

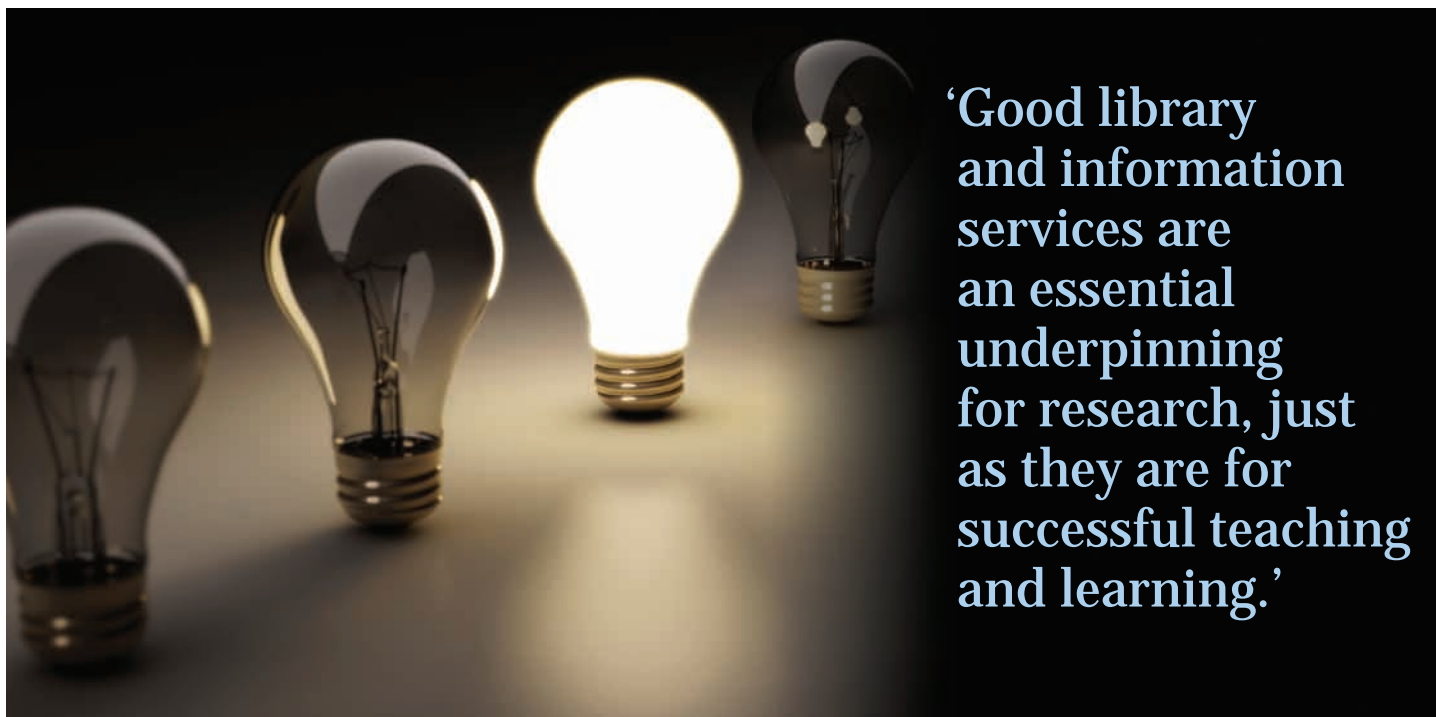
Ensuring a bright future for research libraries

A guide for vice-chancellors and senior institutional managers

October 2008

Research Information Network briefing

www.rin.ac.uk



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

The Research Information Network (RIN) has produced a guide aimed at vice-chancellors and senior managers in higher education institutions on how to ensure library and information services keep pace with the evolving needs of researchers, *Ensuring a bright future for research libraries: A guide for vice-chancellors and senior institutional managers* (October 2008).

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.

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, and they now offer much more in providing 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.

The full guide is available at www.rin.ac.uk/bright-futures-libraries along with examples of best practice.

A summary of the key issues is available overleaf.

What can this guide do for you?

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 institutions' 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. The guidance builds on the current evidence 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.

It offers a framework that sets out the key issues senior managers need to consider if they are to ensure their research information services develop effectively. The detailed recommendations can be found in the full version of the guide.

Key issues

1. Linking library content and collections to research strategies

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 need to develop collection and content development strategies that are explicitly related to their research strategies and priorities.

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

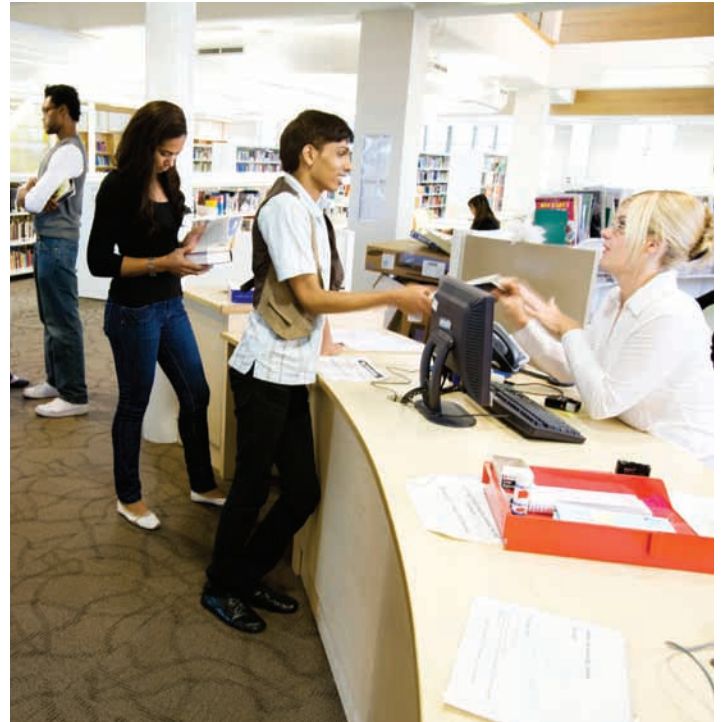
The usefulness of the content and collections provided by libraries and from other sources depends on how easily researchers can discover, locate and gain access to them. Institutions need to ensure that their researchers can readily make use, through the library and other providers, of services that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

3. Sharing skills and expertise

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.

4. Communicating and evaluating research outputs

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 with both researchers and with library and information staff, strategies that optimise the dissemination and impact of their research staff's work.

5. Curation, preservation and disposal

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, to ensure they 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.

6. Sustainable resources

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 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.

More information

If you would like more copies of this briefing to distribute to colleagues, please contact Sarah Gentleman, email sarah.gentleman@rin.ac.uk, telephone 020 7421 7214.