



RIN Consultative Group for Librarianship and Information Sciences

NOTE FROM THE FIFTH MEETING – 25 MAY 2007

Action points in italics

Present:

Jean Sykes (Chair) (London School of Economics)
 Andrew Booth (University of Sheffield)
 James Brown (Research Information Network)
 Stéphane Goldstein (Research Information Network)
 William Kilbride (City of Glasgow Museum Service)
 Peter Morgan (University of Cambridge)
 Norman Paton (University of Manchester)
 Janet Peters (Cardiff University)
 Elizabeth Shepherd (University College London)
 Stephen Smith (University of York)

Apologies

Paul Clough (University of Sheffield)
 Ann-Marie James (University of Birmingham)
 Michael Jubb (Research Information Network)
 Cédric Laizé (Centre for Ecology & Hydrology)

1. Minutes of the meeting of 21 February 2006 (*paper RIN/LIS/07/09*)

These were agreed.

2. Matters arising (*oral*)

- [from item 2, meeting of 21 February] Members will try to identify researchers in the arts and humanities for RIN's **Research Communications Group**. From a social sciences perspective, one name suggested was Peter Halfpenny – Director of the E-Social Science Centre, in Manchester. Identifying female members would be particularly helpful.
- [from item 3, meeting of 21 February] **Membership**: it was noted that Paul Clough is the new BAILER nominee on the Group; he replaces Steve Wood. Conversely, Phil Bradley has now left the Group.
- [from item 4, meeting of 21 February] RIN is looking into the possibility of commissioning research, during 2008, on **social networking** as a research information resource. Members noted that Andrew Booth, at [ScHARR](#), is currently trying to obtain ESRC funding to investigate the use of blogs. The British Library has also commissioned a project into “the researcher of the future,” looking at school students’ and undergraduates’ information seeking working practices and the way in which this might affect their behaviour as researchers in the future.
- [from item 5a, meeting of 21 February] The study on **training of researchers** in information methodologies is due to be completed next month. It is a largely empirical exercise, which will require a follow-up project looking at the policy and practical implications.
- [from item 5b, meeting of 21 February] Members were

- **RIN Executive** to circulate details about the *Research Communications Group*
- **All** to suggest the names of arts and humanities researchers for the *Research Communications Group*
- **RIN Executive** to keep group updated about *BL* study.

disappointed about the failure to identify a contractor to undertake RIN's **study on finding aids for objects and artefacts**. A new invitation to tender would be issued shortly, following discussions with organisations liable to undertake this work. A lesson from this exercise is that RIN might consider giving much more advance notice of its intention to run projects, perhaps using contact lists from such organisations as JISC, SCONUL and [UCISA](#).

3. Freedom of information and research information (oral)

Elizabeth Shepherd agreed to help frame an outline scope for the proposed **awareness-raising workshop**. Concern was voiced about the risk of low interest from the research community; This could be alleviated by partnering with the ESRC and AHRC; involving FoI contact officers within universities; involving the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO); and inviting journalists (e.g. from THES). Steve Wood had already indicated that he should be able to provide a speaker from the ICO. Getting interest outside of the "RIN family" would be useful.

A question was raised about mission creep: is this an appropriate activity for RIN? This activity seems to be about more than research information methodology – should caution be exercised? However, members generally agreed that this initiative is indeed about facilitating researchers' access to information, and therefore falls within the RIN's remit; it may be a niche area for RIN, which has not been properly explored.

- *Elizabeth Shepherd to draw up scoping document by mid-July. Once that's done, to be circulated to group for comment, and then soundings can be taken with RCs and media, e.g. THES.*

4. Researchers' use of academic libraries – next steps following the RIN-CURL report (paper RIN/LIS/07/10)

Members started by considering the executive summary. Comments as follows:

- **Balance between support for teaching and for research:** would it be possible to get a breakdown of views in this respect between research-intensive universities and others?
- Problem of **researchers' understanding of what services libraries provide:** this results largely from failures in communications, and libraries might be less modest in highlighting what they do. Fostering an improved researcher-librarian dialogue could be an important advocacy role for the RIN. Conversely, librarians too need a better understanding of what researchers actually want given their current research practices.
- It might be interesting to look at **library purchasing patterns for research textbooks** (as opposed to teaching/course material). There are likely to be different patterns of usage between research students and tenured researchers; the latter are more likely to purchase textbooks.
- Libraries need to develop their **research support policies**.
- Members noted the development of the [HAERVI](#) project as a means of accessing electronic journals remotely from other institutions; this is due to report shortly.
- Members noted recent CURL/[RUGIT](#) response to a HEFCE call for expressions of interest, under its **shared services**

initiative, proposing a feasibility study for a nationally managed network for research data, taking account notably of the life-cycle of data and the need for well-grounded procedures for managing such data. A decision is expected in June.

- The relevance of the proposed **UK research reserve** was underlined as a means of strategically managing availability of printed material – in the first instance, low-use journals.

The Group then considered some practical steps for advancing the conclusions of the report – although its sheer breadth does not make this an easy task. It was generally agreed that the study represents a wake-up call for librarians to take heed of researchers’ needs, and underlines the importance of bridging the clear gap with the research community.

- There is a case for a **forum**, with researcher involvement, to consider how librarians can meet such needs, current or future (e.g. in relation to data management). Perhaps such a forum could consider case studies, illustrating good practice regarding researcher-librarian interaction. However, there is a risk that such an initiative would simply preach to the converted. Moreover, the report itself provides much empirical evidence pointing to such interaction (and the lack of them).
- The development of a **data librarian role** (as co-ordinated through the DISC-UK collaboration) as an exemplar of novel library-researcher interaction. Descriptions of such initiatives, once identified, could form part of a toolkit for dissemination.
- Research Council grant conditions may require **deposit and effective management of data** – but to what extent can compliance with this be secured? In the life sciences, there is considerable confusion about how/where data is stored, so there a strong case for providing a light-touch service that could help ensure minimum standards for metadata management and accessibility. The possibility should be envisaged of defining good practice in selected areas, and the role that librarians might play in such an area might be considered too. The CURL/RUGIT proposal, if successful, could provide some answers in this respect.
- The idea of a **RIN-led expert seminar** to consider practical ways forward was noted. Members suggested that, for this to be successful, it should be very focused in nature – otherwise it would be difficult to identify courses of action. Evidently, communications issues would need to figure prominently on the agenda.
- The CURL autumn conference might provide a timely opportunity to secure high-level librarian commitment to delivering a practical course of action.

Other relevant initiatives were mentioned: UKOLN’s [eBank](#) project, and the CURL-SCONUL Taskforce on e-Research.

- *RIN Executive to start preparations for the suggested expert seminar, taking on board ideas raised by members; then to seek views on possible participants at such an event.*

5. **RIN report on extending the coverage of library catalogues** (*paper RIN/LIS/07/11*)

Members noted the draft conclusions of the report, and expressed disappointment (but not surprise) at the **difficulty of gauging the impact of retroconversion**. There is a case for

developing methodologies for evaluating such impact, but it is far from clear that it will be possible to obtain the evidence to back this up. It had to be acknowledged that there may not be a good way of establishing priorities for a retroconversion programme. Is there any point in asking questions that cannot be properly answered?

In light of this, members reflected on whether the better approach might not be to provide those libraries with the largest collections with an appropriate sum of money (say £20m), to allow them to complete their retroconversion work over a set period of time in a way that they see fit. It was acknowledged that such an approach lacks sophistication, but has the merit of allowing libraries to take action quickly – although it runs counter to what is proposed in the report.

6. Extending JSTOR coverage (paper RIN/LIS/07/12)

Members concurred that in many areas, not surprisingly, JSTOR is focused heavily on US material. In disciplines such as archaeology, the challenge is to present more local and specialist publications that are not easy to find.

Members agreed on the need to boost health and medicine content, which is weak at the moment. This could be developed as a separate JSTOR category. There is a particular case for covering health policy.

Other areas where coverage might be extended include library and information sciences, and Far Eastern studies – a growing area, as identified at the RIN-JSTOR workshop last September.

At the same time, duplication with other digitised journal services (for instance, in law) should be avoided: JSTOR should focus on unique titles. There is no point in trying to plug every gap just for the sake of ensuring even coverage; rather, further JSTOR content development should be determined by likely demand from users.

7. RIN programme for 2007-08 (paper RIN/LIS/07/13)

There is a big challenge in securing RIN role in knowledge translation, based on empirical evidence – both with regard to RIN's reports and those of other organisations. Members agreed about the need for greater focus on advocacy work, including for relevant work undertaken by organisations other than RIN.

There are dangers in RIN's work being held up owing to lack of resources or ability to take forward the body of evidence so far garnered. These issues are being taken up in the RIN's forward look, to complement the RIN review.

Members agreed that there is a case for a joint meeting of all Consultative Groups, as long as this is well-focused. The RIN-Research Council Liaison Group and the Research Communications Group could usefully be invited to this too.

- *All to feed their views in response to the request from the consultants undertaking the review of the RIN.*

8. Review of HEFCE funding for research libraries (oral)

Members noted that the HEFCE board will take a decision about this future funding in July.

9. Communications update *(oral)*

Members noted current developments:

- The team blog is progressing well; this is now a credible source of interesting, valuable and authoritative information. RIN is considering the possibility of asking for occasional guest postings. Increasing use of the blog was reported: comments are also starting to trickle in from various sources and members agreed to look at it regularly.
- Explaining the rationale and use of features such as RSS is not easy – the use of videos may help.
- The RIN wiki is in process of being set up – it is almost ready for preliminary experimental use.
- Collaborative collection management project: there has been some difficulty with the cocoman.ac.uk domain name, with UKERNA specifically.
- RIN has been getting much coverage in *CILIP Update* recently, including an upcoming feature on the researchers and libraries report.

10. Other business

Dismay was expressed about the AHRC's decision to stop funding the **Arts and Humanities Data Service**; this could lead to loss of expertise, loss of data, and have an adverse impact on JISC-funded project in digitisation notably. Members felt that the AHRC had not thought strategically, and there was concern about a perceived lack of transparency in reaching the decision. It was acknowledged that Consultative Groups may not, formally, be able to do very much – but individuals were urged to write to the AHRC Chief Executive to express their views. Group wishes for its dismay to be expressed to the RIN Advisory Board and AHS Group, regarding

- ***RIN Executive to convey the Group's feelings to the Advisory Board and the Arts / Humanities / Social Sciences Consultative Group.***

Next meeting: Monday 15 October, 10:30 – 13:00