Responding to the information needs for research success: the role of the research librarian

UNISA 2014 LIS Research Symposium
25 July 2014

Segametsi Molawa
Director: Information Services
Human Sciences Research Council
Content

• Overview of research
• Research significance in South Africa
• Questions of focus about role of research librarians
• Theory on role of research librarians
• Summary of survey done in the research councils
Research stakeholders in South Africa

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Research, Careers, Innovation and Youth

The Centre for Research on Science and Technology (CREST)
Conduct research on the nature of science and technology with specific reference to science and technology policy in South Africa.

NRF funds research
To facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of the natural and social sciences, humanities and technology.
Research stakeholders in South Africa

Department of Higher Education

In order to fulfil the economic and social goals of participation in an inclusive economy and society, the Department of Higher education and training is committed to the development of capable, well-educated and skilled citizens through education and research.

All public higher education institutions
Importance of research

• In the budget vote speech on the 22 July 2014, The Minister of Science and Technology Ms Naledi Pando indicated that through investing in research and development and innovation the government has made significant contribution to meeting our triple challenges of poverty, inequality and joblessness.

• Target the National Development Plan, minister believes that Vision 2030 is achievable.
Efforts to escalate quality of research

• Amendments have been made to the Policy and procedures for measurement of research outputs of public higher education institutions in order “to sustain current research strengths and to promote the kinds of research and other knowledge outputs required to meet national development needs”
Who are we?

- Knowledge workers
- Subject librarians
- Special librarians
- Embedded librarians
- Liaison librarian
- Information consultant
- Information scientist
Questions about the role of research librarians

• In the midst of all this transformation in research, what role does the librarian play?
• What kind of service does the library render to be relevant in this era?
• Are the research librarians well skilled for the expected roles?
• Which skills are critical?
The evolving profession

• Davis (2008)- asked if the state of Librarianship in the 21st century is Crisis or transformation?

• Qualities and competencies required:
  o Flexibility
  o Vision
  o Critical thinking
  o Partnership and collaboration
  o From traditional guardian to knowledge
Theory- Applicable models

• Liaison model- Subject librarian are assigned to research programmes (Jaguszewski & Williams 2013)

• Research informationist model- delivering expert guidance to patrons at their site of practice (mainly for health and life science researchers) (Federer 2013)

• Business intelligence professional- moving beyond online search to analysis and prediction (Berkien 2006)
Theory-Applicable models

- Embedded Librarian- Librarians involved at macro/strategic and micro level, going out of the library to library user groups, building strong relationships, providing customised and value added services, collaborating and contributing to the success of research and projects (Shumaker 2012)
Survey- Research Councils

- A survey has been conducted
- A convenience sample of research libraries in the nine National science councils of South Africa, whose legislative mandate generally centre on promotion of research development and technology innovation.
- Both qualitative and quantitative approach
- Data was collected through interviews, questionnaires and literature review.
- Analysis done on Excel
Current state of library support to research

• 7 out of 9 research councils participated
• The ratio of research librarian to researchers ranges from 1: 13 to 1: 120 researchers
• 100% render traditional library services as expected
• 29% fully transformed and embedded
• 14% partially transformed
• 57% not yet transformed
Role of the research librarian

Primary and traditional roles entails:

• Collection development
• Literature search
• Information literacy instruction
• Preservation of resources
• Personnel management
Skills gap

Research librarians identified the following:

• Research data management
• Research impact assessment
• Knowledge management Open access repository of research output
• Research methodology
• Good writing skills
• Excellent customer relation skills
Skills gap

• Understanding of own council mandate and subject specialisation
• Negotiation skills
• Presentation skills
• Knowledge of process towards publishing of a paper.
Recommendations

That research librarians should move towards:

• Providing advanced library research assistance.
• Acquiring relevant skills for the evolving research
  • Establishing collaborative partners with researchers and professional interest groups.
• Offer advanced data management support.
  • Becoming embedded librarians
The evolving profession

Collection

Connection

Paradigm shift
The evolving profession

- Collaboration
References

• Berkien, T. 2006. Transforming information specialists into intelligence professionals. Online, Sep/Oct, 27-31


References


Thank you