Why is the Library Involved in Research Support? Demonstrating why and how the Library can Contribute and Add Value to the University Research Priorities

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WHY IS THE LIBRARY INVOLVED IN RESEARCH SUPPORT? DEMONSTRATING WHY AND HOW THE LIBRARY CAN CONTRIBUTE AND ADD VALUE TO THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PRIORITIES.

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Abstract

Like many countries, in New Zealand the ability to demonstrate your university's research performance and the quality and impact of its research outputs has become increasingly important as this influences government funding, as well as national and international rankings. In this highly competitive environment Victoria University of Wellington has responded with an ambitious 20 year strategic plan which explicitly aims to enhance its research quality, quantity and impact. So, how does Victoria University of Wellington Library contribute to the University's research priorities and goals?

While it may be obvious to many that the University Library has an important role to play in supporting research and arguably contributing to the overall success of the University's research outputs, this view has not always been shared by all academics or researchers, nor for that matter, all Library staff. This paper will look at how the Library has responded and shown it clearly has a role to play in supporting the University's research goals.

Recognising the need to be more closely aligned to the University's priorities and direction the Library underwent a structural change and refocus in 2011. This resulted in the Library becoming more explicit about how it supports research, and to enable it to deliver on this it has incrementally built up its services and capability. This paper will cover how the Library has identified and developed its research support services and capability over the past five years, and demonstrated through initiatives and collaborations why it has a crucial role to play in helping the University achieve its research goals.

The paper will also discuss how the Library plans to further develop and embed research support services to ensure it remains relevant and is strategically aligned to the University's research endeavours.

While they may vary considerably between nations, research performance based funding systems are a common mechanism employed by countries to establish tertiary institutions contributions to research and to allocate funding accordingly [Jonkers & Zacharewicz, 2016]. New Zealand is no different, with the performance based research fund (PBRF) being a well-established mechanism to assess tertiary institutions research performance and funds them on this basis [Tertiary Education Commission, 2016a]. A major element of this system is the 'quality evaluation' which was first held in 2003, followed by a partial round next in 2006 and then a full round in 2012. The next round will occur in 2018 [Tertiary Education Commission, 2016b].

In the 2012 PBRF round, Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) ranked first overall for research quality and aims to achieve this again in 2018 [Victoria University of Wellington, 2015 & 2017]. Along with this, international rankings are becoming increasingly important and greater focus is being given to these. In this highly competitive environment Victoria has developed an ambitious strategic plan which explicitly states "Victoria University will enhance its research quality and will retain and build upon its position as the first-ranked university of the Performance-Based Research Fund. Victoria will improve the international profile and impact of

its research by increasing the quantity of top-quality research and scholarship performed" [Victoria University of Wellington, 2015, pg. 15]. It is in this context that Victoria University of Wellington Library has incrementally developed its services and support for the University's research endeavours.

Like many academic libraries, Victoria University of Wellington Library recognised the need to respond to the evolving needs of the institution and align its services and support accordingly and in 2011 underwent a structural change to enable this. As part of this change the 'Academic Support' team was formed with two managers responsible for the team of Subject Librarians (SL), as well as each having a development portfolio – either Research or Learning and Teaching. [Victoria University of Wellington Library, 2011].

While it may seem obvious that an academic library's purpose is to support the learning, teaching and research of their institution the creation of these two portfolios, with specific roles responsible for them, gave more impetus and focus to identifying how the Library aligned and developed its services.

One of the first tasks of the Academic Support Managers was to lead the development of library support strategies (2012-2015) in their respective portfolios. As well as enabling the library to clearly articulate its direction and priorities for supporting the university's research, learning and teaching activities, they also provided a springboard for discussion and consultation with the wider university community [Victoria University of Wellington Library, 2012].

As Auckland (2012) notes in the RLUK report *Reskilling for research,* considerable thought and work pre-2012 had already been done in relation to how the Library and subject liaison roles supported learning and teaching, however, further work was required to develop services in relation to research support. This resonated with the VUW Library experience and was also evident in terms of how some of the university community viewed the Library and its role. Library support for learning and teaching was well established and considered core to the Library's role. However, not everyone felt the same about the Library's involvement in relation to research support so it was important that the Library was able to demonstrate its relevance and value in this regard.

As Deng and Dotson (2015) note, there are parallels with changes in the research landscape and scholarly communications and its support, so it was timely for the Library to consider how it positioned itself and began redefining its services in this context.

Rather than assuming that the Library knew what the needs of Victoria's researchers were, a project commenced in 2013 to gain an understanding of their needs and establish whether current Library services met them, how services could be improved, and where gaps were identified help prioritise new Library research support initiatives and services [Victoria University of Wellington Library, 2014b].

The project consisted of a range of strands including: a literature review; environmental scan of other New Zealand university libraries and their research support offerings; a questionnaire to all Library staff; interviews with colleagues that support research in other service units; focus groups with academics and postgraduate students; and finally a survey for all Victoria University researchers (academic and higher degree postgraduates) inviting their feedback on their current and future research support needs [Victoria University of Wellington Library, 2014b].

The response rate of the survey was relatively high with 436 valid responses, which equated to 20% of the target audience, enabling reasonable confidence that the results reflected the broader population [Victoria University of Wellington Library, 2014b]. That said, it is recognised that research differs between disciplines and support needs to be tailored, to some extent, to reflect this. The survey results showed little difference between the postgraduate students and academic (research) staff in terms of what they believed were the top areas for support. The six key areas identified were: support and advice around open access publishing; general publishing advice; information about collaborative tools to make research easier; information

about achieving greater research and citation impact; and advice on managing and preserving research data [Victoria University of Wellington Library, 2014a].

Overall, the findings of the data collected aligned with the current literature on the topic and contributed to an evidence based approach regarding future library research support and services [Victoria University of Wellington Library, 2014b]. Based on the findings of the project the following diagram [Figure 1] was developed to summarise the plan for improving the Library's research support and services.
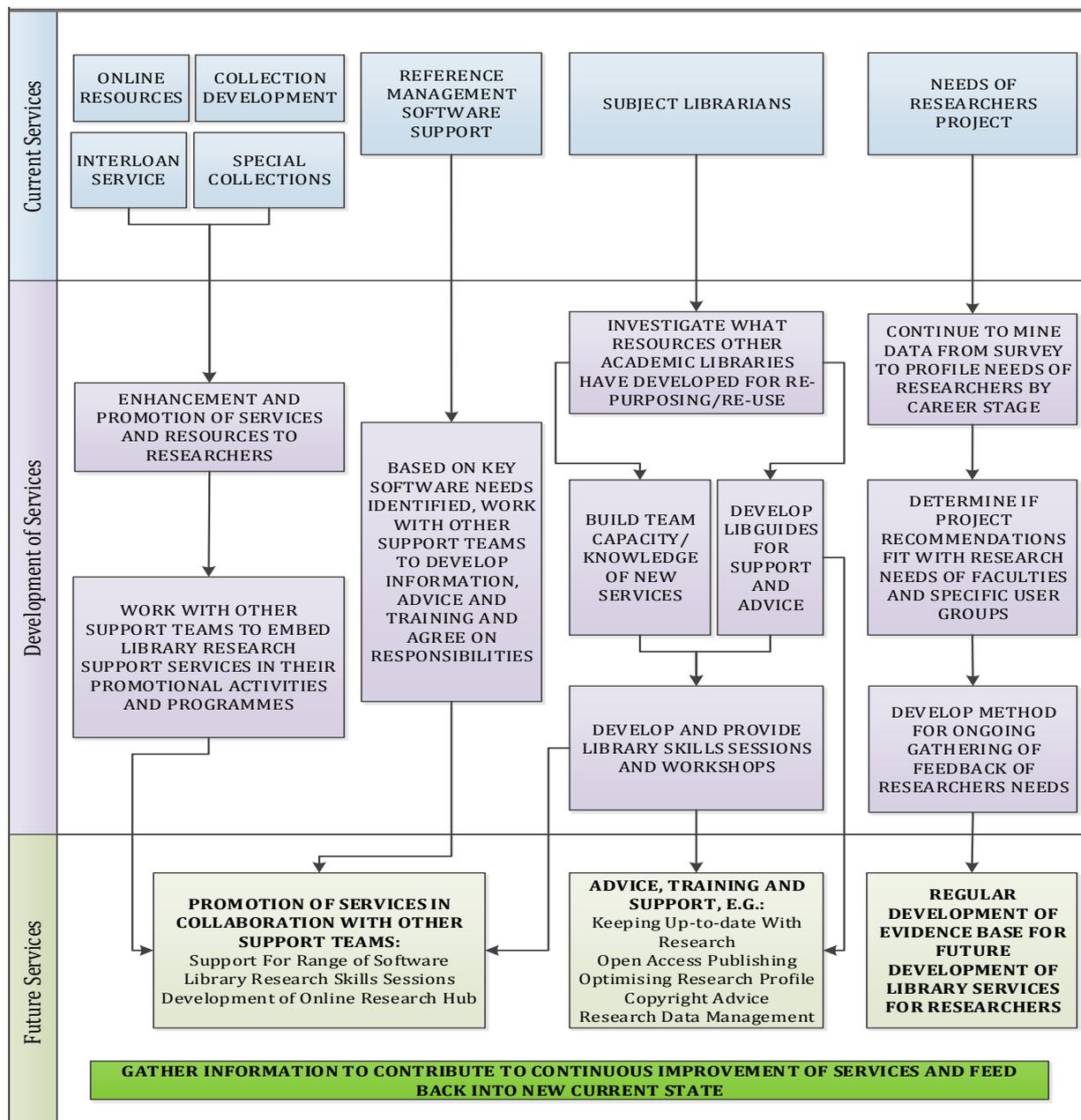

Fig 1: Plan for improvement to Library research support & services [Victoria University of Wellington Library, 2014b. p4]

It became apparent from the outcomes of this project that better promotion and awareness of current services was needed, as it was evident that some of the research community were not aware of already existing services and support.

As anticipated, the findings of the 'needs of researchers' project showed that the key areas identified regarding research support went beyond the Library and collaboration and communication with colleagues across the university is essential to enable enhanced services

and support for researchers. In addition, working with the research community, rather than in a vacuum, is critical.

Connections and a collaborative approach were being formed prior to the outcomes of this project, such as the Library's involvement in the preparation for the 2012 PBRF round. The Library took responsibility for verifying the University's research outputs prior to the PBRF submission. At its peak, this involved over 40 library staff, equating to over 1000 staff hours during a two month period in 2012. This resulted in the verification of 3250 outputs over this period. [Victoria University of Wellington Library, 2013]. This work did not go unnoticed and contributed to accurate information being submitted to the PBRF panel [KPMG, 2013]. Post PBRF 2012, the Library also actively participated in the 'publications and verification working group' which reviewed the process and established recommendations for improved verification procedures in future. This involvement helped the Library to become more visible in terms of its ability to contribute to the University's research activities and it continues to have an important role to play in the preparation for the upcoming 2018 PBRF round.

Having opportunities to actively participate and contribute to the University's research activities has enabled the Library to build its credibility in this area and ensure that its initiatives and support align with the wider research priorities. Representation on various university research committees has been important in this regard, and also offered the opportunity to build relationships and connections.

Other service units in the University are also aware of the importance of collaborating and leveraging off each other's skills and experience to support the University's initiatives in a unified way, focusing on organisational outcomes rather than individual unit's goals. The term 'virtual CSU' (central service unit) was coined to describe a range of services units (such as Library, Information Technology, Research Office, Centre for Academic Development) working as a virtual team towards a common goal to deliver services and support [Flutey, J., Smith, B & Marshall, S., 2017]. An example of this is the 'e-Research' virtual CSU. This includes staff from a range of units (including the Library) working collaboratively to develop a coordinated approach to the delivery of services to support e-Research at Victoria, despite being physically dispersed and affiliated with different service units. This 'joined-up' approach is important for effective delivery of services and support across the University.

University-wide initiatives such as the implementation of ORCID (persistent digital identifier for researchers) and the development of a research data management strategy are being led by the Library. This reflects that the Library is well positioned to take a lead in university wide research initiatives and that this is acknowledged more broadly. Being involved and collaborating across the University, and nationally, has been a successful approach for the Library as it incrementally develops its research support and services.

As interest increases in metrics in relation to the impact of research outputs and benchmarking against other institutions, the Library's expertise has been called upon. Working closely with other relevant groups in the University, the Library has been involved in establishing a key performance indicator (KPI) in relation to research quality, based on citation per publication, to report to University Council. The Library is responsible for delivering this metric and integral to discussions about how the methodology could be revised and refined for future reporting.

In order to deliver on the increasing demand for research related metrics and support, the Library has needed to build its capacity and capability to enable it to effectively respond. This has occurred incrementally over a number of years. While the Academic Support Manager (research portfolio) continues to be closely involved it was recognised that additional capacity and capability was needed. With this in mind, in 2015, a Research Support Librarian (RSL) role was created and filled in early 2016. This role has enabled the Library to better develop and maintain sustainable and relevant research support services. In addition a key deliverable of this role is to build the capability of Library staff so they are equipped to effectively support the University's research activities.

Academic leaders of the University are becoming increasingly interested in understanding more about both discipline and institutional research impacts and opportunities for collaboration. In response to this, the Library has produced tailored reports that summarise the relevant publication activity and research collaborations and these have been well-received by the requesters. A team based approach has been adopted to deliver these reports with the RSL working with Subject Librarians to develop the tailored reports for their subject portfolio. This collaborative team-based approach has enabled those participating to build up their understanding of the relevant tools and produce quality, relevant reports as a result.

The opportunity to work with individual researchers so they are able to optimise their research outputs has also gained momentum [Victoria University of Wellington Library, 2017]. This support is largely offered by Subject Librarians, so strengthening their skills and knowledge to enable them to effectively engage with, and support researchers has been crucial. The Subject Librarian role description has also been updated to be more explicit and better reflect their responsibilities in terms of offering research support and services to the research community. While all Subject Librarians are engaged in research support services, with particular emphasis on their specific subject portfolio responsibilities, this is made more explicit for one Subject Librarian whose portfolios include 'research support'. The intention of this is for the incumbent to have more focus on research support initiatives pan-university, rather than subject specific. For example, working with the Academic Support Manager (research) on establishing the verification process for the upcoming PBRF round, which will be rolled out to the wider team once finalised.

A range of approaches have been undertaken to strengthen research support capabilities in the Library and while the focus has been on strengthening the Subject Librarian's skills, broader involvement across the Library is also encouraged. Participating in 23 Research Data Things in 2016 is a prime example. Victoria joined the virtual community that was developed and coordinated by Australian National Data Service [2016] to broaden participants' knowledge of research data. The local group included a range of library staff as well as colleagues from Information Technology Services. This local community was coordinated by the RSL and at least 25 staff successfully completed all 23 Things.

Another opportunity for Library staff to collaborate, contribute and develop digital research skills, has been participating in the worldwide festival *Research Bazaar* which has been locally hosted by Victoria for the past two years. The intention of this event "is to equip researchers from all career stages with the digital skills and tools required to do their research better, faster and smarter" [University of Melbourne, 2015]. Library staff have been on the organising committee, offered sessions as part of the programme, and also attended as participants.

Offering in-house sessions so Subject Librarians can familiarise themselves with a range of research tools and topics also occurs, for example, recent sessions were held in relation to ORCID iD, which is currently being promoted and implemented at the University as part of a national adoption strategy [Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2016]. These sessions prepared Subject Librarians to then offer, alongside the RSL, 'pop-up' ORCID iD sessions to the University research community. A series of sessions on relevant research tools and topics for Library staff are planned over the coming year as part of ongoing professional development and capability building.

Over the past five years the Library has made good progress in developing its capacity and capability to enable it to deliver relevant services and support in relation to University's research activities. The Library's Research Support Strategy (2012 – 2015) has served its purpose well, with the Library's contributions and expertise, in relation to the University's research outputs and initiatives, now being well recognised and sought after. So, rather than having a separate research support strategy this is now explicitly incorporated into the Library's strategy map and associated priorities for 2017-2020 (see figure 2).

The Library
Te Pātaka Kōrero

STRATEGY MAP 2017-2020

VISION: World class services and resources supporting quality learning, teaching and research

The Library's Strategy map has been framed within the context of Victoria University's Primary and Enabling strategies, and is committed to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

WHAT WE DELIVER	Access to world-class content	Active support for researchers	Capabilities for learning and teaching	Quality environments for learning & research
OUR APPROACH	• Digital first • Right place • Right time • Intuitive and easy	• Expertise • Leadership • Collaboration • Evidence based	• Client focussed • Self-directed • Online and mobile • Targeted	• One Library experience • Open and flexible • Creative & collaborative • Everything works
OUR PRIORITIES	Make it easy to discover content across multiple channels	Develop services to support the research lifecycle	Create self-directed opportunities for learning and research	Provide an outstanding experience and reliable technology across all libraries
	Lead and develop digital preservation capability for enduring access	Actively support researchers to optimise their research output	Partner with and enable academics to strengthen student learning	Find innovative ways to extend access to learning spaces to accommodate changing needs & growth
	Anticipate and actively respond to changing publishing models in the scholarly landscape	Strengthen our capability in using trend analysis and evidence to support our research initiatives	Continue to enhance the library and learning experience for Māori and Pasifika communities	Leverage technologies for successful learning and research

TO ACHIEVE THIS WE WILL
- Optimise the capacity and expertise of staff
- Develop and enhance partnerships across the University
- Take a sustainable, scalable and informed approach to developing services
- Radically and creatively collaborate with others

Capital thinking. Globally minded.

VICTORIA

Figure 2: The Library Strategy Map 2017-2020 [Victoria University of Wellington Library, 2017]

There remains a lot for the Library to do in the research support space and the strategy map (fig.2) and associated priorities identify the areas of focus in the next three years. While the strategy map has a specific strand related to actively supporting researchers, there are relevant threads throughout the strategy and associated priorities and initiatives. For example, responding to the changing scholarly publishing landscape and optimising accessibility to the University's research output relate to both the 'access to world-class content' and 'active support for researchers' thematic outcomes.

There are a range of initiatives that are currently in progress that span the Library's thematic outcomes that will enhance the services and support for Victoria's researchers. These include the implementation of a new digital asset management system, *Waīrēto,* which is on track to be launched in November 2017 and the development of an Open Access approach for the University. The latter will be informed by responses to an online survey that the Library recently undertook to understand the current practices and awareness of University authors in relation to article processing charges (APCs) and publishing in open access journals or books. Mapping our services and future developments in terms of the research life cycle is also currently underway. The aim of this is to provide a structured holistic framework that will help refine current services and inform the development of future services and support and show how these align with the research lifecycle. [Lang, L, 2017]. Central to future services is that they are sustainable, scalable and clearly align with the University's strategies and priorities.

The Library is well placed to actively contribute and support the University's research activities, and needs to remain nimble enough to respond to the changing research and scholarly publishing environment, and be attuned to how these may influence the University's priorities and strategies. Continuing to develop the Library's research support capability, building strong connections and working collaboratively will remain important success factors.

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