
Research support at Cardiff University Library



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INTRODUCTION

Subject librarians have always provided research support services as part of their role, but in recent years this aspect of library work has been more clearly identified as an area for co-ordination and development. Open-access publishing, institutional repositories, the need to co-ordinate collection management and storage, the increasing availability of information technology (IT) tools to help researchers with their work and, not least, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) have all pointed to the need for a coherent library strategy and response.

INFORMATION SERVICES STRUCTURE

*'We need to provide and maintain a modern technological infrastructure that supports our research and education activities both on and off-site.'*¹

When Cardiff University and the University of Wales College of Medicine merged in 2004, the already merged directorate of information services was reorganised and new posts were created. One of these was head of library service development, which included the oversight of two new roles of senior consultants, for information literacy and library research support. There

and some of the larger schools also have a library committee. In addition, some of the subject librarians or IT consultants attend the school research committee and other school groups. Library representatives and subject librarians meet regularly to ensure that schools' concerns about the library are aired and the subject librarians can raise issues with the schools.

The increasingly inter-disciplinary nature of research, and of research centres within the university, means that the model needs to adapt in order to provide the most appropriate service to parts of the research organisation that do not meet the established pattern of provision for schools. We are already considering how to match subject librarians to the coverage of REF panels, and also to include the work of the university's multi-disciplinary research centres.

Identifying researchers' requirements

Every few years we conduct a library survey, to ensure that we understand and respond to the views of all service users. Several subject librarians have also done in-depth interviews with a wide range of researchers. This supplements the valuable data that has been collected nationally on the views of researchers, particularly in recent years in reports commissioned by the Research Information Network.³

Collection-development agreements are negotiated between subject librarians and schools and are endorsed via the schools' governance structures, ensuring that each school's information resources are tailored to the support of its academic priorities, including those of researchers. In addition, usage statistics for journals and e-books, and surveys of academic staff using Bristol Online Survey⁴ software, are being employed to provide an evidence-base for choices about subscriptions in a time of financial restraint.

Collaboration with colleagues

The work we do to co-ordinate services to researchers involves close collaboration with colleagues in information services in areas such as collection management, usage statistics, information literacy and IT. Through the research support group and other related groups, such as the collection development group, we are kept informed of developments in all areas and are able to represent the needs of researchers throughout information services. Staff are involved in various university groups and committees – for example, the directors of research and REF committees – and we also collaborate with colleagues in the research and commercial division (particularly regarding

was also a corresponding role for co-ordinating IT research support, and the intention has been to align IT and library research support more closely. To this end, a research support group was created, which is chaired by the director of information services and draws membership from across the directorate. The director also represents information services on the university's research committee and the new REF sub-group for the university, ensuring that the work of the research support group is tailored to the university's own priorities. Such links between information services and other directorates – such as planning and human resources – is key in ensuring that the research support strategy is aligned with the university's research goals.

COMMUNICATION

*'Success in research, at both national and institutional levels, depends critically on the quality of the information services to which researchers have access.'*²

Communicating with researchers and with senior managers and groups within the university is key to ensuring that library services remain relevant to the research process and that this value is recognised.

Central role of subject librarians

The subject librarians and IT consultants who liaise with the university's schools (departments) are central in ensuring the successful integration of research support at Cardiff. The subject librarian role includes training, help, advice and communication. Every school has a library representative appointed from among academic staff,

grant funding and external research liaison), staff and postgraduate training (including Roberts money) and the planning division (particularly preparation for REF).

Marketing library services

One further focus for the research support group is on finding the best ways to communicate with researchers so that they are aware of the ways in which information services can make their work easier, without adding to their information overload. We recently held a workshop for the group and the communications team, which resulted in a number of suggestions for a directorate-wide engagement strategy to ensure that service developments are both directly informed by researchers' needs and effectively marketed.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Systematic review partnerships

*'Part of what we want to do is to make sure that those decisions are being made by doctors and medical experts based on evidence, based on what works ...'*⁵

Some members of university library staff work in close partnership with researchers, carrying out systematic reviews, notably the librarians at Cancer Research Wales who are authors on a large number of urological cancer reviews. Unusually for an information services department in a university, the library service also has a specialist research unit, the Support Unit for Research Evidence (SURE).⁶ Established in 2000, SURE is a largely grant-funded unit whose researchers search for, and summarise, current and reliable evidence, largely in the form of systematic reviews. Projects are mainly, but not exclusively, in the fields of health and social sciences. Staff are skilled in advanced literature-searching, critical appraisal, summarising the best available evidence and the development of evidence-based methodologies. They frequently work in partnership with researchers from the schools on grant applications and as authors on systematic review publications. They also teach these skills to researchers undertaking systematic or literature reviews within and beyond the university. A Cardiff University systematic review network is being established in summer 2010, funded by the health care schools and with an emphasis on quality standards. The network co-ordinator will be based within SURE.

Special collections and archives (SCOLAR)

*'I am particularly pleased that the transfer of the [rare books] collection to Cardiff University will result in many more people being able to gain access to this superb resource in the future.'*⁷

The staff in SCOLAR work very closely with the academic schools to develop and exploit special collections and archives for research. The latest example of the success of this approach is the acquisition from Cardiff city libraries of a rare books collection⁸ that was originally intended to be sold at auction. Through extensive campaigning and negotiation between the city libraries, academics and librarians from Cardiff University, CyMAL (Museums, Libraries and Archives Wales) and considerable interest from the wider public, the university was able to secure the collection of 14,000 rare and antiquarian books. It includes 175 incunabula (the earliest printed books, from around 1500), around 500 rare Bibles, a comprehensive range of Restoration and quarto drama volumes, books from nineteenth- and twentieth-century British private presses and a rare set of early Shakespeare works. The recent presentation on the collection at the 'Material cultures' conference in Edinburgh illustrates this example of library/academic collaboration and gives further details of the collection.⁹

TOWARDS THE REF

Support for the forthcoming REF is a priority. For the last Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), library staff were involved in the verification of outputs, finding digital object identifiers (DOIs), creating pdf versions of journal articles and the collection of copies of the books that were included in the outputs. We liaised closely with colleagues elsewhere in information services and with the planning division – who were responsible for co-ordinating the university's RAE return – and with the academic schools. Informa-

tion services also offered technical expertise for managing the RAE software. It is likely that all of these services will also be called upon for the REF.

Bibliometrics

*'Recognising some of the burdens imposed on universities by the existing Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), the Government has a firm presumption that after the 2008 RAE the system for assessing research quality and allocating "quality-related" (QR) research funding to universities from the Department for Education and Skills will be mainly metrics-based.'*¹⁰

The Government's proposal in 2006 that metrics, including in part bibliometrics or citation analysis, should be the basis for assessing research quality, has been modified following feedback on the proposals and a pilot exercise. Peer review of outputs is again at the core of the assessment. Use of bibliometric data does remain in the proposal – it may inform the reviewing panels for some subjects, if they choose to use them, if the overall cost is not too high, and if any equalities implications can be mitigated.¹¹

The initial proposals for the REF have however increased the interest from faculty in bibliometric data and other drivers such as the requirement for citation data from some research funders, the use of the h-Index for publicising work, increasing interest in the impact factor for journals and the opportunity to use ResearcherID with easy linking to citation data from Web of Science, have all pointed to a requirement for more help and advice on retrieving and exploiting bibliometric data available from providers such as Thomson (Web of Science), Elsevier (Scopus) and Google Scholar. For the last two years, we have run a workshop as part of the university's staff-development programme entitled 'Citations count! Getting your research known', which consists of a presentation covering these issues plus a self-directed learning workbook. The sessions have been very well received and, in response to requests, we have also provided tailored workshops for some schools and given shorter presentations to various school and university committees and forums.

Open access

*'Many research funders now require grant recipients to make the journal articles arising from work that they fund free of charge ...'*¹²

It is important that we keep up to date with developments in open-access publishing, institutional repositories and the REF and think about ways in which we can help to keep academic staff informed, so that they can respond to and make the most of opportunities. The university's institutional repository, ORCA (Online Research @ Cardiff), will showcase the research output of Cardiff University and the record of outputs will be kept as complete as possible, with a view to using it to record REF outputs data. A JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee)-funded project, I-WIRE, led by the university, is under way; it seeks to make the process of deposit into ORCA as easy as possible, and to enable the re-use of the same data for different purposes.¹³ Library staff have uploaded the RAE 2008 output data into ORCA and, in collaboration with schools, are now in the process of bringing it up to date with publications from 2008 onwards. After this, the intention is that the I-WIRE project will have developed a quick and easy way for authors themselves to add details of their new publications to the repository. For example, authors may just be required to enter a DOI to retrieve all the relevant details, then they would need to attach a copyright-cleared, full-text version of the article and submit it to the repository. To encourage deposit of full-text outputs, we are working with the university's research committee to approve a mandate for open-access availability of Cardiff University publications and for the deposit of electronic theses. We recognise that work now needs to be done on systematically storing research data linked to the publications, and are watching international developments in this sphere with interest.

Authors and Cardiff University affiliation

*'Name ambiguity and attribution are persistent, critical problems imbedded in the scholarly research ecosystem.'*¹⁴

While the Open Researcher & Contributor ID (ORCID) initiative focuses on resolving the problem of identifying authors uniquely, the same can be applied to the institutions they work for. With the many different names that Cardiff University has taken on over the years and the different ways in which journal publishers record an author's affiliation, it isn't surprising that the university is presented in databases such as Web of Science and Scopus in a variety of ways. A check of Web of Science suggests that currently about 6% of the university's publications do not use the 'Cardiff University' name, but either a variant of it – for example, University of Cardiff – or the name of a

school and no institution name. We have talked to both Thomson and Elsevier about ways in which we can check and amend records to try to ensure that a 'Cardiff University' search will retrieve all the relevant records. Elsevier does have an affiliation search in its Scopus database, where papers are grouped together under the Cardiff University name even though the original may have said, for example, 'University of Wales College of Cardiff'. We have worked with Scopus to refine and improve this redirection algorithm. For Web of Science, Thomson does not use a similar algorithm, so its database relies on the searcher to input the variations, but we were able to supply it with information that will help retrieve Cardiff University records within another of its products, Essential Science Indicators. Essential Science Indicators is a source of comparative data for institutions when league tables are being compiled, for example, in the *Times Higher Education*, and so it is important to make sure that Cardiff University is fully and accurately represented.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

We offer various routes for researchers to undertake information literacy training in order to meet individual requirements. This work is co-ordinated with the information literacy team at Cardiff. A list of new members of staff is distributed on a regular basis to the subject librarians, who contact the staff member and offer an individually tailored training session, whether this is in the library or in the researcher's own office. A 2006 report found that just over a third of researchers reported receiving formal training in researcher discovery services¹⁵ and the take-up of the offer of an individually tailored training session at Cardiff records similar results, ranging from 31% to 37% in the last few years. However, informal feedback suggests the sessions are welcomed by those who respond to the invitation.

A further study by the Research Information Network showed that it is increasingly rare for researchers to come in to the library itself – researchers visiting the library at least once per week fell from 40% in 2001 to 22.5% in 2006, with a projected decline to 18.5% by 2011¹⁶. This emphasises the value of contacting new researchers directly to explain the availability of relevant electronic information resources as it is far less likely that the subject librarian will happen to meet them in the library itself.

Group training sessions are offered to new research postgraduates. Those who start at differ-

ent times of the year and miss the formal sessions are contacted and offered one-to-one or small-group training.

In addition, we offer group training sessions for research staff and postgraduate research students via the graduate centre and graduate schools, and as part of the university's staff-development programme. Sessions include 'Keeping your research up to date'; 'Intelligent web searching for researchers' and 'Endnote and Endnote advanced', and last year over 300 research postgraduates attended these sessions.

We are currently adapting and piloting the research readiness self-assessment (RRSA)¹⁷ diagnostic test of information literacy skills for postgraduate researchers, which has been developed and is hosted by University of Central Michigan. The test utilises a variety of question styles, including multiple-choice, multiple-response, problem-based and self-assessments. It gives students context-sensitive feedback and advice, including directing them to appropriate graduate centre or graduate school courses and e-learning materials, and it is being well received by students. This test software was used successfully at Swansea University last year to help its first-year research postgraduates assess their level of information literacy skills more accurately, and library staff at Swansea have helped us develop this pilot study.

WHAT NEXT?

*'Libraries should be able to show not only that they are operating effectively, but that they provide services with demonstrable links to success in achieving institutional goals.'*¹⁸

For all our users, including researchers, we work towards services that are provided seamlessly and with minimum effort involved in accessing information. To this end information services' research support group will be developing a broader menu of information literacy training options that encompass both the traditional skills summarised above and topics such as web 2.0 technologies.

In keeping with the findings of SCONUL's Top Concerns Survey 2010,¹⁹ our priorities are to ensure the most efficient financial management of the library budget, including maximum benefit from e-resources, and that support is available to researchers both on- and off-campus. The university's IT platform is a key part of those developments, along with a chat reference service using LibraryH3lp software that will be piloted

in the 2010/11 session.²⁰ Through a forthcoming survey and other feedback routes we will ensure that researchers' needs are both understood and represented through all aspects of the work that information services undertakes and, critically, that we demonstrate the value of these services in a very difficult financial climate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the helpful contributions from colleagues including Chris Dickson, Sonja Haerkoenen, Cathie Jackson, Rebecca Mogg and Janet Peters.

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