

Report on the 2019 International Association of University Libraries Pre-Conference Seminar: Library Strategies for Research Support Excellence

Amanda Bellenger
Curtin University, Australia

Katie Mills
University of Western Australia

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Report on the 2019 International Association of University Libraries Pre-Conference Seminar: Library Strategies for Research Support Excellence Held at the University of Western Australia, 23rd June 2019

Amanda Bellenger

Curtin University, Australia a.bellenger@curtin.edu.au

Katie Mills

University of Western Australia, Australia katie.mills@uwa.edu.au

The Library Strategies for Research Support Excellence half-day seminar was held on the 23 June 2019 at the Reid Library, University of Western Australia (UWA). The event was organised by International Association of University Libraries (IATUL), UWA and Curtin University, and was sponsored by CNKI. The seminar provided an opportunity for senior university library leaders from around the world, including China, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and Africa to discuss the current initiatives and challenges associated with research support in their respective regions. The key points arising from the seminar are outlined below:

- Libraries are playing a key role in driving policy discussions at their institutions about open scholarship. The release of Plan S has been useful as a means of raising these discussions at senior levels.
- While policy can be a driver for open access, its success in increasing open access has been uneven depending on the level of commitment to OA and monitoring of OA compliance.
- Libraries are providing a wide range of services to support researchers and open access, with targeted support for particular user groups and support for research impact seen as increasingly important. Core infrastructure such as the repository and discovery services continue to be supported and developed.
- Deep engagement with the institution and strong partnerships with internal and external stakeholders, are key to add value to the research process.
- Researcher spaces are valued, with institutions establishing spaces for collaboration and innovation between research institutions, community, and industry, and continued support for spaces dedicated for graduate research students.

This report expands on the major themes raised during the presentations, panel and group discussion below.

1. Policies

Anne Horn, IATUL President and University Librarian at the University of Sheffield (UK), opened the seminar by providing an insight into how the research policy environment in the UK has influenced open research and publishing agreements. As a result of the release of the Finch report, and other government and funding interventions, over half of all UK research publications are now freely available to read online. However, Vivian Lewis from McMaster University (Canada) reported that the Tri-Agency's 2015 open access policy did not lead to substantial change in researcher behaviour nor a significant increase in the number of deposits in institutional repositories in Canada, potentially due to a lack of monitoring and a lengthy submission period. According to Lucille Webster from Durban University of Technology (South Africa), open access policy direction in Africa has largely been focused on the social justice perspective.

The Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian experience sees a leadership role for libraries in contributing to conversations about open access and influencing policy at the national level. Catherine Clark from Curtin University (Australia) gave an overview of the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) Fair, Affordable and Open Access to Knowledge program which comprises sub-projects on retaining author rights, advocating for fair use, revising the CAUL Open Scholarship statement, processes for collecting and reporting article processing charges (APCs), and a review of Australian repository infrastructure.

There is also a role for senior library leaders to lead policies and raise awareness within their own institutions, especially relating to the impact of publisher price increases, sustainability issues with the APC model, and how to foster an environment to support open scholarship. Around the world, Plan S has been a valuable conversation starter within institutions around policy, open access compliance and the consideration of 'transformational' publisher agreements moving from a pay-to-read to a pay-to-publish model. At the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (Saudi Arabia), J.K. Vijayakumar anticipates that a recently adopted institutional policy linking availability of open access publications in the repository to faculty annual review and evaluation will increase open access compliance.

Workshop participants agreed that policy can play an important role in raising awareness but is often slow or unlikely to change behaviour. Libraries should use policies as a stepping stone to broader discussions and have a role in providing simple, clear information to their community. Compliance incentives are key for policy success.

2. Institutional Partnerships and Engagement

A number of presentations highlighted the value of collaboration and the strength of existing institutional partnerships, discussing current strategic projects and initiatives by the Association of African Universities (AAU), Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) and Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL).

Catherine Clark (4) and Vivian Lewis (2) both spoke about collaborative national initiatives focused on sharing collection and expenditure data. In Australia and New Zealand, a CAUL Fair Affordable & Open Access to Knowledge (FAIR) Program project is developing a national approach to collecting and sharing article processing charges (APC) information. Likewise, CARL is working on a survey of individual institutional investments in open access through payments for open access journals or APCs. In May 2018, CARL released 2016/17 institutional expenditure data for journals and databases purchased through the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) in order to increase the transparency of the Canadian scholarly publishing environment and raise awareness of the benefits of open access.

In Australia, New Zealand and Canada, concurrent CAUL and CARL projects are exploring how to leverage institutional repository infrastructure, exploring standards and policies, and planning for future development, functionality and technologies. On the other hand, despite recent growth in both the

repository and open access space, there are still no known digital repositories in 25 countries across the African continent (3). The development of institutional partnerships in Africa has been hindered by this lack of infrastructure and the absence of a systematic approach to research support services. However, some partnerships, mainly in South Africa, have resulted in the use of open source software to host journals and repositories.

Later in the afternoon, the panel discussion explored partnerships from a different angle, concentrating on partnerships and engagement with research offices, graduate schools, grants offices and IT departments within institutions (12). Panellists discussed the importance of building strategic relationships and partnerships on campus. All three panellists mentioned challenges, including the need to find a balance between projects and the resources available, the importance of partnerships adding value and bringing intelligence back into the library, and the benefits of setting strategies for communication and collaboration. At the University of Otago, the Library has partnered with the Health Sciences division on a medical imaging storage system, with the Library providing support around metadata standards and requirements.

Upon discussion, workshop participants agreed that successful institutional partnerships, such as the CARL and CAUL projects, depend on clear goals and outcomes, strategic direction, and an understanding of the ecosystem both within and beyond the partner institutions. Participants reflected that partnerships can be challenged when partner institutions become too internally focused, siloed, or competitive (both internally or externally). National and international collaborations are often strong via library associations, but partnerships with organisations such as ORCID offer untapped opportunities for collaboration on streamlined and unified approaches to best practice.

3. Infrastructure

The panel discussion (12) described the current state of play in Australia and New Zealand, where libraries are involving themselves in projects to design services delivered through end-to-end researcher workflows with researchers at the centre. Research impact advisory services are increasingly important, with the library in a unique position to provide information about university research outputs (through the institutional repository) and to identify opportunities for partnerships by identifying researchers aligned with the institution's areas of research strength. Libraries support the digital humanities in a variety of ways, including digitising archival materials. Libraries work with researchers and research students to create, events, exhibitions, and other outreach activities to showcase their research.

From the Chinese perspective, Jin Chen (9) and Shenli Jia (6) spoke to the significant work undertaken to 'transform' the library service model. Shanghai Jiaotong University Library defines their services in relation to their target user group, and the target user group's needs. Services are mapped to prospective services (for decision makers), guarantee services (for faculty and researchers), innovative services and training (for masters and PhD students), and heuristic education services (for undergraduate students). The Library's service is referred to as a "ubiquitous subject service system" where all services are disciplinary and embedded throughout the institution's activities. In order to develop efficiencies to resource new service areas, Shanghai Jiaotong University Library is using data to refine traditional services, such as evaluating collection usage, and using Artificial Intelligence to automate subject classification and collection evaluation.

At Xi'an Jiaotong University Library (6), the functional definition of the library focuses on provision of library resources, information and consulting, library spaces, and cultivating culture through various programs. Research support targets a wide range of user requirements – evaluating new staff going through the recruitment process, support grant and project applications, and supporting strategic planning by assessing institutional competitiveness. The Library provides the institutional repository,

Scholars@XJTU to raise the profile of the university's achievements. The Library is part of the University Alliance of the New Silk Road, an initiative to develop the Belt and Road databases.

Lucille Webster (3) provided an environmental scan of research support services provided by libraries across the African continent, highlighting the wide range of different service levels and experiences. Most libraries have designated research staff, with variation in position titles. Bibliometrics is a growing field primarily managed by research offices, with limited assistance provided to researchers to assist staff then they are applying for rating. Research data management is in its early stages – with the main challenges relating to the need to upskill librarians, complex issues regarding ownership of data, and a lack of legislation or policy. Support for open access publishing platforms, such as OJS, is in its infancy, with the University of Cape Town leading the work in this area.

Spaces to engage in research activities are highly valued. There is an emerging trend for institutions to establish innovation hubs, networks and incubator spaces on campuses, where the university can collaborate with government, industry, and community partners. Shenli Jia (6) provided the example of the Innovation Harbour opened in 2019 at Xi'an Jiaotong University's new campus. Libraries continue to support graduate research students with dedicated spaces with Lucille Webster (3) referring to examples from African University Libraries. These facilities, sometimes referred to as 'research commons', provide controlled access, individual study spaces, coffee facilities, consultation areas, ICT equipment, and audio-visual support.

Libraries are committed to providing established services including web-scale discovery services and the institutional repository. Min Shao (7) provided an overview of the adoption of Alma-Primo as a web-scale discovery service offered by Tsinghua University Library, which brought significant change to library discovery. The discovery layer offers researchers a large number of results from a single search and provides access to high quality resources. Within the discovery layer, researchers can access DataCite and Figshare where research data is linked to from a research paper. Yufei Jiang (8) detailed the implementation of the institutional repository at Northeastern University, seen as a key resource for exchanging knowledge between people and institutions, with functionality evolving to provide more meaningful data visualisations on use of research outputs and collaboration. Yufei spoke to the challenges for repository managers in managing metadata from various sources, including duplication of author names and standardising institutional unit and department information.

Workshop participants discussed whether libraries should develop their own software or acquire it through a third-party provider. Where research-related functionality is linked to commercial software, there may be issues of trust. Where there is variation in systems between institutions, this poses a problem for interoperability and for researchers who move between institutions. The participants discussed whether such systems should be managed at the local or national level. To develop effective platforms, there needs to be dialogue between systems developers and researchers.

4. Research Evaluation and Rankings

Anne Horn (1) gave an overview of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the UK's system for assessing the quality of research in higher education institutions. The panel (12) later expanded on the theme of national research assessment exercises and mentioned the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) and the Performance-based Research Fund (PBRF) in New Zealand. Whilst the REF and PBRF are used to inform the allocation of funding, there is currently no research funding associated with the ERA exercise. Despite this, the panellists reflected that research assessment exercises are important to institutions, especially from a reputational perspective. Libraries are often seen as the subject matter experts in citation analysis and have filled a gap around analysing the impact of research and the provision of tools such as SciVal and InCites. The focus on research assessment results has also

provided libraries with opportunities to promote open access in institutional repositories as a way to increase research impact.

The expertise that libraries have developed in citation and impact analysis has led to the development of support services to provide benchmarking information, rankings analysis and international collaborations data to support university strategies, reviews of departments and other data-driven decision making. Shenli Jia (China) spoke about the comprehensive and predictive analyses developed by the library to support strategy development at Xi'an Jiaotong University.

Two presentations analysed and evaluated research publication data with visualisations depicting co-authorship trends, citation rates and international influence across institutions and countries. Hong Xiao, the CNKI Deputy Editor-in-Chief, presented a series of visualisations demonstrating the international influence of 6,261 Chinese academic journals. The results of the evaluation showed the top countries citing Chinese literature in STEM areas were the United States, India, Germany, and Australia. In the HASS areas, the top countries were the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. Likewise, Min Shao from Tsinghua University (China) also presented co-authorship data showing international collaborations by researchers from Tsinghua University using visualisation powered by Yewno.

Vivian Lewis (2) emphasised the importance of education, ethics and collaboration when it comes to research evaluation, along with the need to be embedded in global conversations. The conversation amongst workshop participants also acknowledged that libraries provide similar support around bibliometrics, benchmarking and strategic publishing advice, even though the different research evaluation systems (REF, ERA, etc) in operation may differ from country to country. The group identified common challenges around the evaluation of humanities and social sciences (HASS) outputs, and balancing quantity of publications against engagement and impact measures.

Conclusion

The seminar was a useful forum for senior library leaders to engage with diverse perspectives from around the world. The seminar format enabled participants to listen to these perspectives from the invited speakers, as well as time to reflect on the opportunities and challenges for libraries through group discussions.

Charles Eckman, IATUL Vice President and Dean and University Librarian at the University of Miami (11), brought the seminar to a close remarking that “the day’s presentations demonstrated that there is a strong and growing trend towards deeper engagement in the research enterprise” and acknowledging that “this can put libraries in new and uncomfortable roles”. IATUL’s vision is for member libraries to enrich and learn from each other, and it’s clear that whilst paths and practices may differ, we have a shared experience when it comes to the theme of changing roles.

Further reading

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Speakers

- (1) Anne Horn, IATUL President and Director of Library Services & University Librarian, University of Sheffield, UK.
- (2) Vivian Lewis, University Librarian, McMaster University, Canada
- (3) Lucille Webster, Director Library Service, Durban University of Technology, South Africa
- (4) Catherine Clark, University Librarian, Curtin University and Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) Program Director for Fair, Affordable & Open Access to Knowledge, Australia
- (5) J.K. Vijayakumar, Library Director, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), Saudi Arabia
- (6) Shenli Jia, Library Director, Xi'an Jiaotong University, China
- (7) Min Shao, Library Deputy Director, Tsinghua University, China
- (8) Yufei Jiang, Library Deputy Director, Northeastern University, China
- (9) Jin Chen, Library Director, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China
- (10) Xiao Hong, CNKI Deputy Editor-in-Chief
- (11) Charles Eckman, IATUL Vice President & Dean and University Librarian, University of Miami

Panellists

- (12) Howard Amos, University Librarian, University of Otago, New Zealand
- Martin Borchert, University Librarian, University of New South Wales, Australia
- Gwenda Thomas, Director, Scholarly Services & University Librarian, University of Melbourne, Australia