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*Ensuring a  
bright future for  
research libraries*

**A guide for vice-chancellors and  
senior institutional managers**

November 2008



[www.rin.ac.uk](http://www.rin.ac.uk)

This guide is the result of the discussions of the Research Information Network's working group on researchers and libraries, which met during the course of 2008. Its terms of reference are on page 13. The RIN is grateful to the members of the group for their support in producing this document.

“Good library and information services are an essential underpinning for research, just as they are for successful teaching and learning.”

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This guide and case studies are available online at:  
[www.rin.ac.uk/bright-futures-libraries](http://www.rin.ac.uk/bright-futures-libraries)

## Introduction

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### What does this guide cover?

This guide aims to help senior managers in the higher education sector to ensure their library and information services keep pace with the evolving needs of researchers. Good library and information services are an essential underpinning for research, just as they are for successful teaching and learning. Success in research, at both national and institutional levels, depends critically on the quality of the information services to which researchers have access.

### Why should you take action?

Digital technologies and online information resources have brought fundamental changes in how research is done, and also in what researchers expect from library and information services. The services that librarians and information professionals provide have also changed fundamentally over the past decade. They can now do much more to provide leadership that brings improvements in research performance and effectiveness. New resources, services and technologies continue to create new opportunities, new challenges and new expectations. Librarians and information services need the resources and the continuing top-level support within their institutions to ensure that they can fulfil their potential and meet these challenges.



## What support is needed?

Most higher education institutions (HEIs) have clear research strategies. The challenge now is to set out a clear direction for the relationship between these strategies and the development of your institution's library and information services, ensuring that the two fit well together. There is also a need for much better communication and engagement between library and information professionals, researchers, and managers at all levels in HEIs.

## How can the Research Information Network help?

We offer a framework that sets out the key issues you need to consider to ensure your research information services develop effectively. This guide builds on the evidence now available about:

- how researchers are making use of the library and information services currently available to them; and
- the different perspectives and expectations of researchers and information professionals on how those services might be developed and improved for the future.

We have also produced case studies of good practice examples, available at [www.rin.ac.uk/bright-futures-libraries](http://www.rin.ac.uk/bright-futures-libraries)



## The framework

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- 1 Linking library content and collections to research strategies
- 2 Cataloguing, navigation, discovery, delivery and access:  
Researchers' needs
- 3 Sharing skills and expertise
- 4 Communicating and evaluating research outputs
- 5 Curation, preservation and disposal
- 6 Sustainable resources



# 1. Linking library content and collections to research strategies

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No single institution can provide all the publications and other information resources – digital and non-digital – that their researchers need to consult in the course of their research. HEIs therefore need to develop collection and content development strategies that are explicitly related to their research strategies and priorities, which provide appropriate levels of the specialised materials (including foreign-language materials) to support all their key areas of research strength, and which take full account of the continuing rise in the volume of research publications.

HEIs therefore should:

- a **ensure that the process for developing content and collection strategies is open and collaborative**, involving active consultation between library and academic staff, and that the strategies are regularly reviewed and updated
- b **seek to exploit the potential for collaboration with other libraries**, including the national libraries and the five designated major research libraries in England – particularly in relation to highly-specialised and foreign-language materials
- c **publish their strategies** so that they are widely available both within and outside their institution, and
- d **explicitly relate the development and acquisition of special collections of rare material to the research strengths of the institution**, and encourage researchers to exploit such collections.



## 2. Cataloguing, navigation, discovery, delivery and access: Researchers' needs

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The usefulness of the content and collections provided by libraries and from other sources depends on how easily researchers can discover, locate and gain access to them. Institutions need to ensure that their researchers can readily make use, through the library and other providers, of services that enable them to discover, locate and gain access to information sources that may be relevant to their research.

HEIs therefore should:

- a **provide for researchers the means of readily making use of specialist, as well as generic navigation and discovery services** covering the full range of information resources – published and unpublished, at article level as well as title level – relevant to their research
- b **support their library and information services in providing training** in the use of such services, along with user-friendly online guides
- c **ensure, as far as possible, that the content held or licensed by their libraries is fully catalogued**, with bibliographic records accessible via online discovery services, and that action is taken to eliminate cataloguing backlogs
- d **encourage their libraries to share catalogue records with other libraries**; to make them available through collaborative catalogues and online discovery services, both national and international; and to ensure that they are exposed and made available to users through Google and other search engines
- e **support their libraries in providing efficient and user-friendly services to enable researchers to gain access where possible to other sources** of published material that they do not themselves hold, and
- f **encourage their libraries to work with others in developing innovative services** that integrate into researchers' workflows the discovery of, and access to, relevant information resources.

### 3. Sharing skills and expertise

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In a new and more complex research information environment, there is a growing need for better communication and engagement between library and information specialists and academic research staff, so that they can share skills and expertise with each other. Institutions need to develop arrangements to promote this engagement and professional development.

HEIs therefore should:

- a **promote dialogue that produces a clear articulation of the different kinds of specialist services that library and information professionals can provide to researchers** in each of the key subject and disciplinary groups represented in the institution; and ensure that library and information staff have the capability and the capacity to deliver these services
- b **develop professional and skills development programmes** for library and information staff and for research staff and students; and ensure that such programmes are planned and delivered collaboratively wherever possible, so that each group can benefit from and develop the skills and expertise of the other
- c **facilitate where appropriate the embedding of library or information professionals in research teams** to provide specialist advice and support, where appropriate and possible, and
- d **clearly identify provision for the costs of specialised research information services** and build these into the costings for all research activities and projects supported by, or carried out within, the institution.



## 4. Communicating and evaluating research outputs

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Effective communication of research results is an integral part of the research process. Library and information professionals are key sources of advice and expertise about the rapid changes taking place in disseminating, publishing and sharing research results, and also in assessing their impact. Institutions should ensure that they develop and implement, through consultation both with researchers and with library and information staff, strategies that optimise the dissemination and impact of the research their staff undertake.

HEIs therefore should:

- a **establish policies and procedures, in consultation with researchers and library and information services professionals, so that research outputs are made accessible widely and rapidly, and as far as possible, free of charge to users**, ensuring compliance with the requirements of the major research funding bodies in the UK and overseas
- b **develop clear policies and procedures as to the roles that institutional and/or subject-based repositories should play in promoting access to institutional research outputs**, as well as in facilitating the creation of registers of these outputs for research evaluation and other purposes; and as to their staffs' obligations to deposit outputs in such repositories
- c **establish clear policies and procedures on how to support researchers in meeting the costs of the publication fees** charged by open access journals
- d **establish clear policies as to the ownership of intellectual property (IP)** created by their staff, and ensure that clear and detailed guidance is available to researchers about IP rights and their implications
- e **monitor the development and take-up by researchers of social networking tools and services** including blogs, wikis, and social tagging, which have the potential to bring fundamental changes in established forms of scholarly communication; and take advice from library and information professionals about their implications, and
- f **draw on the expertise and advice of library and information professionals in making use of bibliometric and cybermetric tools**, which are likely to play an increasing role in the assessment and evaluation of research outputs and impact at international, national and institutional levels.

## 5. Curation, preservation and disposal

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Information resources of all kinds – printed and manuscript, digital and non-digital, published and unpublished – need to be managed and curated effectively if they are to be accessible and usable; and arrangements made for their preservation, if they are to remain accessible in the long term. Institutions need to put in place policies and procedures to manage their information resources effectively, and to ensure that those of value are preserved for the long term.

HEIs therefore should:

- a **develop and implement policies and procedures to determine which information resources should be managed and preserved over the long term and how;** which can be disposed of within a shorter time, and how such disposals should be managed
- b **develop in collaboration with academic and library and information staff effective curation, conservation, preservation and disposal policies and procedures;** and ensure that those policies are explicitly related to the research mission and strengths of the institution, and that they are regularly reviewed
- c **establish policies for managing their holdings of low-use printed material where the content is available in digital form;** and participate in the UK Research Reserve and other collaborative initiatives to ensure that they adopt a planned and coherent approach to disposal
- d **collaborate with specialist agencies and services** including the Digital Curation Centre, the national libraries and publishers, in seeking to ensure the preservation of, and access to, the digital resources held by libraries that are of long-term value but which may otherwise deteriorate rapidly, and/or become unreadable as hardware and software formats change, and
- e **cooperate with research funders, others institutions and specialist agencies in developing a coherent and comprehensive framework of services to ensure that valuable research data are managed effectively from the point of creation,** preserved and made accessible to others. The heterogeneity and complexity of research datasets means that there are especially difficult challenges in managing them; in determining which should be preserved, in what formats and for how long; and in curating and preserving them for the long term.



## 6. Sustainable resources

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Library and information services need sustainable resourcing at a level that enables them to deliver and develop their mission to support and enhance research performance. Recent estimates suggest that just to keep pace with increases in the volume of research outputs produced worldwide, libraries will require an annual 2% addition to their subscription budgets in real terms. Increases in the costs associated with scholarly communications, as well as international comparisons, suggest that institutions need to invest more funding in their library and information services.

HEIs therefore should:

- a **take account in determining the budgets for their library and information services of the increasing volume, range and sophistication of digital resources and services**, and of the increases in researchers' expectations of the information services provided for them, and of libraries' exposure to above-average levels of inflation and exchange rate fluctuations
- b **consider, in consultation with researchers and library staff, the possible scope for reducing or eliminating some of the costs** that are associated with libraries' continuing to acquire, store and provide access to print copies of material alongside digital versions
- c **note that** while moves towards open access to research outputs have the potential to reduce costs for some libraries in the long term, **open access initiatives will impose additional costs on research-intensive institutions in the short to medium term**, in terms of establishing and running institutional repositories and in meeting the costs of publication fees for open access journals
- d **consider how best to meet the additional costs associated with professional and skills development activity**, and increase the capacity and capabilities of library and information staff to support and enhance institutional research performance
- e **recognise that there is scope for cost savings through the sharing of information resources and expertise, and through the development of collaborative services**; and that there is also scope for recovering some costs by including the costs of specialist library and information resources and services within the budgets for research projects, and

- f **seek to benchmark their library and information services for the support of research against comparable institutions both in the UK and overseas;** and participate in collaborative work that seeks to identify and where possible to quantify the benefits and returns from investments that they make in their library and information services.

## Background to the guide

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In April 2007, the RIN published a major report, *Researchers' use of academic services and their libraries*, which examined the way that researchers use and perceive library services. The report was based on detailed survey work with both researchers and librarians and provided an up-to-date and forward-looking view of how researchers interact with academic libraries in the UK.

Following a workshop to discuss the findings and implications of the report, the RIN set up a working group of librarians, researchers and senior institutional managers to:

- consider the report's findings and conclusions, and other relevant evidence and findings
- identify instances of good practice to illustrate these
- establish the implications for the policy and strategy of HEIs and how these might impact on the development and management of research activity and library services
- develop guidance and recommendations for the benefit of HEIs
- consider the manner in which this guidance and recommendations might be taken forward, and the advocacy required to do so
- set out these views in a document to be presented at an event to be held during 2008.

This guide is the result of those discussions.



## Useful links

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- British Library [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)
- Digital Curation Centre [www.dcc.ac.uk](http://www.dcc.ac.uk)
- National Library of Wales - Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru  
[www.llgc.org.uk](http://www.llgc.org.uk)
- National Library of Scotland [www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk)
- JISC (2005) Open access fact sheet  
[www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/pub\\_openaccess.aspx](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/pub_openaccess.aspx)
- RIN (2007) Researchers' use of academic services and their libraries [www.rin.ac.uk/researchers-use-libraries](http://www.rin.ac.uk/researchers-use-libraries)
- RIN (2008) Activities, costs and funding flows in scholarly communication [www.rin.ac.uk/costs-funding-flows](http://www.rin.ac.uk/costs-funding-flows)
- UK Research Reserve [www.rin.ac.uk/ukrr](http://www.rin.ac.uk/ukrr)

# About the Research Information Network

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## Who we are

The Research Information Network has been established by the Higher Education Funding Councils, the research councils, and the national libraries in the UK. We investigate how efficient and effective the information services provided for the UK research community are, how they are changing, and how they might be improved for the future. We help to ensure that researchers in the UK benefit from world-leading information services, so that they can sustain their position as among the most successful and productive researchers in the world.

## What we work on

Our aim is to help ensure that information services and policies develop in ways that meet researchers' needs, and that we exploit the opportunities arising from new technologies and services so that we sustain a world-leading research sector in the UK. Our work focuses on five key themes:

- **search and discovery**
- **access and use of information services**
- **scholarly communications**
- **digital content and e-research, and**
- **collaborative collection management and storage.**

For more information, visit our website at [www.rin.ac.uk](http://www.rin.ac.uk)



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