

Minutes of RAGnet AGM held at the Royal York Hotel, York

13 May 2004

Chair: Jacqui Forsyth

Minutes: Nigel Billsbrough

Present: Tayo Lill Andreassen, Nigel Billsbrough, Hazel Booth, Malcolm Booth, Peter Brooks, Alan Cannings, Kathleen Callender, Ian Carter, Neil Chisholm, Phil Clare, Carol Clugston, Lee-Ann Coleman, Jan Davies, Rossana Dowsett, Valerie Edwards-Jones, Frances Fakes, Kate Ferguson, Jacqui Forsyth, Claire Gauld, Yasmin Glover, Jeanette Guida, Jonathan Hackney, Janet Hampson, Alan Harrison, Rosemary Hatch, Steff Hazlehurst, Matthias Heger, Anne Jervoise, Isaac John, Deirdre Kelliher, Simon Kerridge, Anne-Marie McBrien, Gareth MacDonald, Norma McNaught, Sarah Manning Press, Richard Masterman, Pauline Muya, Chris Needham, Kate Nimmo, Clive Randall, Elaine Ryder, Louise Shelley, Mark Smith, Maggy Taylor, Peter Townsend, Sue Ward, Antony Weir,

In attendance: Paul Waugaman

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Judith Garside and Claire Ashmore.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous AGM held at the Thistle Hotel, Bristol on 1 May 2003 were agreed to be a true and accurate record of the proceedings and were signed as such by the Chair. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. Annual Report 2003-2004 by Jacqui Forsyth, RAGnet Chair

This has been a very active year for the organisation, one of change and growth. A written Annual Report was presented to the meeting, brief highlights of which are given below:

- The Executive Committee have been focussing on developments arising from the review of the organisation undertaken last year. These include a proposal to change the name of the organisation and to introduce new categories of membership. More immediately two sub-committees have been established to oversee our training and communications strategies.
- Individual membership now stand at over 530 representing some 170 organisations. Although universities and colleges in the UK and Ireland still form the great majority of these, some 85%, we have members from the research councils, funding charities, NHS bodies, independent research organisations and other organisations within Europe.
- We continue our international collaborations with our sister organisations overseas sending representatives to the Society of Research Administrators International (SRA) Conference in Pittsburgh in October and the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) Conference in Cape Town in May.
- To further professionalise our training events we have clearly identified the different types of activities we undertake and have allocated responsibility to a designated Committee member. These activities include the Study Tours and the Expert Seminars. We are also developing a series of core Training Seminars which will be run over a three yearly cycle.

During the year the largest ever Annual Spring Workshop, attended by more than 120 delegates, took place in Bristol. A sixth Induction Workshop was held at Loughborough which attracted 51 participants. The Expert Seminar programme featured events on the Costing, Pricing and Sustainability of Research; IPR for Research Managers and Administrators; Supporting Research Grant Applications and Funding from the US for UK Research.

The very popular EPSRC Study Visits have also continued with two separate tours being arranged through the year.

- During the year we have bid farewell to our newsletter **RAGTimes** which has been replaced by a new electronic newsletter and an Occasional Paper series entitled *Issues in Research Management and Administration*.

- Finally the Chair thanked all members for their continued support of, and participation in, **RAGnet** and wished to note particularly the organisation's appreciation to Kerry Wilding who has left the Committee this year. Kerry served as Editor of **RAGTimes** for a number of years and her contributions to the organisation have been highly valued.

4. Financial Report for 2003/2004 by Rossana Dowsett, RAGnet Treasurer

A written finance report was incorporated in the Annual Report showing the position as at the 31 March 2004. A slightly amended version was presented to the meeting but the bottom line figures had not been affected. The Treasurer reported:

- The association had enjoyed a stable year and continued to maintain healthy reserves.
- We were continuing, with professional assistance, to pursue our application for charitable status.
- The accounts have now been forwarded to our accountants for an independent certification.

5. Proposed Changes to Existing RAGnet Constitution

The Executive Committee of the organisation wished to propose [four Constitutional Amendments](#) which the meeting was asked to adopt.

i) To Change the Name of the Organisation

It was proposed to change the name of the organisation to ARMA(UK), the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (United Kingdom). From a relatively modest beginning as an organisation solely for research centre administrators in the social sciences our membership base has continued to grow and widen. It now includes members from both centre and central positions in HEIs as well as members from research councils, other funders and the NHS.

More and more of our activities are conducted at a strategic level as well as on the international stage with our links with our sister organisations and the change of name, together with an accompanying rebranding exercise, would better reflect our place in the profession and the wider research community.

Several comments were received from the floor including questions on the costs of the exercise and any proposed marketing strategy. The Committee responded by saying that tenders had been requested for the redesign, that some of the costs would be incurred in any case to replenish existing stocks of materials and that a comprehensive marketing strategy would be developed if the amendment was approved.

The proposal was seconded by Chris Needham, Lancaster University and was carried by the meeting unanimously.

ii) To Create a Category of Institutional Membership

Membership of **RAGnet** was currently based on individuals. The Committee has for some time been struggling to try and address the needs of, say, research councils, who may have significant numbers of individuals who are eligible for membership but for whom the current model would be prohibitively expensive. It was proposed to create Institutional Membership for such organisations, at a fee to be negotiated individually with each organisation, but with a cap on the number of members who may attend any particular event. It was also proposed that the votes of such members would be worth a fraction of the vote of an ordinary member to be agreed at the time of joining.

The proposal generated much discussion. It was pointed out that perhaps some HEIs could argue for institutional membership but the proposal was specifically aimed at non HEIs, particularly the research councils. The issue of voting rights and substitution, particularly if an Institutional Member were also a Committee Member, were of particular concern. Other models, like the SRA's and the Association of University Technology Managers, which retained individual membership and voting rights, were raised as possible alternatives. In light of the concerns expressed by the members the Chair called for a show of hands in support of the motion from which it appeared some 50% were in support. The Chair agreed to withdraw the proposal which would need to be rethought by the Executive Committee.

iii) To Change Spring Workshop to Spring Conference in the Constitution

This proposal was seconded by Maggy Taylor, Manchester Metropolitan University and was carried unanimously.

iv) To Change Unincorporated Association to Charity in the Constitution

As the meeting was aware the Executive Committee continued to seek charitable status for the organisation. This would enhance our status, give certain tax advantages and make the organisation more accountable. Given this may be achieved before the next Annual General Meeting the meeting was asked to vote on the amendment in case charitable status was achieved. The proposal was seconded by Kate Nimmo, Glasgow University and was carried unanimously.

6. Any Other Business

A question was asked from the floor on the procedure for electing officers to the organisation. It was pointed out that this was now undertaken by postal ballot, which made it more inclusive, and this year all nominated candidates had been elected. This meant that there were currently no vacancies for elected places on the Committee but there were still opportunities to serve as a co-opted member.

Finally, the Chair of the meeting, Jacqui Forsyth, announced that this would be her last AGM in the Chair as her term of office expired at the end of May. She introduced Peter Townsend, Loughborough University, who had been elected to the position of Chair unopposed. She thanked the organisation, and her colleagues on the Committee, for all their help and support in the past.

The meeting wished to record their appreciation, on behalf of all **RAGnet** members, for the tremendous job Jacqui had done as Chair, and for her vision and commitment in steering the organisation forward at a time of great challenge and change. Her contribution was much appreciated and her presence will be greatly missed.

There being no other business the Chair thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 18.05.

Nigel Billsbrough
RAGnet Secretary
14 June 2004