



RIN Consultative Group for Librarianship and Information Sciences

NOTE FROM THE FOURTH MEETING – 21 FEBRUARY 2007

Action points in italics

Present:

Jean Sykes (Chair) (London School of Economics)
James Brown (Research Information Network)
Stéphane Goldstein (Research Information Network)
Michael Jubb (Research Information Network)
Peter Morgan (University of Cambridge)
Janet Peters (Cardiff University)
Elizabeth Shepherd (University College London)
Steve Wood (Liverpool John Moores University)

Apologies

Andrew Booth (University of Sheffield)
Phil Bradley (freelance)
Ann-Marie James (University of Birmingham)
Cédric Laizé (Centre for Ecology & Hydrology)
William Kilbride (City of Glasgow Museum Service)
Norman Paton (University of Manchester)
Stephen Smith (University of York)

1. Minutes of the meeting of 12 October 2006 (*paper RIN/LIS/07/01*)

These were agreed.

2. Matters arising

- [from matters arising, meeting of 12 October] Members noted the view from the RIN Advisory Board that, given the organisation's limited resource and the need to prioritise its activities, researchers and LIS professionals in the **commercial sector** should not, for the present, be considered as prime stakeholders for the RIN. However, there is value in engaging with individuals from the sector if appropriate opportunities arise. Accordingly, the Group welcomed Stephen Smith's efforts to develop links with the BT library.
- [from item 7, meeting of 12 October] Members noted the formal setting up of the RIN's **Research Communications Group**. Its membership is not complete, and it particularly needs to include more researchers.
- [from item 9, meeting of 12 October] Janet Peters reported that Cardiff University is not seeking further involvement with the [CASPAR](#) project at the moment, and that consequently there is no information to convey.

- *All to reflect on identifying possible members for the Research Communications Group.*

3. Group membership

In the light of his recent appointment at the [Information Commissioner's Office](#), Steve Wood is leaving the Group. He was thanked for his contribution to the development of its agenda, and it was agreed that RIN could usefully keep in

contact with him, particularly in view of any future activities relating to freedom of information (see below). RIN had already approached BAILER to seek its nomination for an individual to replace him; a name is expected from them soon.

Phil Bradley has been unable to attend any of the Group's meetings to date; it was suggested that he may wish to reconsider his position as a member.

- *RIN to contact Phil Bradley to enquire whether he wishes to remain as Group member.*

3. Freedom of information (FoI) and research information (*oral*)

As agreed at the last meeting, RIN circulated a questionnaire on FoI to all Consultative Groups. However, the number of returned questionnaires had been disappointingly low.

What responses there were to the questionnaire suggested a **low awareness and little use of FoI by the research community**, perhaps partly because of the relative novelty of the concept in the UK. There were mixed views about feasibility or desirability of gathering information about the use of FoI or organising training for researchers in this area. There had also been some scepticism expressed at the Life Sciences Consultative Group, where some suggested that benefits could be derived from a level of information restriction, for instance with regard to ethical considerations in data retrieval.

Initiatives such as [mySociety](#) are helping to raise awareness, and there are opportunities provided for researchers in cases where official or public bodies decide to release large quantities of information, e.g. [Ofcom](#) making available its data on location of mobile phone masts.

Steve Wood reported on some of his recent activities:

- attendance at a meeting at the National Library of Wales on social science researchers' use of FoI – there was some interest from that quarter;
- early gathering of evidence from peer review journals about explicit use of FoI; there are growing opportunities for researchers.

Other relevant developments were also noted:

- British Academy conference held last year for the benefit of historians, led by Peter Hennesy – who could be a useful contact;
- ESRC has been working with various stakeholders, especially in Government, on developing a UK data strategy.

The Group generally felt that an **awareness-raising workshop** could be useful. It was agreed that such an event should be addressed to a multidisciplinary audience (although it is understood that FoI is liable to be of greater interest to researchers in disciplines such as social science and history) and could address such questions as:

- the use of FoI as a research tool;
- sharing and comparing experiences of such use across research areas;
- identifying actions that could help researchers make better use of FoI (e.g. through some sort of methodological toolkit);
- the role of FoI officers in universities.

Any such RIN workshop would need to build on the sort of

- *RIN to explore with other groups whether they might wish to be associated with a workshop.*
- *All to take the opportunity, if they see fit, to respond to the Government's [consultation](#) on changing the FoI fees regime.*

initiative indicated above. It was felt that, in spite of the possibility of introduction of a more restrictive fees regime during 2007, a workshop need not be organised until late 2007 or early 2008, to allow for maximum preparation time – although in the meantime the Government may well implement a more restrictive fees regime.

4. **RIN report on researchers and discovery services: taking forward the conclusions** (paper RIN/LIS/07/02)

The Group reflected on the questions raised in the cover paper. The gap between discovery and access is being addressed in a number of ways, notably through moves towards open access. There is only limited scope for any RIN initiatives in this area, but RIN-commissioned case-studies might examine how individual libraries are dealing with barriers to access.

Case studies might also be a useful way of researching the **gaps in provision of discovery services** identified in the study, focusing on some specific disciplines. There is a need to draw a distinction between (i) gaps in provision of discovery services themselves (e.g. in coverage of foreign language materials) and (ii) poor availability of back-runs of online journals. Help with the identification of potential case study disciplines is something that might be best left to the other Consultative Groups, with their lines of communication to the various research communities.

Blogs are increasingly proving useful as a supplementary tool in some disciplines as a means of presenting information, and also for gauging opinion (important in areas such as politics research) and recording comment. The study pointed to the low importance of blogs as a discovery tools, but this is an area where habits are changing quickly. Again, case studies could be useful here, and the Research Communications Group has expressed an interest in the management and curation of social networking outputs as a source of information.

In relation to **training and development**, members underlined the importance of critical evaluation skills for researchers when appraising results of their search strategies. The development of such skills, at appropriate times in the course of researchers' careers, could be an important role for librarians. It was noted that: 'training' is not necessarily the best term to describe this; in order not to put off researchers, it may be better to envisage the function as, for instance, the targeted provision of advice. The Group felt that the conclusions of report should not necessarily be taken at face value, and that there is a continuing role for librarians regarding skills development for researchers.

□ *RIN to present this paper to the other Consultative Groups.*

□ *RIN to consider the possibility of undertaking empirical work around the information outputs of social networking.*

5. **Overview of forthcoming RIN projects** (paper RIN/LIS/07/03)

This was noted without comment.

5a. **RIN project on training of researchers in research information methodologies and tools** (paper RIN/LIS/07/04)

The Group expressed its satisfaction at the project specification. Members noted the usefulness of Andrew Booth's well-documented review of recent research/survey work on training

□ *RIN to appoint contractor to undertake the study around*

of researchers about research information methodologies and tools.

mid-March.

5b. RIN project on finding aids for collections of objects and artefacts (paper RIN/LIS/07/05)

The Group noted that William Kilbride has commented on the outline specification, and his views had been taken on board. RIN has been in touch with stakeholders such as MLA. Members expressed their surprise that such a systematic and wide ranging survey, particularly from the perspective of researchers, had not been undertaken in this area before. It was suggested that this is likely to be an ambitious study and gap analysis because of the widespread and disparate nature of relevant resources.

- ❑ *RIN to issue call for proposals in the near future*

5c. RIN project on publication and quality assurance of research data outputs (paper RIN/LIS/07/06)

Again, this was recognised as a very ambitious, as well useful and timely project. However, members felt that the study would benefit from some re-casting, from two perspectives....

- ❑ One the one hand, its scope would benefit from broadening, notably by explicitly covering (i) capture of data, and (ii) curation and preservation.
- ❑ Conversely, it might be scaled down by focusing on its normative, empirical aspects. This in itself would produce an important body of evidence which could be used as a basis for a follow-up study that would take forward the formative issues, i.e. what needs to be done (including questions about how best to assess data standards). This suggestion reflects the views expressed at the recent meeting of the Research Communications Forum.

- ❑ *RIN to re-assess the project specification in the light of the Group's comments.*

6. Review of the RIN (paper RIN/LIS/07/07)

The RIN had recently completed its self-assessment, as a prelude to the review. Members were advised that the consultant, Alan Brickwood, may seek to interview individual Group members as part of the review.

- ❑ *RIN to circulate the self-assessment document at the earliest opportunity.*

7. Communications issues (oral)

Members were asked to comment on aspects of functionality on the RIN website, notably their use of [RSS feeds](#), their interest in the Executive team blog and their willingness to offer comments on blog entries – in the latter case, it was noted that blogs take a long time to become established, and views from users may not be forthcoming until a while after the blogging practice has been established.

Members pointed to the usefulness of linking up with the growing community of library blogs.

- ❑ *All to reflect on and provide views on the RIN Executive Team blog.*

8. RIN update (paper RIN/LIS/07/08)

Salient points highlighted from the update document:

- ❑ Key issues from the **Advisory Board awayday**, particularly

the need to focus activities, and to draw out the distinctiveness of RIN's role as an agency that sits astride the library and researcher communities. Noted complementarity between evidence-gathering, observatory role (often bottom-up) and advocacy/guidance role (often top-down) – the statement on public policy and scholarly communications is an example of the latter role.

- ❑ Ongoing project on **retroconversion**, due for completion around Easter.
- ❑ **Collaborative storage**: phase 1 of the initiative is now under way. Advisory board about to be created to oversee (but not manage) phase 1, including the preparation of the specification for phase 2.
- ❑ Sally Curry has recently taken up post as **Collections Project Officer**, jointly appointed by RIN and CURL, to take forward what has been achieved to date in CCM – notably building on CoFoR.
- ❑ **Researchers and libraries project**: this is nearly complete, based on extensive survey work, focus group meetings and log analyses at UCL. Workshop to take place in late April or early May.

There was a question about the RIN report on **research funders' policy and practice** – is this being quietly buried following its much delayed by low-key publication? The report provides a useful snapshot about current state of play, but it has not fulfilled its role as an early 'quick win' for the RIN; moreover, the fieldwork was carried out a long time ago and has, to an extent, been superseded by events such as the publication of the [RCUK position statement](#).

9. Other business

RIN has built good relationships with [JSTOR](#), which has been discussing the possibility of running a second UK workshop, in Scotland, in collaboration with [SCURL](#). A further issue is how UK researchers could provide input and ideas to JSTOR to help them develop their service. LIS and AHS groups might assist by providing views of where gaps lie, e.g. in non-English language material.

- ❑ *RIN to provide a list of areas of JSTOR coverage, to allow Consultative Groups to consult with their respective communities about gaps in provision.*

Next meeting: Friday 25 May, 10:30 – 13:00