



RIN Advisory Board
NOTE OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING – 17 December 2008

Action points in red italics

Present:

Robert Burgess (University of Leicester) (Chair)
Michael Anderson (University of Edinburgh)
John Coggins (University of Glasgow)
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
Branwen Hide (RIN)
David Ingram (University College London)
Michael Jubb (RIN)
Joanna Newman (British Library)
Ed Pentz (CrossRef)
Malcolm Read (JISC)
Jenni Rogers (HEFCE)
Kevin Schürer (University of Essex)
Philip Steer (Imperial College)
Jean Sykes (London School of Economics)
David Walton (British Antarctic Survey)
Jo Wood (University of Leicester)

Apologies

Roger Kain (University of Exeter)
John Feather (University of Loughborough)
Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)
Tom Rodden (University of Nottingham)
Nigel Weatherill (University of Birmingham)
Jan Wilkinson (University of Manchester)

Joanna Newman was welcomed to her first Advisory Board meeting as the British Library's observer.

1. Minutes of the meeting of 25 June 2008 (paper RIN/AB/08/14)

These were approved.

2. Matters arising

From item 2

Six members were yet to contact the RIN Executive Team with their declaration of interests.

- ***RIN Executive Team to remind relevant Board Members of the need to return declaration of interest sheets.***

From item 3

The project on researchers' publication and dissemination behaviour had commenced, and was being carried out by a consortium involving Edinburgh and Manchester Metropolitan universities.

From item 4

Since the last meeting, RIN had used its increased outreach capacity to develop its engagement with learned societies,

From item 4

Sarah Gentleman had received some comments on the RIN website, and further comments are welcome.

3. Membership of the Advisory Board

There were now four vacancies on the Board, owing to the recent resignation of Teri Threadgold. Identifying new members had thus far not been fruitful. It was noted that a cross-section of disciplines was required on the Board, with a particularly need for more women. Members were invited to suggest individuals who might be approached. Suggestions included Teri Rhys, Pro Vice Chancellor in Research at Cardiff; David Baker, Principal at University College Plymouth St Mark & St John; Christine Shearer, Pro Vice Chancellor, with a background in psychology, at Essex; and Denise Leavesley, a statistician at Kings College.

- ***Board Members to put forward names they feel may be suitable to approach for Advisory Board membership.***

4. The value of research information services (RIN/AB/08/22)

Members noted the paper, and thoughts were solicited.

It was agreed that a multi-pronged approach to the report would be desirable, perhaps with a view to creating a UK-based study similar to that carried out in the US by King and Tenopir. It was felt that it may be beneficial to seek the views of the Wellcome Trust on this issue, as it has an active interest in e-journals in the life sciences.

It was also suggested that ‘counterfactual’ work be carried out, to investigate what is lost by not having use of electronic resources, for instance in some areas within the arts and humanities (e.g. musicology). This would be of particular relevance given the forthcoming budgetary constraints on libraries resulting from currency fluctuations and the continuing imposition of VAT on e-journals.

Research was increasingly being carried out only in English, and this should be considered in terms of the consequences on the use of non-English language material.

It was noted that increased e-usage had decreased interaction with libraries and librarians, yet had also made assessment of services more formalised. There was a real need to ensure that all researchers get help, and that ‘top researchers’ are able to spend adequate time with their students and postdocs. Thus, the areas in the information services that could be better developed include curation and education.

Concerns were raised regarding the setting out of economic benefit and return on investment as areas for assessment. This could be difficult to prove (e.g. something that may not seem beneficial now, may prove to be highly beneficial in a few years’ time).

- ***RIN Executive Team to approach the Wellcome Trust***

The Board recognised the considerable challenge of getting RIN to influence the sort of changes that were required to increase the value of information services. The very definition of value, the demonstration of return on investment (see above) and the establishment of a baseline were all problematic. The methodology required to investigate such issues had to be extremely robust. It was therefore hugely important to establish what RIN, and others, could realistically achieve. This problem could be revisited in greater detail in the context of the forthcoming Board awayday.

5. UKRDS update (RIN/AB/08/23)

The feasibility study for the UK Research Data Service (UKRDS) had been completed, and the report stemming from this was being formatted. It would be submitted to HEFCE on 17th December.

The main proposal would be for a 2 year ‘pathfinder’, which, if successful, would be succeeded by a 3-year consolidation project.

While the report was being reviewed, advocacy and communications work would continue, and the Project Management Board was meeting every 6 weeks. An international conference to present the findings would be taking place on 26 February 2009.

In discussion, the Board recognised the importance of addressing the question of fitness for purpose of research data in the long term, to ensure that such data can stay usable in years to come. This raised the question of how best to add value to data to improve the return on the original investment.

Members reflected also on how the costs of UKRDS might be split between Funding Councils and Research Councils; it was felt that there remained some uncertainty about the funding mechanism.

- *Jean Sykes to circulate UKRDS Study Executive Summary in early 2009.*

6. Options for future projects (RIN/AB/08/24)

The Board noted that much activity over the next financial year is already committed, stemming from the continuation or taking forward of current work; this would use up roughly one third of the RIN budget for 2009-10. Nevertheless, there was still much scope for initiating new projects and activities in the months to come.

Whatever the activity, the Board stressed the importance of dissemination for current and future RIN work; this would be key to demonstrating – particularly for the purpose of the next review – that RIN is genuinely making a difference. Members were interested in the idea of a clearly and simply presented leaflet/brochure to set out what RIN has achieved and how it has been influential.

Suggestions for future projects were welcomed from the Board. It was agreed that this paper would be developed further for more in-depth discussion at the Awayday.

- *RIN Executive Team to develop paper RIN/AB/08/24 to serve as a basis for discussion at the awayday*

A couple of specific suggestions were made at this stage:

- The UK Data Archive had 40 years' worth of information on how its data (not just in the social sciences, but also covering aspects of medical sciences and the humanities) has been used. This information could usefully be analysed as part of an investigation on the life cycle of data and the economics of their use.
- There might be a case for an investigation into what publishers are doing by way of looking after/providing access to data.

- ***RIN Executive Team to liaise with Kevin Schürer about the possibility of such an investigation.***

7. Advisory Board awayday

Members agreed that the format for the event should be similar to previous years, with three or four intensive discussion sessions each introduced by a Board member. It was agreed also that the papers and discussions on value of information services and options for future projects should serve to frame the agenda.

The awayday would take place on 5-6 February, not 5-6 March as originally indicated. The venue, likely to be in York, would be confirmed as soon as possible.

- ***RIN Executive Team to formulate an agenda for the awayday.***

8. RIN update and Operating Plan (RIN/AB/08/26)

The paper was noted, and the Board wished to record its appreciation of the much improved quality and clarity of RIN reports – and moreover, members were impressed with the range of different recent and projected outputs, consisting not just of reports but also of toolkits, models and events.

It was pointed out that the advocacy role of members of the Advisory Board should be included as an objective in the Operating Plan.

- ***RIN Executive Team to include the Board's advocacy role in the Operating Plan.***

9. Other business

No further comments. Meeting adjourned

10. Date of next meeting

5th – 6th February 2008. This will be the Awayday, at a venue to be confirmed.