



# RIN Consultative Group for Physical Sciences, Technology & Engineering

## NOTE FROM THE THIRD MEETING –12 JUNE 2007

*Action points in italics*

### Present:

Elaine Martin (Chair) (University of Newcastle)  
Dorje Brody (Imperial College)  
Simon Coles (University of Southampton)  
Stéphane Goldstein (Research Information Network)  
Robin Hankin (National Oceanographic Centre)  
Roger Hines (Sheffield Hallam University)  
Michael Jubb (Research Information Network)  
Keith Westhead (British Geological Survey)

### Apologies

Paul French (Imperial College)  
David Gavaghan (University of Oxford)  
Werner Hofer (University of Liverpool)  
Tong Sun (City University)  
Suresh Thennadil (University of Newcastle)

## 1. **Minutes of the meeting of 22 September 2006** (*paper RIN/PTE/07/01*)

These were agreed.

## 2. **Matters arising**

### Software (*from item 2.2*)

JISC and the [Digital Curation Centre](#) have recently initiated projects relating to the technical management of software. Also relevant is the RIN's newly commissioned project on data publication – software is a key element in this area. In this context, the RIN Executive has concluded that it is premature for it to undertake work specifically relating to software issues. It is likely that data publication project will raise questions relating to software that can be pursued subsequently.

### Persistent identifiers (*from item 2.3*)

The Life Sciences Consultative Group is particularly interested in exploring this area, and a workshop is currently in the early stages of preparation, at the initiative of a couple of members of that Group.

### General update

Bearing in mind the long interval between this and the last meeting, members were given a brief update on key RIN developments over the past few months, notably:

- the report on researchers' use of discovery services;
- the report on research funders' policies;
- the report on researchers and library services (see below);
- the consultation statement on principles for data stewardship (see below);
- the statement on scholarly communications and public

- ***RIN Executive to circulate further information to all Consultative Groups once the scope of the proposed event has been developed.***

policy objectives, signed up to by a variety of representative and public bodies and providing a framework for the development of more detailed policy and practice by the various stakeholders;

- the review of the RIN, the outcome of which will be presented to the RIN's funders in July; members expressed surprise at the amount of time taken to carry this out. The Group noted also the importance, as the RIN looks forward, of developing and implementing the empirical findings of the body of work undertaken to date.

### 3. Group membership

There was satisfaction about the nomination, by the Institute of Physics, of the Group's three newest members; a welcome was extended to Dorje Brody, present at the meeting. With the arrival of a mathematician and two physicists, the Group is now much more balanced. The importance of keeping the membership active and engaged was emphasised; if need be, additional members could be recruited to maintain momentum.

### 4. Researchers' use of academic libraries – next steps following the publication of the RIN-CURL report (*paper RIN/PTE/07/02*)

#### Introduction

Members noted that the study provides a solid evidence base on usage and possible developments of library services, as seen by researchers and librarians themselves. A particular point of interest is those areas where there is a dissonance of views between these two groups. In the sciences in particular, there is clearly an issue of visibility of library services. However, on the whole, researchers attach value to these services – the challenge is to translate this feeling into support for the development of the library function. The RIN now needs to look at how best to stimulate activity that will address the study's conclusions. In the first instance, there will be an expert seminar, in the autumn, to identify the key issues to develop; this can serve as a basis for the setting out of a practical roadmap.

#### Discussion

Members highlighted that many researchers are very unclear about the impact, for their own work, of top-slicing of university research budgets to fund research support functions; this could lead to suspicion on their part about any additional financial commitments to library services – especially bearing in mind the apparent disconnection between libraries and numerous researchers. This situation provides an additional argument for bridge-building between librarians and researchers. There is a need for a shift of mentality so that libraries are clearly perceived as vital services and no longer merely as buildings. To help this, for instance, librarians could develop their training role, to cover the increasingly complex information needs of researchers.

#### Data issues

There is a need also to clarify the relationship between librarianship and data management: what is the role for librarians there? Are libraries being squeezed out by in this

- ***RIN Executive to organise an expert seminar, in the autumn, to consider how best to take forward, in a practical sense, the conclusions of the study.***

area? Are they indeed the right place to provide data services? Should their role eschew data management in any form and instead focus on support and advice? On the other hand, librarians have much expertise in curation and preservation which could be valuable in a data management context.

Members noted the CURL/[RUGIT](#) initiative on shared services for data, in response to a recent HEFCE call for expressions of interest. But does this address cultural/social/political factors? This is the sort of area that RIN could usefully get involved in. There is a case for undertaking a mapping of existing data services.

#### *Local vs. national provision*

Members pointed also to a tension between data services provided locally and nationally; a balance needs to be achieved between the two. Local provision may not necessarily be as cost-effective as the data centre provision funded nationally by some Research Councils – but at the same time it may be that local repositories represent the easiest environment for researchers to deposit data. This highlights the importance of interoperability between local and national services.

#### *The role of journals*

Another factor is related to the need to subscribe to journals; there are precedents for libraries (e.g. Princeton) cancelling subscriptions, on the grounds that relevant information is now available free on the web for certain communities of researchers. What is the role for libraries if such trends develop? However, journals remain in a strong position, because (i) big deal agreements mean that libraries find it difficult to cancel subscriptions to particular titles; and (ii) even in disciplines (such as physics) with a tradition of use of e-repositories, there remains an incentive to publish in journals for research assessment purposes.

### **5. RIN-JISC-NERC study on publication and quality assurance of research data outputs – an update (*paper RIN/PTE/07/03*)**

The rationale and scope of the study were briefly presented. Members noted with interest the project's consideration of data as an impact measure. Data citation was deemed equally important.

- *All to comment on the project, particularly with views on which subject areas and interdisciplinary areas it might focus on.*

### **6. Data stewardship principles (*paper RIN/PTE/07/04*)**

The Group has seen and discussed an earlier version of this document, which could have an important awareness-raising role.

- *All to disseminate the consultation document within their respective communities.*

### **7. Proposed study on activities, costs and funding flows in the scholarly communications process (*paper RIN/PTE/07/05*)**

This study is intended to address the paucity of information and data relating to the costs implied in the scholarly communications process, and how they are being met (cash or kind). Members noted the need for a better evidence base to serve as a basis for policy development – although, inevitably,

the study will incorporate a forward-looking element too.

## 8. Meeting with physical sciences and engineering learned societies (paper RIN/PTE/07/06)

Members noted that the broad purpose of the series of meetings with learned societies is to engage in two-way communications: to help them develop views on research information issues, and to assist the RIN with bridge-building with the research community.

Members asked whether the [ALPSP](#) could be asked to help promote a dialogue with societies. This is quite possible, but the RIN is keen to engage not just with publishing arms of the societies – and there is the danger of any dialogue being hijacked by the contentious open access debate.

It was suggested that the Institute of Physics has a very large database of referees, which is a major asset for the society; might this be used as a means for the RIN of getting a better feel of that community?

- *All to suggest any learned society that the RIN may have overlooked, and any contact within societies that the RIN could usefully exploit.*

## 9. RIN programme for 2007-08 (paper RIN/PTE/07/07)

Members noted the following broad RIN priorities in the next year or so:

- Building on evidence base that RIN has set out so far, developing an intellectual framework for advancing policy: the challenge for the RIN is for this framework is to reflect the needs of the users rather than the suppliers, i.e. determined by the requirements of the research community – hence the importance of seeking researcher involvement in meetings, working groups, workshops and other forms of dialogue.
- Further evidence-gathering.
- Setting out of case studies to analysing the way that researchers generate, manage and use research information. Different disciplines approach this in very different ways, and there is not always a good understanding about those differences, and the barriers that can occur consequently in interdisciplinary research. The RIN still in the very early stages of setting out agenda in this area, so comments are particularly welcome.

Members reflected on possible areas that might for the subject of case studies:

- Statistics could be very pertinent, because it is interdisciplinary by nature, as statisticians need acquire familiarity with the subject matters that are the focus of their activity – this reflects the need to cross-match individual disciplines with statistical methodology.
- Risk assessment is also inherently interdisciplinary for the same reasons.
- Computing.

- *All to comment further on possible subjects for case studies.*

## 10. Communications update

Members noted with interest the RIN's use of web-based tools such as blogs and – soon – wikis. However, it was felt that such

- *RIN Executive to investigate the expansion of the RIN's*

approaches tend to be attractive to users who are already well-plugged in to well-structured online networks, and may be less useful for broadening the RIN's appeal beyond such circles. The Group proposed that there could be value in further expanding the RIN's mailing list (currently with over 1000 contacts), to allow the conveying of simpler and more conventional information – as exemplified by RINews.

*mailing list*

#### **11. Other business**

There was none.

**Next meeting: Friday 12 October, 11:00 – 13:00**