



Business Plan 2008-2011

I. Summary

1. Creating, using and sharing information resources of many different kinds is an integral part of the process through which research expands the frontiers of knowledge and understanding. How researchers achieve these goals has changed fundamentally in the past five years, and rapid change continues. Ensuring that research information strategies, services and policies develop appropriately and effectively is of critical importance among the many measures needed to sustain a dynamic and internationally-competitive research sector that makes a major contribution to the expansion and dissemination of knowledge and to national wellbeing.
2. The strategy set out in this plan is designed to enable the Research Information Network (RIN) to build on its first two years of operation and to support developments that will help the UK research sector in responding to new opportunities and challenges. Over the next three years, we shall work actively with our funders and other partners and stakeholders to develop the base of evidence as to the behaviours, perceptions and needs of members of the different stakeholder groups in the research information landscape; to enhance our understanding of the implications of that evidence; and to develop and promote proposals for changes in policies and services for the benefit of researchers. In all our work, our focus will be on the needs and the views of researchers themselves.
3. Our strategy is thus based on three core aims:
 - i. Developing the evidence base;
 - ii. Providing authoritative advice and guidance;
 - iii. Promoting change
4. The RIN's core role is thus to conduct research and promote innovation to meet the information needs of UK researchers. It is not a service provider, nor does it seek to become one. Rather, this plan sets out how, with the help of some additions to our staffing, we shall maximise the RIN's contribution to enhancing, sustaining and broadening understanding of the development and use of research information resources and services; and to the development of effective policies, strategies and services that enhance the effectiveness of the UK research community in meeting the goals that have been set for it by the Government and our funders.

II. Introduction

5. In this plan we set out how the RIN will develop its activities over the next three years, building on the work undertaken since 2005 and the outcomes of the review commissioned by our funders in 2007. Our funders recognise that the research landscape is changing rapidly and that a successful research sector requires the resources and the infrastructure to be able to respond to new challenges and opportunities. Only thus, as is noted in HEFCE's *Strategic Plan 2006-2011*, will the UK be able to maintain a research base with the capacity to produce a substantial body of work of international excellence across the full range of disciplines. We aim through our work to support our funders in their shared mission to promote and support research of the highest quality, to develop and sustain a UK research sector with a strong position among the world-leaders, and in particular to maximise the value of the information resources produced by researchers.
6. In a rapidly-changing environment, a body such as the RIN needs itself to be nimble in responding to new opportunities and challenges; and we set out below how we plan to add to our capacity and enhance our responsiveness. This plan will therefore be reviewed and updated annually in the light of changing circumstances.

The research information environment

7. Discovering, handling, and creating information resources are core activities for researchers, at the heart of the research process. How researchers undertake these tasks has changed fundamentally in the past decade. Over the past five years,
 - i. many more information resources have become readily-available online to researchers in all subjects and disciplines;
 - ii. technological developments have led to a transformation in the services libraries are able to offer to researchers;
 - iii. the services provided by other information providers in both the public sector (including JISC and publicly-funded data centres) and the commercial sector (including both Google and the major scholarly publishers) have developed rapidly; and
 - iv. researchers have begun increasingly to create and to use a much-expanded range of digital information resources and tools in the course of their research.
8. Further change is now under way, and indeed the pace of change is quickening. New services and behaviours, including those commonly referred to under the heading of Web 2.0, will have profound implications for researchers, institutions, and funders, as well as current service-providers. Seeking to ensure that research information strategies, services and policies develop appropriately and effectively is thus of critical importance among the many measures needed to sustain a dynamic and internationally-competitive research sector that makes a major contribution to national wellbeing and to the expansion and dissemination of knowledge.

The RIN's role

9. In this period of transformation of the information environment, there is an enhanced need for effective support for the research community in responding to new challenges and opportunities. And such support must be based on an in-depth understanding of the nature, scale and implications of the changes in both service provision and researchers' behaviour. Since its establishment in 2005, the RIN has worked with partners to develop a core of evidence as to the behaviours, perceptions and needs of members of the different stakeholder groups in the research information landscape, with a particular focus on the needs and the views of researchers themselves. Over the next three years, we shall seek to develop that evidence base in areas of core concern to our funders and other partners and stakeholders, but also to work more actively with them to disseminate the evidence and to develop an understanding of its implications; to develop proposals for changes in policies and services for the benefit of researchers; and to promote our findings and recommendations to a wider range of audiences.
10. Wherever possible, we undertake and commission work in partnership with other bodies (these have included up to now CURL, DTI, JISC, the Publishing Research Consortium, the Research Councils, and SCONUL); and we shall continue our policy of actively managing commissioned projects to ensure that they produce work of high quality. As we set out later in this plan, we shall also recruit additional high-quality research and liaison staff, adding to our capacity, and enabling us to increase the impact and effectiveness of our work.
11. We shall thus build on the momentum we have established over the past two years, and maximise the RIN's contribution to enhancing, sustaining and broadening understanding of the development and use of research information services; and to the development of effective policies, strategies and services that enhance the effectiveness of the UK research community in meeting the goals that have been set for it by the Government and our funders.

III. RIN Strategy 2008-11

12. The RIN's core role is to conduct research and promote innovation to meet the information needs of UK researchers. We are not an information service-provider, nor do we seek to become one. Indeed, our independence is among our core strengths, underpinning our ability to bring key stakeholders together. Brokering relationships and working in partnership with our funders and other stakeholders will remain a core principle underlying and adding value to all our activities, and ensuring that our contributions are as objective and authoritative as possible.
13. Our strong focus will remain on researchers in the HE and Research Council sectors, and the provision of information services for them. Insofar as we devote attention to researchers in other parts of the public sector, and in the voluntary and commercial sectors, we shall focus on their behaviours and needs when they work in partnership with colleagues in the HE and Research Council sectors. We recognise also that the issues we seek to address are typically international in scope. Thus while our focus will be on research and information issues in a UK context, we shall also participate in and seek to

influence the work of international fora and organisations where possible and appropriate.

14. Our strategy for the next three years is built around three core aims:
 - i. Developing the evidence base;
 - ii. Providing authoritative advice and guidance;
 - iii. Promoting change.
15. There is a close relationship between the three aims. They are founded on our belief that in a rapidly-changing landscape there is a need for sustained work to assemble and analyse the evidence required for effective development of strategy, policy and services; and that key stakeholder groups should be actively engaged in this work, and in developing and promoting proposals for change.
16. The specific areas of study and policy development under each of the three aims will evolve as the information landscape changes and detailed plans will be determined in consultation with our funders and other key stakeholders in the research and information communities. We shall take care to complement and add value to the work undertaken by other bodies, and not to duplicate effort. Significant areas for activity will build on our work to date and will include:
 - i. the creation, sharing and use of research data, and related policy implications;
 - ii. the development of academic libraries and their services, and of collaboration between libraries;
 - iii. developments in the scholarly publication system and their implications;
 - iv. researchers' take up of new services including blogs, wikis, forums, groups, and social networking services;
 - v. training and staff development for researchers and information specialists
 - vi. case studies of the use, creation and management of information resources in the research process as a whole.
17. The balance of activity will vary under each of the three aims. The case studies identified in the list above will cut across a number of the other areas. They will focus on researcher behaviour in different disciplines and research contexts, and we shall seek through them to gain an in-depth understanding of the role that the use, creation and management of information resources and services plays in the research process as a whole; and of how research performance and productivity might be enhanced with the help of improved information policies and services.
18. Throughout our work, our focus will be on researchers' behaviours, perceptions and needs, and the policy and strategic implications that flow from them. We shall also consider how most effectively to evaluate the impact on research practice, performance and productivity of changes in the infrastructure of information policies and services; and if necessary and appropriate seek additional funding to conduct exploratory work in this area.

Developing the Evidence Base

19. HEFCE and the other Funding Bodies, along with the Research Councils, have clearly stated their intention to encourage the effective sharing of research findings, and to improve the systems for researchers to share and disseminate outputs as widely as possible. But there is a notable lack of evidence about key features of the research information landscape in the UK, about how researchers are making use of key information resources and tools, and about what inhibits greater use. Debates on strategies and policies for the future development of research information services are thus not supported by evidence as to how well (or not) the current system is working, or as to the take-up, influence and implications of new services. In order to provide an essential underpinning for policy development and the improvement of services, evidence-gathering and analysis will therefore remain a core element in the RIN's work, along with careful attention to how that evidence is presented to key stakeholders.
20. This work will be of critical importance in a context where researchers are finding new ways to communicate with each other, to have discussions, and to publish information. We shall gather evidence from researchers themselves, through surveys, focus groups and interviews, including researchers at all stages of their careers, and with varying levels of awareness and skill in their use of information resources and services; and from the full range of service-providers in the library, information and publishing communities. We shall look across disciplines and subject areas, and identify both gaps and opportunities for exploiting good practice across the sector. We shall also highlight as appropriate where policies and services are not working effectively, or where poor practice is having a detrimental effect on research performance.
21. Wherever possible, we shall ensure that our evidence-gathering and analysis is initiated and undertaken in partnership with representatives of the key stakeholders in the research and information communities, so that our findings are accepted as objective and authoritative. We shall thus develop our work in
 - i. surveying and analysing key features of the provision of information services to researchers, including such matters as the development of new models of scholarly publishing and communications; the development and take-up by researchers of Web 2.0 and other innovative approaches and services; changes in the provision and availability of scholarly journals in print and digital form across the HE and research sectors; the provision of training, awareness-raising and updating for researchers; and the costs of information service provision and how they are supported by revenue flows from various sources.
 - ii. gathering and analysing evidence on researchers' behaviour, perceptions and needs, seeking to develop a better understanding of such key issues as how disciplinary and institutional cultures influence the ways in which researchers use, create and manage different kinds of information resources; the barriers to information flows across disciplines; and how to

help researchers in using information sources in disciplines and subjects other than their own.

22. A particular focus of our work will be a series of in-depth case studies of the behaviour of researchers in a range of different disciplines and institutional settings as they find, use, manage, create and disseminate information resources and services of various kinds in the course of their research. We believe that such case studies will be a powerful mechanism for building up a detailed understanding of researcher behaviour and of how performance and productivity might be enhanced. They will thus provide a critical base of evidence for decisions, notably by funders and HEIs, on policy and on the development of infrastructure and services.
23. In order to ensure that the work we produce is of the highest possible quality, we shall continue to devote considerable efforts to working with our consultants and partners throughout the period of each of our studies, and particularly in the drafting of findings and recommendations. And our new research officer post will enable us to undertake some work in-house, to speed up our commissioning of projects, and to enhance our engagement with consultants during the course of the work they undertake for us.

Providing Authoritative Advice and Guidance

24. In a context of rapid change, researchers, research institutions, funders, and information service providers all have an enhanced need for authoritative advice and guidance on the implications for policy, strategy and service development. The RIN is an independent body which has already shown that it can bring key players together to develop evidence-based advice and guidance on how to improve the information environment and services for the benefit of UK researchers. In consultation with our funders, we shall exploit our ability to broker relationships and to bring together key stakeholders, including researchers themselves, to consider in depth the lessons and implications of the evidence we and others have gathered; and to develop with them authoritative policy and strategic advice addressed to different organisations and interest groups. Our advice and guidance will thus be tailored to the various needs of audiences in research institutions, funding bodies, and information service providers, as well as the research community itself.
25. Our new liaison and advocacy post will enhance our existing capacity and enable us to build on our work up to now by:
 - i. intensifying our efforts to draw out the implications of the evidence from our surveys and other sources to identify where and how information services might be improved, and key areas for policy development at both local and national levels;
 - ii. bringing together key stakeholders to develop high-level frameworks of principles and goals for the future development of information services;
 - iii. establishing short-term working groups to identify practical ways forward in tackling specific issues that arise from our discussions with key stakeholders;

- iv. reviewing the policy landscape itself, including both new policy initiatives, and implementation and compliance with existing policies; and
 - v. securing a marked increase in engagement and interest from senior policy-makers at both institutional and national levels.
26. The value of what we produce will derive in particular from our ability to work productively together with representatives of different stakeholder groups. We shall thus seek throughout our work to secure ownership of our recommendations from key stakeholders in the information and research communities. We shall develop the work of our consultative groups, research communications group, and Research Councils liaison group; establish working groups to consider issues of strategic importance; and widen the range of representatives and intermediaries with whom we interact both formally and informally. We shall also work hard to secure engagement and interest from senior policy-makers at both institutional and national levels.
27. The need for coherent approaches to the development of the landscape of policy, strategy and service provision for both research data (in all its forms) and published information outputs, and the relationships between them, will be a particular focus of our work.

Promoting Change

28. In order to sustain the UK's strong position among the world leaders in research over the coming years, there will need to be continuing change in the framework of research information policies, strategies and services. Additions to our staffing will enable us to enhance our communications – in both directions - with our funders and key stakeholder groups, and our ability to present our work effectively and to promote our findings and recommendations.
29. It is unrealistic for us to seek to communicate directly with more than a small proportion of members of the UK research community: those who take an active interest in matters of information policy and strategy, who engage through our consultative groups and our workshops, read our publications, and use our website; and those (several thousands already) who participate in our surveys. In seeking to promote change, we shall therefore focus our attention on policy-makers and service-providers, and on key intermediaries in learned societies, research institutions and other organisations. We shall seek through those intermediaries to raise awareness of current and forthcoming developments, and of the scope for embracing change in order to enhance research performance.
30. We shall seek to ensure that the RIN listens and is listened to by our key stakeholders, and we shall tailor our communications and our advocacy to the interests and needs of different audiences and groups in the research and information communities, seeking to influence their policies and practices, and to promote and facilitate change. We shall thus
- i. build on our relationships with executive bodies, service providers and other agencies, encouraging them to participate in, to facilitate, and to promote our work;

- ii. work with our stakeholders to help them develop policies and practice that reflect the conclusions and recommendations arising from our studies and other projects;
 - iii. improve the range and expand the distribution of our print publications, including our Newsletter. We shall also produce more short synopses of our reports and guidance, targeted at different stakeholder groups;
 - iv. further develop our website as a resource of information not only about our own activities, but about other important developments in the research information landscape; and as a means of two-way communication, using blogs, wikis, and promoting the take-up of RSS feeds and other channels of communication;
 - v. expand and build on our relationships with key intermediaries, including learned societies and professional associations, placing information and articles in their newsletters and other publications, and on their websites, with links to our own website;
 - vi. organise workshops and seminars across the UK, and make presentations at conferences for both the research and the information communities;
 - vii. develop our contacts with relevant specialist media and seek to ensure good coverage of RIN activities in relevant publications as well as in blogs and other new channels;
 - viii. secure the help of our funders and other partners in disseminating and promoting the results of our work.
31. Through these various mechanisms, we shall seek to promote broader awareness and understanding of developments in the research information landscape, of the opportunities and challenges presented by such developments, and of how behaviours, policies and services might most effectively respond to them. Thus we shall seek to promote changes to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the UK research community in meeting the goals that have been set for it by our funders.
32. We shall also seek to promote change by helping research institutions to reach a clearer view of how enhanced library and information services can support their research missions, and by facilitating co-operation between libraries in the development of their services.

IV. Structure and Governance

33. The RIN Executive team, expanded from four to seven members, will remain based in the British Library, which will continue to provide accommodation and related services, including responsibility for recruitment and employment infrastructure. Governance will be vested in the Funders' Group consisting of one senior officer of each of the UK HE funding bodies, the British Library and the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales and a representative from Research Councils UK; and the Advisory Board, comprising a chair and up to 17 members representing the UK higher education, research, and information communities.
34. We shall seek to enhance the membership and the role of the consultative groups and other standing groups we have established, as a key mechanism for

ensuring that all our work is properly informed by the needs and interests of our key stakeholder groups, and that we have good lines of communication with them.

V. Resources

35. It is anticipated that the resources to be provided to the RIN over the three years from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2011 amount to a cash total of at least £3.930m, comprising £3.720m. from the four Higher Education Funding Bodies¹, and £0.210m from the Research Councils. The non-cash resources to be provided in the form of accommodation and other services by the British Library have been estimated to represent an additional sum of over £0.200m over the three years.
36. These sums, though modest in relation to the role we have been given, represent a significant addition to the current level of resource. A serious constraint on the RIN's level of performance and impact over its first two years has been **the capacity of the current Executive team to work intensively with key stakeholders in developing, commissioning and managing strategically-focused projects, and at the same time to work with them carefully to consider, present and promote the implications of the evidence we and others have gathered.** In order effectively to fulfil the role and the strategy set out in this Plan, we shall therefore use the greater part of the additional resources now provided to increase from four to seven the size of the Executive team.
37. We shall thus recruit as soon as possible
 - i. *a research officer*, with expertise in library and information studies or social scientific research, to take on responsibilities including undertaking in-house research projects, drafting research specifications, working with consultants on commissioned projects, and contributing to the drafting of reports. Such a post would add to our nimbleness, flexibility and responsiveness, particularly in undertaking short-term research projects in-house (something we are not currently able to do);
 - ii. *a strategic liaison and advocacy officer*, with experience of research and/or information policy issues, and high-level advocacy and communication skills, to take on an ambassadorial role, with responsibilities including expanding our range of contacts and liaison with key intermediaries and gatekeepers and intensifying our engagement with them; encouraging them to participate in and to promote our work; identifying key areas for policy and service development; bringing key stakeholders together to identify key issues and practical ways forward; and contributing to reviews of the policy landscape itself. Such a post would enhance our capacity to engage key stakeholders in our work and to influence their policies and strategies;

¹ Made up of £2.948m in new funding and £0.772m in carry-forward as reported to the Funders' Group in July 2007. Our latest projections indicate that the carry-forward at the end of June 2007 will in fact amount to c£1.1m.

- iii. an *administrative officer*, with good-quality administrative experience, to take on responsibilities including support for the consultative groups and short-term working groups, and day-to-day liaison with contractors and with key stakeholders in the library, information and research communities.
38. These additions to staffing will enable us significantly to enhance the effectiveness and the impact of the RIN's work by
- i. undertaking short research projects in-house;
 - ii. engaging more actively with consultants in their work on commissioned projects;
 - iii. developing our range of contacts and liaison with key intermediaries, and intensifying our engagement with them;
 - iv. increasing our capacity to work with and to influence our partners and key stakeholders in following up our commissioned studies, to consider carefully the implications of the evidence we gather, and to develop and promote associated advice and guidance;
 - v. expanding the volume and range of our efforts to communicate the results of our work through a variety of media.
39. Our budgetary plans are set out in summary below, and will be set out more fully in parallel with our annual Operating Plans. The figures in the table are based on the lowest estimates of the amount to be carried forward from June 2008, and thus of the total amount to be made available over the three years 2008-2011. If our funders allow a higher amount of carry-forward, then additional resources will be used for commissioned projects and outreach events.

RIN Financial Projections as at November 2007

	FY 2008-09 (75%)	FY 2009-10	FY 2010-11	FY 2011-12 (25%)	Total
Running Costs					
Salaries	280	390	400	105	1175
Equipment	20	5	5	0	30
T&S, Consumables etc	35	50	50	10	145
Sub-total	335	441	454	114	1350
Programmes					
Commissioned projects	600	750	800	200	2350
Workshops, conferences etc	50	80	80	20	230
Sub-total	650	830	880	220	2580
Grand Total	985	1271	1334	334	3930

40. We shall continue also to attract additional resources from other bodies in the form of contributions to the costs of jointly-commissioned projects. In addition, we shall continue to benefit from the work of significant numbers of people who serve on our Advisory Board, consultative groups and other standing and ad hoc working groups, and on the expert panels we use to oversee all our major projects.
41. It is possible that in the course of our work we shall identify the need for additional resources for specific initiatives to improve the effectiveness of information services. In that case, we should develop a special case for the resources required for that purpose. But we are confident that with the resources now available to us, the RIN will be able to develop and sustain its role as a provider of evidence and advice, and a promoter of change which makes a significant contribution to ensuring that the UK's world-class research base is supported by the provision of a world-class research information environment.

VI. Risks

42. The key strategic risks that we have identified are cross-cutting and could impact on the achievement of all three of our core aims. We have taken account of these risks in developing the strategy set out in the previous sections of this plan. But in seeking to work with others to achieve our core aims, we shall not be wholly risk-averse: while we shall take action to mitigate risks wherever possible, we recognise that some of what we do may not succeed in meeting all our objectives.

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigating Actions</i>
1. That there is a mismatch between our aims and priorities, those of our funders, and the views of our key stakeholders.	Regular and systematic liaison with our funders and stakeholders, and taking their views into account as we develop our strategy and activities.
2. That our staffing and governance structure do not effectively enable us to deliver our core aims.	Recruiting and retaining high-quality staff. Sustaining a collaborative culture with a clear vision and a strong commitment to delivery. Commitment, review and challenge from the Advisory Board and Funders Group Strong focus on core aims and objectives
3. That we do not respond effectively to changes in the research information environment and the	Priority to environment-scanning. Systematic liaison and review with stakeholder groups.

<p>activities and priorities of key stakeholder groups.</p>	<p>Engagement with initiatives and structures of key stakeholders.</p> <p>Regular review of plans</p>
<p>4. That we do not secure co-operation and partnership from key stakeholders in both the research and the information communities in commissioning and overseeing our evidence-gathering studies; in considering the implications of that evidence; in developing advice and guidance for the sector; and in disseminating and promoting our work.</p>	<p>Utilising additional Executive team capacity to broaden and deepen contacts and liaison with key stakeholders.</p>
<p>5. That the reports, recommendations, advice and guidance we produce are not seen as objective and authoritative.</p>	<p>Planning and overseeing work rigorously and in full partnership with key stakeholder groups.</p> <p>Judicious use of experts to advise on RIN projects and reports.</p> <p>Careful drafting and rigorous review of all RIN publications.</p>
<p>6. That our work does not secure the interest and engagement of senior policy-makers in the research and information sectors at both institutional and national levels, or are perceived as of little relevance by our funders and key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Regular, proactive and systematic engagement with funders and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>Partnership with stakeholders wherever possible and appropriate in planning and overseeing RIN projects.</p> <p>Follow-through for reports and other studies to ensure that key lessons and implications are drawn out and well-articulated.</p> <p>Effective communications strategy and implementation.</p>
<p>7. That we do not succeed in raising awareness of current and forthcoming developments among key intermediaries and gatekeepers for the research community.</p>	<p>Expanding and building on our contacts and relationships with intermediaries</p> <p>Placing information and articles in relevant newsletters and other publications, and on websites.</p>

VII. Key Performance Indicators and Measures

43. We have identified some key performance indicators that will enable us to monitor progress in critical aspects of this plan. More detailed measures are set out in our annual operating plan. The measures themselves are essentially quantitative, but they will be accompanied by regular qualitative assessments of the impact of the work the RIN undertakes and produces.
44. As noted earlier in this plan, we shall also in the course of the next two years consider how most effectively to evaluate the impact on research practice, performance, and productivity of changes in the infrastructure of information policies and services; and if necessary and appropriate seek funding to conduct exploratory work in this area.

<i>Key Performance Indicator</i>	<i>Measures</i>
1. To commission and produce high-quality reports that make a significant contribution to the development of the evidence base	Number of reports commissioned and produced annually; number of partners engaged in commissioning and funding studies; evidence of readership and citation.
2. To organise workshops and seminars to consider issues arising from RIN reports and studies, and other relevant developments in the research information environment.	Number of events; attendance; feedback from participants; evidence of follow-up.
3. To make effective presentations at workshops, conferences and seminars organised by other bodies in the research and information sectors.	Number of presentations; attendance; feedback from participants.
4. To secure the engagement of representatives of the research and information communities in our work.	Representation of researchers and others on RIN standing bodies and working groups; levels of attendance and interaction.
5. To produce documents providing authoritative guidance and advice.	Number of reports and publications produced; levels of response to consultative documents; citation and promotion of RIN advice by other bodies.
6. To raise awareness and understanding of key opportunities and challenges presented by developments in the research information landscape.	Readership and citation of RIN publications; readership, comments and downloads from RIN website.

7. To ensure that the resources provided by our funders are deployed effectively.	Production and approval of annual plans with profiles of activity and expenditure; delivery of those plans.
---	---