



WHELF Research Group Event: Librarians Supporting the Research Lifecycle

Date: Monday 8th May 2017

Location: Seminar Room C0.13, Biosciences Building, Cardiff University

Event Report: Nick Roberts (Research Librarian, University of South Wales)

Introduction:

The venue for the session was the Biosciences Seminar Room in the Sir Martin Evans Building of Cardiff University, a modern glass-sided room that was a pleasant accommodation for the afternoon.

Following a welcome from Mari Ann Hilliar (Subject Librarian, University Library Service, Cardiff University) we had an introduction to the session speakers from Dr Alison Weightman (Director, Specialist Unit for Review Evidence (SURE) and Associate Director, Research & Academic Engagement, University Library Service, Cardiff University). The session was comprised of three invited speakers and a breakout discussion between attendees on possible practical implications from the talks. This report provides an overview of the three presentations given by the invited speakers.

First Speaker: Josie Grindulis

The first speaker was Josie Grindulis, Career Development Manager at Cardiff University. Josie detailed her extensive experience in supporting the career development of researchers both in Cardiff University and as the Chair of AGCAS (Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Service). Josie covered three areas in her presentation:

1. The major policies affecting the careers of researchers
2. The Researcher Development Framework
3. The place of local training and support for researchers

These are the main themes from Josie's presentation:

- It's not easy to define researchers in general terms, they are a very diverse population who are trained to be independent
- Josie discussed research careers in terms of a continuum and she highlighted that researchers have a range of career options (senior research positions, teaching and scholarship, outside of academia)
- Josie mentioned that supporting researchers also means helping them gain skills that will enhance their employability, including moving in to new areas

- Josie stressed that researchers are reliant on funders and it's important to know as much about the policies and mandates that researchers are working under
- Josie listed some of the initiatives that effect researchers and the level of awareness of them amongst the national community of researchers – she quote 2015 figures that reported only 70% of researchers in the UK were aware of the REF
- Josie spent a lot of time outlining the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and how it identifies skills that are needed to be a successful researcher. While not a qualification Josie listed the reasons why the RDF is important;
 - o It is nationally recognised
 - o It is sustainable
 - o It is portable
- Josie outlined some of the areas that could be supported
 - o Supporting the conduct of research
 - Keeping up-to-date with research protocols and policies
 - REF
 - Funder conditions
 - Equality and diversity
 - Ethical standards
 - Digital literacy skills
 - o Supporting the careers of researchers
 - Liaise with other support providers at the institution
 - Skills for careers and employability
- Using information from Mari Ann Josie described some of the current research support activities from the Cardiff University Library Services
 - o Systematic reviews
 - o Citations advice
 - o Open access
- Looking to the future Josie suggested that library services should have a bigger role to play in supporting researchers with analytics information to enhance publication strategies

Second Speaker: Rob Evans

The second speaker was Professor Rob Evans, Director of Learning and Teaching in the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University and a member of Cardiff's Centre for the Study of Knowledge, Expertise and Science (KES). Rob's area of research is the sociology of science and technology. Rob's talk was a very valuable insight into a researcher's perspective of where Library support can and cannot fit into the research lifecycle. Rob started the talk with the bracing acknowledgement that researchers have a persistent confidence in their self-sufficiency, that researchers do not need librarians in the way that we think they do.

Rob broke the presentation down into three sections:

1. Performance expectations – what researchers are supposed to do
2. Research as practice and culture – what researchers actually do
3. Points of entry for librarians

In the first section, Rob used the example of Cardiff University and the expectations on researchers one of the main points of which was to “produce and disseminate research outputs that are consistent in quality and quantity with agreed standards”.

In the second section, Rob made the point that linear models of research are not realistic and that the cyclical models are more representative of the activity. Rob equated being a researcher to a life-style practice and a researcher is never not doing research.

In the third section, Rob stressed that being a researcher is more akin to being an apprentice – a researcher will learn by doing researching and becoming an autonomous individual through different phases of apprenticeship and becoming an expert. Rob argued that to understand the gap between librarians and researchers we have to understand the difference between tacit and explicit knowledge. The main argument is that the published knowledge in a subject area is only one part of the equation, the tacit knowledge such as experience and personal connections are essential for a researcher to develop their expertise.

Rob expanded on this by describing two forums for research:

- Consultative forum
 - o This is the public face of research and science. Peer-reviewed literature, academic conference proceedings where discourse is limited to discussion of empirical data and evidence.
- Contingent forum
 - o This is the private face of research and science. The interactions are based on trust and reputation but the discourse includes a wider range of data, evidence and differences of opinion.

Rob asserted that the Contingent Forum is essential for researchers and highlighted why that is:

- In a consultative forum, there are no opportunities to distinguish between difficult and pathological science. The contingent forum allows for closer questioning of research design.
- Getting published is easier than people think but it's hard to sift through the peer reviewed literature to identify what needs to be read but a contingent forum allows a researcher to be aware of what's happening in their sector.

Rob listed some possible areas of support for librarians:

- Searching / Finding information
 - o Some subject areas may require more assistance with finding literature, Rob used the example of medical researchers who are also practitioners and less embedded in a research culture, while others are completely self-sufficient. Depending on the subject area there may be low opportunities for participation from librarians.
- Evaluating / interpreting information
 - o Systematic reviews are a good example of high participation from librarians but Rob said that too much participation moves the librarian into a research role rather than a librarian role.
- Data Archiving
 - o Rob argued that researchers need more assistance with data archival as it requires subject knowledge *and* information management. Researchers can be focused on results data but librarians can assist them with data archiving at different stages (before and during the research).
- Publication/dissemination
 - o Open access and new forms of publishing
 - o Help with metrics

Rob concluded his presentation by listing a few challenges and opportunities for librarians:

Challenges	Opportunities
Requires immersion in research culture	Need to support generic search and information literacy skills
Contributions likely to be difficult in absence of extended immersion	Open Access requests create new demand for new dissemination infrastructure
Too much specialisation risks transforming library role into a research role	Calls for Open Science will further extend role of universities as points of dissemination

It was interesting that Rob's challenges emphasised the distance from the research, too far away and you do not have an accurate view of the research and too near you risk becoming too involved. Rob's thought-provoking presentation gave the attendees a lot to talk about over the tea, coffee and biscuits.

Third Speaker: Penny Dowdney

The third, and last, speaker was Penny Dowdney, Doctoral School Manager, Bangor University and Vitae Regional Co-Representative for South West and Wales. Penny gave a very detailed presentation on her many roles supporting researchers.

- Doctoral School Manager at Bangor
- Welsh Crucible Champion
- KESS II (Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarship) Wales Manager
- Head of Academy of Teaching Fellows
- Vitae Regional Co-Representative for South West and Wales

Penny's many examples of the good practice at Bangor were very interesting, especially the strong ethos of working closely with the library. Penny cited Bangor's joined-up and systematic inductions for PhD researchers and she stressed how important it was to report upwards on the effectiveness of such activities. In a similar vein Penny said that we need to push for our support staff to be acknowledged and awarded in the same way as academic colleagues, she used the example that at Bangor they have a 'love your technician' initiative.

Like many institutions Bangor are keen to grow their PGR numbers and place a focus on retention through to completion. Penny asked the audience to think how we can help these PhD researchers at our own institutions.

Echoing Josie's point from earlier in the session Penny urged the attendees to have a better understanding of the legislation affecting researchers, learning the landscape that researchers have to work in will give us a better idea of how to support them.

Penny described the major initiatives she is involved with and gave valuable context for how they affect researchers. Penny highlighted the Welsh Crucible and the KESS II initiatives as being important for developing careers of researchers in Wales.

Towards the end of her presentation, Penny described some of the training and development sessions offered in Bangor's evolving PhD Training and Development programme. Some of these activities have been listed below as they may be useful for WHELP colleagues.

Basic care workshops

- In-depth workshops to fit in with PhD milestones
- Specialist workshops
- Generic workshops (transferrable skills)

Examples of the workshops run at Bangor

- Effective doctoral supervision
- Examining doctoral candidates
- RefWorks (basic and advanced users)
- Marketing yourself online
- Literature searching (discipline specific)
- Introduction to intellectual property
- Viva preparation
- How to be an effective researcher

To conclude her presentation Penny listed some of the challenges and opportunities in supporting our research communities and they are a good summation of the themes for the session as whole.

- Researchers are a diverse community and there may be different levels of engagement
- Penny described the needs of researchers in terms of they 'don't know what they need until they need it'
- How to evaluate what we do (what works and what doesn't, how do we communicate successes)
- Important to build networks / communities
- Where do we 'fit' as researcher developers?
- Move away from the library as the location for support - if they cannot come to us we have to go to them

Acknowledgements:

Many thanks to the three speakers, Josie Grindulis, Rob Evans and Penny Dowdney, for taking time away from their very busy roles to speak to the attendees. Thanks to Cardiff University for hosting the event and all the colleagues who attended.