

Supporting Research: New Opportunities for 'Subject Librarians' and Other Staff

Antony Brewerton

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Antony Brewerton

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1





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Remodel

v. tr. remodelled, remodelling:

1. Model again or differently
2. Reconstruct

4





5





6



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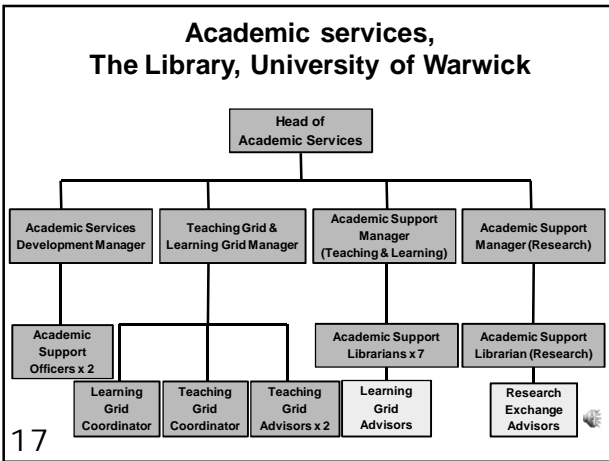




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Changes in the learning environment

<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>
Reactive/Stable	Creative/agile
Instruction	Construction
Content delivery	User generated content
One to many/interactive	Peer 2 peer/participative
Interactive	Participative
Curriculum centric	Learner centric
Mundane	Engaging

19



Changes in the research environment

<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>
Sole researcher/small teams	Global research collaborations
Single disciplinary focus	Multi- & inter-disciplinary focus
Nest	Community of scholars
Print dependent	Desk top delivery

20



Changes in the library business

<i>Traditionally</i>	<i>Now</i>
Physical stock	Digital resources +
Scarce resources	Amazon/Google, etc.
One study size fits all	Third place
Physical barriers	Accessibility
Independent provider	Collaborative partner
Controlling	Motivational
Supply driven Library/operations centric	Embedded user-focused service

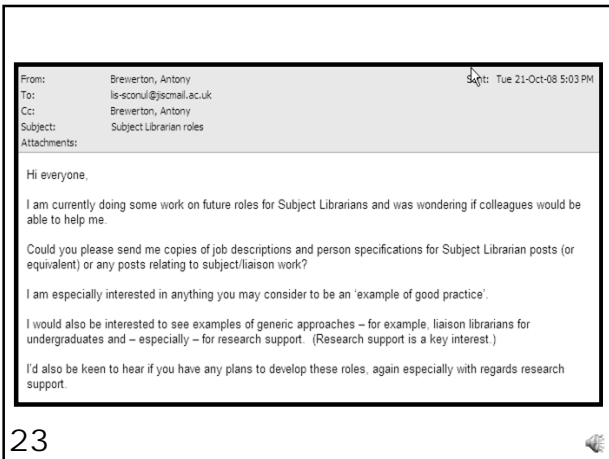
21

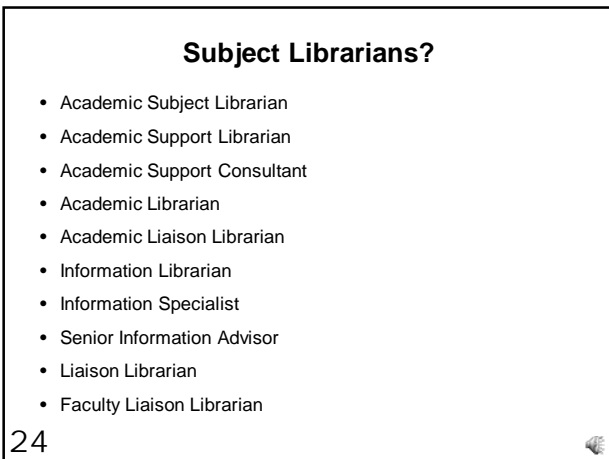


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...and rather excitingly...

- Research Support Librarian
- Research Support Specialist
- Research Liaison Manager

25



Core Subject Librarianship skills

No.	Job description duty	Frequency of occurrence
1.	Information skills teaching	53
2.	Liaison/user-focused approach	50
3.	Collection management/development	47
=4.	Budget management	36
=4.	Enquiry support	36
5.	Production of print/Web guides	28
6.	Blended learning/e-learning/VLE support	15
7.	Current awareness	3

26

Antony Brewerton, "...and any other duties deemed necessary", *SCONUL Focus*, 51, 2011, p.60-67



New skills

No.	Job description duty	Frequency of occurrence
1.	Marketing	35
2.	Staff management	28
3.	QAA/quality assurance/audit support	8
4.	Management data collection	6

27



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28



Research roles

<i>No.</i>	<i>Job description duty</i>	<i>Frequency of occurrence</i>
1.	'Research support'	15
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

29



'Research support' – job purpose

"To be responsible for developing and implementing a research support strategy across all library user groups to ensure that the needs of researchers are met"

...and...

"To ensure that the library fully supports the [institution's] research strategy"

30



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Research roles

No.	Job description duty	Frequency of occurrence
1.	'Research support'	15
=2.	Bibliographic software support	8
=2.	IR/IR advocacy	8
=3.	Promotion of special collections	4
=3.	Copyright	4
4.	Bibliometrics/impact measurement	3
5.	RAE/REF support	2

31



RLUK Workforce Think Tank 'Subject Librarians' Project



32

RLUK Workforce Think Tank

Subject Librarians/Information Specialists/Liaison Staff Project

Aims

To map the information needs of researchers onto tasks to be undertaken by subject librarian/information specialist/ liaison staff and to develop the skills sets of existing staff to ensure they meet the needs of a constantly changing research environment

33



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Subject Librarians/Information Specialists/Liaison Staff Project

Stakeholder groups

- Researchers
- Subject Librarian/Information Specialist/Liaison Staff
- Directors
- Pro-Vice Chancellors for Research/Research Managers
- Library Schools
- Professional bodies

34



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Areas of investigation

1. Review of Subject Librarian (etc.) roles:

- Literature review of Subject Librarian/Information Specialist/Liaison Staff roles in the UK, North America and Australasia
- Environmental scan of Subject Librarian/Information Specialist/Liaison Staff job descriptions, staffing structures and models of researcher support in the UK, North America and Australasia

35

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Outcomes/Deliverables

- Analysis of the literature
- Mapping of researcher needs (using 'seven ages of research' or other models) onto support activities
- Review of support landscape and review of issues related to alternative models of information support for researchers
- Composite job description and person specification
- Tools for training needs analysis for staff
- Analysis of training offered by library schools/other bodies and opportunities for developing new courses (for both entry level and established staff)
- Analysis of how the research might inform future RLUK activities and opportunities for greater working with other professional bodies

36



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Benefits

To Library Schools:

- Identify opportunities for library schools to develop courses for new professionals which are more closely aligned to the needs of library managers to ensure new entrants to the profession have the appropriate skill sets to support a constantly changing research environment
- Identify opportunities to work with RLUK to develop courses aimed at developing existing professionals

37

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The project

- Timely
- Of international interest

38



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Methodology

- Mary Auckland
- June 2010 onwards
- 4 Work Packages
- Report published January 2012

39




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Subject Librarians/Information Specialists/Liaison Staff Project
Work Package 1

Researcher needs & Subject Librarian roles:


- An exploration of the **information needs and information seeking behaviour of researchers**, and the role of Subject Librarians supporting these, and mapping the role of Subject Librarians to the needs of researchers
- An environmental **scan of 'subject librarian' job descriptions, staffing structures and models of researcher support**
 - Review of current literature
 - Short questionnaire to 23 libraries

40 

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Work Package 2

Subject Librarian skills sets:


- Defining the **knowledge and skill sets** required by 'Subject Librarians' to support researchers based on the information gathered in WP 1
- A **validation** of current and future relevance of the knowledge and skills sets identified and **analysis of the extent to which Subject Librarians and their managers think the skills are currently available**
 - Review of current literature
 - Questionnaire completed by 22 RLUK member libraries

41 

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Work Package 3

Training and development currently available for new and existing professionals:

- Investigate **current training opportunities** for Subject Librarians
- Investigate **gaps** between provision and needs
 - Desk research
 - Short web-based survey of training suppliers
 - Survey of LIS Schools

42 

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Work Package 4

Alternative support models:

- A review of **alternative models** of information support for researchers and **implications for the profession**
 - Interviews with key players

43



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Findings

- Researcher information (and other) needs ... and how we are addressing them
- Subject Librarians' skills & knowledge, training needs & opportunities available, now & in the future
- Subject Librarians and models of researcher support

44



RLUK Research Libraries UK

www.rluk.ac.uk/content/re-skilling-research

Re-skilling for Research

An investigation into the role and skills of subject and liaison librarians required to effectively support the evolving information needs of researchers.

Final Report

Conducted for RLUK by Nery Jenkins, QIS&IS, Herford

March 2011

45




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Findings

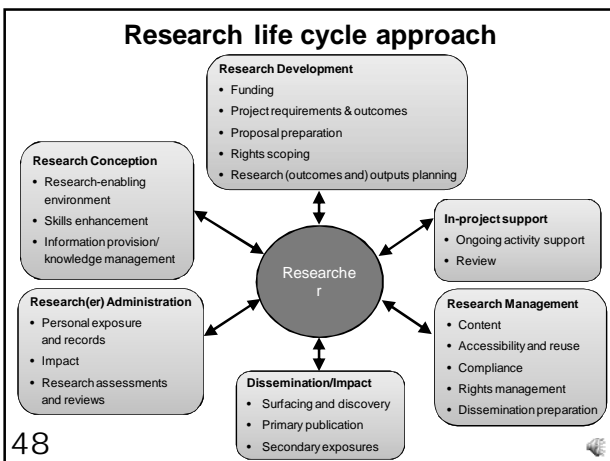
- Researcher information (and other) needs ... and how we are addressing them
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46 

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Subject Librarians

- Starting point for research support posts

47



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Research life cycle

1. Conceptualising new research, developing proposals, and identifying funding opportunities
2. Seeking new information
3. Information management
4. Data collection
5. Data discovery, management and curation
6. Sharing, discussion, online collaboration
7. Analysing and reflecting on information and data
8. Writing up and dissemination
9. Compliance, IP, © and other statutory requirements
10. Preservation
11. Quality assessment and measuring impact
12. Commercialisation

49 Emerging technology (see Report, section 2.3, p.16-32)

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Research life cycle (2)

1. Conceptualising new research, developing proposals, and identifying funding opportunities
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12. Commercialisation

50 Emerging technology

So, what are we doing?

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Research life cycle (3)

1. Conceptualising new research, developing proposals, and identifying funding opportunities
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Research life cycle (4)

1. Conceptualising new research, developing proposals, and identifying funding opportunities
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Research life cycle (5)

1. Conceptualising new research, developing proposals, and identifying funding opportunities
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12. Commercialisation

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Research life cycle (6)

1. Conceptualising new research, developing proposals, and identifying funding opportunities
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Generally...

"To date, Subject Librarians have supported the needs of researchers through relatively traditional services revolving around information discovery, collection development and some elements of information management." (p.33)

55



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Flexibility

"...the most important skills or attribute staff can have is an adaptable and flexible approach to work." (p.34)

56



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32 skills & knowledge areas

Themes related to:

- Information literacy
- Information management
- Subject/discipline & knowledge of tools/sources
- Partnership building
- Research process – generic & local knowledge
- Research data management
- Metadata and research data
- Scholarly communications
- Funder mandates, assessment & other 'legal' requirements
- Web 2.0 & other emerging technologies relating to researchers

57

(see section 3.1, p.35-38)



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9 areas of increasing importance over next 2 – 5 years

1. Excellent knowledge of bibliographic and other finding tools in discipline/subject
2. Excellent skills to design information literacy training (both face-to-face and online)
3. Outstanding skills in information discovery, literature searching, etc.
4. Knowledge to advise on citing and referencing, and the use of bibliographic management software
5. Ability to proactively advise and market appropriate library services to researchers
6. Good knowledge of data sources available in the discipline/subject
7. Excellent knowledge of content (in all relevant media) available to discipline/subject
8. Awareness of current and changing local research interests
9. Ability to gain an appreciation of individual researcher/project needs (including listening skills) (p.39)

58



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4 areas unnecessary now or in the future?

1. Knowledge of sources of research funding to assist researchers to identify potential funders
2. Deep understanding of discipline/subject
3. Ability to synthesise, analyse and provide digests of 'discovered' information
4. Ability to advise on the preservation of project records (p. 41)

59



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9 areas of high skills gap, relatively high importance

1. Ability to advise on preserving research outputs
2. Knowledge to advise on data management and curation
3. Sufficient knowledge to support compliance with the various mandates of funders, including open access requirements
4. Knowledge to advise on potential data manipulation tools
5. Knowledge to advise on data mining
6. Knowledge to advocate, and advise on, the use of metadata
7. Ability to advise on the preservation of project records
8. Knowledge of sources of research funding to assist researchers to identify potential funders
9. Skills to develop metadata schema and advise on standards (p. 43)

60



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Traditional liaison model


- Information literacy training
- Provision of information on Web pages
- Helping researchers on a 1-to-1 basis
- Committee work/meetings
- Informal liaison (p. 46-48)

62 

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New ways of working with researchers

"Several libraries report an evolution or possibly a transformation from this traditional liaison model to a new way of working with researchers." (p. 48)

63 

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Better engagement

"Re-establishing a lively and sustained dialogue with their research communities is a key challenge for the library and information services in many libraries... Better engagement between information professionals and researchers could add to the efficiency and effectiveness of research... Such a strategy would have to be proactive... And it would have to meet the challenge of delivering results that correspond to researchers' patterns and timetables of work."

(quoted on p. 49)

- RIN/BL (2009)

64



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Job descriptions

"Most participating libraries provided copies of job descriptions and person specifications for their Subject Librarian posts. On the whole these documents make little mention of support for research, and even when they do the tasks and responsibilities included, and the skills and knowledge mentioned, are couched in very general, rather than specific, terms. By and large they do not reflect the richness of the [researcher's needs]." (p. 52-53)

65



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A change in focus

"...the focus needs to change from collections, to the process of doing research and mainly supporting the latter, 'from collections to connections'." (p. 58)

66



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Subject Librarians/Information Specialists/Liaison Staff Project

What should RLUK be doing to help members develop the skills sets of 'Subject Librarians'?

- Subject Librarians will need support with change; Many Subject Librarians have been in post for a long time but they need to change or their posts will seem less relevant, especially given the need to demonstrate value for money
- We need considerable staff development support to help staff take on new roles
- We mustn't 'throw the baby out with the bath water' – we mustn't lose sight of the value Subject Librarians currently bring; How do we balance this with new roles? Who does the established activities?

- RLUK Conference, Edinburgh 2010

(see Appendix E, p. 98-99)

67

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Practical help

- Good practice for inspiration (see section 2.3 & Appendix B)
- Sample Job Descriptions & Person Specifications (Appendix D)
- Tools for Training Needs Analysis (Appendix C & Tables 1-3)

68

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A team approach

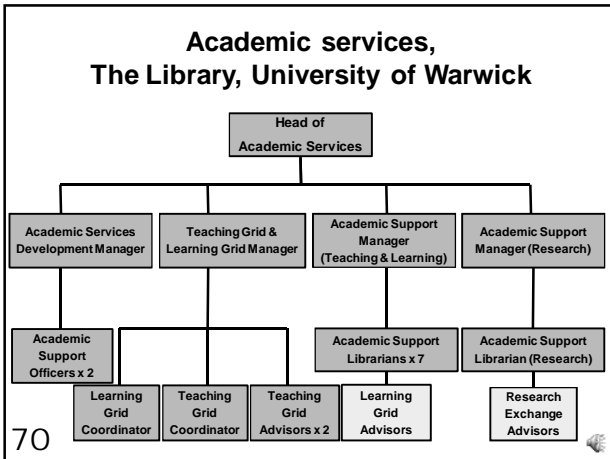
"[Subject Librarians] cannot be expert in themselves in each new capability, but knowing when to call in a colleague, or how to describe appropriate expert capabilities to faculty, will be key to the new liaison role. Just as researchers are often working in teams to leverage compatible expertise, liaison librarians will need to be team builders among library experts where this advances client research. New liaison roles are not emerging *de novo*, but rather in continuity with established roles." (quoted on p.59)

- Hahn (2009)

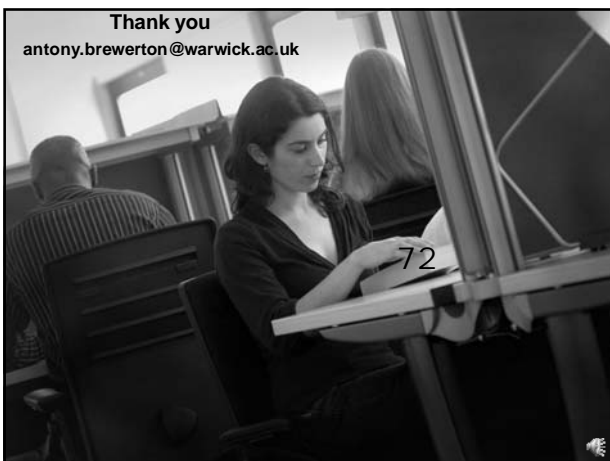
69

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- RLUK Workforce Think Tank**
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- Research life cycle**
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- 71



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References

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www.rluk.ac.uk/content/rluk-strategic-plan-power-knowledge-phase-two-2011-2014
 - Antony Brewerton. '...and any other duties deemed necessary' – an analysis of subject librarian job descriptions; *SCONUL Focus*, 2011, **51**, p.60-67
 - Antony Brewerton, Developing research support: a report on the RLUK project to map the information needs of researchers onto tasks to be undertaken by subject librarians and other staff, now and in the future; *SCONUL Focus*, 2011, **54**, p.40-45
- both available via www.sconul.ac.uk

73



Images

- *The Library, University of Warwick*
- *The author*

74





Thanks to:

- Research Libraries UK
www.rluk.ac.uk
- The Library, University of Warwick
go.warwick.ac.uk/library

75



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