



RIN Consultative Group for Physical Sciences, Technology & Engineering

NOTE FROM THE FIFTH MEETING – 3 November 2008

Action points in italics

Present:

Stéphane Goldstein (Research Information Network) (acting chair)
Simon Coles (University of Southampton)
Matt Giess (University of Bath)
Sarah Gentleman (Research Information Network) for Item 5
Catherine Gray (Research Information Network)
Aaron Griffiths (Research Information Network) for Item 4
Ken Hollywood (British Geological Survey)
Roger Hines (Sheffield Hallam University)
Cedric Laize (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology)

Apologies:

Dorje Brody (Imperial College London)
Paul French (Imperial College London)
Robin Hankin (National Oceanographic Centre)
Michael Jubb (Research Information Network)
Werner Hofer (University of Liverpool)
Tong Sun (City University)
Suresh Thennadil (University of Newcastle)

1. Report from the last meeting, 5 May 2008

Minutes from the last meeting were agreed with no matters arising.
Noted that RIN is still looking for a new Chair for the group, who will need to be recruited from the RIN Advisory Board.

2. Membership of the Consultative Group (*paper RIN/PTE/08/06*)

Noted that it has been difficult to recruit new members to the group, especially in the disciplines of astronomy, chemistry and built environment.

Suggestions from the group were welcomed:

- David Hyett, Head of Information and Records Management at the British Antarctic Survey *Ken Hollywood to approach*
- Approach heads of university departments rather than individuals, to see if they could identify members of their faculties *RIN to investigate*
- Royal Society of Chemistry have special interest groups (e.g. Chemical Information Computer Applications Group), could target their events *RIN to discuss at forthcoming liaison mtg with RSC*
- Sheffield Hallam have a specialism in Civil Engineering *Roger Hines to approach*
- Stuart Green at the University of Reading (School of Construction Management and Engineering) *RIN to approach*
- Jim Downing at Cambridge University (colleague of Peter Murray-Rust), who has a library background *RIN to approach*
- Institute of Physics *RIN to approach*
- Peter Willett's group (Information Science) at Sheffield *RIN to approach*

3. Data management initiatives – co-ordinated approach to advocacy and policy development
(paper RIN/PTE/08/07)

There have been many reports over the last few years relating to data management and recommendations made as to how policies should be developed. However implementation of such recommendations has proved more difficult.

Working with JISC and NERC, the RIN is looking to develop an advocacy strategy regarding implementing change, using the conclusions of previous relevant reports as a starting point. This will be targeted at specific organisations, such as Research Councils and funders, with the aim that they commit to taking forward the recommendations. A call for expressions of interest to help with the development of such a strategy will be issued before the end of the year.

Comments from the group were welcomed:

- Pilot studies may prove useful, to demonstrate the benefits of these recommendations. Bear in mind that most researchers want to see an instant benefit from managing data, and are less concerned by long term gains
- Highlight rewards such as increased citation and visibility
- In some instances, encouragement from and recognition by peer community for data sharing and dissemination may be as important a factor as RAE/REF ratings; altruism remains a significant motivator, and standing among peers is a way of increasing visibility of research outputs. The focus here would thus be on disciplines rather than institutions.
- Training of researchers and personal development is important
- Open access is sometimes viewed with suspicion or misapprehension, so it may be more appropriate to view data sharing in terms of good research management systems

The project could involve organisations which already have a policy and interest in data management (NERC, British Geological Society). Funders other than Research Councils should be approached, i.e. charitable, commercial, philanthropic

Noted that JISC are also doing a similar project, 'Discipline based advocacy' (covering chemistry and economics) which is aimed at discipline level rather than at funders

Strong feeling in the group that demonstrating the benefits of effective data sharing and collective value are very important

RIN to take forward the Group's ideas in the formulation of the project specification

RIN to enquire about JISC project

4. RIN project on use and relevance of Web 2.0 as an information resource for researchers
(paper RIN/PTE/08/08)

This project is to be commissioned shortly, and will examine the relevance of Web 2.0 as an information source and tool for researchers. RIN has had a very good response to the call for expressions of interest and will consider the consultants research designs carefully before selecting which one to fund. There will be an expert panel overseeing the project and suggestions from the group of who may be approached from the physical sciences community would be appreciated.

Comments from the group were welcomed:

- The term Web 2.0 may be off-putting to some, although difficult to encapsulate – ‘user-driven content’?
- Concern about doing the project representing no more than a snapshot in time for an area that is very fast moving – may be better to do a longitudinal study looking at how groups use Web 2.0 over a certain period
- Perhaps use PhD students starting off on their research and have them record their usage over a six-month period – would have to cover a number of different disciplines
- Skills and knowledge of Web 2.0 is an important issue, as many people may be in favour of the tools if they knew how to use them
- Web 2.0 *tools* can be very transient or even faddish, which could do little to inspire confidence. However, with regard to *content*, the transience that is inherent in Web 2.0 may be beneficial: some academics may not want a non-static point of reference, but others prefer to ‘put ideas out there’ without having to have things set in stone in journals

It was agreed the spec needs to be clearer on what is being asked, and indicate that all the questions/issues raised are not expected to be answered, rather focus should be on certain areas and not try to encompass the whole spectrum

A follow up study may need to be commissioned, depending on the outcome of this project

Some members expressed an interest in the possibility of collaborating with prospective bidders on the project.

RIN to refer to the Group’s ideas in the evaluation of the project and its subsequent oversight

5. RIN communications strategy (paper RIN/PTE/08/09)

Now the RIN team has expanded, we have more resources to improve communications and expand the dissemination of our reports. A new Communications Officer and Partnerships and Liaison Officer are now in post, who can act as advocates for RIN making links with research councils, libraries etc.

Suggestions from the group as to how our strategy may be improved were welcomed:

- Becoming involved more with end-users, i.e. features in organisational newsletters, with tailored content; getting the right contacts is important, for instance communications staff in Research Councils
- Industry contacts as well as academic, i.e. Technology Strategy Board
- Elaborate RIN short briefing papers providing a summarised run-down of relevant developments in the broad world of research information; the emphasis should be on demonstrating relevance to the readers of such material
- RIN flyers/report briefing notes could be sent to Research Council libraries. Ken Hollywood is the Chair of the Research Council Libraries Group (RESCOLINC) and is happy to take literature to their next meeting
- Roger Hines is attending a JIBS conference next week and is also happy to take literature along

Suggestions for the redevelopment of the RIN website

- Include news from other relevant organisations on the new

Matt Giess to give newsletter contact details to Sarah

Matt Giess to give contact details to Sarah

Sarah Gentleman to give Ken flyers etc

Sarah Gentleman to give Roger flyers etc

All Group members to feed

RIN website, i.e. JISC, HEFCE etc, so it is more of an information portal – similar to what was suggested above with regard to briefing material

- Consider developing the website's interactive features

further suggestions on the RIN website

6. RIN update and operating plan (paper RIN/PTE/08/10)

A paper detailing RIN's current and forthcoming projects was circulated. As always, suggestions of new areas of research are welcomed. Researchers' use of eBooks was mentioned as a possibility.

It was noted that RIN intends to hold a joint meeting of all four Consultative Groups May/June next year, so all members can meet and share ideas; this idea was welcomed.

7. Other business

None.

Next meeting: date in February 2009 to be confirmed