



RIN Consultative Group for Physical Sciences, Technology & Engineering

NOTE FROM THE SIXTH MEETING – 13 March 2009

Action points in italics

Present:

Michael Jubb (Research Information Network) (chair)
Charlotte Briggs (Research Information Network)
Jim Downing (University of Cambridge)
Paul French (Imperial College London)
Stephane Goldstein (Research Information Network)
Roger Hines (Sheffield Hallam University)
Ken Hollywood (British Geological Survey)
David Hyett (British Antarctic Survey)
Qin Wang (Durham University)

Apologies:

Dorje Brody (Imperial College London)
Simon Coles (University of Southampton)
Matt Giess (University of Bath)
Robin Hankin (National Oceanographic Centre)
Werner Hofer (University of Liverpool)
Cédric Laizé (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology)
Tong Sun (City University)
Peter Willett (University of Sheffield)

1. **Minutes of the meeting of 3 November 2008** (*paper RIN/PTE/09/01*)

These were approved.

2. **Matters arising**

From item 2 – Group membership:

Following suggestions made at the last meeting, David Hyett and Jim Downing have now joined the Group. Jason Swedlow (U of Dundee – Centre for Gene Regulation and Expression) was suggested as an additional member, although it might be more appropriate to invite him to the Life Sciences and Medicine Group.

► *RIN Executive Team to approach Jason Swedlow.*

From item 3 – data management initiatives:

Members expressed interest in the issue of **training for data management**. The Group noted that RIN is currently in discussion with RCUK and Vitae about means of improving the information-handling training environment in the HE sector, and more specifically about promoting better understanding regarding the possible use of Roberts funding for this purpose. Training is also implicit in the UKRDS initiative, around which RIN and other agencies are working, as part of the drive to develop capacity and capabilities. Libraries have a key role to play in this area.

From item 4 – RIN project on Web 2.0:

This project is now underway, led by a consortium from Manchester and Edinburgh universities. It is due for completion by mid-Autumn.

From item 5 – RIN communications strategy:

Members noted that a specification has been drawn up for the reconfiguration of the RIN website. Invitations to tender are about to be issued for a contract to undertake this work and support the

maintenance of the website.

3. RIN project on use of e-journals (paper RIN/PTE/09/02)

The draft report, soon to be published, is very much the first phase of this project. It will be followed immediately with further work, also to be undertaken by [CIBER](#), to provide a qualitative refinement to the initial quantitative analyses and to address questions that could not be properly answered in the first phase.

Some members were unclear on the effects of e-journals usage on the **quality of research**. It was suggested that there has been a decrease in the use of older, less 'traceable' journals, and the advent of e-journals has increased peoples' expectations of how quickly information should be accessed. Additionally, the Group felt that students may be less aware of material published pre-1990, especially if it is not available online.

Members were concerned about the sustainability of current levels of e-journal access in the light of the pressures that **exchange rate fluctuations** are placing upon library budgets this year. It was noted that RIN is set to publish a briefing note for institutional managers on this issue. The Group reflected on whether this financial situation would increase interest both in open access and nationally negotiated site licenses; and whether there would be yet another push for obtaining VAT exemption on electronic publications. Would there also be more reliance on pay-per-view, in spite of it being expensive and unpopular?

Other questions raised in discussion:

- ▶ Members were interested in how and why researchers are using Google. What are researchers' expectations of this search engine, and is Google actually better than services such as Web of Science?
- ▶ What has been the effect of e-journals on teaching?
- ▶ The Group pointed to the distinction between usage and impact of e-journals.
- ▶ What is the impact of the use of e-journals on the use of printed journals? It was noted that some learned societies still very much value the printed medium as an adjunct to electronic material.

▶ *RIN Executive Team to circulate library budgets briefing note to Consultative Groups.*

4. RIN/ UUK guidance on payment of publication fees (paper RIN/PTE/09/03)

Commenting on the guidance note, members suggested that payment of publication fees is often not made from institutional funds, but from researchers' own grants. There is much uncertainty about exactly where money would come from within institutions.

A number of specific points were raised in discussion:

- ▶ Open access journals appear to be particularly useful for interdisciplinary studies.
- ▶ The Wellcome Trust has taken a strong stance regarding compliance with its open access mandate.
- ▶ Members raised a problem that is often unnoticed, when authors pay to publish in hybrid journals, but, owing to 'technical problems', their articles do not appear in practice in open access. This suggests that there is a need for improved communication, within hybrid titles, between managers responsible for open access implementation and those dealing with subscriptions.

5. Value and benefits of research data (paper RIN/PTE/09/04)

The underlying question in this area is how RIN, along with others, can build on existing work/initiatives and develop an advocacy

strategy in order to point to the value of data sharing and thereby encourage capacity building in data sharing. This would have to take place in the context of the possible emergence of [UKRDS](#) as a looming part of the data sharing landscape. Members noted that RIN is in discussion notably with UKRDS, DCC and JISC about how to develop a practical agenda.

The Group felt that researchers, who are often required to produce large volumes of data, are often left on a limb with regards to data curation and storage solutions. Such situations are liable to lead to duplication of effort, and members therefore recognised that there is a case for some sort of **national or centralised approach to curation**. It was noted, however, that UKRDS would not provide a centralised facility; rather, it would oversee good practice, foster the creation of support services and encourage the emergence of thematic or subject-based data centres. However, it is not yet clear how UKRDS would interact with such centres.

Further points raised in discussion:

- ▶ There was interest expressed in focusing on data usage; a number of measures (for instance, related to knowledge transfer) could be used for this purpose.
- ▶ To what can publishers be expected to archive or curate data related to journal articles? It has to be recognised that, in most instances, this is neither appropriate nor feasible.
- ▶ There is a difference between 'flat file' data and features such as time lapse – which take up lots of space, and which publishers wouldn't be interested in looking after, but which could be of future use and interest to researchers.

Members felt that measures to enable effective sharing and long-term curation of research data required considerable buy-in and commitment (not least financial commitment) from funders and other public agencies.

▶ *RIN Executive Team to circulate emerging proposal for RIN project focused on usage and impact of established research data centres.*

6. Options for future RIN projects (paper RIN/PTE/09/05)

Members noted that the paper represents a shopping list of possible future activities. RIN would have to be selective about which projects to undertake, as its resources typically allow no more than 6-7 major projects to be running at any one time. However, RIN has considerable leeway to determine the shape of its programme of activities, within context of its business plan. The role of experts that RIN consults to determine what it does is very important, and these experts include members of Consultative Groups. Possible activities have been also discussed by the Advisory Board.

On this basis, the Group discussed a number of suggestions:

- ▶ Exploring the issue of short term vs. long term storage – how, where, what gets thrown out, and how it is linked to sharing.
- ▶ Updating RIN's 2007 report on researchers' use of library services.
- ▶ RIN might consider work around the issue of depositing PhD theses in open electronic repositories. What would be the impact of this? Would the possibility of long-term scrutiny of such theses have an effect on quality control? However, although the British Library's [EThOS](#) initiative has so far proved successful (levels of take up 5-6 times what was planned), it was recognised that universal deposit of e-theses could be problematic: many theses are not destined for publications, for instance for reasons relating to copyright, commercial confidentiality, etc. Moreover, for those that are published, not enough thought may go into what authors may be exposing themselves to in the long-term.
- ▶ There may be a case for work in discoverability of data sources – something that Google is not very effective at. Members noted that UKRDS' proposed registry of data management plans has the

potential to serve as the nucleus for some sort of discovery service.

7. Joint Consultative Groups awayday – 7 and 8 May 2009

Information about this event had previously been circulated to members. The Group agreed the outline programme, but there were no particular suggestions on themes for discussion.

- ▶ *Stéphane Goldstein to email a reminder of the awayday to members of all Consultative Groups*

8. RIN update and Operating Plan (paper RIN/PTE/09/06)

The paper was noted by members, from whom suggestions and ideas would be sought over the coming months as RIN develops its programme of activities. In particular, RIN would be looking to populate the expert panels that oversee its commissioned research projects; Consultative Group members with an interest in given projects would be welcome to serve on such panels.

Members noted some forthcoming relevant workshops:

- ▶ The next meeting of the [RIN/DCC Data Managers' Forum](#), on 30 April-1 May. The focus of this third meeting will be on value of data sharing.
- ▶ A workshop, organised in conjunction with [SHERPA](#), on compliance with requirements to deposit e-prints in repositories, on 29 May.
- ▶ RIN is also planning an expert seminar with RCUK on next steps from RIN's 2008 [Mind the Skills Gap](#) report on information-handling training for researchers. RIN would welcome participation from Consultative Groups at this event.

- ▶ *RIN Executive Team periodically to remind Group members of opportunities to sit on RIN expert panels.*
- ▶ *All to notify Stéphane Goldstein if they wish to take part in any of these workshops.*

9. Other Business

There was none.

Next meeting: joint Consultative Groups awayday, 7-8 May. The next meeting of the Physical Sciences, Technology and Engineering Group will be on 4 November 2009.