

Ensuring a bright future for research libraries

Selected examples of good practice in UK research libraries

This document highlights instances of good practice in UK research libraries, to illustrate the RIN's guide for Vice-chancellors and senior institutional managers, ***Ensuring a bright future for research libraries*** at www.rin.ac.uk/ourwork/using-and-accessing-information-resources/ensuring-bright-future-research-libraries.

The examples relate to the broad headings around which the framework for action is structured.

The RIN welcomes suggestions about additional examples that can be added to this list. Please contact stephane.goldstein@rin.ac.uk if you have any ideas that you would like to submit.

1. Linking library content and collections to research strategies

Virtual research environment – an example from King's College London

The aim of the VRE project, implemented during 2008-09, is to develop an integrated research environment across the College that supports and streamlines the processes and practices of research; and supports strategic research planning that contributes towards the achievement of College Strategic Goals, by:

- supporting research collaboration and communication;
- supporting the production of and open access to scholarly works and other digital research outputs, including published papers, grey literature, presentations, e-theses and research data;
- supporting the creation, storage, analysis and use of research data and other digital assets that form the source materials for and the outputs of research; and supports access to these materials subject to appropriate authorisation;
- ensuring effective curation and preservation of the College's digital assets, including research outputs, and those digital assets for which the College is the custodian;
- providing a showcase for [Information Services & Systems](#) and [Centre for e-Research](#) expertise, both within the College and in the wider HE and public / business communities.

The project is articulated around five strands, with the goals indicated in each case:

- ***Research planning and administration:*** to implement an infrastructure that provides integrated, standardised access to information and tools that support the planning, administration and management of research from initial conception to completion and strategic planning.

- **Collaboration and communication:** to implement a flexible, extensible framework for collaboration between researchers, both across the College and with researchers in collaborating institutions.
- **Scholarly works:** to provide an infrastructure that supports scholarly publishing of digital research outputs, including publications, grey literature, presentations, e-theses, and research data.
- **Data management:** to create an infrastructure that supports the creation, storage, analysis and use of research data and other digital assets that form the source materials for and outputs of research; and supports access to these materials for authorised users.
- **Data preservation:** to provide an infrastructure that ensures effective curation and preservation of College digital assets, including the outputs of research, and those digital assets for which College is the custodian.

Cross-institution resources acquisition and cataloguing – an example from the University of Edinburgh

As part of the Chinese Studies in Scotland Initiative, the Scottish Funding Council supported a project to set up a Master of Chinese Study course concentrating on modern sociological and economic aspects of China. Glasgow, Abertay, Aberdeen and Edinburgh university libraries collaborated on acquisitions of material, and also on website creation and support.

The service addresses the needs of both staff and students involved in the course. It has greatly strengthened the collections of the Libraries for which materials is bought (Edinburgh and Glasgow), e.g. Chinese social sciences resources, yearbooks, large microfilm acquisition of US DoS papers. Take-up has been significant, with post-project shared cataloguing of foreign language resources – Chinese & Arabic by staff in Edinburgh, Russian by staff in Glasgow, for each other's catalogues.

Staff teaching on the course are eligible to borrow from all participating institutions' libraries.

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

Systematic review support – an example from the University of Birmingham

Background:

Academic support teams offer bespoke support in expert literature searching and reference management for any group undertaking a systematic review. This could be funded research or postgraduate students undertaking the review as assessed work. The level of support is adapted and customised to meet the needs of research groups and individuals.

Specific example:

A systematic review of the literature on the effects of portfolios on student learning in undergraduate medical education (BEME -Best Evidence Medical Education review).

The review is ongoing but the Library Services input occurred between October 2005-May 2006

Summary of library support activities:

- Attendance at initial meetings and input into scoping of the review
- Supported the bid process – providing broad search terms and advised on resources to search
- Developed expert search strategy and translated terminology and operators for searching 8 subject specific bibliographic databases
- Trained review group in use of advanced search operators
- Set up customized reference software database to meet the groups information management needs for the project. Including output styles and tagging
- Trained review group in using the reference software
- Devised test exercise for recruitment of a research assistant to the review group
- Supported research assistant in maintaining current awareness searches and using reference software
- Ongoing advice and troubleshooting

Staff resource and time:

- Work was undertaken as business as usual with no additional resource provided (part of a portfolio of research support activity)
- Additional staff time commitment needs to be negotiated and balanced within general workload
- Approximately 15 hours to develop the search strategy and set up current awareness services.
- Additional time commitment in ongoing support.
- Library staff involved are cited as a member of the review group in any papers produced.

Effects of support and impact on research:

Library staff are an integral part of the project team at every stage, contributing to the initial successful bid and ongoing review work of the project team. This service is rolled out to other research groups and individuals, as new reviews are considered.

3. Sharing skills and expertise

Skills training programme – an example from the University of Surrey

Researcher information skills support integrated into Roberts funded Postgraduate Research Skills Training Programme. This training programme is made available to all research students and involves Library Information professionals working alongside the Academic responsible for the research students training programme. This is at an early

stage of development following the integration of the skills team into the Library in August 2006 and the opening of a new centre in September 2007. Potential for future development to link this team with the support team managing development of the Institutional Repository. Discussion has started about this.

The current work involves the team of six academic liaison librarians working alongside the Postgraduate Research Skills Coordinator (1 post). It is having an increasing impact (approximately half the research student population attend some of the sessions) but currently relatively few sessions in the programme also involve information professionals. Major persuasion has been required to build these connections due to difficulties involved in developing joint team approaches plus issues on the Library side connected with lack of confidence. It is probably too early to gauge the impact on research practice.

Research data library – an example from the London School of Economics

A Research Data Library service aims at supporting academic researchers that use data as part of their research activities. The LSE Data Library was set up in 1997 although Data Libraries in the US started back in the 60's.

The users in the LSE include PhD students and member of staff but increasingly MSc and undergraduate students are using the data collection and requesting help from the Data Librarian.

The service comprises both a collection of data resources (survey data, aggregated databanks, financial databases and Geographic Information Systems resources) in electronic format and the support for locating and using datasets in general.

This type of research support service establishes close connections between library and researchers. Data Librarians are able to learn about interests of their researchers by working on the ground with them. Observable results include a better use of the library collections due to the awareness raising activities and an increase number of requests for data resources and support services.

The impact on research practice of such services includes an increase in awareness of data availability which should result in an increase use of data.

4. Communicating and evaluating research outputs

Librarians supporting RAE2008 – an example from the University of Birmingham

At the University of Birmingham, librarians directly supported the Research Assessment Exercise 2008, through a librarian's membership on the University's RAE management committee (2005-2007), and 2 librarians directly contributing to the RA2 publications sub-project (2006-2007).

This project supported the University's entire submission and involved 2 key tasks:

- Adding and validating data for selected publications. This required an understanding of publication metadata and HEFCE field requirements, and the ability to find the data.

- Sourcing the full-text of items in a variety of formats. (DOIs, pdfs, books, conference papers etc). Again, advanced information retrieval skills were critical to this area.

The tangible results were a successful RAE submission, with all data and the full-text of items sent to HEFCE. Moreover, long-term gains are in the integrity of our publications database, the relations established with RAE leads and academics from across the university, and a greater awareness of the metadata and information retrieval skills of librarians. Librarians are now firmly involved in discussions around the Research Excellence Framework, and will continue to support the RAE in all of its guises.

This activity is the subject of a recent article in *Serials* – see <http://dx.doi.org/10.1629/21174>.

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