



## RIN Consultative Group for Life Sciences and Medicine NOTE FROM THE NINTH MEETING – 6 JULY 2009

*Action points in italics*

### **Present:**

John Coggins (Chair) (University of Glasgow)  
George Banting (University of Bristol)  
Nathalie Cornee (MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology)  
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)  
Richard Grant (Faculty of 1000)  
Dorothy McCaughan (University of York)  
Oliver de Peyer (MRC National Institute for Medical Research)  
Tim Rapley (University of Newcastle)  
Patricia Spoor (University of Leeds)  
Chris Taylor (European Bioinformatics Institute)

### **Apologies:**

Fiona Beyer (University of Newcastle)  
Chris Garforth (University of Reading)  
Chris Hyde (University of Birmingham)  
Michael Jubb (RIN)  
Emily Lyons (Imperial College London)  
Howard Meltzer (University of Leicester)  
Andrew Pitt (University of Glasgow)  
Jennifer Rohn (MRC Laboratory for Molecular Cell Biology)  
David Shotton (University of Oxford)  
Vince Smith (Natural History Museum)

### **1. Minutes of the Consultative Groups joint meeting, 30 April – 1 May 2009 (paper RIN/LSM/09/01)**

This was noted.

### **2. Matters arising (oral)**

*UK research journal subscription service:*

Members agreed about the strength and relevance of the idea of such service, as suggested in the ‘winning’ proposal from the recent joint Consultative Group meeting. In seeking to take this forward, it would be important to engage notably with the HE Funding Councils; there were lessons to be drawn from the setting up of the [Scottish HE Digital Library \(SHEDL\)](#), for which the engagement with the Scottish Funding Council occurred arguably rather late in the day. There was case for speaking about this to HEFCE Chief Executive Alan Langlands.

It was felt that the Scottish example provided an interesting precedent, but it was recognised that reproducing this across the UK would be very challenging, with 100+ universities in England, compared to just 13 in Scotland.

***RIN Executive Team to pursue discussions with JISC Collections, to formulate jointly a proposal for a possible project on a UK research journal subscription service.***

Moreover, the groundwork for SHEDL had already been laid north of the border through the collaborative approaches stemming from the successful research pooling arrangements – which are far less prevalent in England.

The Group suggested that the current difficult economic circumstances might offer opportunities for fruitful discussions with publishers regarding the setting up of innovative licensing arrangements that could provide them with stable returns on investment. Members noted with interest that it was Elsevier that took the initiative of approaching Research Councils with a view to setting up a common deal across all RC institute libraries.

*Other ideas:*

The Group noted that, other than the above ‘winning’ proposal, a range of useful ideas had been considered by the various breakout groups at the joint meeting. RIN should not lose sight of these, and members noted that the Executive Team was indeed developing a range of activities that draw upon several of the ideas mooted by the Groups. One such idea is explored under item 4.

### 3. RIN case studies in the life sciences (paper RIN/LSM/09/02)

The Group expressed much interested in the preliminary outline findings, and members felt that the report contained much to be alarmed about – although it was recognised that the behaviour that is identified was a reflection of the reality of researchers’ experiences, and that any remedial action would need to be founded on this reality.

The Group noted that the report says much about reciprocity and (un)willingness to share, particularly in environments other than researchers’ most local networks. This raises questions about incentives to share, and credit or recognition for doing so. Of course, there were variations across communities; in some areas, sharing clearly carried more kudos, and it was interesting to explore the reasons for this. These were not always clear, but cultural differences, associated with long-term behavioural change, were often likely to be a factor. Such change could in turn be influenced by the provision of support, advice, training/skilling initiatives...

Members identified with many of the findings, and agreed that they confirmed much anecdotal evidence, some of it going back many years. It was very useful therefore to have a solid body of evidence to substantiate such views.

Members noted that the first draft of the full report (50 pages + 200 pages of appendices) had now been produced. As soon as possible, input would be sought from the Group on the report’s conclusions and recommendations, particularly on how best to take them forward with relevant audiences in a way that reflected the complexity and heterogeneity of practice suggested by the report.

*John Coggins to bring the findings to the attention of Doug Kell, BBSRC Chief Executive.*

*RIN Executive Team to seek views asap from the Group regarding the full report’s conclusions and recommendations.*

**4. What's mine is mine: identifying individuals, tracking contributions, recognising value (paper RIN/LSM/09/03)**

This paper, based on one of the strands of discussion at the Consultative Groups awayday, seeks to highlight the challenges associated with improving the data sharing environment. A major premise was that unique persistent identifiers could play an important role in this respect, through dependable mechanisms for identifying both individuals and outputs (although the dangers of identity fraud were ever-present). In this context, the Group noted the British Library's active involvement in the setting up of an international joint data registration agency.

The Group agreed about the importance of measuring research outputs in the round, recognising the contributions and outputs of individuals as a whole, and not just journal articles – bearing in mind that such articles were not always the most appropriate way of conveying research results. A further premise, therefore, was the importance of crediting researchers; this was likely to produce a good response, because individuals wished have their work valued. This, the Group agreed, had implications for the way that research assessment was undertaken – a key issue for the future. But if the future shape of REF was to be influenced, methodologies, including metrics, needed to be developed to reflect the quality of non-journal research outputs, such as data.

The Group reflected on the possibility of turning the paper into a more widely-disseminated thinking piece, for instance in the form of as a briefing note or possibly an article.

*RIN Executive Team to liaise with Chris Taylor to explore how the paper might be turned into a document for wider dissemination, possibly involving further contributors.*

**5. Research data centres: national vs. institutional provision**

Chris Taylor presented the argument that the autonomous and localised development of institutional repositories, characterised by a fragmentation of the deposit infrastructure, could be detrimental to the effective curation of research data. Was there a need for a degree of national coordination, perhaps in the form of a registry or indexing service? But what prospect was there, realistically, for the development of any such national provision? It had to be borne in mind that institutional repositories were only just starting adequately to address the needs for e-journal deposition, let alone data.

The Group agreed that the development of a national e-theses repository might provide a model for a national service (see below, item 7).

**6. Reporting guidelines in peer review of health research studies – proposal from EQUATOR Network (paper RIN/LSM/09/04)**

The Group considered the outline proposal from the

*RIN Executive Team to write*

[EQUATOR Network](#), and there was a strong consensus among members that this was inadequate in its current form. It was felt that the scale and scope of the study was unclear; there was uncertainty about its focus too; might this be too narrow, and did the research have potentially wider applications? Was there actually much guidance to be investigated, other than the [CONSORT Statement](#)? It was suggested that the Cochrane Centre, or even the MRC, might be more appropriate than RIN as a source of funding for the work.

Members consented to examine a fuller version of the proposal, assuming such a document were readily available soon. However, given the scepticism expressed towards the outline, the Group could not be confident that even a fully worked-up proposal would justify such a level of RIN investment.

*to Iveta Simera, at the EQUATOR Network, to advise her of the Group's initial views and to enquire whether a fuller version of the proposal is available.*

## 7. RIN update (paper RIN/LSM/09/05)

Two forthcoming projects caught the Group's attention:

### *E-Theses:*

The Group recognised the potential usefulness of work in this area, and drew attention to the importance of disciplinary differences, and to the issue of legitimate reasons for delaying the deposit of e-theses – particularly apparent in the humanities and some social sciences.

RIN could investigate areas such as how e-theses might be used; conditions of access; formats; embargo periods; and, crucially, likely demand. It was suggested that, in the course of formulating its project, RIN could usefully contact the universities involved in the [EThOS](#) pilot. Members also drew an analogy between e-theses and Nature Preceding, inasmuch as they both reflected published research outputs that were not subject to full peer-review.

### *Transition models:*

Interest too was expressed in the prospective project on transition models in scholarly publishing. The Group suggested that there was a case for revisiting this area in a couple of years, to examine how change had taken place in practice.

## 8. Other business

Members were keen to commend RIN on the usefulness of its monthly e-news bulletin – although it was felt that this was currently over-long.

**Date of next meeting: date in November to be confirmed**