



RIN Consultative Group for Physical Sciences, Technology & Engineering

NOTE FROM THE FOURTH MEETING –5 MAY 2008

Action points in italics

Present:

Dorje Brody (Imperial College)
Stéphane Goldstein (Research Information Network)
Robin Hankin (National Oceanographic Centre)
Ken Hollywood (British Geological Survey)
Roger Hines (Sheffield Hallam University)
Michael Jubb (Research Information Network)

Apologies

Simon Coles (University of Southampton)
Paul French (Imperial College)
Werner Hofer (University of Liverpool)
Elaine Martin (University of Newcastle)
Suresh Thennadil (University of Newcastle)
Tong Sun (City University)
Keith Westhead (British Geological Survey)

1. Report from the last meeting, 12 October 2007

Noted departure of Elaine Martin as chair of the group; a new chair will be identified asap, and MJ took the chair on an interim basis.

The Group, although established at the same time as the others, has not been as active. RIN has recently considered, along with its Advisory Board, the scope to develop or refine the role of the Groups. The conclusions include:

- expanding the membership of the groups, to increase coverage and ensure critical mass
- arranging for a forum to enable the four Groups to meet together, once a year, to encourage cross-fertilisation between disciplines
- drawing on the expertise of group members to support specific RIN activities, such as the running of expert groups to oversee project work

As a result, the Groups are currently in an interim phase, pending the implementation of these new arrangements, especially from the beginning of the next academic year.

Members agreed the principle of these new arrangements. Members were reminded that nominations for additional members would be welcome.

Daniel Hook is a database developer who runs systems to help universities (including Imperial College) manage information about academic staff.

2. Research Excellence Framework – possible RIN project work (*paper RIN/PTE/08/01*)

Prospect of RIN project work articulated around an analysis of the influence of research assessment on the information behaviour of researchers, especially publishing patterns. The

premise is that research outputs are increasingly sophisticated and varied, and are certainly not limited to journal articles and books.

Noted that software is an increasingly important scholarly output. Maps (ref BGS) are also an important specialised output.

Whatever the metric adopted, individuals are likely to adapt their behaviour in order to maximise their advantage. Outputs are necessarily complex, and the simpler the output measurement, the greater the temptation to game-play. Citation clubs are a case in point. Self-citation as well, but it is difficult to see how this can be discounted bearing in mind the growth in multi-author papers.

Danger of measuring the push (extent to which authors push their papers) rather than the pull (influence and impact).

What would be the outcome of any RIN research project? Can RIN hope to influence the research assessment process? RIN's aim is certainly to provide evidence in order to influence policy, and in this instance to help HE funding bodies address what is clearly a difficult and uncertain issue for them – they recognise the potential limitations of conducting assessment on the basis of a specific and limiting indicator such as Web of Science.

Can international comparisons help, in a context where many other countries are apparently trying to copy the UK framework? Digital author identification is an important factor also.

3. Use and relevance of Web 2.0 as an information resource for researchers – possible RIN project work (*paper RIN/PTE/08/02*)

Relatively little work on the take-up of Web 2.0 within the research community; this seems to be timely. There are implications for researchers both as authors and readers.

To what extent can the reduction in the use of A&I services be attributable to Web 2.0? Clearly, the growth of Google among other factors accounts of this, but what might be the particular impact of Web 2.0 in this area?

What might RIN's aim be in undertaking this research? This is not about pushing any particular Web 2.0 approach, but gathering evidence in order, for instance, to help libraries reach a view about cataloguing and discovering. There are also fundamental issues around recognising outputs such as blogs and wikis as legitimate research outputs; for instance, how should they be cited? What of version controls? How can the ephemeral nature of most blogs be addressed?

Many of the problems associated with citing, say, blogs also apply to databases/datasets; issue of granularity: what exactly is cited?

Project methodology is likely to be qualitative as well as quantitative; not enough to simply interpret web stats.

4. Taking forward the conclusions of two RIN projects currently nearing completion (*paper RIN/PTE/08/03*)

Cost and income flows:

Great interest manifested in the results of this project. Is there any scope for publishing this in a journal? Probably not,

inasmuch as it has now been disseminated through the RIN website, but there might be scope for publishing derived worked based on modelling different assumptions or hypotheses.

Noted with interest the engagement of publishers in overseeing and contributing to this project.

Training:

Noted with interest, but little discussion.

5. RIN update (*paper RIN/PTE/08/04*)

Noted in particular data publication project and forthcoming programme of case studies – for the latter, advice about who might undertake the work would be welcome.

6. Other business

None.

Next meeting: date in September or October 2008 to be confirmed