

Presentation notes - IATUL Workshop

Slide 1: I would like to describe to you today how the University of Sunderland developed a research support staff development program which resulted in more confident, skilled and knowledgeable staff, but also as a happy accident, provided opportunities to collaborate more closely with our research community.

Slide 2: Sunderland is a city on England's North East coast and was once home to ship building, coal mining and heavy industry. Originally a Technical college then Polytechnic, specialising in teacher training, marine engineering and the only pharmacy school in the North East, it became a University in 1992 when the town was granted city status.

With approximately 19,000 undergraduate/ post graduate students and 250 PhDs, 30% of our students study in off campus locations both in the UK and overseas. While predominately a teaching institution, the university boasts some high quality pockets of excellence in research.

Slide 3: Public funding for research in English higher education is administered under a 'dual support' system. Under this system, the Higher Education Funding Council, (HEFCE) provides annual funding for English institutions in the form of a 'block grant' known as Quality related funding.

This supports the university's research infrastructure and enables ground-breaking research in keeping with their mission. Research Councils, the European Union, government departments and other external bodies provide additional grants for specific research projects and programmes.

The majority of block funds for research are distributed on the basis of research quality, and take into account the volume and relative cost of research in different areas.

To assess the quality of research for funding purposes, HEFCE and the other UK funding bodies, run a periodic assessment exercise, the most recent of which was the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014). This funding includes an amount to support our research degrees programmes .

Slide 4: Each of our Research Beacons bring together a number of research themes, encouraging multidisciplinary collaborations as well as innovation around the boundaries of specific subjects including, Creative and Cultural Practices, Regional Studies and Culture, Digital Innovation and Health Sciences.

Slide 5: Our Research Centres of excellence inspire rigorous academic research, illuminating pressing questions of the 21st century and influencing debate and policies. These centres focus on 3 key areas: Innovation, Sustainability and Entrepreneurship; Applied Social Sciences; Pedagogy.

Slide 6: In 2011 we looked at our existing resources and support for research and updated our offer to include: dedicated staff support for research; updated research support area on the library website including a research blog; personalised support from library buddies; an institutional repository for research outputs; library input to the university's central research training programmes.

This model of support has been revised from 2012 – 2014, informed by best practice in the sector and evaluation of guidance from UK bodies such as the Research Information Network, Research Libraries UK , VITAE and ITHAKA S+R.

Slide 7: During the past four years a perfect storm of change seemed to be on the horizon which would have an impact on students, academics, researchers and librarians. We were experiencing rapid developments in the research environment, including new models of academic publishing, scholarly communications and impact measurement and digital innovations in communicating research output.

Slide 8: Bosman and Kramer identified important developments in the research workflow phases and their associated trends, expectations, uncertainties, opportunities and challenges. They are currently investigating the way information is created, shared, and processed in academia, reflected in a number of related activities aimed at charting the changing scholarly landscape. Outputs include an overview of current and expected developments and models to gain an overview on the abundance and variety of research tools. Charting the creation and availability, (supply side) and usage, (demand side) of such tools, Bosman and Kramer hope to further investigate why researchers use certain tools and to discover what these usage patterns can tell us about the changes in scholarly communication. Finally they hope to uncover the driving forces behind the creation and innovation of research tools and their interoperability, (or lack of). More information is available from: <https://101innovations.wordpress.com>

Slide 9: While many of these changes were welcomed and provided opportunities for innovation and improvement, we observed that this was also causing some anxiety amongst our librarian and research community. We were also aware that there was so much we didn't know about our researchers' perspective and practices of E-resource use and engagement with digital tools.

A number of focus group meetings and a staff survey were conducted with liaison librarians/library buddies to gain views on training needs and a staff development programme was devised to address these needs.

Slide 10: As well as using expertise within library staff, we asked researchers and PhD students from various faculties to contribute to the development programme to give us their perspectives and also invited the Assistant Director of the university's Graduate Research Service to talk about their role. We wanted to work with our research community to find out first-hand what they expected from library services and what their experiences of online/digital services were. Our liaison librarians also needed a deeper understanding of University Research Activity. This was most valuable and gave us a real insight into researcher behaviour and the variance in disciplines.

Slide 11: Following discussions with staff and an examination of the university's 2014- 2017 Research Plan, a programme of staff development was devised which would include the following topics:

- University's Research activity
- Support for generic research training programmes
- Researchers' online behaviours
- Research impact measurement
- Digital literacy and Social Media for research
- Open Access
- Research metrics
- Making research visible and Researcher profiles

Slide 12: The staff development programme proved to be very successful in terms of gaining new knowledge, skills and understanding and fresh perspectives and insights into research support needs and expectations. It also enabled new and unexpected collaborations with researchers, academic staff and the Graduate Research Service.

Outputs of these collaborations include:

- Co-Authoring of the University's Open Access Policy
- Collaborating with research staff using digital technologies for research dissemination and creation of online researcher profiles using tools such as Research Gate, Research Professional and ORCID
- A small scale collaborative research project to investigate students use of subscribed online resources use during a research methods module and the possible impact this may have on their subsequent marks/grade
- The creation of a cross-service working party to examine Research Data Management policy

Slide 13: Reflecting on the staff development programme we continue to refine and improve research support, recognising that our researchers are the experts in their subject and ensuring they are aware of what they can expect from skilled, knowledgeable and confident library staff.

Any questions?

Slide 14: Image credits

References:

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