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JUBB, Michael. The UK Research Information Infrastructure: Key Issues and Challenges. In *35th LIBER Annual General Conference, Turning the library inside out, Uppsala, du 4 au 7 juillet 2006* [en ligne]. Format PDF.

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The UK Research Information Infrastructure: Key Issues and Challenges

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LIBER Conference, Uppsala

5 July 2006

The RIN and its Mission

- Established in 2005 – for three years in the first instance
- Sponsored by
 - the Higher Education Funding Councils for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
 - the eight UK Research Councils
 - the British Library, and the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales
- *Mission*
 - To lead and co-ordinate new developments in the collaborative provision of research information for the benefit of researchers in the UK

RIN Structure

- Executive team of four
- Budget of £3m (4.5m euros) over three years
- Reporting lines
 - Funders' Group (the 15 sponsors who provide the funds)
 - Advisory Board of research and information professionals)
 - Consultative Groups of representatives of the research and information communities

Strategic Objectives

- To develop a strategic framework for enhancing the UK research information infrastructure
- To ensure the active engagement of the research community
- To act as an advocate for research information provision in the UK and internationally
- To improve the arrangements for researchers to find information sources relevant to their work
- To enhance management and development of the UK collection of hard copy research resources
- To ensure that the outputs researchers produce and need are retained and made available for use

Information Service Infrastructure

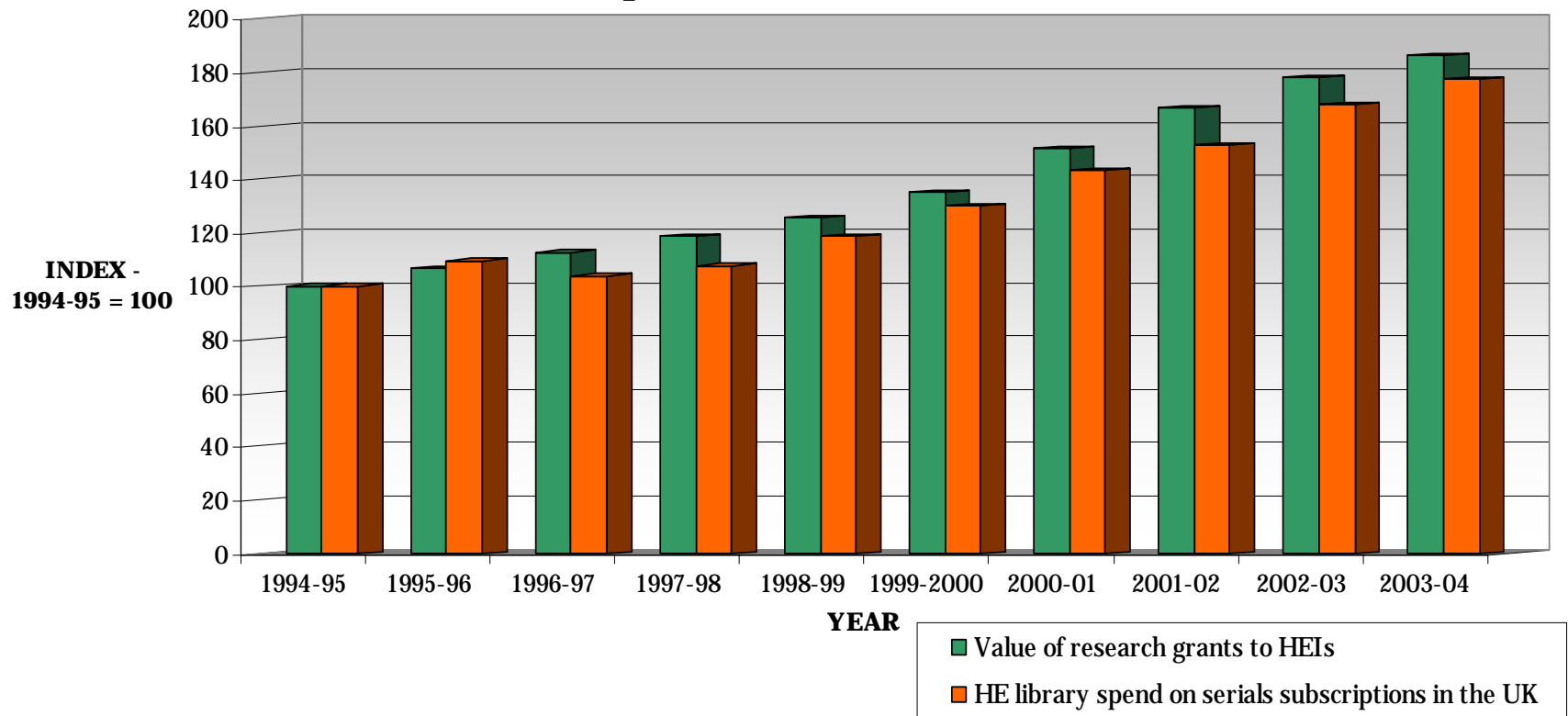
- Key challenges in developing a distributed and federated information infrastructure
 - Context
 - Key Players and their Roles
 - Scholarly Communications
 - Research Data
 - The Changing Role of Research Libraries
 - Services for Researchers
 - Key Issues for Research Funders, Universities, Libraries, and Researchers

Context :I

- Continuing growth in the volume and scale of research
 - Development of world-wide virtual research communities
- Increasing integration of conceptual and technological tools from computer science into all areas of research
- The “data deluge”
 - Forecasts that in the next five years e-science projects will produce more data than has been produced in the whole of human history up to now
 - Challenges of research data management, from data acquisition and data integration, to data treatment, provenance and persistence
- The shift of publications from print to digital
 - Expectation of immediate access and delivery to the desktop
 - Developing expectation of linking of publications and underlying data

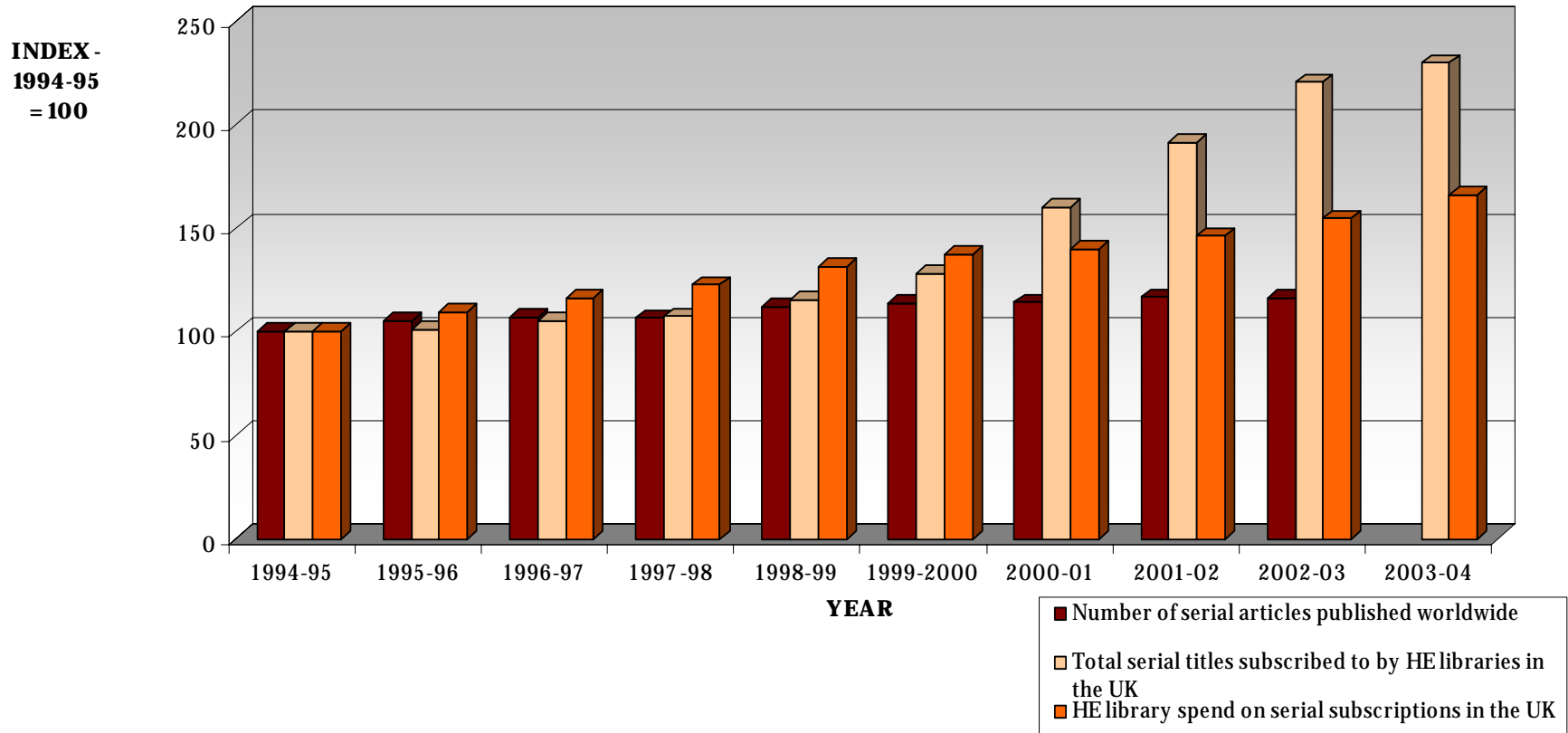
Context II: Research Grants and Library Expenditure

Research grants to UK Universities and Colleges, and library expenditure on serials



Context III: Research Publications

Worldwide production of serial articles, UK serial subscriptions and expenditure



The UK Research Information Service Infrastructure

- A highly-federated and distributed system
 - Like other parts of the research infrastructure, has suffered from under-investment
- Key players
 - National and copyright libraries, especially the British Library
 - Other major research libraries
 - Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and its major service providers
 - Data Centres such as the British Geological Survey, the European Bioinformatics Institute, the Arts and Humanities Data Service
 - Publishers, with services such as Science Direct, Web of Science, SCOPUS etc
- Role of Funders and Policy Makers
 - Government Departments and Agencies
 - Universities and Colleges
- International connectivity
 - Opportunities and challenges

Scholarly Communications: I

- Impact of new technologies on all the key stages/functions in the scholarly communications process
 - doing research and producing research outputs
 - identifying and protecting intellectual property rights
 - quality assurance and the peer review of research outputs
 - presenting, publishing and disseminating outputs in both digital and printed forms
 - providing access to quality-assured and authentic published outputs
 - assessing usage and impact
 - preserving and providing access to published outputs in both digital and printed forms, for the indefinite future
- Changing roles of the key players, and resulting tensions between them

Scholarly Communications: II

- Impact of the open access movement in its two key forms
 - Pay-to-publish journals
 - Development of institutional and subject-based repositories
- Need for a better, shared, understanding of the changes in what is being done, how, and by whom
 - in order to maximise benefits of new technologies
 - to establish an evidence base for the development of public policy
 - costs and income flows across the whole scholarly communications process
 - patterns and demographics of usage
 - linking of publications and underlying data
 - impacts of development of informal communications

Research Data

- Increasing need to manage and provide access to digital data, as well as formal publications
- Little consistency in policy and practice across major research funders and institutions
- Need to recognise different requirements that arise in handling different kinds of data from different sources
 - experimental data; observational data; models and simulations; social survey data
- Increasing international interest
 - OECD Ministerial Declaration 2004
 - US National Science Board Report on Long-Lived Data
 - Australian Accessibility Framework
- Increasing need for guidelines and protocols, and for co-ordination

Research Libraries and their Role

- ❑ Change in researchers' expectation of information provision
 - ❑ interest less in the *collections* of individual libraries, more in the information resources and services to which they can provide *access*
- ❑ Change in the range of services provided by libraries, with print and digital resources and services
- ❑ Need for better understanding of the relationships between researcher behaviour and expectations, and the services that libraries can offer
- ❑ What kinds of changes are required to meet researchers' needs
 - ❑ can we sustain the necessary investment
 - ❑ are libraries an essential focus for such investment?

Research Libraries and the Persistence of Print

- Remaining importance of print and ms, especially in arts, humanities and social sciences
- Digitisation a powerful tool, but questions of integration, interoperability, and priorities
- Increasing recognition of need for collaboration at national level in management and development of hard copy and microform collections
 - Collaborative preservation and access for low-use printed material
 - Collaborative management and development of collections in specified areas

Researchers and their Needs

- Effective, intelligent and comprehensive resource discovery, so far as possible on a single platform
- Seamless discovery and access wherever possible
- Quality assurance (quality, authenticity and integrity)
- Interoperability and seamless access to published and unpublished data in a wide variety of formats, and to the applications necessary to make use of them
- Skilled support and training

Challenges for Libraries, Universities, and Funders

- Need for investment and co-ordination in developing a distributed infrastructure that provides essential services for researchers across the sector
- Need for a better understanding of
 - the impact and potential of technological developments
 - changes in the functions and roles of key providers of information services
 - changes in researchers' behaviour, perceptions and needs
- In order to achieve
 - Clarity as to expectations, roles and responsibilities of key players
 - Optimal configuration of investments of key players

Some Key Principles or Goals

- Ideas and knowledge derived from publicly-funded research should be managed and made available as widely, rapidly and effectively as practicable
 - explicit rules and codes of conduct setting out the responsibilities of researchers, their institutions, and providers of information services
 - standards and quality assurance in creating, collecting, and managing data and research outputs, and selecting and making them available to others
 - access in a managed environment which maximises ease of use while protecting the interests of creators and others who have legitimate interests
 - clarity, efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the use of public funds
 - operational and financial sustainability over the (very) long term

 **More Information about the RIN**

 **www.rin.ac.uk**