

Research Information Network CONSULTATIVE GROUP FOR LIBRARIANSHIP AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

NOTE FROM THE FIRST MEETING – 2 FEBRUARY 2006

Action points in red italics

Present:

Jean Sykes (Chair) (London School of Economics)
Andrew Booth (University of Sheffield)
Jackie van Bueren (Research Information Network)
Stéphane Goldstein (Research Information Network)
Ann-Marie James (University of Birmingham)
Michael Jubb (Research Information Network)
Cédric Laizé (Centre for Ecology & Hydrology)
William Kilbride (Archaeological Data Service)
Peter Morgan (University of Cambridge)
Norman Paton (University of Manchester)
Elizabeth Shepherd (University College London)
Stephen Smith (University of York)

Apologies

Phil Bradley (freelance)
Janet Peters (Cardiff University)

1. Welcome

The chair welcomed members to this first meeting of the Consultative Group; members then introduced themselves.

2. Nature and role of consultative groups (*paper RIN/LIS/06/01*)

The chair introduced proceedings by stressing that this was essentially a scene-setting meeting. Future meetings would focus less on reporting back than on discussions aimed at influencing emerging projects and initiatives, to allow for the development of the group's key role as initiator and conveyor of ideas. It would be crucial to ensure that members feel a sense of ownership of the RIN's agenda, notably by providing their expertise and judgement about how the RIN might add value as a strategic and co-ordinatory body. At a practical level, members noted the suggestions that (i) they might propose specific points for discussion in advance of meetings, (ii) the RIN's web presence could be developed into an interactive networking resource, and (iii) they might contribute occasional opinion pieces for the website.

Terms of reference: the ToR reflect the importance of engagement with the research community. In this light, members agreed with the proposal that they should serve as a conduit for their respective communities or peer groups, thereby allowing for two-way communication between the RIN and its stakeholders. In the first instance, members agreed to act as an RIN channel, as appropriate, for a varied range of networks with which they are involved, of which:

▶ *All to reflect on how they might contribute to the development of the RIN's programme of work.*

▶ *All to begin disseminating RIN information, as appropriate, to the listed networks.*

▶ *Stéphane Goldstein to modify the ToR in the light of members' comments.*

- ▶ National Council on Archives (representing both users and practitioners) – *Elizabeth Shepherd*;
- ▶ Forum for Archives and Records Management Education and Research (FARMER) – *Elizabeth Shepherd*;
- ▶ Archives and Records Management Research Network (ARMReN) – *Elizabeth Shepherd*;
- ▶ Forum on Information Standards in Heritage – *William Kilbride*;
- ▶ Geospatial Working Group (a subset of JISC’s JCS, of which Jean Sykes is a member) – *William Kilbride*;
- ▶ CURL Research Support Taskforce – *Anne-Marie Jame*;
- ▶ British Business School Librarians’ Group – *Anne-Marie James*;
- ▶ BBSRC Data Sharing Policy Working Group (which mirrors similar groups in other Research Councils, and whose work on standard-setting for publicly-funded research data outputs is highly relevant to the RIN’s agenda on digital content) – *Norman Paton*;
- ▶ University Medical Librarians’ Group – *Peter Morgan*;
- ▶ Health Libraries Group – *Peter Morgan*;
- ▶ NHS Libraries and Knowledge Development Network (LKDN, with which the RIN has already established links) – *Peter Morgan*;
- ▶ Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) Environmental Informatics Programme – *Cédric Laizé*;
- ▶ British Computer Society (as an instance of possible interaction with the private sector) – *Stephen Smith*.

At an international level, there could also be scope for networking with the Council for European Information Services and Libraries.

Members noted that the RIN could make financial resources available to support networking activities initiated by the Consultative Groups, such as the running of workshops.

In discussion, members raised the following:

- ▶ The scope of the Consultative Groups, as set out in the ToR, should appear more future-proof, by conveying the sense that, in a rapidly-evolving digital world, new types of information source are constantly being developed.
- ▶ Similarly, the ToR should reflect the role of the RIN in relation to horizon-scanning and emerging activities.
- ▶ The scope of the ToR should make a reference to archival holdings as one of the information sources.

In addition, it was suggested that the commercial sector, which is a huge and variegated player in the R&D landscape, should clearly be included of the RIN’s remit. This is certainly the case, although members acknowledged the difficulty of finding interlocutors in an environment where information research outputs are subject to commercial consideration. Members noted

that the ongoing RIN study on funders' policies and practices would – hopefully – yield useful information on commercial sector practices. Members were also reminded that the RIN has an indirect interface to the sector through the links that many Research Councils have with private industry.

The ToR would be modified accordingly, but members were reminded that, when drafting general material such as this, it is difficult to find a descriptive language that meets the aspirations or preferences of the full range of RIN stakeholders.

Expansion in membership: it was agreed that the Consultative Group could benefit from the membership of an individual representing library and information science as an academic discipline, as distinct from its service provider function.

► *Stéphane Goldstein to approach the British Association for Information & Library Education and Research, to seek a nomination to the Group.*

3. RIN Strategic Plan (paper RIN/LIS/06/02)

Members were invited to provide some general views on the document.

Some members were surprised that the Plan does not make any reference to the research assessment exercise, which could have been usefully mentioned under aim 6, relating to research outputs. For instance, digital technologies increasingly allow for new ways of maximising impact (e.g. Google Scholar), with blurring of the distinction, in impact terms, between published and non-published outputs – as is implicitly recognised by the importance attributed to e-content.

It was also felt that there is lack of clarity, at this stage, about the shape of the RIN's proposed framework (under aim 1) for research information infrastructure. It was acknowledged that this remains largely to be defined; the Consultative Groups would play an important role in helping to shape the framework, and it would be appropriate for them to view their future work in the context of the process to develop this framework.

Given this, it was assumed that the framework would, in all likelihood and of practical necessity, focus on a number of priority areas. Members were advised that the framework is not intended to form a national strategy or plan. Instead, it should (i) identify key issues to be addressed, (ii) give an indication of how these might be addressed, and (iii) provide a structure/environment in which a wide range of information providers can relate to what is being done by other stakeholders and partners (the RIN's new initiative in relation to scholarly communications provides an example of this – see below).

Finally, it was suggested that the RIN might address the difficult challenge of reconciling the imperative of ensuring public access to publicly-funded research information outputs with the requirements of intellectual property.

4. Director's report (paper RIN/LIS/06/03)

<p>There was no time to consider the whole report; the meeting focused on two issues.</p>	
<p><u>Resource discovery</u>: members noted that, in addition to digital search and navigation resources, it is important to remember the continuing need for traditional cataloguing and retroconversion work for printed material – in some areas, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, there is still a large amount to be accomplished in this vein. The other Consultative Groups would provide their own perspectives on how well their own communities are served by resource discovery services.</p>	
<p><u>Scholarly communications</u>: members noted the main output from the RIN-sponsored scholarly communications meeting held on 30 January; key stakeholders such as publishers, librarians and Research Councils are working together to produce an agreed description of the broad functions that form part of the overall scholarly communications process. This would serve as basis for a co-ordinated, collaborative programme of work to obtain a better understanding of these functions in a changing digital environment, in order to assist in the development of more effective public policy in the UK.</p>	

5. Collaborative collection management and storage (paper RIN/LIS/06/04)

<p><u>Collaborative collection management</u>: this represents a common sense approach, albeit one which can only work effectively in specific circumstances, where the research community is relatively small and cohesive and information resources are widely distributed – although academics are not always happy to see the disappearance of material from their home institutions. CCM is closely associated with the need for good discovery services, to establish the location of distributed collections.</p> <p>Members asked about the role of learned societies in this context. Members noted that the RIN has been in contact with learned society librarians, who are showing a particular interest in collaborative storage.</p>	
<p><u>Collaborative storage</u>: members noted how a solution that was originally intended to overcome long-running problems of shelf space is also offering the prospect of a centrally-co-ordinated system that guarantees access to and preservation of little-used resources and enhances the service provided to the research community at a national level.</p> <p>Members commented that, to be effective, here too such a service would have to overcome the cultural barriers of academics reluctant to see the off-site relocation of their research resources. This highlights the importance of engagement with users and sensitivity to their preferences – and the danger of an approach that is overly supply-led.</p> <p>Funding issues are also an important factor. Members noted that the establishment of a national system of this kind would require significant investment from sources such as the Higher Education funding bodies; and much of the savings resulting from such investment would arise through reducing or eliminating the need for future capital expenditure on additional storage in many institutions across the country. Members reflected on the relative</p>	

costs of storing and digitising books. The cost of digitisation is difficult to estimate; Google, for instance, is not providing financial information on its Book Search initiative – which, in any case, is focused on access rather than preservation.

Members asked whether there exists any national system for libraries to register their desire to dispose of material and check whether copies are available elsewhere. Members noted that such checks are made routinely but informally, and that any structured national system would be impractical to put in place.

6. Digital content (paper RIN/LIS/06/05)

Members noted that some Research Councils take an active interest (albeit relatively recently in some cases) in the issue of management of the digital data generated by their funded research. Although some Research Councils, such as ESRC, issue clear guidelines in this area, by and large digital data is not subject to any sort of overall regulation. The RIN has just started working with the JISC, CCLRC and the e-Science Programme to devise fundamental principles and guidelines relating to the management of such data – this initiative will be extended to other stakeholders soon.

Members agreed that it would be opportune to identify examples of good practice in data management. The current RIN study on funders' policies and practice¹ should provide some useful pointers in this respect.

Members enquired whether this work concerned digital archives as well. They were advised that, initially, the focus would be on data in its usage as a tool for the research community. This is an area of work where the RIN, notably through its interface with Research Councils, is more likely to have an impact than would be the case with archival material.

7. Other business

There was none.

Next meeting: Thursday 4 May 2006, 10:30 to 13:00 (with a sandwich lunch served at 13:00) at the British Library

¹ See <http://www.rin.ac.uk/?q=policy-and-practice-on-management-of-research-outputs>