allow access to their research outputs, but also create opportunities for researchers to use FoI to obtain valuable data from public sources.

During March and April we joined forces with the Information Commissioner's Office, JISC, The National Archives and other partners to host a series of FoI workshops in London, Manchester and Glasgow. At the workshops we gathered views from researchers on the best ways of dealing with the disclosure of research data, as a first step towards providing researchers and their institutions with appropriate guidance and support.

Researchers in the humanities

In 2009 we published a collection of case studies on the information needs and behaviours of researchers working in the life sciences. We're continuing this programme of work in 2011 and in April we published a new set of case studies focusing on researchers working in the humanities.

Libraries of the future

In March we published *The value of libraries for research and researchers with RLUK*, which investigates the value of the services that UK libraries provide to researchers and the contributions that they make to institutional research performance. The study forms part of our work on the future of academic and research libraries, as a member of the Library and Information Science Research Coalition.

E-ONLY SCHOLARLY JOURNALS

In recent years, publishers, librarians and academics have seized the opportunities created by the electronic publication of scholarly journals. Yet although e-journals have become very popular, content continues to be published, acquired and used in print too. In the UK, we are still some way from a wholly electronic journal environment. There is growing concern that by retaining both formats, we are generating unnecessary costs for publishers, libraries and users.

In November we published our report *E-only scholarly journals: overcoming the barriers*. The report examines the obstacles to moving to a purely electronic format for scholarly journals in the UK and investigates what we can do to overcome them.

Benefits of e-journals

A 2008 survey found that 90 per cent of all scholarly journals were available online. Academics and students find e-journals convenient and flexible, with easy access to a wide range of content when and where they want. In many science and social science subjects, academics now work in a wholly digital format. For libraries, e-journals offer considerable savings in storage and long-maintenance costs.

There is widespread agreement that we should try to maximise the benefits of e-journals and eliminate the costs involved in publishing journals in print.

Barriers to change

Two of the most significant barriers to moving to an e-only format relate to publishers' pricing policies and the VAT status of e-journals. A substantial number of publishers still use pricing models that combine print and online versions of journals in a single price. At the same time, print journals are zero-rated for VAT but electronic journals are subject to the standard VAT rate of 20 per cent (17.5 per cent before January 2011). Despite repeated attempts to persuade the UK government and the EU to remove this inconsistency, it is unlikely to change in the near future.

Other barriers to e-only provision include scholarly work patterns and preferences and the continuing demand for print in some areas, as well as the lack of availability of back-runs of journals online. There are also some technical challenges in providing access to e-journals that still need to be addressed.

Collaboration and advocacy

Progress to e-only provision of scholarly journals will require libraries, publishers and others to work closely together. JISC should work with publishers, libraries, universities and other relevant organisations to make pricing models less complicated, lobby for changes in the VAT treatment of e-journals and help print-only journals to move online. These parties should also develop a joint strategy for the long-term preservation of e-journals.

Advocacy will be a particularly important part of overcoming the barriers perceived by academics and other users. Publishers and libraries must provide support for librarians who need to address the concerns of academic staff about issues such as post-cancellation access, long-term preservation and the quality of digital images.

Pricing and licenses

JISC, RLUK and SCONUL should bring academic librarians together to develop a statement of their requirements on pricing models and other licensing terms and conditions. The JISC Collections website should provide clear information on publishers' subscription prices and indicate where the difference between e-only and print prices is great enough to offset the VAT charged on e-journals.

Publishers can encourage libraries to move to e-only provision by setting subscription prices that are at least 16.6 per cent lower than the print or combined print and online price, to offset VAT costs. Publishers should also offer post-cancellation online access as part of standard licenses and improve compliance with standard technical processes, including user log-in.

PEER REVIEW AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

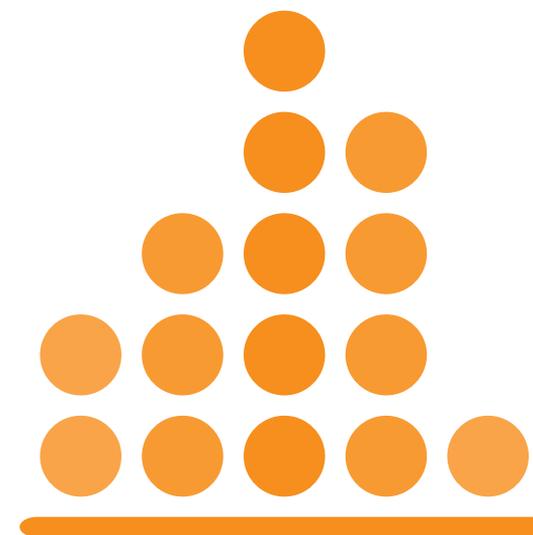
The size of the research community and the volume of research taking place are growing in both the UK and around the world. Systems for evaluating and assuring the quality of research, both before and after it is funded or published, are coming under increasing scrutiny.

In 2010 we published two guides to help researchers understand the role of quality assurance and assessment in research and the issues that are currently being debated. *Peer review: A guide for researchers* was published in March, with *Quality assurance and assessment of scholarly research: A guide for researchers, academic administrators and librarians* following in May.

Understanding assurance and assessment

Quality assessment involves the evaluation of academic work, through processes such as peer review and quantitative scoring. Quality assurance, on the other hand, describes a set of procedures that ensure a particular standard of quality in academic work. Quality assurance is designed to make sure that research is properly conducted and its results are reported accurately, using the best techniques, knowledge and understanding.

Our guide to quality assurance and assessment explains some of the issues involved in ensuring quality in scholarly research. It describes the different processes used for assuring and assessing quality for programme and project proposals, researchers, institutions and scholarly journals. It also explores how assurance and assessment will need to evolve in response to increases in research volume, growing pressure on costs, greater competition between researchers and new kinds of research outputs.



A closer look at peer review

Peer review is one well-established mechanism for quality assurance and assessment. It comes in a wide range of forms, but is based on giving research proposals, presentations, papers and other publications to independent experts for critical evaluation. Peer review is used by funders, scholarly journals and employers around the world as the main way of making sure that only high quality research is funded, published and rewarded.

Our guide to peer review looks at how effective peer review is in selecting the best research proposals or material for publication, ensuring fairness and detecting misconduct and malpractice. It explains the different levels of transparency that are currently used in the system, from open reviews to double-blind reviews. The guide also examines what's being done to speed up the peer review process and reduce the burdens placed on researchers both as reviewers and submitters of work to be reviewed.

The impact of new technologies

The internet provides new channels through which researchers can communicate their findings and comment on, annotate and evaluate the work of others. New opportunities for quality assurance and assessment are emerging in the form of social tagging and recommender systems, checks on plagiarism and facilities for online comments and ratings.

One of the key issues for the future will be how these tools and techniques evolve alongside more traditional systems of quality assurance and assessment. Whatever the changes, systems for peer review and other forms of quality assurance and assessment will remain critical to sustaining trust in the work of researchers.

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE SHEDL

Scotland's digital library: the first year

The Scottish Higher Education Digital Library (SHEDL) is a purchasing consortium made up of the 19 higher education institutions in Scotland. It was established by the Scottish Confederation of University & Research Libraries (SCURL) in 2008 and its first licences – covering more than 1,500 online journals published by the American Chemical Society, Cambridge University Press and Springer – came into effect in January 2009.

Published in October, our report *One year on: Evaluating the initial impact of the Scottish Higher Education Digital Library* provides an overview of the effect that those first licences have had on use and cost-per-use for library collections. It is based on usage and financial data for each member institution, combined with interviews with academics, subject librarians and electronic resource managers. To mark the release of the report, the RIN and SCURL hosted a reception at the University of Edinburgh in November.

A fast rate of growth

In its first year, use of SHEDL content grew at a faster rate than the UK average increase for online journal article use. The share of overall usage tended to decline at institutions which already had access to content through JISC's NESLi2 licensing system and rise at institutions without access. In the research pools – collaborations between departments in different Scottish universities – usage increased most among members without prior access to content through NESLi2 deals.

The cost-per-use for all three online journal publishers fell by between 11 per cent and 17 per cent, with these savings experienced by almost all institutions.

Supporting learning and research

As well as providing better access to online journals in member institutions, SHEDL is supporting wider teaching, learning and research outcomes. It has raised awareness of library offerings, supported interdisciplinary research and helped to improve information literacy training for students.

The role of SHEDL in promoting awareness of libraries and their resources among staff and students is a valuable one and should be encouraged, particularly as content is added through new licence agreements.

Next steps for SHEDL

Our report puts forward a number of recommendations for the future development of SHEDL. We recommend extending its licences to include large providers, both multidisciplinary and specialist, as well as smaller, more niche publishers.

We also suggest that the steering group and member institutions consider the feasibility of adding other resources to the collection. These might include back volumes of journal articles, e-books, aggregated databases and datasets. However, as SHEDL expands and absorbs a growing proportion of library budgets, thought should be given to the implications for other, more specialised journal collections.

Ongoing evaluation

Finally, we recommend ongoing evaluation of the performance of SHEDL, as new annual usage figures become available and as new publishers are introduced to the scheme. Our study provides an early assessment of the impact of SHEDL, but further studies will be needed to identify trends which will emerge over time.



FINANCIAL TRENDS AND CHALLENGES FOR LIBRARIES

The last decade saw unprecedented change for university libraries. Rapid growth in student and staff numbers across the sector was accompanied by a move to a mostly digital environment, with major changes to how libraries and their users operate. Budgets for most university libraries continued to grow during this period, but the next few years are going to be much more difficult in financial terms. Libraries will have to cope with further fast-paced change, but with significantly reduced budgets.

Responding to cutbacks

Published in March, *Challenges for academic libraries in difficult economic times: A guide for senior institutional managers and policy makers*, explores how libraries are responding to financial cuts. Libraries are having to rethink the services they provide, including the balance of spending on information resources and staff. Another challenge lies in how to protect existing services while also developing new services to meet emerging needs.

Faced with these challenges, library directors are trying to develop a better understanding of the relationship between library activities and learning and research outcomes. They are also keen to establish greater collaboration among libraries, with the aim of achieving substantial cost savings at the same time as maintaining momentum in developing new services to meet the needs of library users.

Collaborative working

World-class information resources are of fundamental importance to UK universities and their success in teaching, learning and research. Given the challenging financial environment, it is essential that library directors have the support of senior managers in the higher education sector, as well as from publishers and other information providers. Strong partnerships between libraries and champions from across the higher education and information sectors will be critical to sustaining the outstanding position of UK universities.

Patterns in library expenditure

Our September report *Trends in the finances of UK higher education libraries: 1999-2009*, examines changes in the financial position of university libraries over a ten-year period. Our analysis of data collected by the Society of College, National and University Libraries revealed that library expenditure has been rising in real terms, but not as fast as expenditure in the higher education sector as a whole. The proportion of total institutional expenditure devoted to libraries fell significantly in all parts of the sector.

Expenditure on information provision rose among RLUK and other pre-1992 universities, but fell among post-1992 universities and higher education colleges. Money spent on information provision accounts for just over a third of all library costs.

Changing spending patterns

The balance between money spent on books and serials changed significantly in this period. Money spent on books fell, while expenditure on serials rose sharply. Expenditure on print-only serials has fallen since 2001, while money spent on serials in electronic format has increased by more than six times. The cost of e-books has also risen rapidly from a low base, although print remains the dominant format of books in libraries.

Money spent on staff increased in real terms but remained relatively static as a proportion of overall library expenditure. There was also little change in staff numbers across the ten-year period, although RLUK members saw an increase up to 2004, followed by a decline.

Comparisons of data from the UK and the USA suggest that money spent on information provision and staffing rose rather more slowly in real terms in the USA than in the UK.

WEB 2.0 AND OPEN SCIENCE

Web 2.0 services such as blogs and social networking sites provide an easy way for people to create and share information online. Our report *If you build it, will they come? How researchers perceive and use web 2.0*, published in July, found that researchers who use web 2.0 believe it has helped to raise their profile and facilitated international collaborations. Researchers also value the potential web 2.0 offers for gathering comments and feedback before research results are formally published.

We found that most researchers have a positive attitude towards web 2.0 and make occasional use of it for purposes related to their research, such as communicating work, developing networks and collaborations, or finding out what others are doing. Web 2.0 services are becoming a valuable supplement to established channels of scholarly communication. However, very few researchers are using these services as a routine part of their working life.

Overcoming barriers

The major barriers to take-up of web 2.0 services are uncertainty about the benefits, particularly for services which don't yet have a strong community of users, and concerns about quality and trust. As consumers, many researchers do not trust information that has not been subject to peer review. As producers, they may be cautious about sharing results without a standardised way of attributing authorship.

We are still at an early stage in the development of web 2.0 and should encourage experimentation and innovation that could benefit the research community. Computing and information service professionals within universities should raise awareness of web 2.0, publicise examples of successful use and provide training. Universities and funders should develop policies that support innovation while ensuring integrity and security, taking into account issues including knowledge transfer, intellectual property rights, training and data sharing. It's also important that researchers share good practice and learn from each other in the use of web 2.0 tools.

Open science

Collaboration and data sharing were the focus of our September report *Open to all? Case studies of openness in research*. Working in partnership with NESTA, we set out to identify the benefits and barriers to using 'open science' methods. Open science describes an approach where data, results and protocols are made freely available throughout the research process so that others can contribute and collaborate.

Through interviews with 18 researchers working in 6 UK research institutions, we identified several distinctive benefits to open science practices. Working in an open way can make research more efficient and collaborative. It can also help researchers to address questions in new ways and lead to greater engagement.

Becoming more open

Our report identified a number of issues which can discourage open working. These include a lack of evidence of the benefits and rewards of open working, a shortage of skills and concerns about quality. Researchers also face challenges in understanding ethical and legal restrictions on allowing access to data, including the implications of the Freedom of Information Act.

To help researchers understand the benefits of open science practices, we recommend that research funders and institutions work with research communities to promote data management and sharing. They should also develop tools and standards which encourage open working and provide training as part of doctoral programmes and continuing professional development.

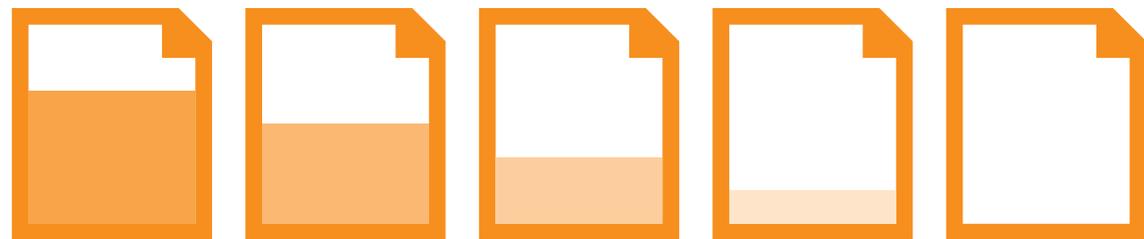
Exploiting web 2.0

The RIN and NESTA hosted an event at the Royal Society to launch the *Open to all?* report. Speakers and attendees at *Research and routes to innovation: Researchers' use and exploitation of web based resources* discussed the influence of technology on current research practice and explored the recommendations of our two reports on web 2.0 and open research.



OTHER PROJECTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Highlights from other projects and publications that we undertook in 2010.



Understanding the research landscape

Our October report *Research support services in UK universities* investigates the provision of information-related support services for researchers in the UK. The report includes recommendations on how to develop services to meet researchers' needs. The Online Computer Library Center produced a comparative study to investigate support services for researchers in the USA.

Planning for the future

E-infrastructure – taking forward the strategy, published in September, summarises what we learnt from a series of interviews with research funders and specialists in information technologies, e-science and e-infrastructure. The aim of the project was to inform the development of the Research Councils UK report *Delivering the UK's e-infrastructure for research and innovation*.

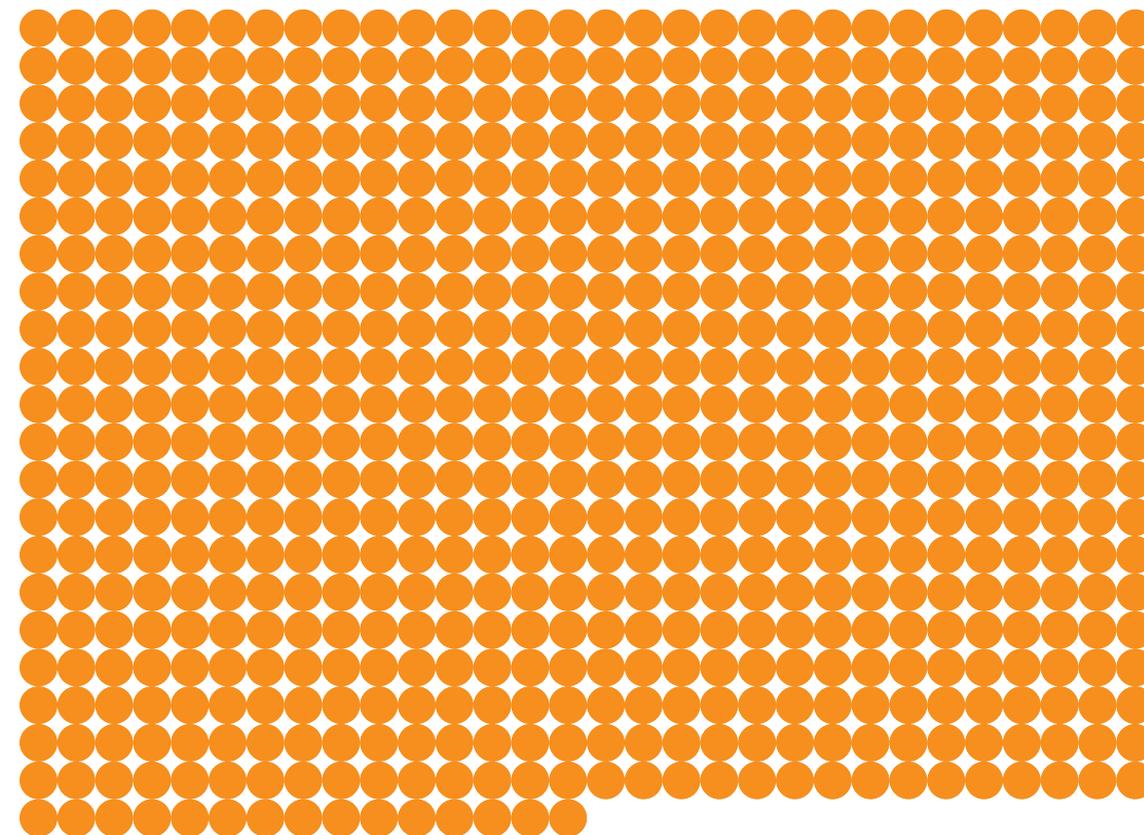
Factsheets and guides

In June we published *Getting your feet wet: an introduction to open access*. The guide explains why researchers should publish in open access journals or deposit their work in repositories, as well as how to do so. In the same month we published *Government and research policy in the UK: an introduction*, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the different government bodies involved in research policy and funding.

Our factsheet *Managing research data: a guide to biocuration*, published in May, describes how information in biological databases is managed and what a career as a biocurator involves. In September we published updated versions of our factsheets *Making sense of research funding in UK higher education* and *Helping you to influence the research information environment*, which explains how to get involved with our work.

EVENTS

Highlights from our 2010 programme of events.



Information in transition

Our evening series of events on research information in transition ran from October to December 2010. The first event addressed changes in scholarly publishing and how new technologies can be exploited to provide services to researchers. The issue of open access was at the forefront of the discussion.

Behaviours and policies relating to data management came under the spotlight at the second event, with a particular emphasis on incentives for spreading good practice. The final event examined the topic of quality assurance, including how web 2.0 services such as blogs and online commenting could complement peer review and other established quality assurance mechanisms.

Digital curation

In October we partnered with the Digital Curation Centre to host the fifth meeting of the Research Data Management Forum. Focusing on the economics of applying and sustaining digital curation, the meeting featured presentations on costs and sustainability from research funders, data centres, publishers, institutional managers and others.

Talking science

In July the British Library was the venue for a lively TalkScience event with Mark Henderson, Science Editor for The Times, in conversation with Dr Evan Harris, former MP for Oxford West & Abingdon and member of the Commons Science and Technology Committee.

Topics discussed ranged from the role of science in the new government to how science could be used more effectively in policy-making and whether the long-term impact of science will ever be measurable.

Impact and value

Evidence, value and impact: the LIS research landscape in 2010, the annual conference of the Library and Information Service (LIS) Research Coalition, took place in June. Professor Andrew Dillon of the University of Texas and Professor Charles Oppenheim of Loughborough University gave keynote presentations, while RIN Director Dr Michael Jubb introduced the conference with a review of the work of the coalition so far and a look at its plans for the coming year.

6,130

The number of different individuals who visited our website each month, on average.

2,960

The number of people who were signed up to receive the RIN e-news, as at 25 March 2011.

3,115

The number of followers of @research_inform on Twitter, as of 25 March 2011.

702

The number of fans of RIN's Facebook page, as of March 2011.

645

The total number of people who attended the eight events we held during the year.

○ TalkScience – Science in UK Government Where's the Evidence? – Co-sponsored w/British Library (12 July):	100
○ Research and routes to innovation Researchers' use and exploitation of web based resources (15 Sept):	60
○ Research Data Management Forum Co-sponsored w/ Digital Curation Centre (27 Oct):	55
○ Research Information in Transition series:	190
○ The future of scholarly publishing where do we go from here (Oct 11):	90
○ Research data behaviours and policies (Nov 18):	70
○ Quality assurance responding to a changing information world (13 Dec):	30
○ Evaluating the impact of SHEDL (9 Nov):	50