

National research management associations and networks: challenges and alternatives —An interactive poster—



Danish Association of Research
Managers and Administrators



Poster presented by the Board of DARMA (contact information below): Olaf Svenningsen (presenting), Stine Bjorholm, Marianne Gauffriau, Karen Slej,
Nicolaj Tofte-Brenneche, Jane Tymms-Andersen, Lone Varn Johannsen

Research Management Associations (RMA's) have grown in numbers and size over the past decades. In countries where formal RMA's do not exist, informal networks are often present. From activities in DARMA, EARMA, and the Leiden Group, it is clear that the diversity in style and development of organizations is much more variable than a single model can capture. The range includes loose informal networks, as well as fully staffed professional associations, but all types tend to have similar goals and objectives.

But how do RMA's create value for members?

Which works best: formal organization or informal network?

How can organizing research managers and administrators best benefit both the profession (you) and the research that we support?

Based on our experience from the Danish DARMA, we have made a few notes below, **and now we ask for your input!** Please grab a pen and a sticky note below, and share your ideas and opinions with us in the space below!

Informal network vs. association

Advantages

Network:

- + Low admin workload.
- + Informal communications.
- + No or small responsibilities.

Association

- + Name recognition; formal collaborations.
- + Economy – security.
- + Long-term planning.
- + Larger range of possible activities.
- + Efficient communications.

Disadvantages

Network:

- No formal structure to support activities.
- No economy – limited possibilities.
- No support for logistics.
- No name recognition → collaborations are difficult (who are you talking to?).

Association:

- Certain level of bureaucracy is required.
- Expectations...
- Higher stakes; failure is always an option...

Small vs. BIG

Small associations...

- ...have less distance between members and board, "everybody knows everybody".
- ...can easier tailor activities to special needs.
- ...are more dependent on an operational board.

BIG associations...

- ...require more bureaucracy.
- ...can hire staff or consultants.
- ...can have a board focusing more on strategy and strategic development.

DARMA as an example of a small association

DARMA's development:

- 2008 – founded, first GA
- 2009 – courses developed, Brussels study tour
- 2010 – Nordic NIH conference
- 2011 – US East Coast study tour
- 2012 – INORMS in Copenhagen
- 2014-15 – Fully legally and financially independent association, Special Interest Groups and Westensee Workshops launched



What DARMA offers:

- Annual Meeting and General Assembly
- Study tours (Brussels, Copenhagen, Eastern US, UK, Munich, and more)
- Courses (two: introduction to RMA, strategy)
- Westensee Workshops
- Special Interest Groups
- Funder workshops
- Travel stipends
- Website:
 - News and views
 - Events lists
 - Job ads
 - Contact w. other members



Ladder of increasing member involvement:

1. Online discussions @ DARMA.dk & LinkedIn
2. Group discussions at Annual Meetings
3. Westensee workshops (members organize, DARMA pays, shared logistics)
4. Special Interest Groups
5. Ad hoc working groups
6. Board membership



Photos by Karam Sidoros, from DARMA's Annual Meeting 2018, 17-18 May, in Nyborg, Denmark

Challenges for RMA's in small countries (DARMA's experience)

- Member base (number of RMA's in country): c. 300, limited potential for growth.
- Limited (but healthy) financial turnover constrains hiring staff.
- Dependence on member engagement (initial euphoria often fades quickly).
- Professional development offerings from larger association (EARMA, ARMA, SRA, NCURA) constrains activities.
- A small and voluntary board is sensitive to external pressure on board members: job shifts, stress, health problems, private life crises, etc.
- The Board is – by necessity – operational, leaving less room for strategic development.

Place for
sticky notes

Please grab a sticky note, and tell us what you think!

Any and all comments are welcome! Use the questions below for inspiration:

- What makes a network or an association interesting to you?
- What would you like to see more (or less) of from your RMA/network?
- What does the "network vs association" issue mean for you and your own professional development needs?
- Do you recognize "quickly fading initial euphoria"? What would make you engage more long-term?

Please stick your notes here:

This poster and all the comments we receive will be posted on DARMA's webpages immediately following the INORMS 2018 Conference.
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