



Action points in red italics

Present:

Robert Burgess (University of Leicester) (Chair)
Michael Anderson (University of Edinburgh)
James Brown (RIN)
John Coggins (University of Glasgow)
Sally Curry (RIN/CURL)
John Feather (University of Loughborough)
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
David Ingram (University College London)
Michael Jubb (RIN Director)
Roger Kain (University of Exeter)
Malcolm Read (JISC)
Kevin Schürer (University of Essex)
Jean Sykes (London School of Economics)
Anne Trefethen (University of Oxford)
Jackie van Bueren (RIN)
David Walton (British Antarctic Survey)

Apologies

Mike Cruise (University of Birmingham)
Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)
Elaine Martin (University of Newcastle)
Ed Pentz (CrossRef UK)
Lyn Pykett (University of Aberystwyth)
Jan Wilkinson (British Library)

1. Minutes of the meeting of 27 June 2007 (paper RIN/AB/07/16)

These were agreed.

2. Matters arising

[from item 5] HEFCE's review of research libraries is due to be completed soon, with a decision to be taken at the HEFCE Board at the end of November. RIN was consulted early in the review process; and an interview with Ivor Crewe had taken place in May.

[from item 8] Kevin Schürer confirmed that the UK Data Archive has been awarded a two-year EU grant, starting in January 2008, in partnership with 17 European national data archives as a 'preparatory phase' project for the [CESSDA](#) (Council of European Social Science Data Archives) research infrastructure. This special award is a result of the CESSDA RI being part of the [ESFRI \(European Strategic Forum for Research Infrastructures\) 2006 Roadmap](#). The project will investigate several issues relating to the development of an integrated social science data infrastructure, of which persistent identifiers is one (albeit small) part.

3. RIN review: funding and development of a new Strategic Plan (*paper RIN/AB/07/17*)

Funding issues

The Board noted that the formal outcome of review is now not expected until late November at the soonest, following the meetings of the Boards of the various funding bodies.

Members welcomed the extension of RIN's term until mid-2011, but expressed disappointment about the expected level of funding, and also with the delay in confirming the funding decision. This delay had a knock-on effect on the preparation of the RIN's new strategic plan, a draft of which was originally going to be presented to the meeting. This had not been possible owing to the lateness with which the RIN was informed of the likely funding scenario.

However, it was recognised – given the prudence with which HEFCE tends to consider requests for additional resourcing – that the expected level of funding was unsurprising; the implications were not unworkable. The carry forward of unspent funds should at least allow the RIN to recruit the staff needed to meet the objectives set out in the forward look. The Board's view was sought about whether such an expansion in staffing is still appropriate in the light of financial circumstances.

Members agreed, but highlighted the risk of RIN being constrained in its ability to recruit a sufficient number of staff of appropriate calibre and experience. It was suggested that it would be better to recruit two high-level individuals than to compromise with three staffers with less experience – even if this entails limiting some of RIN's scope. It is hugely important for RIN, in its renewed guise, to quickly expand its current capacity to engage with a range of stakeholders at senior level. The Board felt that only skilled and experienced staff could achieve this. It also recognised that recruiting such staff could be a lengthy process.

Members asked whether the Research Councils could realistically contribute more to RIN's budget. This was considered doubtful. However, additional funding might be available if RIN could demonstrate specifically (and persuasively) that it is helping to meet some RC objectives.

- *Kevin Schürer to discuss informally with Ian Diamond the suggestion of increased Research Council commitment to RIN.*

New strategic plan 2008-11

The Board noted that the previous plan quickly became dated, hence the importance of ensuring that the new document had more validity throughout RIN's second term. The 2008-11 plan should therefore be more flexible than the first. It should allow RIN to be poised to exploit opportunities as well as to set the agenda. The commitment to a case study approach, focused on researcher behaviour, was considered crucial in this respect.

The Board agreed that case studies were also a good way for RIN to demonstrate its usefulness and relevance. Organisations such as JISC and the British Library would be very receptive to this sort of output – although it should be borne in mind that RIN is not the only organisation to commission case studies on researcher behaviour, and consequently it should be mindful of what is being done by others.

Pertinence to the objectives of funders should be a factor in the development of RIN's strategy; and, in spite of concern about the quality of the Brickwood report, some of the issues raised by the report should be actively considered by RIN.

- *RIN Executive Team to circulate to the Board a draft of the 2008-11 strategic plan asap, in anticipation of a discussion at the December meeting.*

Involvement of stakeholders

The Board reflected on the rationale for RIN to place a greater emphasis

on piggybacking on relevant initiatives led by other stakeholders, and to work collaboratively with them; it would be worth spending time investigating such opportunities. This is particularly pertinent for instance with JISC – although the distinct nature of RIN’s input (e.g. in relation to analysing researcher behaviour) would need to be maintained. Members suggested that there are potentially fruitful interactions with research environments that lead to significant knowledge transfer and even commercial applications. Could links usefully be developed with those parts of the research community? Organisations such as the Ordnance Survey were cases in point. There were similar issues relating to engagement with the NHS – although it was understood that it was difficult to find appropriate interlocutors there.

Another type of interaction would be for RIN to investigate the added value of existing initiatives, and the impact that these have on the broader research information environment. Such evaluative work could prove useful, especially since it was not often undertaken. However, it was understood that this would be a departure from a conventional observatory role, and could represent a distinct raft of additional activity for RIN; careful thought was therefore required about how to achieve this.

Finally, members commented that RIN’s international engagement needs to be very well focused; there is a danger otherwise in getting sucked into a wide range of initiatives that are not central to the RIN’s remit.

Communication

The Board emphasised the crucial importance of engagement with researchers at the ‘coal face’. Clearly, the Consultative Groups were one means of achieving this. Another way was to promote a direct dialogue with researchers who were genuinely interested in RIN activity, for instance through focused workshops. The key factor here was to motivate those individuals that would be receptive to such a dialogue. Members argued that this should form an important part of RIN’s approach, and one of the RIN’s new appointees could usefully focus on this type of activity – with support from the Advisory Board and the Consultative Groups.

Members reflected on whether RIN’s communications strategy might involve defined targets for the number of articles published in the mainstream media. The [Higher Education Policy Institute](#) (HEPI) is a good example of a smallish organisation that has been very successful at promoting its work.

The Board agreed about the potential usefulness of a major RIN conference – but this would require extremely careful preparation for it to succeed as a showcasing event. For this reason, members felt that it would be unlikely to take place before the end of 2008. The conference programme should be designed on the basis of the likely audience, rather than the other way round. RIN should consider seeking funding and/or sponsorship.

4. Advisory Board membership and role (paper RIN/AB/07/18)

Members considered the issues raised in the discussion paper, and agreed that the size of the Board could usefully be expanded to 18 from its nominal current complement of 16 (including two vacancies). Such an increase would partly address the need to achieve an orderly and sensible turnover. Members emphasised the importance of achieving a balance between turnover and continuity; as such, there is a strong

■ *All to consider whether they wish to remain on the Board, and to notify the RIN Executive Team if they intend to serve for the*

argument for rolling programme of turnover, with phased retirements from the Board on a year-by-year basis.

Members had expressed an interest in developing links with researchers whose outputs lead to commercial applications. In light of this, is there a case for including on the Board representation from that sector, to provide a perspective on commercial practices – e.g. with regard to intellectual property?

There was strong agreement about the need for Board members to continue chairing the Consultative Groups

current term only..

- **RIN Executive Team** to raise issue of Board turnover with the Funders' Group, with a view to altering the Board's ToR if appropriate.

5. Role and membership of RIN Consultative Groups (paper RIN/AB/07/19)

The Board agreed that expanding the membership of the Groups by 50% seems logical, and could help to develop a greater degree of proactivity.

The Board underlined the importance of incentivisation in order to increase the level of engagement on the part of Group members. One idea that attracted some interest was the possibility of identifying 'research champions', in well-defined areas, to work on behalf of each Group. Such champions would require a budget, as well as support from the RIN Executive Team, and could be envisaged as some sort of fellowship – which might prove attractive for younger researchers seeking to establish their careers. Keeping the champion's term relatively short (say, one year) and ensuring rotation could help to surmount the problem of covering the wide range of disciplines represented on the Groups.

Conversely, the Board was sceptical about the idea of providing a stipend to all Consultative Group members.

- **All** to suggest individuals who might be approached for Group membership, relating to the gaps in coverage identified in the paper.
- **RIN Executive Team** to consider the possibility of defining a 'research champion' role on the Groups.

6. Data stewardship: from principles to policy (paper RIN/AB/07/20)

The data stewardship principles exemplified the challenge for RIN of identifying the level at which it can most effectively intervene in its policy-making and advocacy roles. In this instance, the Board suggested that RIN may have now achieved all that could be reasonably expected from it; by setting out a series of overarching principles, it has helped to lay the groundwork for others to consider the practical implications and identify solutions accordingly, and has consequently played its role.

The Board noted that the CURL-RUGIT feasibility study, which will present proposals for developing and maintaining a national shared digital research data service for UK HEIs, addresses many of the key issues stemming from the RIN principles. There is therefore a case for RIN not to undertake any further activity in this area for the present, until the feasibility study is concluded. Following that, RIN may again have a useful role in taking forward relevant elements.

The CURL-RUGIT study was intended as a cross-university, collaborative project. Although it was funded by HEFCE, the Board noted the importance of seeking early involvement from the Scottish Funding Council and other Scottish partners if this was to be a truly UK-wide initiative.

- **RIN Executive Team** to publish the finalised principles asap, with a commentary on how the principles are to be taken forward.

7. RIN update (paper RIN/AB/07/21)

The paper was noted.

8. Other business

There was none.	
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Next meeting: Wednesday 19 December, 14:00 – 16:00 (to be preceded by a sandwich lunch at 13:30), at the British Library