



Changes in Academic Libraries: Evolution and Innovation in Research Support Services

Sheila Corrall*, Mary Anne Kennan** and Waseem Afzal**

*Information School, University of Sheffield; **School of Information Studies, Charles Sturt University



Purpose

New services are emerging in academic libraries in response to technological, political, economic and social changes in the operating environment, particularly as a result of developments in national research policy and networked data-driven science.

The study investigates the evolving roles of libraries and librarians offering research support services, including existing and planned services, in addition to library readiness for research support, with particular reference to the education and development of the current and future library workforce.

The focus is libraries in the higher education institutions of Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland.

Research questions

- What specialist research support services are being offered?
- What new services do libraries plan to offer in the future?
- Are library staff constrained in providing specialist support?
- Do staff need additional education and training for new roles?
- How might LIS schools respond to evolving library roles?

Methods

The research has taken a pragmatic approach, employing an online questionnaire survey analyzed with descriptive statistics.

The instrument contained 35 questions in four main sections:

- (1) About you and your organization
- (2) Research support services – Bibliometrics
- (3) Research support services – Research data management
- (4) Research support services – Future plans.

Sample population

Academic libraries were identified through the membership lists of their respective national organizations: the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL), Council of New Zealand University Librarians (CONZUL), Society of College, National and University Librarians (SCONUL) in the UK and Consortium of National and University Librarians (CONUL) in Ireland.

Table 1. Survey responses by country

	Australia	NZ	UK	Ireland
Number of institutions	39	8	163	9
Number of responses	36	8	88	9
Response rate (rounded)	92%	100%	54%	100%

Bibliometric support and research data services

Research data services are less prevalent than bibliometric support, but more evident in plans for future service development.

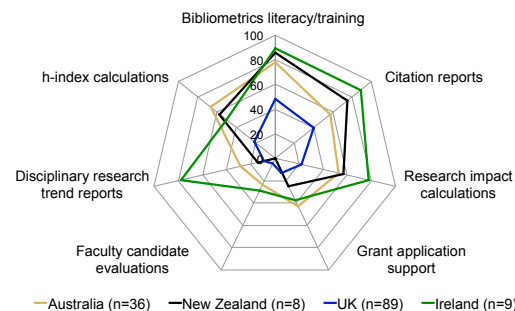


Fig. 1. Existing bibliometric services (% responses per category by country)

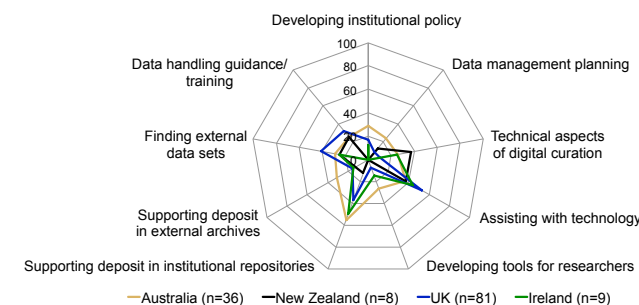


Fig. 2. Existing research data services (% responses per category by country)

Libraries are reaching out to wider audiences (such as university administrators) as a result of developments in research support.

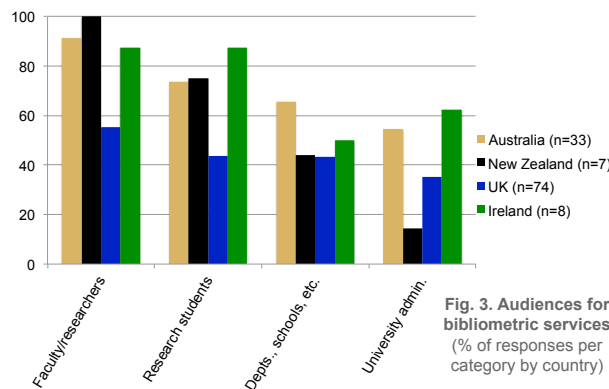


Fig. 3. Audiences for bibliometric services (% of responses per category by country)

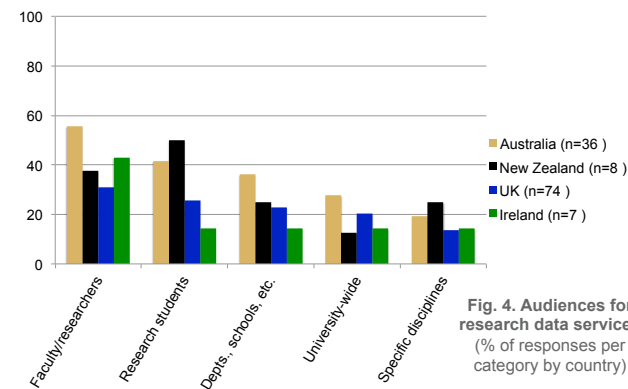


Fig. 4. Audiences for research data services (% of responses per category by country)

The main constraint on service development for both bibliometrics and data management is a shortage of staff knowledge and skills. The majority of respondents agreed there is a need for specialist electives on such topics in LIS professional education programs.

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge with thanks the financial support provided by the Information Studies Research Priority Area, Information Infrastructure Program, Faculty of Education, Charles Sturt University. They also gratefully acknowledge the time and effort contributed to the study by the participants and colleagues who advised on design of the survey instrument.

Contacts

Sheila Corrall, University of Sheffield, UK
 Phone: +44 114 222 2632; Email: s.m.corrall@shef.ac.uk

Mary Anne Kennan, Charles Sturt University, Australia
 Phone: +61 2 6933 2853; Email: mkennan@csu.edu.au

Waseem Afzal, Charles Sturt University, Australia
 Phone: +61 2 6933 2647; Email: wafzal@csu.edu.au