

Steering Group Bulletin

JUNE 2009

No. 8

YOUR STEERING GROUP (CCSG):

LORNE BECKER and ADRIAN GRANT (Co-Chairs);

DONNA GILLIES (Author Representative);

LISA BERO, STEVE McDONALD and ROB SCHOLTEN (Centre Representatives);

JONATHAN CRAIG and ROGER SOLL (Co-Ed Representatives);

JANET WALE and LIZ WHAMOND (Consumer Network Representatives);

ZBYS FEDOROWICZ and HANS VAN DER WOUDE (CRG Representatives);

KATRINA WILLIAMS (Field Representative); JULIAN HIGGINS (Methods Group Representative);

RUTH FOXLEE (TSC Representative); SONJA HENDERSON (ME Representative)

INTRODUCTION FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

LORNE BECKER and ADRIAN GRANT

Truly seminal events happen rarely, and we have recently had two in close succession. In January 2009, David Tovey joined us as the first ever Editor in Chief of *The Cochrane Library*, with full editorial independence for the *Library's* publication. Then in April, Jeremy Grimshaw reported with the recommendations of our first Strategic Review in sixteen years of operation. David's appointment marks a watershed in the history of the Collaboration and the *Library*. For some time now we have been professionalising our business arrangements, and this new role allows us to do the same for our editorial arrangements.

David will be taking a lead role in ensuring that we apply the rigorous editorial and quality standards developed by the Collaboration's members over many years, and will be developing and expanding these as required. The Strategic Review, conducted by a small internal team and with the assistance of Ashridge Consulting, has allowed us to focus in on what makes the Collaboration unique, on the key benefits that our organisation brings to health care globally, and on how we can develop and improve our extraordinary organisation to better deliver our aims and live to our principles.

Key recommendations of the Review are that we re-emphasise our primary mission to produce high-quality systematic reviews; acknowledge formally our secondary (but supporting) missions of training, methods development, and advocacy for evidence-based decision-making; and identify principles for developing new products or lines of activity. At its April 2009 meeting, in conjunction with a strategic discussion session involving Centre Directors, Co-ordinating Editors, and others, the Steering Group accepted all of the recommendations of the report, and committed to taking forward the work necessary to make them a reality (SEE PAGE 7).

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OUR SINCERE THANKS TO THE NORDIC COCHRANE CENTRE, AND IN PARTICULAR JANNIE HEDEGAARD, FOR THE EXCELLENT ORGANISATION OF THE MID-YEAR MEETING IN VEDBÆK, DENMARK, THIS APRIL

MEMBERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are very pleased to announce that **Jonathan Craig** will take over as Co-Chair of the Steering Group when Adrian Grant's term expires this October. Jonathan is well known to many of you. He has been a member of The Cochrane Collaboration since 1998 when he began work on his first Cochrane review. He is now a co-author on 49 reviews and as the Co-ordinating Editor of the Cochrane Renal Group has contributed to the production and updating of all of that Group's 68 reviews. Jonathan brings a wealth of relevant experience and international recognition as a clinician, researcher, policy maker, journal editor, guideline developer and consumer advocate. Within the Collaboration, he has a leadership role in the Diagnostic Test Accuracy Methods Working Group, the Co-ordinating Editors' Executive and the Co-Eds Methods Working Group, in addition to serving on the Steering Group and two of its advisory groups.



Jonathan will be inducted as a Co-Chair during the Singapore Colloquium this October, and all of us on the Steering Group are looking forward to working with him in this new role.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to **Joy Oliver**, who stepped down as a Centre Staff Representative following the Freiburg Colloquium in October 2008. Joy's post is currently up for election, as are seats representing the Consumer Network, Co-ordinating Editors and Trials Search Co-ordinators. Voting is conducted through Archie, and information has been sent out to entity representatives by Claire Allen. Elected candidates will take up their posts at the Annual General Meeting during the Singapore Colloquium.

The Group would also like to thank **Dave Booker**, Web Development Manager, who is taking extended leave to travel with his family in Nepal; we wish him all the best. We welcome **Chris Mavergames** to this role in Dave's place. Chris is leading the redevelopment of cochrane.org over the next few months and describes his progress later in this Bulletin.

COCHRANE AUTHOR
DISCOUNT ON ALL WILEY BOOKS
<http://eu.wiley.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-302237.html>

MONITORING AND REGISTRATION GROUP MEETING

The Steering Group would like to thank **Zbys Fedorowicz** (CRG Representative) for his excellent hospitality at the MRG's recent meeting in Bahrain (29-31 May 2009). The MRG (a sub-group of the CCSG) had a very productive meeting, focussing in particular on its role within the Collaboration in light of the recommendations of the Strategic Review of the Collaboration.



THE MRG PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT STANDING: IAN SHEMILT, JOS VERBEEK, HANS VAN DER WOUDE, NICOLE SKOETZ, KAREN NEW, ROB SCHOLTEN, ZBYS FEDOROWICZ, CLAIRE ALLEN, MINGMING ZHANG. LEFT TO RIGHT SITTING: MARIAN SHOWELL, JASON WASIAK, LUCIE JONES, JOY OLIVER.

The meeting was scheduled to coincide with the first Collaboration symposium to be held in the Middle East, promoting evidence-based health care in collaboration with the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). This event generated significant press coverage in the region and was conducted under the patronage of Bahrain's Prime Minister, Sheikh Khalifah bin Sulman Al Khalifah.

UPCOMING CCSG MEETINGS



2009 Colloquium: Singapore, 11–14 October

2010 mid-year: Auckland, New Zealand, 22-27 March

2010 Colloquium: Keystone, Colorado, USA, 18-22 October

The call for invitations to host the Centre Director and CCSG mid-year meetings in 2011 is open until the end of July.

Interested applicants should email **Jini Hetherington** at the Secretariat: jhetherington@cochrane.org.

A bid to host the 2011 Colloquium is currently under consideration by the Colloquium Policy Advisory Group (CPAG) and the Steering Group, and the decision will be communicated to the Collaboration in due course.

UPDATE FROM THE WEB TEAM

CHRIS MAVERGAMES



The Cochrane Web Team is currently in the initial stages of implementing the open-source Content Management System (CMS) in 'Drupal' to manage cochrane.org and the entity sites currently using the Entity Website Builder (EWB). Drupal was chosen after a year-long procurement process and we are now installing and configuring it to manage content across Cochrane's web presence, including programming the system's interaction with Archie and preparing for the possible creation of features such as a Cochrane Intranet, blogs and RSS feeds. It will also facilitate the impending information architecture redesign of cochrane.org.

This CMS implementation process is scheduled to last into October/November, and will be followed by rigorous testing of all systems for roll-out in late 2009/early 2010. I attended the first ever Cochrane **Web Strategy Summit** in London, England, with members of the Web Strategy Group (newly formed in Denmark at the CCSG mid-year meeting), which includes David Tovey (Editor in Chief), Deborah Pentescio-Gilbert and Philippa Scoones (John Wiley & Sons), and Rasmus Moustgaard (Systems Developer of the Collaboration's Information Management System). From this meeting, the Web Team gathered ideas to further our work in Drupal and our redesign plans. In addition, we will have a booth with the IMS at the Singapore Colloquium where we plan to canvass opinion on possible new layouts for cochrane.org and possibly offer some basic Drupal tutorials for potential web contributors and entity webmasters.

* WEB 2.0 SYMBOLS

THE DISCRETIONARY FUND

The Discretionary Fund exists as an enabling device to allow Entities to seek limited funding for projects of benefit to the whole Collaboration. Applications can be made at any time and must meet some basic criteria (Cochrane Policy Manual, section 1.5.3). Recently, the number of bids has been low, and the Steering Group therefore took the decision to raise the limit per application from **3000** to **5000 GBP**, whilst retaining an overall fund value of 15,000 GBP per annum. It is hoped that this will raise interest in the Fund.

CEO and EiC: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

NICK ROYLE (CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE COCHRANE COLLABORATION)

and

DAVID TOVEY (EDITOR IN CHIEF OF *THE COCHRANE LIBRARY*)

In the last six years the Collaboration has taken a number of steps to professionalise its operations. These include the appointment of Nick Royle as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in 2003, and of David Tovey as Editor in Chief (EiC) in 2009. Nick and David are enjoying a close and productive working relationship, and we thought it would be useful to spell out where the boundaries lie between the two roles.



David's role has at its centre the Collaboration's core mission of preparing, maintaining and promoting the accessibility of Cochrane systematic reviews. Focussing primarily on quality issues in the preparation and publication of the reviews, David has editorial independence to take forward the Collaboration's principal publication – *The Cochrane Library* – to ensure that it remains a world-beating resource for those interested in the effects of healthcare interventions. David is supported in his work by an Editorial Unit based in London, England.

Nick's role encompasses the organisational, business and finance operations necessary for the Collaboration to function, and for David and others to be able to get on with their jobs without getting side-tracked. His role includes oversight and engagement with everything from legal issues such as intellectual property rights, contract negotiation, and legal advice, through talent management, particularly when there are employment issues to be resolved, to finance and audit.



Most items of business sit neatly in one category or the other. For others there will be overlap or grey areas. As an example, contractual issues surrounding publication of *The Cochrane Library* will normally sit with Nick rather than with David. If there is any doubt, David and Nick will sort out between them who will deal with what. So, if you are in any doubt, don't worry about whom to approach. Between them, David and Nick will make sure that you get the support you need.

REPORT FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

DAVID TOVEY

What have I been doing?

I have spent much of my first four months in post consulting with individuals and entities in order to inform myself about the work of the Collaboration, and formulating ideas collectively about how we can best move forwards. I presented a report summarising my findings and early conclusions to the Steering Group at its April meeting in Denmark. This will form the basis for the work of my Editorial Unit team over the next few months. The Strategic Review of the Collaboration has also been published during this time, and has been crucial in developing my understanding and planning ahead.

Current plans

I am delighted to announce three new appointments to the Editorial Unit team based in London. They are, in chronological starting order, **Giovanna Ceroni** (Business Manager), **Harriet MacLehose** (Senior Editor) and **Toby Lasserson** (Scientific Editor). Over the next few months we will be concentrating mainly on the following projects:

Quality development

We are quite close to having agreed standards for editorial processes across Cochrane Review Groups (CRGs) following some recent work by a group of Co-ordinating Editors in Denmark, and building on previous work in this area. In order to explore the extent to which these standards are currently achieved, and to identify variation in practice (and resources), we will circulate a self audit document shortly to CRGs asking for a description of their current processes. This will then be amalgamated, anonymised and fed back to the CRGs and the wider Collaboration during the Singapore Colloquium.

Updating

The Updating Working Group (UWG) reported to the Steering Group in Denmark, and responsibility for overseeing the updating process has now passed to the Editorial Unit. I am very aware of the many challenges CRGs and review authors face in maintaining Cochrane reviews. I am currently working on proposals based on the work of the UWG and CRGs, informed by my conversations with review authors and editors, to ensure that we are able to meet our own aspirations and our users' expectations in this area.

Website development

Technology is at the heart of the Collaboration, and we are working to ensure that our web and digital production

services work closely together to continue to deliver a premier service to the Collaboration and external users, building on the findings of the user testing in Oxford and Oslo. We held a web strategy meeting in London in early June to prepare an action plan for more effective joint working and co-operation, and also to deliver much needed benefits to our customers. These benefits will include more frequent publication of the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, better site navigation, and improved labelling of updated reviews.

'Cochrane Response' and 'new product' development

Over the next six months we will explore the feasibility of developing a 'Responsive Review' process, as indicated within the recommendations of the Strategic Review. We will need to explore with internal and external stakeholders what such a service would look like, how it might be resourced and supported, and what strategic partnerships would be required to ensure the project's success. We will explore other opportunities for developing products related to the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* which, as the Strategic Review indicated, is our core function.

Feedback

I hope that I will be able to work closely with the Feedback Management Advisory Group and CRGs to revisit and develop standards and practice for responding to feedback from customers. *The Cochrane Library* was an innovator in creating web-based knowledge, with the capability to encourage 'comments and criticisms'; with the advent of Web 2.0 and user-generated content, we need to ensure that we can maximise the potential of interaction with users.

Podcasting

The introduction of podcasts has been an enormous success and a great tribute to the work of **Mike Clarke**, the Web Team, in particular **Chris Mavergames**, many review authors and **Laura Sampson** from Wiley-Blackwell who has co-ordinated their collective efforts. I am delighted that Mike has agreed to continue in his role as podcast editor, and look forward to continuing to develop the service.

Improving Communication

We are developing a communication strategy for the Editorial Unit. The Cochrane Collaboration is a huge virtual network, and we need to ensure that we maintain excellent connections with all Cochrane entities, in order to shape our own strategic direction and to play a central part in the work of the organisation. The strategy will incorporate face-to-face contacts, teleconferences and use of communication technologies, and is a vital element of our work.

THE COLLABORATION'S FINANCES: THE EFFECT OF THE 'CREDIT CRUNCH'

NICK ROYLE

The Cochrane Collaboration's core finances come from publishing revenue – sales of *The Cochrane Library*. These funds are deployed by the Steering Group on cross-Collaboration functions, such as software development and maintenance, administrative functions, and the Editorial Office. The audited accounts are presented to the Annual General Meeting for approval by the Collaboration's members, and posted on our website.

The good news is that our accounts are healthy, and that income is holding up well at a time of considerable financial turmoil. Our expenditure is currently exceeding our income, as part of a deliberate strategy of using reserves to fund strategic initiatives. Our aim is to reach a stable position in which income exceeds operational expenditure, with the excess available for strategic initiatives.

However, we are in a time of considerable risk, and a particular concern is the effect on our income of currency fluctuations. Well over half of our publication income is earned in US dollars, but the part of John Wiley and Sons Ltd (a US company) that handles *The Cochrane Library* is UK-based. Our income is, therefore, paid to us and our accounts are prepared in UK pounds sterling. The dollar has risen in value against the pound by over 30% in the last year, and our earnings have risen accordingly.

Whilst this is good news, the down side is that we don't know where currency levels will be in six or twelve months' time - after all, nobody foretold last year's currency swing. The largest part of our ongoing expense obligations are paid in UK pounds. Therefore, if the dollar declines relative to the pound, our income will decrease while our expenses will not. The risk is that, if we plan our future expenditure levels based on current income, should the dollar fall back to nearer last year's level, we would be considerably over-committed, and facing a large and dangerous financial shortfall.

At its April 2009 meeting the Steering Group agreed that this was not the time to be adventurous with expenditure. Rather, and as part of the work arising from the Strategic Review, we should identify where major expenditure will be required to implement its recommendations, and, as the world's financial turmoil eases, and the Strategic Review follow-on actions crystallise, it will put us in a good position to make the necessary strategic investments.

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE FOR THE COCHRANE LIBRARY

To ensure the accountability and editorial independence of the Editorial Unit, and to provide a mechanism for conflict resolution, the Steering Group has agreed to the formation of an oversight committee for *The Cochrane Library*. A working group has been established to investigate the overlap of the oversight committee with the remit of the Publication Arbiters.

As noted in a recent article by the World Association of Medical Editors: *"Editors-in-Chief and the owners of their journals both want the journals to succeed but they have different roles. The editor-in-chief's primary responsibilities are to inform and educate readers, with attention to the accuracy and importance of journal articles, and to protect and strengthen the integrity and quality of the journal and its processes. Owners (whether professional associations or for-profit companies) support the core values and policies of their organisation and are ultimately responsible for all aspects of publishing the journal, including its staff, budget, and business policies. The relationship between owners and editors-in-chief should be based on mutual respect and trust, and recognition of each other's authority and responsibilities. Conflicts can damage both the intellectual integrity and reputation of the journal and its financial success."*

STEERING GROUP CHAIRS: REVISED ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND ELECTION ARRANGEMENTS

The Steering Group has agreed to widen the eligibility criteria for Steering Group Co-Chairs beyond the existing membership of the Group to anyone who holds, or has held, a leadership position within the Collaboration. As this requires a change to the Constitution of the Collaboration, the decision will require ratification by the Collaboration as a whole at the next Annual General Meeting (AGM), to be held during the Singapore Colloquium this October. At the AGM, Adrian Grant will be presenting a list of essential and desirable criteria for the post, and clarifying what is meant by the term 'leadership position'. Candidates should check their nomination statement against these criteria.

COCHRANE COMMUNICATION LINKS

EMAIL DISCUSSION LISTS NEWSLETTERS AND BULLETINS
PODCASTS RSS FEEDS
www.cochrane.org

HOW DO I ACCESS THE COCHRANE LIBRARY?

<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/mrwhome/106568753/AccessCochraneLibrary.html>

ATTENDANCE AT STEERING GROUP MEETINGS

As part of its strategy to manage potential conflicts of interest within the Steering Group, it has revised its rules on attendance at its face-to-face meetings. Apart from the elected members of the Group (unless they have a significant conflict of interest for a particular item), attendance at the full meeting is restricted to the three ex officio members: the CEO, the EiC, and the Administrator (who is also the Company Secretary and the minute taker). Other members of the Secretariat may attend at the Co-Chairs' discretion. Other people (such as the Director of the IMS, the Website Development Manager, the Directors of the Trading Company, and others submitting papers to the Steering Group) will be invited to join the discussion of specific agenda items when the Co-Chairs assess, in advance, that this would enhance decision-making. Only elected Steering Group members are able to vote on policy items.

This new strategy was employed successfully at the recent mid-year meeting in Denmark, and had the added benefit of reducing the number of 'descriptive' presentations made to the Group, which can distract attention from the policy-setting agenda.

THE IMS

The Collaboration is committed to the IMS system. Produced by the **Nordic Cochrane Centre (NCC)**, and co-financed over the years by the NCC's hosts (the Rigshospitalet) and the Collaboration, a recent independent report highlighted the technical excellence of the system that, allied with our production processes, allows us to do things that other publishers only dream of.

Financing such an important project has a high degree of priority, but balancing financial demands across the Collaboration always presents challenges. That's why the Steering Group welcomed at its recent meeting a well-constructed proposal that set out the case for and costs of a series of measures to improve performance and usability that will be delivered over the next couple of years.

The cost of these improvements will be in the order of an additional 200,000 GBP and will be paid for out of the Collaboration's publishing income.

OPPORTUNITIES FUND: ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS FROM THE 2008 ROUND

We are pleased to announce the funding of three projects from the most recent round of the Opportunities Fund:

A Course for Cochrane Statisticians: Addressing Advances in Meta Analytical Techniques, Doug Altman, Statistical Methods Group, 16,500 GBP.

Cochrane Training: Developing a Core Collection of Approved Training And Support Materials, Steve McDonald, Australasian Cochrane Centre, 48,997 AUD.

Evaluation of The Cochrane Collaboration's Risk of Bias Tool, Jonathan Sterne, Bias Methods Group, 29,354 GBP.

The successful applicants are to be congratulated on the high quality of their proposals and we look forward to the results of their proposed projects. We also thank all applicants to the Fund for the time and effort put into their applications.

CONTINUATION OF THE OPPORTUNITIES FUND

The Steering Group discussed at length in Denmark whether or not to continue the Opportunities Fund, because of the many other calls on the Collaboration's core funds, and the growing interest in directing existing funds to support the strategic objectives of the Collaboration. While the existing approach to soliciting applications was seen to have been an important mechanism for generating good ideas from Collaboration members, it was felt that this strategy could be modified to invite applications that fit with the directions outlined in the Strategic Review of the Collaboration. There was broad agreement that the Opportunities Fund Committee, which assesses the applications, should in future be comprised of non-Steering Group members, with the Steering Group considering the Committee's recommendations and having final approval. It was agreed to continue the Opportunities Fund for the next year, but with changes that would address the above concerns.

In addition, to ensure that the outcomes and deliverables of all Opportunities Fund projects are disseminated as widely as possible across the Collaboration, new reporting requirements for the projects are being implemented, which will amongst other things require project leaders to develop mechanisms for communicating the outcomes of the project to potential stakeholders within the Collaboration in the short, medium and longer term.

COCHRANE REGISTER OF STUDIES

It's taken a while, but the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the *Cochrane Register of Studies* (CRoS) is going out to potential IT developers in the next few days. CRoS has the potential to revolutionise the way that we assemble CENTRAL.

CENTRAL – the *Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials* – is the Collaboration's core repository of references to trial reports. It is assembled by periodically combining the data contained in entities' specialised registers, together with records from other bibliographic databases such as MEDLINE and EMBASE, and is the primary reference source for authors of Cochrane Systematic Reviews.

Based on the report of the CENTRAL Vision Group, informed by our experience of operating the 'interim measures' for the assembly of CENTRAL, and guided by considerable consultation, the RFP seeks proposals to deliver a new online system for entities to use to manage their specialised registers, and from which the data for CENTRAL will be aggregated. Crucially, the new system will allow both studies- and referenced-based records in the same database, and will make the aggregation process simpler and more efficient.

All Cochrane entities will be sent a copy of the RFP, and will be very welcome to put forward proposals, or to suggest potential developers. The Collaboration is committed to achieving value-for-money in its procurement practices, and all proposals will receive equal treatment.

COCHRANE 'REVIEW GROUP CO-ORDINATORS' NOW 'MANAGING EDITORS'

The Steering Group has recently agreed to the request from Review Group Co-ordinators (RGCs) to change their title to 'Managing Editor' (ME), with immediate effect. This change has been approved in order to give organisations outside the Collaboration a better understanding of this role. All Collaboration documents and websites are being updated to reflect this decision.

OFFICIAL RELATIONS WITH THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO): UPDATE

Since the update in the last Steering Group Bulletin, **Lisa Bero** (Centre Representative) has made considerable progress in promoting the Collaboration's bid to become a Non-Governmental Organization in Official Relations with WHO. As an NGO, the Collaboration would conduct formalised communication with WHO, and would have membership of the World Health Assembly, which passes WHO health resolutions.

Lisa will be co-ordinating a special WHO-linked session during the week of the Colloquium in Singapore this October, at which various case studies will be presented on successful interactions between the Collaboration and WHO. Abstracts of these interactions will be made available to the session participants and may also be added to cochrane.org. Following the session, in November 2009, the Collaboration's application will be formally assessed by WHO.



SUMMARY: THE STEERING GROUP AND THE STRATEGIC REVIEW

We have **reaffirmed the Collaboration's primary purpose** to be the production of high quality systematic reviews.

We have **accepted all of the recommendations** of the Review.

We have identified one or more Steering Group members to **take responsibility for moving forward each individual recommendation**.

We have changed our budget allocation process to better support the activities recommended in the Review.

We are looking for ways to **get widespread involvement from Collaboration members** in our ongoing plans for moving forward the Review recommendations.

www.cochrane.org

www.thecochranelibrary.com

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