

Editorial: Reaching out to the research community: roles for academic libraries

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Following on from the issue on support for teaching, this issue of *SCONUL Focus* turns its attention to looking at the ways in which our profession can add value in supporting the research community.

The Research Excellence Framework (REF), the growth of open access, issues relating to research and data management and scholarly communication, as well as the requirement to extend more traditional means of support to an often disparate community, present a number of opportunities as well as challenges.

Jane Belger and Jennifer Crossley describe the approach taken at UWE to expand the growth of support to researchers there, focusing on two core activities – managing the institutional research and data repositories and scholarly communication, alongside the more traditional areas of liaison, teaching and advocacy. Vicky Wallace from the University of Birmingham gives an overview of the university's approaches to enhancing researcher engagement with research support services, noting how colleagues from different divisions came together to offer a 'world café' style event and a range of menus for bespoke training to help researchers raise their academic profile. The provision of innovative and appropriate study spaces within libraries remains important for researchers. Articles from the universities of Birmingham and Leeds show how they have tackled this, the latter developing a research hub within an existing building, whilst the former took the opportunity to design spaces for researchers and research collections as part of a new library build.

Ethnography-inspired approaches to determining user behaviour and experience have been popular in recent years when considering how best to support all students. This approach has been extended to the research community at the Open University, and the article by David Jenkins describes how the Open University has undertaken cognitive mapping to understand how their research students conduct research, with a view to maximising the relevance of services for this group.

It is perhaps wrong to assume that research students will commence their studies with all the skills required to conduct their studies; with this in mind, the article from Helen Williams at the University of Wolverhampton describes the new programme of doctoral academic writing support developed there, noting the popularity of daytime face-to-face support, despite the availability of online tools.

This issue also features a crop of articles which highlight the role that libraries can play in developing enhanced services to support the research process. The authors from UCL show how the appointment of Research Data Support Officers has enabled the library to build networks with others at the university to strengthen research data management advocacy and training, whilst an article from research librarians at the University of Bristol shows the potential to support researchers in data compliance matters such as the inclusion of data access statements in journal articles. At Loughborough, Elizabeth Gadd describes how a close working relationship between the research office and the library has led to the provision of enhanced bibliometrics support for their researchers, whilst in a similar vein, Helen Muir describes how her role as Research Support Librarian has evolved to support Queen Margaret University's REF submission – incorporating bibliometrics, altmetrics and open access publishing. Moving away from the UK, Rachel Isaac-Menard's article demonstrates that librarians face similar challenges in the USA as academic librarianship has changed. She shows how librarians at Adelphi University have assumed new roles, becoming instrumental in working towards the publication of a new book.

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A further three articles in this issue profile librarians who have also been undertaking research degrees themselves, providing interesting insights on the dual role of research supporter and research practitioner; Helen Fallon's article recounts her experience as an academic author, with reference to her role editing a themed issue of the *New review of academic librarianship*.

An initiative at Leeds Beckett University has brought together a number of research-related themes aimed at supporting their undergraduate community. The authors describe how they have launched the institution's first open access undergraduate journal, which offers the opportunity for students to enhance their digital literacy skills and provides them with experience of writing for publication and an understanding of the research culture, whilst at the same time recognising the contribution that undergraduates can make to research.

Moving on to collections, Gavin Willshaw offers us a flavour of the work being undertaken at the University of Edinburgh through a new project which seeks to digitise the remaining 17,000 of their 27,000 PhD theses so the entire collection of Edinburgh research is available for anyone anywhere in the world to download free of charge – evidence that the importance and significance of open access goes above and beyond the availability of journal articles!

Finally, this research theme concludes with an overview of the topics covered in the DARTS series of conferences – which are aimed specifically at librarians with an interest in research support – since 2005. This reflective article demonstrates nicely how the research landscape has changed over the last decade, as revealed in the content of the conferences.

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