



**RIN Advisory Board
NOTE OF THE SIXTH MEETING – 25 OCTOBER 2006**

Action points in red italics

Present:

Robert Burgess (University of Leicester) (Chair)
James Brown (RIN)
John Coggins (University of Glasgow)
Mike Cruise (University of Birmingham)
John Feather (University of Loughborough)
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
Michael Jubb (RIN Director)
Roger Kain (University of Exeter)
Elaine Martin (University of Newcastle)
Graeme Rosenberg (HEFCE)
Kevin Schürer (University of Essex)
Jean Sykes (London School of Economics)
Jackie Van Bueren (RIN)
Jan Wilkinson (British Library)

Apologies

Michael Anderson (University of Edinburgh)
David Ingram (University College London)
Ed Pentz (CrossRef UK)
Lyn Pykett (University of Aberystwyth)
Malcolm Read (JISC)
Anne Trefethen (University of Oxford)
David Walton (British Antarctic Survey)

Apologies for absence and new members

The Chair welcomed Graeme Rosenberg, who replaces Will Naylor as one of RIN's HECFE contacts, and James Brown, the RIN's new Communications Officer.

1. Minutes of the Advisory Board meeting of 6 July 2006 (paper RIN/AB/06/13)

These were approved.

2. Matters arising (oral item)

Report on research funders' policy and practice: members noted that, after some considerable delay, this is now nearing completion. The report should prove useful as a description of current practice about management of research information outputs. In light of the significant amount of editing which this document has already been subject to, it was suggested that, rather than seek a further round of comments by the entire Board, the RIN Executive Team should ask a couple of members to double-check it prior to closing off the project. This was agreed.

► *Michael Jubb to enlist the assistance of two Board members to read through the report.*

3. Director’s report (paper RIN/AB/06/14)

<p>Members noted the report and highlighted two issues:</p>	
<p><u>Digital research data</u>: the Board agreed about the strategic importance of this area within the portfolio of RIN activities, although it was emphasised that RIN should take care not to duplicate what is being taken forward by other organisations; in this as in other areas, the RIN’s forte lies in pulling information together and co-ordinating initiatives in a cross-disciplinary way. Points raised in discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ importance of looking at the way that data is dealt with as an integral part of the research process, and how it influences the conduct and governance of research; ▶ time-proofing of data; long-term management of the technology; developing good business models to ensure that data remains in an accessible, cost-effective format; ▶ difficulty of establishing a constructive division of roles between the public and the private sectors (e.g. the tensions between the parallel initiatives on sequencing the human genome); <p>Such issues would be explored in greater depth at the awayday on 23-24 November.</p>	
<p><u>E-infrastructure roadmap</u>: members were updated on progress with this OSI initiative, whose steering group would be meeting for the last time in early November. There were likely to be implications for the development of the RIN’s digital data agenda, and there are also important relationships with the ESFRI roadmap initiative at European level and spending priorities under FP7.</p>	

4. Towards a RIN communications strategy (paper RIN/AB/06/15)

<p>The Board welcomed the move to develop a communications strategy, especially as a means of raising the RIN’s profile particularly within the research community, and the opportunities afforded by the appointment of James Brown.</p> <p>Members showed much interest in how the RIN’s approach to communications might serve the purpose of helping to deepen engagement with stakeholders. The Board stressed the importance of identifying the key audiences to be targeted by the RIN, so as to be able to tailor communications accordingly (it was suggested that the research community in its entirety constitutes too large an audience – this view reflects aspects of the discussion on relationships with the research community, as reported below). Such tailoring is also appropriate to reflect the different types of RIN activity, which underlines the need for RIN’s communications output to be sophisticated and multi-faceted.</p> <p>The Board identified policy makers in general, and the Research Councils in particular as especially important audiences. There were some suggestions about what might be done in practice to further this, for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ensuring that RC websites, which are consulted regularly by researchers on the lookout for funding opportunities, carry practical 	<p>▶ <i>All to reflect on possible approaches to RIN communications and to make suggestions to the Executive Team.</i></p>
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information on relevant RIN activities, for instance in relation to good practice, such as principles of digital data management – thereby associating the RIN’s ‘brand’ with these activities;

- ▶ to achieve this, establishing relationships with RC web managers – a point also made by the LIS Consultative Group (see below);
- ▶ meeting with individual RCs to identify particular issues or communities that might be the focus of communication.

The Board recognised that defining clear and appropriate messages is at least as important as identifying key audiences, and is closely linked to the development of the RIN’s role. Such messages should serve to address a number of challenges, for instance, promoting the RIN as an organisation that:

- ▶ produces outputs that are useful to researchers;
- ▶ acts as a watchdog;
- ▶ has the ability and influence to engineer changes in practice (RIN’s role as a co-ordinator and/or catalyst);
- ▶ collates and sets out information in a coherent way (RIN’s role as an observatory).

Members noted that, in all such areas, the RIN could develop capacity to communicate in an interactive way, i.e. to reflect the views of its stakeholders. The website is a powerful instrument for this; workshops and conference are another medium, although it is understood that such events are a blunter tool for getting messages across.

5. Relationships with the research community (*paper RIN/AB/06/16*)

As set out in the Strategic Plan, active engagement with the research community is a fundamental aspect of the RIN’s purpose. In anticipation of an in-depth discussion at the forthcoming awayday, the Board considered the nature of this engagement, and the sort of relationships that might be developed in order to further it. Members suggested that there were two broad types of relationship: (i) a representative role on behalf of researchers, and (ii) a brokerage function between bodies with an interest in research information. There are important questions to address about the tension between these two roles in the context of overall RIN activity. For instance, does the research community want a relationship with RIN, and what might be the nature of this potentially elusive relationship? Or is the RIN likely to be perceived more as part of the research infrastructure, as an organisation that helps to underpin provision of services? The Board’s general view veered towards an emphasis on a brokerage or facilitating role, with a strong focus on deepening collaborations notably with the Research Councils (emphasising points made during the discussion on the communications strategy), and also with learned societies. This suggests a RIN positioning which is once removed from researchers themselves.

It follows that the new RIN-RC Liaison Group could play an important part in advancing the RIN’s agenda in this area – although care would be needed to ensure that this group evolves a distinct and useful role. It was suggested, for instance, that it might focus initially on deepening relations with those four RCs (BBSRC, EPSRC, MRC and PPARC) that at present have the least developed links with RIN; to achieve this

▶ *Mike Anderson to draft a short paper to introduce the Board’s awayday discussion on relationships with the research community.*

▶ *RIN Executive Team to make arrangements for inaugural meeting of RIN-RC Liaison Group, before the end of the year.*

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aim, it would be important to secure an appropriate level of individual RC representation on the group – this had been a problem with the now defunct RCUK Research Output Information Group. There was also a question about whether it would not be better for the new Liaison Group to be chaired by an individual other than Michael Jubb.

In relation to learned societies, the Board noted RIN's intention to organise a series of subject-based workshops in the first quarter of 2007. Members agreed that some societies, especially those with good communications networks, could prove to be valuable interlocutors and intermediaries with researchers.

Finally, it was suggested that the RIN-commissioned project on researchers' use/perception of library services might be a useful opportunity to make contact with groups of researchers; could the survey not include an additional question about researchers' expectations of RIN?

6. Advisory Board awayday, 23-24 November (paper RIN/AB/06/17)

In the light of the above discussion, members agreed that relationships with the research community would be a key theme at the awayday; this would be covered under the proposed session 2. However, the Board felt that more time would be required to do justice to the very broad area of RIN strategic direction. It was therefore agreed to extend session 2 to cover the whole of the second part of the afternoon, but to divide this in two: the first part would cover role and strategy, and the second the interface with researchers. The discussion on research data would be deferred until the second day, when it would replace the session on scholarly communications. The meeting would close with a discussion on the RIN review, followed by a recap and synthesis session to conclude.

It would be very important for the awayday to produce clear, practical outcomes; the opportunity would be wasted if the meeting were to be no more than a wide-ranging discussion. In this respect, effective facilitation of the sessions – by designated Board members – would be essential.

- ▶ **Michael Jubb to seek the agreement of selected Board members to chair and facilitate meeting sessions.**
- ▶ **Designated Board members to draft short papers to introduce each session discussion.**

7. Feedback from RIN Consultative Groups (oral)

There were reports from the two Groups that had met since the last meeting of the Advisory Board. Key points as follows:

Physical sciences group (2nd meeting, 22 September):

- ▶ Group members are undertaking “intelligence gathering” to lay the basis for possible RIN activity in the area management of information/data relating to university-produced software; the idea would be to identify best practice, key issues, and initiatives currently being developed. This would allow RIN to scope a project in time for the next Group meeting.
- ▶ The Group are interested in the RIN's activity on the development of the website, and is happy to trial ideas for interactive features such as blogs and wikis.

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Library and information sciences group (3rd meeting, 12 October):

- ▶ The Group could usefully take the lead in the broad area of establishing relationships with the commercial research information sector. A recent contact has been made with the library at the BT research centre, and a Group member, Stephen Smith, will investigate how this could be built on. The RIN will look into how interfaces might be developed, including the possibility of a workshop.
- ▶ The issue of training of researchers into use and management of research information warrants further investigation – partly on the basis of the RIN study on researchers and discovery services. A Group member, Andrew Booth, will undertake a short review that pulls together findings on training needs/issues from the RIN study and other relevant reports.
- ▶ The Group also expressed much interest in the development of the RIN's communications strategy, highlighting such issues as the importance of RIN branding on publications, reports etc; establishing contacts with web managers in Research Councils; and the setting up of wikis.
- ▶ Group member Steve Wood is taking the initiative on exploring the impact of the Freedom of Information Act on the research community. In the first instance, the views of members of all Groups will be canvassed to get an idea of how FoI affects them. This could be a prelude to further consultative activity, such as a workshop bringing together researchers and information managers. One area to be explored might be the issue of changing the fees regime for obtaining information under FoI.

8. RIN studies and reports (*paper RIN/AB/06/18*)

The list of activities was noted without comment.

9. Other business

The point was made that the RIN's remit extends beyond the HE sector, and that care should be taken not to neglect sectors such as Government Departments, which are large generators of R&D, and the NHS. The RIN Executive Team will reflect on these issues. The question of the relationship with NHS research information infrastructure has already been discussed with the Life Sciences Consultative Group, and the Board will have noted the recent initiative from the LIS Group (see above).

Next meeting: this will be the awayday, on Thursday 23 and Friday 24 November, at the Middlethorpe Hotel, York