



RIN Consultative Group for Life Sciences and Medicine
NOTE FROM THE SEVENTH MEETING – 11 SEPTEMBER 2008

Action points in italics

Present:

John Coggins (Chair) (University of Glasgow)
Nathalie Cornée (MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology)
Stéphane Goldstein (RIN)
Catherine Gray (RIN)
Michael Jubb (RIN)
Howard Meltzer (University of Leicester)
Patricia Spoor (University of Leeds)
Chris Taylor (European Bioinformatics Institute)

Apologies:

George Banting (University of Bristol)
Chris Hyde (University of Birmingham)
Dorothy McCaughan (University of York)
Oliver de Peyer (MRC National Institute for Medical Research)
Tim Rapley (University of Newcastle)
Vince Smith (Natural History Museum)
David Shotton (University of Oxford)

Two new members were welcomed: Nathalie Cornée, from the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology – she replaces Kevin Hioms, who left the Group earlier in the summer; and Chris Taylor, from the European Bioinformatics Institute.

1. Minutes of the meeting of 25 April 2008 (paper RIN/LSM/08/05)

These were approved.

2. Matters arising (oral)

There were none.

3. Membership of the Consultative Group (paper RIN/LSM/08/06)

Members noted the increase in the Group's membership and the means deployed by the RIN Executive to identify additional active researchers, but recognised that advertising would now be necessary to bring the group's complement up to the previously agreed level of 18-20.

Areas where coverage remains weak include clinical research, plant biology, ecology, as well as representatives of such organisations such as [UK Biobank](#). Members suggested organisations that might provide names, e.g. the [NHS National Programme for Information Technology](#), the [EQUATOR Network](#), the [National Library for Health](#) (NHS Evidence), [Rothamsted Research](#) (Mike Beale was

→ *All to suggest names of individuals that RIN might approach.*

→ *Stéphane Goldstein to investigate the possibility of identifying potential Group members from the suggested organisations.*

mentioned). The Group asked whether, in addition, RIN might consider seeking individuals with a background in the commercial sector.

4. **Data management initiatives – coordinated approach to advocacy and policy development** (*paper RIN/LSM/08/07*)

The Group noted that the principal challenge for this proposed activity is to derive an action plan, for relevant agencies, from the rich variety of conclusions and recommendations stemming from recent initiatives in the area of data management, sharing and dissemination. In this context, it was recognised that the outputs of the current UKRDS feasibility study were likely to be particularly important, and that any RIN-led work should seek to complement this. Thus any action plan might most usefully focus on ‘upstream’ issues, relating to policy and strategy, especially taking a long-term view (which funding organisations often don’t), as opposed to the development of systems and infrastructure that will form much of the focus of the UKRDS report.

Members felt that **the context for this sort of work is truly international**, and this needs to be recognised – but must also be reconciled with RIN’s remit as a national organisation. Members reflected on whether there is a distinction to be drawn between knowledge and data; it was felt that whilst the knowledge base is international, the data environment is more fragmented.

Members also recognised the need to **understand what is meant by data** (raw data, derived data, interpretations...); this is important when drawing up guidance about what and how to disseminate, preserve and curate.

The Group agreed that this proposal is particularly challenging, and is likely to require sophisticated skills and an ability to identify how and where resources need to be deployed to ensure that action is taken where appropriate. Might some of the groundwork be undertaken by teams such as EBI? It was agreed that the RIN Executive could usefully draw advice from its various Consultative Groups, some of whose members might be drawn together in a working group if there was sufficient interest.

→ *RIN Executive Team to further consult with the other Consultative Groups.*

5. **RIN disciplinary case studies in the life sciences** (*paper RIN/LSM/08/08*)

The Group noted that the purpose of the study is to provide evidence, some of it behavioural, to HEIs and others to help them overcome barriers to improved researcher performance, regarding areas such as:

- discoverability of / access to information and data;
- facilitating the sharing of such information and data across disciplinary boundaries.

Steve Oliver, at the University of Cambridge (formerly

→ *RIN Executive Team to consider approaching the suggested individuals to provide an interdisciplinary perspective on the expert panel.*

Manchester) and Tom Kirkwood, at the University of Newcastle, have some expertise in the area of cross-disciplinarity and could be useful contacts; they might be approached to join the study's expert panel. The six UK Centres of Integrative Systems Biology (CISBs)¹ could also provide useful experiences in this vein.

6. Planning for RIN activities during 2009 (*paper RIN/LSM/08/09*)

The Group considered some ideas for the development of RIN's programme of activities during the course of 2009.

- ➔ One particularly challenging area of investigation might be the question of **how researchers' data can be set out and validated** when they are disseminated. The form that such data takes depends on whether their structure is determined by researchers themselves or by users. The needs and rewarding of data creators must be much better considered, at a very practical level, so as to get the most out of these creators. The Group suggested that some of the behavioural information stemming from the RIN's programme of case studies (see above) would address this.
- ➔ Interest was expressed in the **impact of REF** not just on researcher behaviour, but also on organisational change and performance management.
- ➔ Members recognised the need to press Research Councils to take forward the **information training agenda**. It was noted that BBSRC's newly appointed Director of Innovation and Skills, [Celia Caulcott](#), could be a useful contact.

➔ *Chris Taylor / RIN Executive to liaise with a view to presenting a paper at the next meeting to explore the possibility of a RIN project on the validation of research data.*

7. RIN update (*paper RIN/LSM/08/10*)

This was noted without discussion.

8. Other business

There was none.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 18 December 2008, 10:30 – 13:00

¹ The CISBs are located at the universities of [Edinburgh](#), [Manchester](#), [Newcastle](#), [Nottingham](#) and [Oxford](#), and at [Imperial College London](#).