

# Annual Report: 2001-2002

## Chair's Report

This past year has for many of us been dominated by the outcome and aftermath of the Research Assessment Exercise 2001. Whether involved in the preparations for submission or not, all members will have had an interest in the outcome, and been feeling its impact in their own institution ever since. Whether you are glad or sad about your own results, the exercise proved that "British university research is the best since records began". As Research Administrators and Managers we can feel justifiably proud of our contribution to that achievement. We have indeed facilitated excellence in research by identifying and establishing best practice in research administration, as our mission statement says we aim to do.

The role of the research administrator in contributing to institutional research strategy is now widely accepted and valued. The professional management of externally funded grant and contract income continues to be vital. **RAGnet** exists to support its members in undertaking these tasks.

Training events during the year included the annual Spring Workshop in May looking at the various stakeholders in research, the fourth annual Induction Workshop for new Research Administrators and a wide range of expert seminars. These focused on 'hot topics' (research ethics), exchange of best practice on core areas of responsibility (research degrees) and broadening our skills (intellectual property rights). This latter seminar reflected an area members are increasingly having to deal with, and is also covered in the current **RAG Times**. A full training report is included [later in this Annual Report](#).

Membership has increased to well over 400 individual members representing 110 universities and colleges in the UK and Ireland. Forty-five per cent of members are in pre-1992 universities in the UK and 45% in post-1992 universities and colleges, with 10% in independent research centres, overseas institutes, medical bodies and others. Sixty per cent of members are now in central offices, continuing a trend towards more centrally-based members. Of those 'local' administrators based in faculties, departments and research centres, and those in specialist institutes, 47% are in social sciences, 42% in sciences (including 18% in medical and health sciences), and 11% in arts and humanities areas.

A major focus for **RAGnet** this year has been collaboration, and in particular international collaboration. We have been actively participating in the Association of Commonwealth Universities' four year Research Management Programme. The Programme aims to share international experience of research management, help forge stronger links with a wider number of funding bodies, and support institutions only just beginning to establish research management activity. **RAGnet** has a key role to play in helping deliver these aims, and is seeking to improve links with Commonwealth groups such as the Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS), the Canadian Association of University Research Administrators (CAURA) and the newly developing Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA). We very much hope to welcome Commonwealth colleagues at future Spring Workshops.

**RAGnet** has also been approached to join International Consortium of Research Management Societies (ICRMS), which will involve linking **RAGnet** with the American Society of Research Administrators (SRA), European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA), ARMS, CAURA and others. ICRMS will function as an umbrella group for these related organisations. These Commonwealth and broader international links will provide additional opportunities for us to broaden our understanding of research management, share experience, and collectively find solutions to shared issues. Research itself is an international activity, and it is right that there should also be global collaboration on research management and administration.

But **RAGnet's** focus has not been exclusively overseas; we have also been working to extend collaboration with funding bodies, and would like to increase membership from staff in these organisations in future. In March there was a Study Tour for members to the EPSRC, in which participants had the opportunity to learn more about internal EPSRC procedures, reviewing mechanisms and policy. Increasing understanding between universities and funding bodies will only make our job easier. **RAGnet**, of course, continues to play an important role in improving understanding and breaking down barriers between University central administration and departments by involving administrators and managers from both, and we would like to extend this to funding bodies too.

This year we welcomed Sue Mitchell (Newcastle), Ian McCormick (Sheffield) and Rosemary Hatch (Plymouth) onto the committee, and welcomed Andrea Bailey (Newcastle) back following maternity leave. Sadly, Maureen Skinner (London Institute) has resigned as she moves to a new post outside research administration. Many thanks to everyone who has served on the committee this year - all their work is voluntary and their time, enthusiasm and ideas are much appreciated. Any members interested in joining the committee are welcome to speak to me. It is hard work, but also great fun.

Finally, many thanks to all members whose involvement and continuing support give our organisation its strength and character.

Jacqui Forsyth  
April 2002

---

## **RAGnet Training Review of the Year 2001-2002**

### **Spring Workshop 2001: People Power - stakeholders in research**

*24-25 May 2001, Holiday Inn, Newcastle-upon-Tyne*

More than 90 people attended **RAGnet's** annual Spring Workshop, which this year focused on people in and associated with research administration. There were sessions on the HEFCE Review of Research, contract research staff, research students and research administrators, and the workshop offered participants an opportunity to relax after the RAE and before the aftermath and still gain some useful insight into how they could move forward in research administration.

### **Research Degrees: Quality and Standards expert seminar**

*15 June 2001, Aston University*

**RAGnet's** first seminar focusing on issues relating to research students attracted 41 delegates, who turned up despite travel problems to join this interactive session which focused on the precepts of the QAA Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Programmes. A keynote presentation on the Code of Practice was provided by the QAA. Delegates worked in groups to exchange information on institutional practice and to identify examples of good practice to share at the plenary session.

### **Fourth Induction Workshop: An Introduction to Research Administration**

*24-25 September 2001, Burleigh Court, Loughborough*

This annual workshop is aimed at people with less than one year's experience in research administration, either from a research centre or from a central position. The programme looks at varying roles and responsibilities of a research administrator, gives information on funding for research and how to apply for funds, looks at negotiation skills and gives an insight into project management and into the financing and administration of research projects. Above all it offers delegates the opportunity to network with other new research administrators. In 2001, 46 people attended the induction course.

### **Intellectual Property Rights expert seminar**

*29-30 October, 2001, Durlston Court Hotel, Bournemouth*

This seminar piloted a new format of two back-to-back courses at introductory and intermediate level, where delegates could choose to attend one or both days according to their needs. The first day covered the basics of IP, whereas the second focused on IP management issues, and was aimed at administrators and managers responsible for making decisions on protecting or exploiting IP, and for reviewing IP issues in research contracts and projects. In total, 43 people took part in the event, which we hope to repeat in 2003.

### **Research Ethics expert seminar**

*30 November 2001, University of Central Lancashire*

32 delegates attended this highly topical and well-received introduction to ethical issues in research, which provided an overview of the different types of research and associated ethical problems and examined ethical issues faced by research administrators. The seminar included several interactive sessions with case studies in the social and medical sciences as well as a role play of a research ethics committee meeting.

## **Research Degrees: Examinations and Appeals expert seminar**

*18 January 2002, London Institute*

**RAGnet's** second seminar on research student issues attracted 26 participants who benefited from an opportunity to share experience and identify best practice in relation to research degree examinations and appeals. Delegates worked on a series of real and slightly fictionalised case studies. The outcomes from the group work were then fed into a plenary feedback session. RAGnet intends to continue to offer seminars on issues relating to research students, and welcomes suggestions for future topics.

## **EPSRC study tour**

*25/26 March 2002, EPSRC, Swindon*

The EPSRC study tour, jointly organised by **RAGnet** and EPSRC, was run on a trial basis for ten participants. It provided an excellent opportunity for interaction between EPSRC staff and University administrators and included sessions on EPSRC grants and peer review processes, discussions on policy issues as well as a mock EPSRC panel. Due to the high demand for the event and the successful organisation at EPSRC, it will become a standing event in future.

---

## **Treasurer's Report**

The accounts for the year are published below. There are a number of points on which we have taken professional advice which affect our activities and which are reported on here.

We have applied for an Inland Revenue concession to avoid having to submit a Corporation Tax self-assessment each year. Assuming this is granted we will only have to inform the Inland Revenue if we have any change in status, for example if there are profits from trading activities. Trading activities include receiving fees from non-members for attending events. We have therefore adopted the policy of only allowing members to attend events. As before, non-members may join at the time of booking an event.

We are currently still outside the VAT threshold (£54,000 income in any twelve month period), although it is not inconceivable that we might fall within it in future. We should, however, be exempt as a 'professional association or learned society'. We should be exempt from charging VAT on events fees as long as the event is self-financing and not subsidised by subscriptions.

## Financial report: April 2001 - March 2002

<b>Current account</b>			
Start balance 1/4/2001			£9,391
<b>Income</b>			
Membership fees (1)		£13,572	
Corporate membership fees		£800	
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Committee costs and expenses	-£3,027		
Committee training costs	-£1,437		
Advisory Group costs and expenses	-£1,748		
<b>RAGnet</b> Executive Assistance (2)	-£2,441		
Bursary awarded	-£500		
General consumables	-£4,100		
<b>RAG Times</b>	-£3,966		
Professional fees (accounting, data protection, website)	-£1,311		
Bank charges	-£477		
Transfer to deposit account	-£8,000		
<b>Surplus/deficit on events</b>			
Spring workshop 2001 (3)		£2,100	
Induction 2001		£1,472	
Intellectual Property Rights Workshop		£1,382	
Spring workshop 2002 (4)		£2,239	
<i>Expert seminars: (5)</i>			
Research Degrees: Quality & Standards	-£571		
Research Ethics		£219	
Research Degrees: Examinations & Appeals		£382	
Funding Opportunities in Humanities & Social Science		£30	
Events held in previous financial year		£2,555	
Total expenditure/income	-£27,548	£24,751	
End balance 31/3/2002			<b>£6,593</b>
<b>Deposit account</b>			
Start balance 1/4/2001		£27,079	
Interest earned		£555	
Transfer from current account		£8,000	
End balance 31/3/2002			<b>£35,634</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS AT 31/3/2002</b>			<b>£42,226</b>

### Notes

(1) Mostly from 2001/2002 renewals. Some from 2002/2003 renewals and new memberships.

(2) General assistance on recruitment, website, committee business etc. £4,992 costs for the year are still outstanding. Assistance with specific events is charged against the events.

(3) Net surplus was £1,750

(4) Most transactions will take place during 2002/2003

(5) Most events still have some income and expenditure outstanding. Most are forecast to generate a small surplus

The accounts for 2001/2002 will shortly be passed to an accountant for independent review.