

2009 HUMANE Conference, King's College London, Friday 12 to Saturday 13 June 2009

Identifying and Managing risks in Universities.

Administration is all about reducing uncertainty. If there was no uncertainty, most HUMANE members would be in other careers. Parts of this uncertainty are identified as risks. As an effect of some US scandals, auditors shifted their responsibilities onto management by requesting that the organizations should identify and manage risks. This procedure has spread to Europe, and in some states risk management is one of the prescribed procedures in the public sector.

We have reason to believe that risk management will be an identified activity in most large institutions in a not too distant future. Even if risk is not yet spelt out as an issue in your national system, this conference gives you opportunity to reflect on what might happen, what the effects might be, how effects could be reduced and how you would stand up to your responsibilities if the worst happened.

The kinds of risks that we run differ from institution to institution. But there are some common categories:

- All institutions have the responsibility to provide researchers, teachers and students with a safe and secure working environment. We try to provide this whilst we on the other hand are expected to be institutions open to society.
- We all live with the risk of loss of property, through theft, fire or accident.
- We all run financial risks; less evident and important to public agencies; vitally important to those who are private entities.
- Some of us own our buildings and have to build reserves for maintenance. (A friend of mine on a study visit to Notre Dame in the late 90's fired the final question to the almighty President: "What's the biggest challenge for the next millennium? Answer: The plumbing!")
- We also have to consider scientific risks. How do we protect the intellectual property, whether it belongs to the institution, the teachers or the students? That is not only a matter of financial responsibility, it is also our responsibility that they don't lose results which has cost time out of time of the scholars' lives, time that cannot be replaced.

The conference aims to give insights in the nature of these risks and examples of how institutions identify risks and how risks are reduced or accounted for through presentations from Keynote Speakers and contributed papers.