Changes in Academic Libraries: Evolution and Innovation in Research Support Services

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Abstract
Academic libraries support researchers with a range of services, including the development of collections and the provision of reference, information and instruction services. New services are emerging in response to technological, political, economic and social changes in the operating environment, particularly as a result of developments in national research policy and networked data-driven science. Studies of library responses to the opportunities offered by e-research have been conducted in North America, but there has been limited investigation of the situation in other countries. The present study aims to complement surveys of emerging practice from the United States by investigating research support services in the academic libraries of Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Ireland. The research questions are: What specialist research support services are being offered in the academic libraries? What new services are libraries planning? Are library staff constrained in providing specialist research support services? Do staff require additional education, training and support in research support roles? and How might library and information science schools respond to the evolving role of research support services in academic libraries? Emerging findings of the survey reveal varying levels of engagement with different types of research support services across the four countries. Bibliometric support services seem to be more prevalent than research data management, but data management services are more prominent in reported plans for library service developments in the future. The results of the study will also inform the design of education and training programs for the current and future library workforce.

Keywords: academic libraries; research services, bibliometrics, research data management, digital curation.

Introduction
Academic libraries support researchers and increasingly participate in the research process by providing a widening range of research services. New and innovative library services, in areas such as bibliometric analysis, research data management and development of data repositories are emerging in response to changes in tertiary education funding and policies, such as national processes for the assessment of research quality (Drummond & Wartho, 2009; Key Perspectives, 2009; MacColl, 2010). These funding and policy changes have coincided with technological developments, especially in the area of e-research (Borgman, 2007; Markauskaite, Kennan, Richardson, Aditomo, & Hellmers, 2012), to create opportunities for academic librarians to find new roles within their institutions and the research community (Corrall, 2012; Research Information Network, 2010; Swan & Brown, 2008).

There is a growing body of literature examining these changing academic library roles in North America (Shearer & Argaez, 2010; Soehner, et al., 2010; Walters & Skinner, 2011), but few studies in other countries, where research has concentrated on e-research, data management and the roles and practices of academics. Corrall’s (2012) literature-based review shows how many libraries in the United States are establishing their place in the e-research arena: some are adapting existing library practices to handling data in areas such as academic liaison, collection development, information literacy and repository management; others are concentrating on strategic issues, notably by providing advice and guidance on the submission of the formal data management plans now often required by research funders.
Auckland’s (2012) empirical investigation of the role and skills of subject/liaison librarians in supporting researchers is more broadly based than other studies and identifies a range of existing and embryonic research support services in libraries from America, Asia, Australia and Europe (including bibliometric analysis, digital curation and data mining), but her study is based on a sample of only 23 libraries worldwide. Our research aims to complement and extend prior work through a comprehensive survey of the research support services both offered and planned in academic libraries across Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland, in addition to defining the target audiences and operational partnerships for such services, identifying perceived constraints on service development, and establishing library priorities for preparatory and continuing professional education and training. The poster presents the background, purpose, research questions, methods, and emerging findings of the online questionnaire survey, which was distributed by email in February 2012.

**Purpose**

The study aims to investigate: (1) existing research support services; (2) planned research support services; and (3) library readiness for research support services, with particular reference to the education, training and development needs of the current and future academic library workforce.

The research questions are:

- What specialist research support services are being offered in the academic libraries of Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Ireland?
- What new research support services are libraries planning to offer in the future?
- Are library staff constrained in providing specialist research support services?
- Do library staff require additional education, training and support in research support roles?
- How might library and information science schools respond to the evolving role of research support services in academic and research libraries?

**Methods**

The research has taken a pragmatic approach, using an online questionnaire survey that is being analyzed using descriptive statistics. Academic libraries in the four countries selected were identified through the membership lists of the relevant national organizations, namely the Council of Australian University Libraries (CAUL), the Council of New Zealand University Librarians (CONZUL), the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) in the UK, and the Consortium of National and University Libraries (CONUL) in Ireland. The librarian or manager responsible for research services in each library was identified through staff directories on library websites. Email messages outlining the aims of the study and containing a link to the web-based survey instrument were personally addressed to the contacts identified to maximize the response rate. The instrument contained 34 substantive questions organized in four main sections, covering demographic information, bibliometric services, research data management services and future plans. It was piloted with academic library staff in both Australia and the UK. Table 1 shows the numbers of questionnaires distributed and usable responses received by country. Thirty-three of the 174 responses received were excluded from the analysis because they were either empty or contained only demographic data.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>New Zealand</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of institutions</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of responses</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate (rounded)</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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**Findings**

Analysis of the survey results is ongoing. The emerging findings reveal varied levels of engagement with different types of research support services across the four countries. Bibliometrics training, citation reports and calculations of research impact seem to be relatively well supported in Australia, New Zealand and Ireland, but less prevalent among the UK responses, though it is important to note here the lower response rate recorded for UK libraries. Current levels of activity in the area of research data management seem relatively low across the whole population, but with the examples of support reported varying between countries. However, there is more evidence of plans for future service development related to research data management than for bibliometric services, particularly support for developing institutional policy, but also in relation to developing data management plans and guidance on handling research data.
Conclusions

The full results of the analysis will provide a more complete picture, not only of current activity and future plans for research support services, but also of the perceived constraints on service development and the particular areas where library managers feel that staff need to develop their knowledge and skills. The findings will give libraries a broad view of what is happening in the field and a better understanding of their own competitive position in an important area of emerging practice. The study should also provide a firmer evidence base for library and information science educators and trainers to plan and design education and development programs to meet the needs of both new professionals and existing practitioners.

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References


Curricula Vitae

Sheila Corrall holds a chair in librarianship and information management in the Information School at the University of Sheffield, UK. She teaches subjects related to the management and delivery of library and information services, specializing in strategic planning and managing change, with a particular focus on academic libraries. Her research interests include the application of business management concepts and tools in library and information services; the roles and competencies of library, information and knowledge workers; education and training for library and information work; and strategic aspects of information literacy development. Recent work explores the intellectual assets of academic libraries and the evolving concept of the library collection in the digital world.
Mary Anne Kennan is a senior lecturer in the School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University, Australia. She teaches subjects on the digital environment, research data management and research methods. Her research interests build on her 2008 PhD, which focused on scholarly communication, institutional repositories, and open access, moving into the broader areas of e-research and research data management, including the practices of sharing and collaboration – growing areas of concern for information scientists, sociologists, academic and research librarians, and information technologists. Recent projects examine evolving research support services in academic libraries and the management and sharing of volunteer-collected data.

Waseem Afzal is a lecturer in the School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University, Australia. He teaches courses in strategic library management, knowledge management, project management in information agencies, and web studies. His research areas include human information behavior, the management of information organizations, e-commerce, economics of information, and library and information science education. His forthcoming book, Management of Information Organizations, offers a multidisciplinary perspective on the theory and practice of management for professionals working in libraries, museums, the media industry, publishing companies and other information centered organizations.