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Abstract

Nowadays, the University Library is conceived as a resources-based Service oriented to learning, teaching and research, as well as to the running and management of the whole University. In this sense, one of the Library missions consist in making easier and disseminating the information resources, and also in cooperating with the knowledge creation processes, in order to contribute to achieve the University goals.

As a result, new library activities have been implemented through the analysis of the patrons' needs: the Research Support service has been set up in many of them in order to offer a range of services for researchers in all the stages of the research process.

This contribution presents the actions currently developed by the author with a focus on the needs of the researchers, analyzes the current trends around this topic and discusses some factors that might mark their development in coming years.

Keywords: University Libraries, Research Support librarians, Information Science profession, Information management, Research at Universities

In the core of research

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In the Research Library environment, much is being talked about relating to concepts previously unknown to librarians such as: open linked data, librarians as data curators, or librarians embedded in research groups appear amongst the latest trends to explore.

Actually, the support provided to researchers has always been one of the main purposes of libraries. It's only that the techniques which we use which have evolved and developed.

There is not so much difference between the behaviour of the researcher who accessed the library twenty years ago to obtain information, and the one who tries nowadays to extract the same or similar information from a repository. In both cases, libraries and librarians are playing key roles.

It is true that the library does not always retain the required material (fortunately!), but librarians are still in a position to filter, to preserve and to offer the intellectual production at the scientific community's disposal, both as publications and as data processed.

Currently, we Research Support Librarians, are working in several ways:

We assist our patrons in how to use the advanced functionalities of information resources, how to process the alerts and the citations of their papers and how to select the scientific journals in which to publish in order to disseminate their results. We offer to publish their works in the Institutional Repository, and to help manage their data. We advise them on how to use the social networks in order to make their publications more visible.

We show them the autoarchiving policies of journals and publishers. We offer them services on Bibliometrics, such as how to acquire bibliometric indicators so as to complete the applications for research activity assessment and how to get a more consistent public profile as scientists, using the different tools available.

Several recent reports have confirmed that these are the general lines in which libraries and researchers are working together nowadays.

Looking at a recent European Research Area (ERA) report:

'Achieving a fully functioning ERA must be a key goal of future research and innovation policy initiatives. This should acknowledge the need for science to deliver sustainable

solutions to societal challenges, the growing demand for research integrity and accountability, and the drive towards a new mode of conducting and sharing research, i.e. Science 2.0.' (1)

Also the ERA Communication Synthesis Report (Report EUR 26232) states the role of libraries on the access and preservation of scientific information, which is part of the ERA priority 5: 'Optimal circulation access to and transfer of scientific knowledge'.

Furthermore, the report recognizes the crucial role that repositories have played in collecting, preserving and disseminating digital intellectual output from research.

And, at the same time, considers that 'This slower progress of open access to data can be explained by two factors (Science Metrix, 2013b): (i) The heterogeneous nature of scientific data [...] [and] (ii) The relatively slow progression of OA data repositories may be due in part to the lack of champions, such as with OA scientific papers repositories which might have developed faster due to the role played by librarians.' (2)

The implementation of an Open Science infrastructure is one of the goals of the European Cloud Initiative, that "should open up to every research centre, every research project and every researcher in Europe the world-class supercomputing, data storage and analysis capacity which they need to succeed in the global, data-driven innovation system." (3)

In the same sense, The NMC Horizon Report: 2015 Library Edition points out as fast and mid-range trends the increasing focus on research data management for publications and the increasing accessibility of research content.

The same report also mentions the importance of bibliometric and citations technologies, the semantic web and linked data, or the importance of digital identity as elements to consider in the next years. (4)

In view of these reports, it could seem that our next tasks will be the result of a greater development of the current ones.

Nevertheless, our future as research support librarians is intrinsically linked to the future of research itself.

But what about our libraries? There are some aspects in which we can influence to some degree, what is happening but we can not completely control all factors, such as:

- Budget: we depend on the financial situation at international and national levels. This point is decisive in order to materialize our professional and technical projects

- Staff: highly related to budget, this factor depends on our funders, and on governmental policies (especially in the case of public funding research libraries)

- National laws and mandates: Particularly important for further development (or not) of open access policies. Among the stakeholders, are research groups, the publishing industry, and of course, librarians. It is interesting to observe the movements and power of associationism in our profession.

On the other hand, there are some other factors inherent to our profession, about whose we could have a broader scope for action (needless to say: the next lines reflects only my very personal view and experience, and are fruit of a self-analysis).

Let us take as an example the figure of the librarian embedded inside research groups. What can we do in order to strengthen the links between the scientists and the librarian? Despite the fact that librarians are highly-skilled professionals, sometimes we may need to move away from our comfort zone. Simple movements on our part, such as thinking out of the box, feeling part of a research team, or having a project-oriented approach (as generally researchers do), might lead us to step

over our current threshold of integration among our patrons. In fact, not only do we need to support them in the best way, but we should also demonstrate that we are part of their team.

Whatever happens in the future, research libraries and librarians will surely remain as important elements supporting, helping and facilitating the creation of knowledge. We did it before and we can do it in years to come.

To summarise it is a matter of focus and willingness: of being more and more at the centre of research.

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