Evolving Roles: Research Support Services in the Academic Libraries of Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and the U.K.

Charles Sturt University

Waseem Afzal
School of Information Studies
Charles Sturt University
Australia
wafzal@csu.edu.au

Sheila Corrall
Information School
The University of Sheffield
U.K.
s.m.corrall@sheffield.ac.uk

Mary Anne Kennan
School of Information Studies
Charles Sturt University
Australia
mkennan@csu.edu.au

The University Of Sheffield.

Introduction

With changes in government policy and increased focus on research outcomes and research evaluation, academic libraries are reviewing their traditional foci on collections, reference and IL, and increasingly offering services that support academics in their research practice.

Examples of the developments which are shaping emerging research support services in academic libraries include:

• Open scholarly communication
• Increasing digitization of resources
• Development of institutional repositories
• Data generated and required by e-research
• Research evaluation exercises
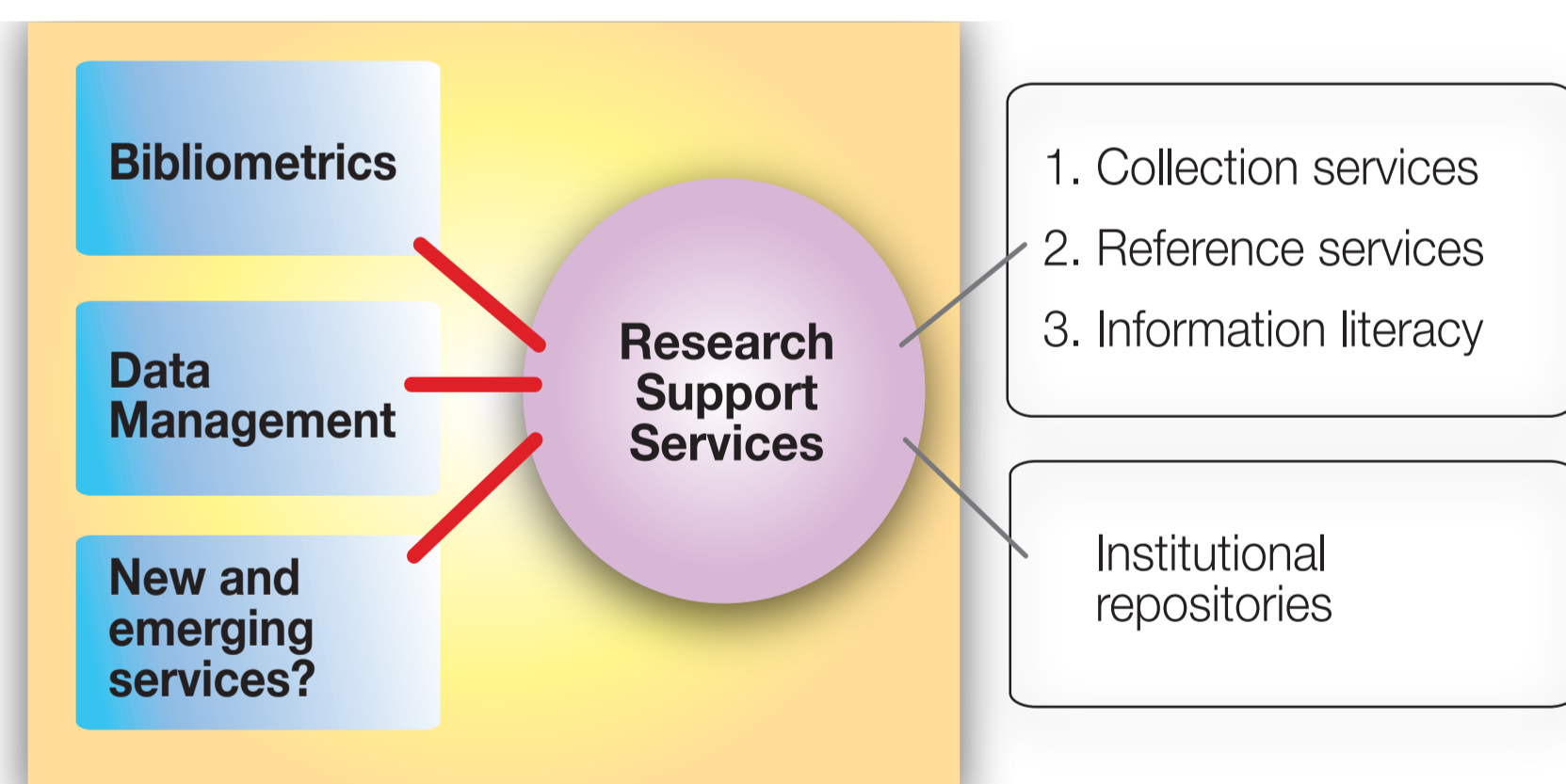• Requirements of funding agencies for the ongoing curation of research data.

Background

Changes in tertiary education funding and research evaluation policies have led to requirements for changed academic library services, particularly in the area of research support services. Research support services have always existed in academic libraries, as for example:

• Collection services (providing access to research resources such as books, journals and databases)
• Reference services (for example, providing information searches, research consultations, alerting services)
• Information literacy services (for example classes on searching of specific databases or the use of bibliographic software)
• Managing institutional research outputs through institutional repositories (Corrall 2012).

This survey, however, aims to understand **new and emerging research support services,** such as **data management** and **bibliometrics** services.

Focus of this Study

Significance of this research for Library and Information Science

The study will:
• Provide information regarding the nature of research support services in the academic libraries of Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and the U.K
• Inform educators whose work must reflect the reality of work in the profession as well as to standards of professional bodies and research in the sector
• Inform a current practice in the countries surveyed and complement work done in North America

Primary Purpose and Research Questions

The study will investigate the evolving roles of academic libraries and librarians offering research support services. The study aims to investigate: (1) existing research support services; (2) planned research support services; and (3) library readiness for research support services, in particular, with regard to education and training. The research questions to be investigated are:

1. What specialist research support services are being offered in the academic libraries of Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom (UK)?
2. What new research support services are libraries planning to offer in the future?
3. Are library staff constrained in providing specialist research support services?
4. Do library staff require additional education, training and support in research support roles?
5. How might Library and Information Science (LIS) schools respond to the evolving role of research support services in academic and research libraries?

Proposed Method

The proposed research takes a pragmatic approach using an online survey which will be analyzed using descriptive statistics. The librarian responsible for research services in each academic library will be identified. If necessary we will approach the University Librarian.

Sample Population

Proposed benefits of the project:

• **For university libraries**, the results of the study will provide better understanding of their competitive environment and a broad view of what is happening in the field
• **For educators**, the study will increase understandings about the changing roles of academic libraries and thus the education and training needs of our potential students and their future employers
• **For researchers**, the study will also identify domains of rapid change in academic libraries which will provide ideas for potential research projects
• **For academic communities**, the study will extend and update existing knowledge of library research support services providing a more comprehensive picture of the current situation and enabling international comparisons of emerging practices.

Selected References

Corrall, S. (2012) Roles and responsibilities: Libraries, librarians and data, in Pryor, G. (ed.) *Managing Research Data*, pp. 105-133. London: Facet.

Drummond, R., & Wartho, R. (2009) RIMS: The Research Impact Measurement Service at the University of New South Wales. *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, 40(2), 12-24.

Key Perspectives (2009) *A Comparative Review of Research Assessment Regimes in Five Countries and the Role of Libraries in the Research Assessment Process: A Pilot Study Commissioned by OCLC Research*. Dublin, OH: OCLC Research.

Markauskaite, L., Kennan, M.A., Aditomo, A., Hellmers, L. & Richardson, J. (2012) Investigating eResearch: Collaboration practices and future challenges?, in Juan, A. et al. (eds.) *Collaborative and Distributed E-Research: Innovations in Technologies, Strategies and Applications*. IGI Books

MacColl, J. (2010) Library roles in university research assessment. Liber Quarterly, 20(2), 152-168.

Swan, A., & Brown, S. (2008). *The skills, role and career structure of data scientists and curators: An assessment of current practice and future needs: A report to the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)*. Truro: Key Perspectives for JISC.