

# Exploring similarities:

## national and international research management and administration

Ian Carter reports on the 2nd INORMS Congress.

The 2nd INORMS (International Network of Research Management Societies) Congress was held in Liverpool, UK in June 2008 over four days, and hosted by the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (UK). It comprised a two-day conference, along with pre- and post-conference seminars, posters, an exhibition, and various social and orientation events. The event attracted over 500 participants from 30 countries, with more than 100 speakers, and received very good feedback about the quality of the event.

The pre-conference events provided fundamental training, both UK-focused and internationally-focused, a comparative discussion of research assessment, and an Executive Forum, which allowed small group discussion at a senior level of the complementary roles of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and the Director of Research Services, and key performance indicators for those involved in research support. The post-conference seminar was on research ethics in an international context.

The main conference was structured around

nine themes: assessing research; developing and supporting researchers; developing professional research managers and administrators; dissemination and translation of research; management and organisation of research support; policy and strategy; research funding and funding opportunities; research integrity, ethics and governance; and systems and operations; plus an opening plenary session and a keynote session on the second day. The format provided both formal and informal settings for exchange of practice and experience, with many interesting national and international comparisons.

The conference started with a hand-over from Janet Dibb-Smith of the Australasian Research Managers Society, the hosts of the first meeting in Brisbane, Australia in 2006. Aldo Stroebe of the Southern African Research and Innovation Managers Association (SARIMA) and Dr John Kirkland of the ACU used this opportunity to announce the next INORMS congress – which will be held in Cape Town, South Africa in 2010 and jointly hosted by SARIMA and the ACU

The opening plenary session was then fol-

lowed by contrasting presentations from Professor Ian Diamond, Chief Executive of the UK Economic and Social Research Council and Chair of Research Councils UK, Professor Adelani Ogunrinade, Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Lesotho, and Dr Christine Boesz, Inspector General of the US National Science Foundation. Professor Diamond illustrated the approaches to internationalisation being taken by the UK Research Councils, whilst Professor Ogunrinade demonstrated that both developing and developed nations face the same people-related challenges in achieving research excellence, though some have the additional challenges of less robust infrastructure. Dr Boesz, meanwhile, discussed some of the ethical and governance issues that can arise, and how an international context for research adds to both the complexity and the need for the development of inter-organisational relations.

The keynote address was given by Professor Sir Drummond Bone, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liverpool, on the internationalisation of research. Professor Bone's experience in the establishment of a new university in China, and his leading of the international strand of the current UK government into



The plenary session at INORMS

higher education meant that he was able to provide a well-informed perspective. It was also fitting that his knighthood, announced a matter of days before, could be acknowledged by the audience.

There were six parallel session slots in the conference programme and each provided seven or eight choices for participants, across the range of themes and levels of experience. Most took a comparative approach, with multiple speakers, and allowed for dialogue with the participants. Achieving such a large programme (46 parallel sessions in all) was challenging, but the response from those invited to speak and those volunteering session ideas was very positive. A number of ideas were melded together to create the comparative sessions that received good feedback from the participants.

A number of receptions and other social events took place, with the highlight being the gala dinner, at which the entertainment was provided by a Beatles tribute band. With Liv-

erpool being the European Capital of Culture in 2008, there were additional attractions for those visiting the city, and many people (both UK and non-UK delegates) were surprised at the vibrancy and architecture of the city and region, adding to their experience of the Congress.

The international nature of the presentations and of the audience (about one third were from outside the UK), made for interesting discussions and exchanges. As hoped, the programme helped to illustrate the similarities that we face, as research managers and administrators, regardless of the scale or established nature of our particular organisation

The Liverpool Congress was a success, building on the formidable start in Brisbane.



Delegates at the main congress gala dinner on Wednesday 17th June

We all look forward to continuing the international relationship and quality of event in South Africa in two years' time. **RG**

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## INORMS 2010

The next International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS) Congress will take place in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2010. The congress will be jointly hosted by the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) and the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and will provide an opportunity to highlight much of



the work taking place outside the economic north. The congress will be the first of its kind to take place in Africa, and it will reflect nearly a decade of international research management cooperation.

The INORMS community has grown significantly in the last few years in response to regional efforts and demand and, by the time the 2010 congress comes round, we can expect to see further growth, with regional societies for India, East Africa and the Caribbean. The 'northern' research management societies are becoming more engaged with each other, sharing their results and best practice, and have also played a major role in developing research management in the economic south – with some developing, enhancing or reviewing their respective international chapters to accommodate this growth.

Thus, the INORMS 2010 Congress will not just be about international networking; it will also be about the internationalisation of research management societies, the pooling of resources and the increasingly borderless nature of research management.

The event will also focus on professionalism, and enhancing dialogue between funders and institutions.

Further details of the next INORMS Congress will be available on the SARIMA website at [www.sarima.org](http://www.sarima.org) and the ACU website at [www.acu.ac.uk](http://www.acu.ac.uk) **RG**

## The Association of Commonwealth Universities