



RIVAL Reunion – May 25<sup>th</sup> 2023– Edinburgh

*RIVAL 2019-21: Did we get it right?*

Emeritus Professor Hazel Hall, Edinburgh Napier University



## About Hazel Hall

I'm an Emeritus Professor in the School of Computing, Engineering, and the Built Environment (SCEBE) at Edinburgh Napier University, and Docent in Information Studies in the School of Business and Economics at Åbo Akademi, Finland.

This is my personal web site. Here I maintain a [blog](#), showcase my on-going work with the staff and research students in SCEBE's [Social Informatics Research Group](#), keep an archive of my [research outputs](#) and [popular handouts](#), link through to my [external presentations on SlideShare](#), and provide [my full contact details](#) for anyone who would like to [get in touch with me](#).

There is a [Wikipedia page](#) that provides details of my early life, career, education, recognition, and personal life.



— Professor Hazel Hall in 2020

<http://hazelhall.org>



# From a network model to a model network: strategies for network development to narrow the LIS research-practice gap

Hazel Hall, Bruce Martin Ryan, Rachel Salzano and Katherine Stephen  
*Centre for Social Informatics, Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, UK*

Narrowing the  
LIS research–  
practice gap

---

Received 22 April 2022  
Revised 24 September 2022  
Accepted 27 September 2022

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of the empirical study was to examine whether strategies shown to work well in one model of network development for library and information science (LIS) practitioners and researchers could be applied successfully in the development of a new network and contribute to the narrowing of the research-practice gap in LIS.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Overall, 32 members of a new professional network were surveyed by a questionnaire following the completion of a programme of four network events held between 2019 and 2021.

**Findings** – The analysis demonstrates the transferability of the existing model of network development to a new network and that it can be successfully adapted for online delivery of network events and activities.

**Practical implications** – The criteria deployed for the evaluation of the new network could be used in other similar settings. Funding bodies can also use these findings as demonstration of the value of their investment in network grants.

**Originality/value** – This contribution on means of growing collaborative networks to narrow the LIS research-practice gap stands out in contrast with prior research that tends to focus the support of research productivity of academic librarians in North American universities for the purposes of career development. Here wider aspects of research engagement are considered of value for LIS practitioners from a range of sectors and institutions, beyond North America, for purposes that are broader than personal advancement.

**Keywords** Collaboration, Evaluation, Librarians, Researchers, Networks

**Paper type** Research paper



Hall, H., Ryan, B.M., Salzano, R. and Stephen, K. (2023), "From a network model to a model network: strategies for network development to narrow the LIS research-practice gap", *Journal of Documentation*, Vol. 79 No. 3, pp. 757-783.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-04-2022-0088>

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2018							Pilot	Bid to RSE				Award
2019							E1				E2	
2020			E3				E4				E3	
2021	E4i	E4ii	Report									Lit search/review
2022	Writing & submission			Peer review			Accepted & online					
2023	Bid 2			Print	E5							

## RIVAL timeline, including *JDoc* paper details



Katherine starts job at SGSSS

Hazel retires

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2018							Pilot	Bid to RSE				Award
2019							E1				E2	
2020			E3				E4				E3	
2021	E4i	E4ii	Report									Lit search/review
2022			Writing & submission				Peer review			Accepted & online		
2023	Bid 2			Print	E5							

Diane joins Napier

Rachel takes up lecturer post

Staffing milestones

Bruce is  
still here!





RIVAL Reunion – May 25<sup>th</sup> 2023– Edinburgh

*RIVAL 2019-21: Did we get it right?*

Emeritus Professor Hazel Hall, Edinburgh Napier University



‘To create a collaborative network of Scotland-based Library and Information Science (LIS) researchers and library and information professionals interested in maximising the value and impact of LIS research.’



**Arts and Humanities Network Award, 2018**  
*Anticipated delivery: 2019-2020*  
*Actual delivery: 2019-2021*

## Team D's evaluation of RIVAL against its initial aims

Data collected by questionnaire, February-March 2021

1. *Social Network Analysis (SNA) questionnaire*
  - To explore changes in network topology
  - All 32 network members submitted data
  
2. *Outcomes questionnaire*
  - To gather opinion on the extent of network building
    - Level of agreement with statements
    - Opportunity to complete free text responses
  - 23 respondents (78%)

## Outcomes questionnaire themes

1. Meeting the project goal
2. Creating *new* relationships
3. Strengthening *existing* relationships
4. Sharing contacts
5. Research confidence (practitioners only)
6. Application of new learning
7. The means of bringing the membership together
8. Resources created during the funded period
9. Impact of the COVID19 pandemic lockdowns

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither disagree nor agree
Agree
Strongly agree
Don't know

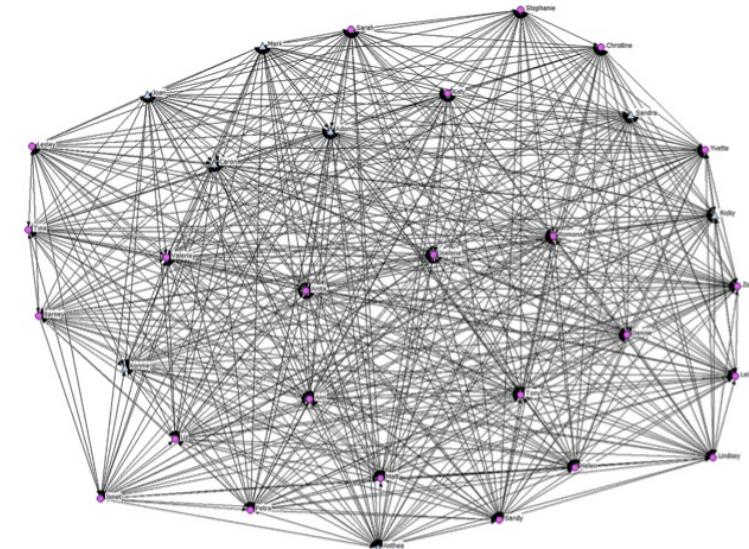
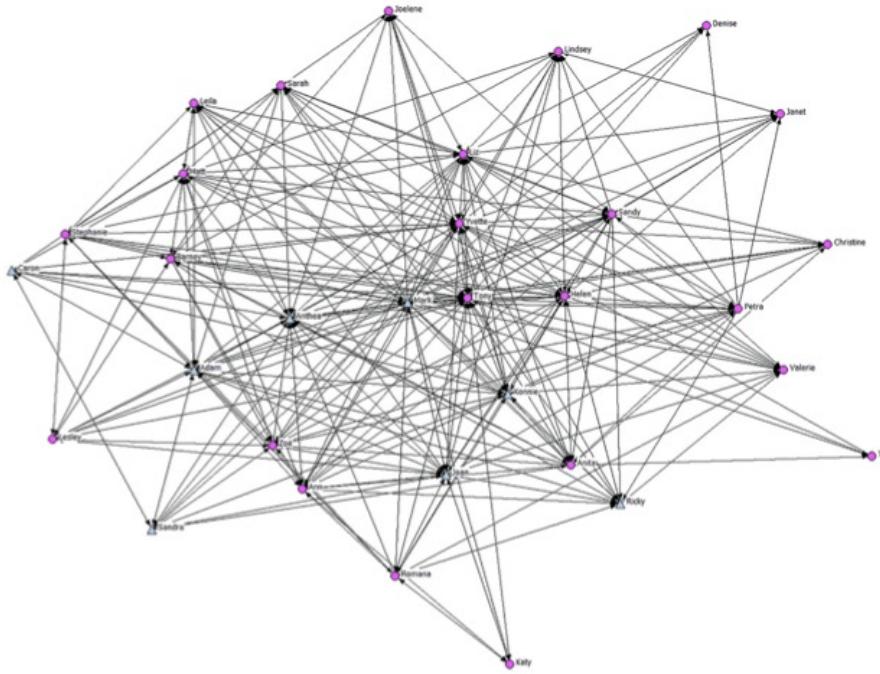
‘The RIVAL project has created a collaborative network of Scotland-based LIS researchers and practitioners interested in maximising the impact and value of LIS research.’

‘RIVAL network membership has increased my belief that I can attain my professional goals as a research user.’

## Sample outcomes questionnaire statements

‘I have been able to incorporate research ideas inspired by the needs expressed by practitioner RIVAL network members into my research plans.’

‘The RIVAL project has produced some useful online resources that can be used by network members and others.’



- Increase in network density from 38% of all possible network connections to 90% from first sociogram to the second
- ‘Network centrality’, i.e. individual proximity of members to one another in the network, is more even in the second sociogram

## The main question: was a network created?

*Insight from analysis of outcomes questionnaire responses*

- **Yes:** the majority believed a network had been established
- Sectoral sub-networks also identified
- New connections fostered
- Existing relationships developed, including those with co-workers
- Willingness to share contacts beyond core group
- Diversity of membership regarded a strength
- Participation in a Scotland-wide initiative valued
- The *mode of project delivery* was conducive to network development

## ***Nature of the network created: some reservations***

‘I suspect that for some participants engagement in the RIVAL sessions is quite wide but not that deep. So, the network has been useful for lesson learning, building contacts and knowledge across research and evaluation themes but [after only a few sessions including online] it will not have impacted behaviour to a major extent.’

## Other main findings discussed in this presentation relate to:

- Impact of participation in RIVAL on *practitioner roles* as:
  - research users
  - research partners
  - practitioner-researchers
- *Learning acquired* to enhance research into practice, and practice into research
  - New learning
  - Open access online resources
  - Integration of learning into service provision
  - Incorporation of research ideas into plans of LIS researchers

## Impact of RIVAL on practitioners in research roles

Role	Increased belief in meeting professional goals	Growth in confidence in other ways
As research <i>users</i>	✓	✓
As research <i>partners</i>	✓	✓

## Beyond research user/partners to practitioner-researchers

‘Participation [in the RIVAL network] has encouraged me to pursue a research journey as a practitioner.’

## Learning from RIVAL network membership

- General appreciation of the LIS research environment
- Measurement of research impact
- Processes associated with the execution of academic research
- Communication of research results

‘I’ve attended research impact valuation events before, this is the first time I feel confident in understanding its foundations.’

‘I have increased my knowledge and understanding of the requirements of academic research [and] constraints [that] funding puts on project development.’

## Integration of learning into service provision

- Majority had already integrated learning into service provision
- Remainder had the intention of doing so
- Pandemic lockdowns identified as a limitation

‘[RIVAL has given] me the opportunity to learn and discuss different approaches to data collection/use, and how research can be used to support service development ideas, identify aims/outcomes and challenge assumptions, including my own.’

## Incorporation of research ideas into plans of LIS researchers

- All LIS researcher respondents had incorporated research ideas inspired by RIVAL participation into their research plans
- RIVAL has laid a path for practitioners to communicate research needs to academic researchers

‘The network has increased my awareness of how to raise practitioner issues with the research community, in order to consider whether research exists or could be undertaken in support of those issues.’



## Getting it right: the four RIVAL teams

- Team A: RIVAL event 5 ✓
- Team B: practitioner-oriented article ✓
- Team C: grant proposal
- Team D: project report ✓

**RIVAL project evaluation**

**Research, impact, value and LIS in library and information practice in Scotland**

Editorial team: Hazel Hall, Bruce Ryan, Sally Kerr, Andrew McTaggart, Maureen McWhirter, Andy Taylor, Professor Melissa ~~Jacobs~~, and Dr Alison Tyler

March 2021

**RSE**  
The Royal Society  
of Edinburgh  
KNOWLEDGE MADE USEFUL

## National Library of Scotland collaborative PhD profiles



### Rhonda Rathburn

**Rhonda** is researching 'Not participating, not included: Towards inclusive assessment practices in the Scottish library sector.' She is supervised by Dr Paul Gooding, University of Glasgow, Dr David Brazier, Edinburgh Napier University, and Amina Shah at the National Library of Scotland (Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities, Applied Research Collaborative Studentships, Arts and Humanities Research Council). From 2022.

<https://www.nls.uk/using-the-library/academic-research/collaborations/profiles/>

## Getting it right: impact measurement of RIVAL 2018-2021

- Impact best measured 2-10 years after project end (Klautzer et al, 2011)
  - Possible for impact to be felt
  - Memories fresh enough for evidence to be accessible

Assessing policy and practice impacts of social science research: the application of the Payback Framework to assess the Future of Work programme

Lisa Klautzer, Stephen Hanney, Edward Nason, Jennifer Rubin, Jonathan Grant, Steven Wooding

Research Evaluation, Volume 20, Issue 3, September 2011, Pages 201–209,  
<https://doi.org/10.3152/095820211X13118583635675>

2021+2= 2023; 2021+10= 2031



## Getting it right: the future

- Over to you!

## Discussion topics: 15 minutes on each

1. Which of the following would be of most benefit to the LIS practitioner community in Scotland, and why?
  - a) Development as **research partners**, i.e. how best to work with LIS researchers on joint research projects
  - b) Development as **research users**, i.e. how to access and use published research in the development and delivery of services
  - c) Development as **researcher-practitioners**, i.e. how to conduct research
2. What are the learning priorities of LIS researchers and practitioners in Scotland with regards to the themes of research, value and impact?
3. What practical steps can you suggest to meet the requirements identified in your answers to Q1 and Q2?



RIVAL Reunion – May 25<sup>th</sup> 2023– Edinburgh

*RIVAL 2019-21: Did we get it right?*

Emeritus Professor Hazel Hall, Edinburgh Napier University