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# HERON

Sally Curry  
HERON Project Manager,  
University of Stirling  
Tel: 01786 466616  
E-mail: s.g.curry@stir.ac.uk

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In March 2002 it was announced that HERON was to be acquired by Ingenta. With this development, the HERON Project, which has been funded by JISC since its inception in 1998, has completed its final goal - that of moving from a funded project into a service.

In the Winter 2001 issue of the SCONUL Newsletter it was reported that HERON was working with a consultant (John Cox), to identify a permanent way forward for the project to enable it to complete its intended transformation from project into service. This consultancy was undertaken in September and October of 2001 and John Cox made his final report to the HERON Partners (Universities of Stirling, Napier and South Bank) and the Advisory Board in mid November. The Partners accepted his recommendations which covered:

- 1 ways in which the HERON service could immediately begin to put the service onto a more business like footing
- 2 options for the future of the service

Since then the HERON team and the University Partners have been involved in discussions with possible future partners and Ingenta quickly emerged as the leading candidate. Since mid December intensive negotiations have been carried on between HERON and Ingenta and by early March the discussions had reached a stage where it was considered appropriate to announce the agreement between the two parties to the public.

HERON has been very successful in establishing a copyright clearance and digitisation service for the UK higher education sector. However, in doing so we have identified many areas where changes are needed if the use of digitised learning materials, course packs or the development of academic 'digital libraries' is to become widespread. In particular there is a need for a reduction in costs for the end users, improvement in turn around times between the submission of requests and the delivery of digitised material and a reduction in

the uncertainty amongst users of the service about both these factors.

The association between HERON and Ingenta offers a great opportunity for HERON to make improvements in all these areas. Access to Ingenta's massive databases and holdings of digitised journal articles (subject to approval by rightsholders where necessary) will speed both the selection and delivery process, will improve the quality of the digitised documents HERON is able to offer and should also begin to reduce the average cost of requests. HERON has always been keen to work more closely with publishers and rightsholders, specifically in establishing direct mandates with them. Once again, linkage with Ingenta should assist the HERON team in achieving this objective with benefits which should accrue to both the content owners and the content users. This will then lead to a further improvement in access to digitised material especially with regard to requests for extracts and chapters for non-journal material.

This transfer is an excellent example of how JISC funding and institutional contributions can be used to fund the lengthy gestation period of a new development with a commercial partner coming in to establish a solid, ongoing service.

On behalf of the HERON Partnership, Carolyn Rowlinson, Project Director, has said: 'From a largely untested idea, the service has grown rapidly, evolving according to the needs of our members. HERON's role in supporting universities in their efforts to widen access and to develop innovative teaching and learning is increasingly valued in higher education, and students are enthusiastic about online delivery of recommended reading. We welcome this outcome: Ingenta not only guarantees continuation of the HERON service, but promises exciting opportunities for development which we believe will offer real benefits to the higher education community.'

HERON: [www.heron.ac.uk](http://www.heron.ac.uk)

Ingenta: [www.ingenta.com](http://www.ingenta.com)

John Cox Associates: [www.johncoxassociates.com](http://www.johncoxassociates.com)