Serving different constituencies: researchers

1. INTRODUCTION

The past decade from 1992 has been formative in shaping the support for and delivery of research degree programmes. A number of initiatives are now in place which promise a coherent national strategy to underpin developments for at least the next five years. This chapter of necessity contains a considerable amount of background information, in part because this is now a good moment to reflect on the journey from Follett to the Research Libraries Network but also because understanding the future direction of support for researchers requires an understanding of how we got to this point.

2. THE BROADER CONTEXT

The United Kingdom higher education infrastructure comprises elite research institutions, commonly but not exclusively defined as the Russell Group of 19 research led institutions, and mass higher education institutions. Mass higher education universities include the red brick universities founded in the post war era and "New Universities" created post 1992 from former polytechnics. The elite universities with a heritage of scientific and technical research retain their dominance of research but keep a significant stake in undergraduate teaching. The mass higher education institutions provide courses for graduates mainly in professional and vocational areas, and in new subjects such as the apocryphal "meeja studies" much derided by the media. They retain, however, an interest in research. This system creates a number of tensions, between learning and teaching, between elite universities and mass education universities, and in competition for funding. Government funding attempts to ensure that excellence is adequately rewarded wherever it is found, while at the same time supporting the expensive scientific and technical research of the elite universities. Funding for research is delivered in two streams, known as the dual funding system, through HEFCE awards to departments judged excellent in the Research Assessment Exercise [RAE] and through the AHRB / Research Councils. In recent years the Office of Science and Technology has provided additional money for a number of special initiatives.

Two recent initiatives, the White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (2003) and the Roberts Review (2003) of the RAE have set the climate for research that will prevail at least until 2008. The title of the White Paper's chapter on research, *Research Excellence - building on our strengths* sets the tone of government strategy to focus resources on institutions with an existing research capability. It embraces a broad view of research to include social sciences, arts and humanities giving examples of topics normally found in new universities, such as tourism, design and performing arts and commits to the creation of an Arts and Humanities Research Council. However, the White Paper explicitly questions the link between teaching and research, suggesting that the prestige perceived to be gained from having a research capability might equally be gained by excellent teaching only institutions. Although this argument was criticised at the time of the release of the White Paper, and now has less prominence, the changes to the support structure for research mean in effect that those institutions which do not already have a research profile with high RAE ratings will find it difficult to establish one. More money is to go to the top 25 institutions through the RAE with the creation of an additional higher tier. Support will be directed at institutions that work together in consortia to deliver a research capability. The funding for research has moved to a more expensive "economic cost model" and the standards set for PhD programmes require an appropriate research environment in which research at a high level is already being carried out. Institutions, in order to secure funding for PhDs will also have to meet the more rigorous conditions for research training set down by Research Councils.

The Research Assessment Exercise [RAE] assesses research on the basis of the outputs of research active staff across a range of approximately 70 subject areas awarding scores from 1 (very poor) to 5* (of international standing). The RAEs have previously been conducted in 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001. Those with scores of 3a / 4 or above receive additional funding. The RAE was recently reviewed by the HEFCE sponsored Roberts Review (2003). The RAE process was endorsed by both the review and HEFCE and will continue with modifications to the panel structure that assesses submissions and to the scoring structure. The next review due in December 2008 and will continue in a 6 year cycle thereafter.

The RAE and the White Paper have implications for Subject Librarians. The White Paper and the accumulation of other initiatives and policies addressed in the rest of the chapter have in effect drawn a

line in the sand. Those institutions not involved in research at higher levels are unlikely to expand their research activities and may take the strategic choice in the direction of excellence in teaching and learning. Those who are have a stake in the RAE have begun to plan for 2008, directing resources either to achieve higher ratings or to support existing excellent ratings which will have knock on effects for Subject Librarians who support these areas.

3. ACCESS TO RESEARCH LIBRARIES

The Joint Funding Council's Libraries Review Group (1993) chaired by Professor Brian Follett devoted a chapter to *Libraries and the Researcher*. This chapter and recommendations made by the Follett Report set in motion a series of initiatives that have had a lasting and beneficial effect on research libraries, in particular creating rational systems for resource discovery and access. Follett supported funding for the development of the Consortium of University Research Libraries [CURL] database into a national Online Public Access Catalogue, which evolved into CURL OPAC [COPAC]. Many recommendations directed funding at resources for Social Sciences and Humanities which Follett recognised as making greater use both of library resources and librarians than other disciplines. The Follett Report set out the principles to guide further policy making including local autonomy in provision, but where possible co-operation between libraries and special support for the social sciences and humanities. In particular Follett set up a second Review Group on a National Strategy for Library Provision for Researchers, chaired by Professor Michael Anderson.

The Anderson Report (*Joint Funding Council's Library Review*,1996) set out the six broad principles of a strategy for library provision for researchers: 1) provide a means to locate material with reasonable ease; 2) long term preservation of material of importance to the national heritage; 3) operate fairly for individuals and institutions 4) work economically; 5) be flexible and not undermine existing good practice; 6) draw on existing strengths. Anderson recommended that a guiding principle of access should be that researchers go to collections and not vice vera and that researchers should begin with their own library and only use major national and research libraries as a last resort.

Anderson made 18 recommendations, but an area of great concern was the cost imposed on major research libraries by visiting researchers. A third report was commissioned from Coopers and Lybrand, *Funding Councils Study of the level and costs of use of higher education libraries by external researchers* (1997). The report concludes that most external researchers concentrate on about 20 university libraries costing somewhere between 6 million pounds and 10 million pounds and that visiting researchers consume more resources because they make more requests for assistance form Library staff.

The Funding Councils responded to the need for more financial support for research libraries with the Research Support Libraries Programme [RSLP], investing 30 million pounds of funding over three years, 1999-2002. The funding delivered in three steams reflected the conclusions of Anderson and Follett, supporting the Humanities and Social Sciences, collaborative collection management and a resource description framework to aid resource discovery. In a second initiative Funding Councils set up the Research Support Libraries Group [RSLG] in 2001 chaired by Brian Follett. The key recommendation of the RSLG report in 2003 was the establishment of a high profile strategic body to oversee research libraries, the Research Library Network [RLN], comprising National Libraries and Funding Councils. The RLN is currently being created at the British Library. The press release announcing the creation of the RLN promises a 'joined up' library service for researchers in the United Kingdom, focusing on three areas:

- "provide strategic leadership for collaboration between publicly-funded research information providers and their users – to develop effective, efficient and integrated information resources and services to support UK research
- co-ordinate action to propose and specify solutions to meet researchers' changing needs – building on the earlier studies into UK researchers' needs carried out by the RSLG
- act as a high-level advocate for research information, across the UK and internationally." (HEFCE, 2004)

A number of related initiatives have contributed to enhanced access to research libraries. The UK Archives Hub, developed by CURL and funded by Joint Information Systems Committee [JISC]

provides information on archival and special collections in universities and colleges. Institutions from across the sector have contributed archival descriptions to the hub. The Archives Hub supports researchers, librarians and archivists in the Arts and Humanities but has the benefit of raising awareness across the higher education sector for other users of the richness of university and college collections.

Responding to concerns about supporting visiting Scholars, an issue of particular concern to Anderson, SCONUL have instituted SCONUL Research Extra, a widely supported scheme with 157 participating libraries, to provide a coherent system allowing researchers to visit other libraries. Beginning operations in 2003, the statistics for researches registering with the scheme provide for the first time a statistical picture of how many researchers use other libraries. Registration in the first year was 2417 staff and 3484 students with the majority of activity centered on the major research Universities as predicted by the Coopers and Lybrand study.

The decade from Follett to the RLN has perhaps asked more questions than provided answers. The future, however, looks promising, with the prospect of a national strategy, supported by the considerable financial and political weight of the funding councils informed by the needs of researchers.

4. RESEARCH TRAINING

Issues relating to research training are addressed in a number of government, Funding Council and Research Council reports as part of a general concern with the quality, delivery and funding of research degree programmes. Three consistent themes emerge in the discussion of research training: the relevance of skills acquired by research students to employment in industry; how research students get access to research training and developing guidelines and codes of practice for research training and the mechanisms through which quality can be assured. What are variously termed information skills, information retrieval or bibliographic skills are bundled in with skills related to employment and research management. The following briefly reviews the discussion of research training reflected in published reports from the White Paper, *Realising Our Potential: a strategy for science, engineering and technology* (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1993) to the current funding councils review *Improving Standards in Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes.*

The White Paper endorsed the view that research training should include such transferable skills as communication and management of resources. The mechanism identified to deliver research training to students was the Masters degree forming the first stage of PhD. Successful pilots led to the creation of Masters of Research (MRes) programmes to prepare students for PhDs. A search of the Prospects database identifies over 150 MRes courses currently offered in the UK. The White Paper also identified examples of good practice by Research Councils, including the publication by ESRC of *Post-graduate Training Guidelines* (ESRC, 1991) which set out the research training that institutions had to provide to qualify for ESRC support, a model that is now widely accepted.

In 1996 Prof. Martin Harris published a *Review of Postgraduate Education* (HEFCE, 1996) conducted on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE], The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principles [CVCP] and the Standing Conference of Principles [SCOP]. The Harris Review recommended that a code of practice be drawn up to cover, among other things, infrastructure and environment including learning resources. It commended the work of the Higher Education Quality Council [HEQC] which issued *Guidelines On Quality Assurance For Research Degrees* in 1996 (HEQC, 1996). The Harris Review recommended that postgraduate research be brought within the remit of the planned Quality Assurance Agency [QAA]. This recommendation was accepted and implemented by HEFCE and endorsed a year later by Prof. Ron Dearing's report into *Higher Education in the Learning Society.* Dearing also made a specific recommendation that higher education institutions [HEIs] review postgraduate research training with the aim of ensuring that it not only included training in research but employment related skills "the development of professional skills, such as communication, self-management and planning." (NCIHE, 1997).

The Roberts Review, commissioned by the Treasury, Department of Trade and Industry and the Department for Education and Skills, *SET for success: The supply of people with science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills* (Treasury, 2002) addressed postgraduate education as one part of an all embracing review of education from school to post doctoral research. A key conclusion was that "... PhDs do not prepare people adequately for careers in business or academia. In particular, there is

insufficient access to training in interpersonal and communication skills, management and commercial awareness." (Treasury, 2002 p111). The Government has provided 150 million pounds to implement the recommendations of the Roberts Review with some money being allocated to research training for Research Council funded students. The minimum expectation is that students will attend a two-week UK GRAD Course from 2005 in the second or third year of their studies. Universities are invited to pool funds to support the delivery of in-house programmes.

The Government White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education* (2003), makes specific reference to the training of PhD students, with concerns about quality standards, supervision and providing students with transferable skills. Meeting these concerns inevitably raises the costs of providing PhD training. It might be that smaller Graduate Schools are not able to meet the increased cost of research training, with a trend towards larger better financed programmes that attract a critical mass of funded PhD candidates. The White Paper directed HEFCE to review standards and for research training, prompting the HEFCE sponsored consultation on *Improving standards in postgraduate research degree programmes* (2003). This initial document recommends that facilities including Library and IT should reach national standards, and that research training be provided to a level consistent with the AHRB/Joint Research Councils *Skills Training Requirements for Research Students.* The review also raised concerns that multiple standards might be created where one standard issued by the QAA in 1999 already existed. In response the funding councils asked the QAA to revise their code in the light of the review. QAA issued the revised code in September 2004 for implementation in 2005/2006.

5. GUIDELINES AND CODES

The guidelines and codes of practice for research training require institutions to demonstrate to Research and Funding Councils that programmes have been delivered with evidence of student satisfaction. Where Subject Librarians have not been invited to participate in research training the guidelines and codes represent an opportunity to argue for their inclusion. Their language is very general creating scope for a broad interpretation of what information skills are allowing them to be tailored to specific institutional and subject contexts.

The QAA published the *Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education: Postgraduate Research Programmes* (1999). Under the category of employment related skills, information retrieval skills are specifically identified ", general and employment-related skills including, for example, interpersonal and team working skills; project management, information retrieval and database management, written and oral presentational". (QAA, 1999 p10).

The ESRC published the third edition of the *Post-Graduate Training Guidelines* (2001) setting out the standards they require to be met for recognition. Only institutions recognised by the ERSC are able to received ESRC funded studenships. The ESRC has adopted a '1+3' model with one year funding for research training and three years funding for the PhD element. The guidelines are specific in relation to bibliographic and computing skills:

> ... these are likely to include: the identification of library resources and how to use them; training in other bibliographic sources and methods; techniques for keeping track of the literature; the use of annals, theses, journals and conference proceedings; the maintenance of a personal research bibliography; word-processing; other basic computing skills including spreadsheets and database management; and procedures for the evaluation of research, including refereeing and book reviews. (ESRC, 2001 Section D2.1).

In October 2002 the AHRB/Joint Research Councils produced a statement setting out the *Skills Training Requirements for Research Students* (Joint Research Councils/AHRB, 2002) in seven specific areas. Under research management, students are expected to "identify and access appropriate bibliographical resources, archives, and other sources of relevant information."

Building on the AHRB/Joint Funding Councils statement the AHRB have set out a framework for research training to be applied from 2004. Departments applying for funding will have to demonstrate that they can provide research training that meets with the framework in order to receive AHRB funded studentships. Among the core skills required by the framework are "bibliographical skills and contextualising practice-based research; identifying and using web-based resources; record-keeping and record management." (AHRB, 2003 p3).

The revised QAA Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes (2004) identifies 27 precepts that underpin quality. Precept 5 requires that institutions "only accept students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research and where high quality research is occurring", this includes "adequate learning and research tools including access to IT equipment, *library and electronic publications*;" (QAA, 2004, p8). Precept 10 requires institutions to provide a comprehensive induction programme which includes "a summary of the facilities that will be made available to the student, *including the learning support infrastructure.*" (QAA, 2004, p13) The code, following the lead of the White Paper leaves the door open to bi-lateral or regional co-operation to provide "opportunities for skills development" (QAA, 2004, p20).

The cumulative effect of the guidelines and codes is to provide a base line for support for Postgraduate Research Degrees supported by QAA and by the requirements for funding of AHRB/Joint Funding Councils. Encompassed within these is an explicit commitment to provide resources, information skills training and support which can be validated as part of a quality assurance regime.

6. DELIVERY OF RESEARCH TRAINING

Research training and the information skills component build on students' experiences in undergraduate and masters programmes. Typical PhD candidates will have good undergraduate degrees and a relevant masters degrees. They are likely to have been exposed to information skills teaching at both levels and have sufficient skills to have completed an undergraduate dissertation or project and a masters thesis. Research training programmes are delivered as part of a generic Graduate School programme or alternatively by a single department or faculty. Students preparing for postgraduate research may be required to complete a Masters of Research as a condition for proceeding to a PhD. Research supervisors advise students on research techniques and share their experiences of searching for information and using information resources. Subject Librarians should be aware of researchers in their area and offer one to one subject support. PhD students also have access to the national UK GRAD Programme, previous known as Research Councils' Graduate Schools Programme, which offer national residential programmes and support a regional network of hubs that provide courses and support.

However, not all research students fit a typical profile. A significant number of PhD candidates are from overseas. Although they may take a masters degree in the United Kingdom their experience of undergraduate education will be very different from that of British students. Another significant group is part time PhD candidates who may be working, teaching or live remotely from their 'home' institution. The diversity of the range of subjects together with a growth in postgraduate research students presents problems that mirror those of undergraduate students. As we will see later in this chapter, there is plenty of evidence from recent research that students do not feel that they have the skills they need.

The UK Council for Graduate Education [UKCGE] has conducted three studies on research training in specific contexts, the Humanities (2000), Creative and Performing Arts and Design (2001) and the Healthcare Professions (2003). UKCGE has developed a four-part needs based model. The model is described as a framework with four dimensions: A) Desired outcomes of doctoral research; B) Preparation and development - achievement and evaluation; C) Levels of requirement - knowledge, understanding and skills; D) Types and levels of knowledge, understanding and skills. Bibliographic skills are included in D. The purpose is to provide a basis from which the individual needs of the student can be assessed, rather than to outline a programme of training. The UKCGE make a number of points that are echoed in wider discussions of research training. The studies found that there is a tension between generic university wide courses and courses specific to student's research. Students prefer department or faculty courses that are sympathetic to their area of study. However, students working in small departments can feel isolated. In some areas and in smaller institutions it is difficult to get a critical mass of research students to form a community of like-minded researchers.

VLEs

7. STUDIES OF RESEARCHERS USE OF LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SERVICES

There have been two major cross sector, cross-disciplinary surveys of researcher use of libraries in the period following Follett. The Social and Community Planning Research [SCPR] whose 1995 survey repeated an earlier survey in 1989 (Erens, 1996) and a survey commissioned by the Research Support Libraries Group [RSLP] (Carpenter et al., 2003). In addition, there are a number of surveys looking at behaviour in single institutions: Sussex University (Jacobs, 1998), Leeds Metropolitan (Hewitson, 2000), Glasgow Caledonian (Ferguson & Crawford, 2001) and consortia activities (Bloor, 2001). Taking a different perspective, Eti Herman in a series of articles (2001a, 2001b, 2004a, 2004b) looks at information needs and information seeking behaviours from the perspective of individual researchers.

The surveys reveal a user community under pressure. The burden of teaching and administrative activities reducing the time available to spend on purely research activities is a persistent theme. Services that save time, in particular access to electronic information resources over the web, are highly valued. Hewitson and Carpenter et al. find evidence for what is now known as the 'Google factor', a preference for using generic search engines to locate information, bypassing library websites which provide access to bibliographic and full text databases. Carpenter et al. also note the very low rating for the use of the Research Discovery Network [RDN] Gateways and an even lower awareness of electronic resources created outside higher education, commenting that "archive services will be disappointed to see how low their profile is with researchers, even in Art and Humanities." p20.

Researchers are, however, reluctant to engage in training to improve information skills, citing lack of time as one reason. Carpenter et al. in a focus group on training found participants reluctant to admit to training needs and with an aversion even to the word training, although it was apparent that participants demonstrated an incomplete range of information skills. Researchers participating in the Carpenter study did show agreement across disciplines about areas where they would like more information. These included:

- specialised online search skills;
- ways of keeping up-to-date with what is available;
- locating high-quality information sources;
- how to filter online information effectively;
- how to find/create online archives;
- how to find out what resources are available through their own university.

This brings us to the question about what is different and unique about the researcher outside the framework provided by taught courses or programmes. Here the progress through a programme is generally predictable, marked out by the curriculum and assessment deadlines. For researchers, the only common point of departure, where a group session or workshop might be appropriate or perceived to be useful, is at the beginning of the research process. Institutions may choose to start researchers at a given date and deliver an induction course to support new researchers. They may, however, run courses periodically directed at researchers who have started to study but not received training. The former is preferable to the later as research is a very personal activity. Researchers tend to focus only on what can be proved to be effective and useful to their very specific research area. Their negative attitude towards training reflects similar issues raised about broader research training, that researchers are reluctant to engage with activities that they perceive are generic or not specifically sympathetic to their own area of research.

Different discipline areas have different approaches to research. The natural habitat of the scientist is the laboratory, research projects are often driven by practical considerations, such as setting up and conduct experiments or tests. Scientists, because of the scale of scientific research, often work in teams or in close collaboration with colleagues. Social Scientists may work within a broader research group but tend towards the more individualistic subject analysis of the arts or humanities researcher, who generally work alone on a single project. Programmes which support researchers have to show awareness and sympathy with the particular scholarly research process to the point that, just as when undergraduate information needs can often be deduced from knowing the course year and unit, the researchers information needs can be broadly identified from a description of where they are in their own research process.

Researchers are exposed to a wide range of external influences. These include supervisors based in their home institution but also in other institutions with a different experience of information access and use. Communication is likely to be two-way, with supervisors both giving advice and in turn

learning from the knowledge of new resources encountered by researchers. Knowing who is supervising research is useful. Supervisors are one channel through which information about new and useful resources can be directed. There are a number of times in the life cycle of a PhD. that research is presented to a wider audience: a proposal to a research committee, at the point of transfer from MPhil, to PhD, at research seminars and workshops and as papers at conferences. At each point the information base of the research is tested and provokes questions that require further research and clarification. It is often at these points that research students are in most frequent contact with Librarians.

All surveys reveal disciplinary differences among researchers in a spectrum from the sciences to the arts supporting the sketch Follett included in his initial report. Science and technology researchers focus on journals, value currency of information, and are likely to make use of large bibliographic databases and inter-library loan services. Researchers in the humanities and social sciences require access to long journal runs, make more use of monographs and require access to primary texts. These conclusions are supported by the subsequent research reported by Erens and Carpenter et al. A division emerges, however, with those students who make more use of physical resources being slightly less satisfied with provision now than ten years ago, noting for example the cancellation of journals, a result of the increasing financial pressure on libraries. Students studying disciplines such as medicine, who make extensive use of electronic resources have a more positive view of the provision of resources and their ease of use. As Eti Herman points out (2001a) the flow of information is slowly, and in some discipline areas, rapidly changing direction. The information in other words flows to the researcher and the researcher no longer goes to the information. Crawford and Carpenter et al. suggest that for some groups the need for physical access the Library is declining but researchers increasingly value *services* provided by the Library, such as inter-library loan, access to databases and catalogues and the advice of Subject Librarians. Arts and humanities remain the most wedded to physical collections, especially to book and monograph collections. We might speculate that this makes a virtue out of necessity with electronic access to journals widespread but the emergence of electronic books lagging behind although catching up. In other words, will researchers in arts and humanities follow the trajectory of scientific colleagues once a critical mass of book material is available in electronic form?

8. RESEARCH SUPPORT

Ferguson and Crawford (2001) discover that researchers are able to identify their Academic Liaison Librarian to whom questions can be directed. Similarly Jacobs (1998) concludes that the support which is most effective is that which is closest to the end users. The Subject Librarian who has a broad knowledge of the organizational context in which research is undertaken, who combines this with knowledge of the information sources in the appropriate subject domain and who is skilled in one to one consultations is well placed to provide the informed individual support that researchers need.

A survey by Harrison and Hughes (2001) of Librarians involved in research support reveal a diversity of approaches to research support. Some dedicated posts were funded for specific projects and a small number of institutions provide dedicated Research Support Librarians. Manchester Metropolitan University have provided dedicated Research Support Librarian since 1995. The post has evolved from one that worked directly with researchers, to one that seeks to promote the effective use of electronic resources and library services directly to researchers and working in partnership with Subject Librarians. Generally research support is provided by Subject Librarians, or Subject Teams as part of a broad responsibility to provide support for a school or faculty. In institutions that have a Graduate School, as is the case at Bournemouth University, the responsibility for issues specifically generated by the Graduate School have been delegated as an additional task for one Subject Librarian, while support for individual researchers is delivered by Subject Teams.

Research support includes providing information skills teaching. In recent years information skills has been absorbed into the wider concept of information literacy. This is as an idea that is still in the early stages of development in the UK, CILIP is currently developing a definition of information literacy. There exist already a number of national and international definitions of information literacy skills, the definition designed for higher education in the United Kingdom is the SCONUL Seven Pillars model. A scheme modelled on this structure for undergraduate programmes is used at South Bank University (Goodwin, 2003). The higher education sector is trying to link information literacy skills with learning outcomes defining what an information literate student can do with the QAAs Framework for Higher

Education Qualifications [FHEQ] (QAA, 2001). The FHEQ is a five level structure that defines the skills and capabilities students should be able to demonstrate at the end of each level. Undergraduates progressing through three levels from Level C (Certificate), to Level I (Intermediate) to the final year at Level H (Honours). Masters are Level M, and postgraduate students Level D. Setting aside the lack of an agreed definition of what information literacy skills might be at Level D, the ability to assess students skills against a framework that allows them to see where they are and how far they have to progress to achieve competencies appropriate for postgraduate level is valuable. It provides an opportunity for individualised help to bring students to a level where they can engage with colleagues who have achieved higher levels of information literacy skills. Using surveys of researchers the requirements of guides and codes and current practice it is possible to identify broad areas of what might be uniquely postgraduate information literacy skills:

- awareness of the research landscape in the UK and the ability to identify and network with researcher colleagues working in similar areas;
- knowledge of research resources in higher education and resources outside higher education;
- ability to keep up to date, to find and filter information using electronic current awareness services;
- mastery of advanced search skills and significant bibliographic databases;
- the ability to manage bibliographic data including using a personal bibliographic software package to search, retrieve and store information.

9. GOOD PRACTICE IN RESEARCH SUPPORT

There are examples of good practice in this sector that point the way to providing timely information, online support and delivery into research training programmes. This is a rapidly developing area of practice, however, this can only be indicative of work currently undertaken in UK higher education.

Researchers Weekly Bulletin - Manchester Metropolitan University

The Research Support Librarian compiles and distributes an e-mail based bulletin to Research Directors and individual researchers who have asked to be on the mailing list. The *Researchers' Weekly Bulletin* contains announcements of new electronic resources acquired by the Library (for example, databases and journals), news of new Websites, trials of Web-based databases, announcements of forthcoming conferences and other information of interest to researchers. [http://www.library.mmu.ac.uk/rwb/index.html] (Harrison & Hughes, 2001)

Researcher's Companion - University of Surrey & University of Roehampton

The *Researcher's Companion* was developed to address the information needs of doctoral students at the then Federated University of Surrey (the Universities of Surrey and of Roehampton). It was designed to be used either as a series of modules to be worked through in a linear fashion or by a researcher selecting individual topics of interest in any order. It comprises guidance in literature searching, citing references, copyright and plagiarism, evaluating resources and other items of interest to researchers. [http://www.federalsurrey.ac.uk/researcherscompanion] (Rumsey, 2004)

ResIN – Researcher Information Network – Newcastle University

The Researchers Information Network is based on a review of existing services, a survey of user needs and a review of best practice in other institutions. The ResIN web pages were published on October 2001 to provide a coherent point of access to services and information. The ResIN is regularly updated, and fully integrated into the Libraries web presence, however, retaining a distinctive identity. The Research Support Project that underpins ResIN is now an established part of the Library. [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/library/resin/] (Bent, 2004)

10. CONCLUSION

After a period of rapid change post 1992, research in higher education is entering a consolidation phase. Those institutions at the margins of research activity have the opportunity to invest in the run up to the RAE in 2008 or choose a strategic withdrawal. Following a similar trajectory, the research libraries and the British Library have moved after a decade of reports, policy and funding initiatives to a point where a new national strategy is possible. This can only be positive in creating an infrastructure that meets the needs of future researchers. Research Training encompasses transferable skills, including information skills and library support for research. This has gained a place on the national policy agenda which will have important implications for libraries in delivering support to researchers, including drawing the provision into the realm of quality audit. The guidelines and codes from Research Councils and QAA place a responsibility on library services to be explicit about support for researchers, perhaps pointing in the direction of Subject Librarians dedicated to research support or at least being able to demonstrate that such support is delivered at an appropriate level from existing Subject Librarians. Researchers require support that is sensitive to their situation, and relevant to the broad subject of their research and reject support perceived as being generic or unfocused.
Researchers are reluctant to engage in "training" but in many cases lack adequate information skills.
They prefer support that is individual informed timely and sensitive to the research lifecycle.
They may make more or less use of the library as a physical entity depending on their disciplinary approach but increasingly value services delivered by the library and Subject Librarians.
In addition to an awareness of some electronic resources, there are gaps in knowledge of resources away from home institutions and outside higher education. The emphasis on collaboration and co-operation among institutions may point the way for Subject Librarians in particular regions or within subject disciplines to join together and share ideas, support and training materials.

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