

We Don't Need Training In Resource Discovery, Say Academic Researchers

New findings describing the information-seeking habits of researchers in the higher education sector show that they are confident in their ability to find the information resources they need for their research.

The findings, drawn from a survey undertaken earlier this year, are set out in a report published in November by the Research Information Network. They demonstrate that researchers are generally happy dedicating considerable time and effort to discover material they require for their scholarly work.

The report, *Researchers and Discovery Services*, also confirms that most of them are confident using an extensive range of search and discovery tools, and feel that they require little or no training in this area.

Other key findings include:

- Researchers don't feel overwhelmed by information. They see searching as part and parcel of the research process, and are generally satisfied with the discovery services that they use. A much greater concern is the possibility of missing information that is important for their work – they therefore usually feel happy with large sets of search results from which they can then refine down.
- Social networking tools such as blogs are not yet a significant feature of researchers' approach to discovery – fewer than 10% use them regularly. Moreover, in this respect, there is little difference in habits across career stages.
- Research colleagues remain one of the most important sources of information for virtually every type of enquiry. They also feature as important providers of advice about resources




and tools, and sources of recommendation for new services.

- Google is ubiquitous, but researchers also use a bewildering variety of highly-specialised discovery services.

It is perhaps surprising that there has been no recent attempt – among the plethora of studies on search and navigation more generally, and the growing literature on the use of academic journals – to examine how members of the UK research community make use of discovery services. Search and discovery are integral parts of the research process, and as such the report seeks to fill that gap.

The findings are not only interesting in their own right, but also provide a basis for guiding the further development of discovery services, notably those that are aimed specifically at the research community.

The report was commissioned by the RIN as part of our work to promote better arrangements for researchers to find out what relevant information resources are available for them, where

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Welcome from Michael Jubb



When I took up post early in 2005 as the first Director of the RIN, I found that its sponsors – the four UK higher education funding bodies, the eight Research Councils, and the three national libraries – had set a very ambitious agenda for us.

The role we have been given is to lead and co-ordinate new developments in the collaborative provision of information for researchers in the UK. That certainly represents a challenge for any new organisation, and one we have been delighted to take on.

This thrice-yearly newsletter reports on some of our work over the past few months in seeking to meet that challenge. There are two main focuses for our work.

The first is to build up relationships with some of the key players in the library, publishing and wider information worlds, as well as with representatives of the research community and research funders, and to facilitate collaborative work between them.

The second is to build a firmer base of evidence about the ways in which information services are developing, and how researchers are using them. We hope that you will find the studies we have commissioned both interesting and thought-provoking. We are currently considering the key lessons to be drawn from them. Do look at our website to learn more about our work, and let us know your views.

Introducing the RIN Executive Team

Without further ado, please allow me to introduce the RIN Executive Team. Tucked away in their open-plan offices in Euston, London, the team are a close-knit and friendly bunch. Please do feel free to get in touch.



Michael Jubb

Director of the RIN

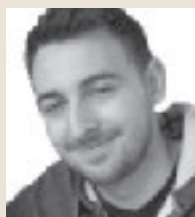
Michael has a long-standing background as an academic, archivist and senior research manager. He was Deputy Chief Executive of the Arts and Humanities Research Board, where he led the organisation's transition to Research

Council status, and previously Deputy Secretary of the British Academy. michael.jubb@rin.ac.uk

Stéphane Goldstein

Planning and Project Officer

Stéphane spent nine years at the Medical Research Council in various policy support and external relations capacities, including a stint as the MRC's parliamentary officer. He has also worked for Research Councils UK, charged with the co-ordination of aspects of research management policy. stephane.goldstein@rin.ac.uk



James Brown

Communications Officer

James has come to the RIN straight from university, where he studied social psychology. As part of the so-called new generation of 'digital natives,' James logically became a freelance web developer. He has expertise in both

the design of and strategy behind digital communications. james.brown@rin.ac.uk

Jackie Van Bueren

PA to the Director

Jacqueline is a psychology graduate with a professional secretarial qualification. She has worked for a broad range of organisations. She was for five years PA to the Chief Executive at the National Association of Goldsmiths.

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A Promising Start



Universities are about the creation and transmission of knowledge and understanding. Hence libraries – and the information resources and services they provide – are at the symbolic heart of any university.

I first became involved in issues to do with research information as a member of the Research Support Libraries Group. Its report, in 2003, rested on the fundamental assumption that delivery for research information services in the UK should be driven

by the needs of researchers themselves. One of the principal recommendations was the creation of what is now the Research Information Network.

As a Vice-Chancellor, I am aware that in the 21st century, information resources and services remain of critical importance to universities, but that the library – and indeed researchers themselves – draws on sources from far beyond the university. Moreover, the services it provides must be ever more closely integrated with the teaching and research activities of academic departments.

Thus I am very pleased to serve as Chair of the RIN Advisory Board, whose membership, from a wide range of institutions, disciplines and expertise, reflects the importance of the RIN's links with the research and library/information services communities.

These links are reinforced through the RIN's four Consultative Groups. These cover the full spectrum of scholarly disciplines, from the arts and humanities to the social, life and physical sciences, as well as librarianship and information science. They provide a forum for informed users, where issues are addressed with the aim of developing better information services for researchers. The Consultative Groups also help the RIN to engage with active researchers who are developing methodologies that reflect the new opportunities of the information age.

The RIN is still a young organisation. In a relatively short period of time, it has established itself solidly, but has much to achieve and many strands of activity to develop – and there is no shortage of these. I look forward to it building on its initial successes, to achieve its ambition of encouraging and enabling ever-improving provision of research information.

Professor Robert Burgess
Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester,
Chair, RIN Advisory Board

www.rslg.ac.uk

www.rin.ac.uk/consultative-groups

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these are, and how they may have access to them.

The information resources examined by this new report include journal articles, books and book chapters, grey literature, conference proceedings and datasets. These can be widely scattered across many different physical locations and websites. The discovery services that correspond to these resources – the means by which researchers can discover and locate them – are also diverse in nature.

As highlighted in the study, these services in turn correspond to a wide variety of tools: from the established to the more newly-developed, and ranging from all-purpose web search engines to abstract and indexing services, citation indexes, library catalogues, subject repositories, portals and a long tail of specialist services.

In addition, libraries and librarians themselves are important resource discovery services. Other people can also act as a 'service' for many researchers: asking a colleague can be the

fastest way to identify a relevant resource. The report covers all of these service tools, amongst others.

The study was undertaken by Rightscom, on the basis of fieldwork by IRN Research, which conducted telephone interviews with some 400 researchers and 50 librarians from a balanced range of institutions, subjects, career stages (from postdoc onwards) and geographical locations.

As the report shows, researchers are indeed distinctive in their approach to discovering and locating the information sources they need. Understanding how they do it, and seeking and listening to their views, are the first essential steps towards improving services, and the efficiency of the research process as a whole.

Over the coming months, the RIN will be considering how it can most effectively help to meet that end. We welcome views from researchers and information providers alike.

www.rin.ac.uk/researchers-discovery-services

Review Highlights Need For More Research Into Journal Publishing

A review of the available information about the operation and costs of scholarly journal publishing for the UK has found that we have only a limited knowledge of how the journal market is currently operating.

The *UK scholarly journals: 2006 baseline report* was published in October 2006 by the Research Information Network, the Department of Trade and Industry and Research Councils UK (RCUK).

Effective communication of the results of research is crucial to the success of the UK research base, which is one of the most productive in the world. The review was commissioned in order to provide a baseline of evidence for policies to promote a world-class scholarly communications system to support the work of UK researchers.

There are some 200,000 full-time researchers in the UK, and as authors and readers they are interested in the articles published in most of the 20-25,000 scholarly journals published worldwide. But the report finds that we know remarkably little about who buys the journals and how much they pay for them, especially outside the higher education sector.

Nor do we have reliable or consistent information about the costs that researchers and publishers incur in producing journal articles. Researchers have enjoyed improvements in access to journals as a result of their now being published increasingly in digital form, but half of all researchers, especially in interdisciplinary areas, find problems in securing access to the content they need.

Furthermore, we know very little indeed about how researchers actually access and use journal articles. So the report both identifies what we do know, but also points to key gaps in our knowledge, where further research is needed.

The report was prepared by Electronic Publishing Services Ltd (EPS) in association with the Department of Information Studies at Loughborough University. It provides an authoritative snapshot of the current state of journal publishing, and supplies policy-makers with the best available evidence on which to base decisions for the future.

A workshop was held in London on 14 November to present and explain the conclusions of the workshop;



consider key lessons to be drawn from it (particularly in relation to the development of UK public policy); and to lay the basis for a plan of action how such issues might be addressed in practice.

The event, chaired by Richard Charkin, Chief Executive of Macmillan Publishing Ltd, attracted some 60 participants drawn essentially from the ranks of publishers, researchers and learned societies. A brief synopsis of the event, and speaker presentations, are available from the RIN website, where the Baseline Report itself can also be found.

www.rin.ac.uk/data-scholarly-journals

New Report: How To Improve Public Access To Digital Content In Academic Libraries

In July 2006, the RIN published a report recommending new ways to give the public trouble-free access to digital content in academic libraries. It addresses issues raised in a 2004 report from the House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology.

In its response to the Select Committee, the Government had recognised that public access to journal articles and other content

is patchy at best. At the request of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the RIN assembled an expert group to advise on how best to improve the position.

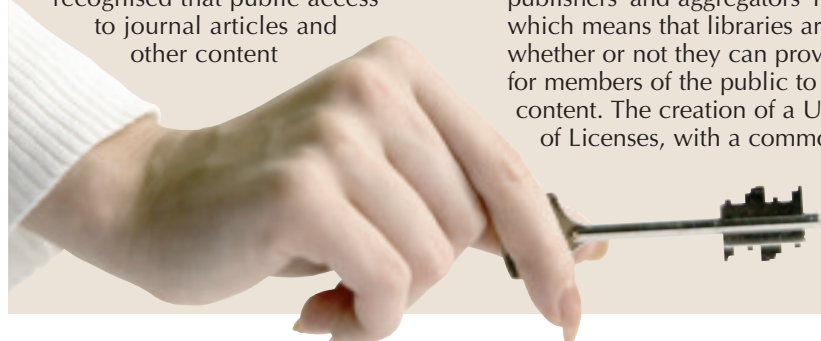
The RIN report identifies three key areas where improvements can be made. First, a major obstacle to easy access is the complex wording of publishers' and aggregators' licenses, which means that libraries are unclear whether or not they can provide access for members of the public to digital content. The creation of a UK Register of Licenses, with a common

agreement on phraseology, should therefore be created as a matter of urgency.

Second, universities and college face technical challenges in providing access for members of the public only to the resources where such access is allowed. Local solutions are wasteful, inconsistent, and difficult for users. A national approach is required.

Third, administrative and other issues arise when providing a managed environment for the public to gain access to digital resources. Universities and colleges need help at a UK level in order to cope with these issues. The report recommends that the Inspire programme should be funded to provide the UK level of support that is required.

www.rin.ac.uk/public-access
www.inspire.gov.uk/
Select Committee report:
tinyurl.com/4ewom



News from the Sector

- The **Arts and Humanities Research Council's** ICT Methods Network ran an expert seminar on 28 November on the sustainability of digital resources in the arts and humanities. A report of the seminar will be available shortly on their website (www.methodsnetwork.ac.uk). The AHRC has also commissioned a series of studies on the use made of digital materials and services by arts and humanities researchers, and a particularly interesting study of peer review and evaluation of digital resources. These will be available shortly on the AHRC website (www.ahrcict.rdg.ac.uk).
- The **Medical Research Council** has launched an initiative which aims to promote data sharing for collaborative research as the norm across all areas of MRC research, and to create a sustainable data-sharing infrastructure. Information about the initiative can be found on their website (tinyurl.com/ykqa69).

Welcoming Your Ideas

Hearing from you is integral to our sound functioning as an organisation. We always welcome honest feedback about any of our activities, in fact, it is encouraged! Equally, you may have some thoughts about what the RIN could do for your community – do let us know.

Future editions of this thrice-yearly newsletter may include opinion pieces: part of their purpose is to promote discussion. As above, do feel free to tell us what you think.



The RIN website (www.rin.ac.uk) will shortly be launching a re-design with a focus on two-way communication. We will be experimenting with an RIN Team Blog, and later a wiki space – both aim to encourage debate.

Here's how you can get in touch:

- Send an email to our Communications Officer – james.brown@rin.ac.uk, or pick up the phone – 020 7412 7759
- Comment on the new RIN Team Blog
- Our mailing address is on our website – rin.ac.uk/contact

We look forward to hearing from you.

CALLING ON LEARNED SOCIETIES...

The RIN is keen to engage in a dialogue with learned societies that have an interest in research information issues – and on that basis to explore how we might work together. We are planning a series of workshops (dates to be determined) where we would welcome representatives from societies across the scholarly spectrum. There will be three such events: for the arts/humanities/social sciences; the life/medical sciences; and the physical sciences. If you are interested, please contact James Brown – details on page 2.

RIN: In Brief

Researchers And Library Services

How do researchers use academic libraries and their services? What do they expect from them, now and in the future? The RIN, with support from the Consortium of Research Libraries (CURL), has commissioned a study to address these questions and to investigate the perception and understanding that researchers have of the wide range of services provided by libraries. The project incorporates detailed surveys of both researchers and libraries, and is due to be completed in February 2007. The ensuing report, designed to provide a base of evidence for higher education policy-makers, will be posted on the RIN website, where more information is also currently available

www.rin.ac.uk/researchers-use-libraries .

Extending The Coverage Of Online Catalogues

In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to make library catalogues more visible over the internet. However, there is still some way to go before the records relating to all the content that researchers value or need are available online. In particular, there remains a likely need for significant amounts of further retroconversion work to provide online digital catalogues to such content. The quantifying and evaluation of this need, and the setting of priorities to address it, is the rationale behind a recently-commissioned RIN study. This is expected to be completed in April 2007.

www.rin.ac.uk/retrocon

JSTOR Workshop

We were very pleased in September to host a workshop organised jointly with JSTOR, which was among the pioneers in building an extensive and reliable digital archive of scholarly journals. Presentations at the workshop considered issues such as how scholars and librarians have responded to the opportunities provided by JSTOR and similar initiatives; expectations for the future development of online information resources; and how research practice is changing in the digital environment. A report on the workshop, along with the presentations, is available at the RIN website. We are continuing discussions with JSTOR on how we can help with feeding in suggestions for the development of their collections and services.

www.rin.ac.uk/JSTOR-workshop

Research Funders' Policies

We shall shortly be publishing the report of a study which provides a comparative overview of how different groups of funders of research in the UK expect the researchers they support to manage and provide access to the information outputs from their research. The study looks at the policies and practice of a selection of around 25 of the largest research funders across the public, voluntary and private sectors including all the Research Councils, and a selection of universities, Government Departments, research charities, and industrial organisations. The report points to the need for policy development in a number of areas, and for more co-ordination across a range of bodies.

www.tinyurl.com/yhsmkw