

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO – MAKING WAY FOR RELEVANT RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES AT LUND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES (LUB)

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What are we doing?

How can librarians support research and researchers and what do the researchers want? These questions were raised at Lund University Libraries (LUB) some time ago, and were formulated as part of one of the strategic goals of LUB¹. LUB is a decentralized library organization, where each faculty is responsible for its own library support services. Even though many libraries at LUB work with research support it was difficult to describe these activities and how to develop the support both at faculty level and throughout the LUB network. We tried to search for other libraries' definitions and actions in the field but with little success; instead many librarians replied with a request for our results. It became clear that the matter called for an investigation of both how research support services can be defined and what researchers want and need. It all came down to this: if we, within the library, cannot define our support and its future directions – how then, can the researchers know about all that the libraries and librarians have to offer? In order to clarify these matters, the Library council at LUB (Biblioteksrådet)² ordered an investigation in May 2011. The project, which was followed out during 2012, was conducted in three parts:

- 1) a literature review focusing on definitions and examples of research support services as well as researchers' needs and experiences of support services (Wiklund, 2012),
- 2) a survey to get an overview of the support services offered today at LUB,
- 3) focus group interviews with researchers to investigate key obstacles in their research processes (Voog et al., 2013).

¹ The goal concerning research is (author's translation): "Support for research – the goal is to develop advanced support services for the needs of research and for the visibility, dissemination and evaluation of the scientific production at Lund University" (Lund's Universitets Bibliotek - LUB. 2009.)

² The Library Council consists of the Director of Libraries and faculty librarians or the equivalent.

The research process

All three parts of the project was structured around a schematically divided model of the research process. The model was created by inspiration from e.g. Bo-Christer Björk (2006) and Peter Blaschke ([2009] (opubl.).

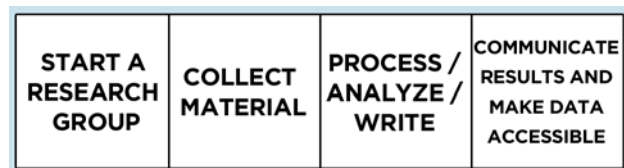


Figure 1. A model of the research process

The model works as an analytical tool; and as a way to structure the information collected in the different parts of the project. Even though we knew, and as the results states, that the research process is never a linear process, we found the model useful for visualizing different types of support services and their purpose. It was also valuable as a way to structure different kinds of needs and obstacles that researchers experience.

Project part 1: Literature overview

The literature review deals with three questions, what are research support services, what research support services do libraries offer and what needs researchers experience, and what do they think of existing services?

What are research support services?

There seems to be little research on libraries' support of researchers. Most of the existing literature either describes support services offered at specific libraries or deals with future roles of libraries in relation to researchers. Much of the material is written from an American or British horizon.

A common term is research support services but there are few definitions. Instead the descriptions of the support offered gets to define the term. Supporting researchers or supporting research is often used interchangeably without discussion of possible

connotations. A recurring idea is that support services are about to facilitate for the researcher to get his/her job done, i.e. saving the time of the researcher. It then becomes an approach and a way to motivate activities. In short, this can be achieved in two ways: one is to support the researcher to develop strategies and techniques for efficient seeking, gathering and use of different kinds of information; the other way is to do some of the work for the researcher, e.g. information seeking activities, providing literature overviews or organize material. Jensen (2012) depicts two dimensions of research support services: broad services, i.e. traditional/ordinary support offered by the libraries to the researchers, such as interlibrary loans; and specific services, focusing on matters like questions related to publishing, such as open access and copyright issues.

This connects to the difference between research support services and library services in general. What is the difference between the two? One answer could be that the former is only intended for researchers, while all users benefit from the latter. But that does not seem to entirely explain the difference. For example, working with collections is a traditional area for libraries that benefits all users, not only researchers. Nevertheless, development of collections is sometimes considered to be a research support service (e.g. Garner, 2006; Larsen et al, 2010). Why are we using a specific term? Are we trying to understand new areas of work and new roles? Or does the fact that researchers more seldom come to the library, which means less occasions for librarians to interact with them, calls for more proactive strategies from librarians to understand the needs of the researchers, hence starting to stress that we also deal with research support services?

The literature often advocates proactive research support services, i.e. librarians should anticipate future needs and wishes; and act to make the needs and wishes easily satisfied when they occur (e.g. Neal, Parsonage & Shaw, 2009; Webb, Gannon-Leary & Bent, 2007). Knowledge about researchers' work and ways of communicating then becomes important for understanding future needs.

In both of the following sections of what libraries offer and what researchers want, the results are structured according to the schematic model of the research process.

What do libraries offer?

Related to the first part of the research process, *Start a research project*, there are few descriptions of research

support services. Often support like information about research funders and alerts for calls, is the responsibility of other central units at the universities and not offered by libraries (CIBER, 2010).

The largest number of research support services is found in the parts *Collect material* and *Communicate results and make data accessible*. As mentioned before, some describe the development of collections by purchase and digitalization as a research support service and they work in close relation with researchers to develop the collections, taking into account e.g. strong research areas (Bent, 2004; Bradbury & Weightman, 2010; Walton & Harvell, 2009). Another aspect of this part is of course information seeking; and there are plenty of examples on how librarians work to facilitate research by offering training in various forms, e.g. through workshops, tutorials, PhD courses, web-based information, leaflets and group as well as individual sessions (CIBER, 2010; Dorskatch, 2007; Gullbekk et al, 2012). As a response to the importance for researchers to keep up-to-date, many libraries also test and inform about strategies and tools for staying aware of what is going on (Bent, 2004; Garner 2006; Schilt, 2007).

Support in the parts *Process/analyze/write* usually revolves around different kinds of software intended for use by researchers. Training and support on references management programs such as EndNote are common while support on other kinds of software and repositories such as Sharepoint, SPSS, arXiv.org, are more often offered by other units at the universities (CIBER, 2010; Kroll & Forsman, 2010; Larsen et al., 2010).

The support of libraries offered in the last part of the research process, *Communicate results and make data accessible*, is geared towards actively taking part in the development of useful systems for, and providing information on, different aspects of publishing, such as open access, copyright and research evaluation. The support differs in levels of involvement, from merely providing information, to e.g. do the actual parallel publishing of manuscripts on behalf of researchers or manage funds for article processing charges for publication in open access journals (Larsen et al, 2010; Neal et al. 2010). There are many examples of libraries that, in close collaboration with universities, have developed institutional repositories (CIBER, 2012; Young & Lund, 2008). In relation to the increased focus on evaluation of research, many libraries aid by offering bibliometric analyses and knowledge on how different models can be used and understood, as well as training for individual researchers (Bradbury &

Weightman, 2012; Dosckatch, 2007; Young & Lund, 2008). For libraries, different support services connected to publishing seem to be a way to make the libraries' knowledge and competences known within the universities and to develop new alliances with the purpose of facilitating for the researchers (e.g. Bradbury & Weightman, 2010; Dosckatsch, 2007; Drummond & Wartho, 2009).

An area where few libraries offer support is in managing and archiving research data. There are examples of initiatives where researchers in a project can gather information to share internally and externally (Larsen et al. 2010). This is the one area where researchers most clearly express needs, which brings us to the next part of the literature review: the opinions of the researchers.

What do researchers think?

Generally the literature on research attitudes towards and needs of support services show disparate results. This may be due to large variations on the design and purposes of the studies, or to the fact the changing landscape of research is experienced different depending on e.g. which countries and disciplines the researchers come from, their academic career etc. There are few examples related to the parts *Start a research project* and *Process/analyze/write*. In both cases the researchers often rely on support offered by central units at their universities or on their own knowledge of funders and freeware (CIBER, 2010; Kroll & Forsman, 2010). However, they were not always aware of what support was on offer (CIBER, 2010). Connected to the part *Collect material* it is evident that, despite differences between disciplines, researchers to an increasing extent are relying on electronic material and electronic tools (Carpenter et al., 2001; Researchers' use of academic libraries, 2007). Access and accessibility is stressed as central aspects and custodians of collections and administrators of information resources are considered one of the most important roles for librarians in the future. When it comes to support in information seeking the researchers' answers are diverse; some think it is important and relevant while others rely on their own knowledge or find the training on offer as being too basic (CIBER, 2010; Kroll & Forsman, 2010). Instead, they take the time to learn more as needed. Some researchers are reluctant to delegate information seeking to librarians that may not have the detailed knowledge that the researchers believe is required (CIBER, 2010).

In connection to the last part, *Communicate results and make data accessible*, support on open access and other publishing related issues are considered interesting, but many researchers seem to experience the information offered by libraries difficult and too complex (CIBER, 2010). Institutional repositories are often not considered relevant but rather adding another time-consuming administrative duty (CIBER, 2010; Kroll & Forsman, 2010). According to Kroll & Forsman (2010), management of research data is the area where most researchers in their study express a need for support and try to handle it on their own.

To summarize, libraries do offer research support services in all parts of the research process but to a varying extent. There are more examples found in traditional areas such as collection management, information seeking and the communication of research, the latter perhaps showing the largest increase. For the researchers, the most important issue is the access and accessibility to material, but it is more difficult to get a clear picture of what research support services that should be developed. One of the reports mention that the researchers in their study do express a need for support in different stages of the research process, while seldom coming to the library and directly asking for the support (A multi-dimensional framework for academic support, 2006). Kroll & Forsman (2010), argue that researchers have "preferences for services that are convenient, easy, and embedded in their workflow" (p. 21). That is why librarians need to be proactive and talk to researchers about their work.

Project part 2: Survey on current research support services at LUB

To get an overview of what the faculty libraries at Lund University define as research support services and what they offer, or are planning to offer, we sent out a questionnaire in April 2012 to persons responsible for the faculty libraries or equivalent. It was structured around the different parts of the research process (see figure 1) and under each part a number of functions/support services was listed. It was also possible to add additional functions/support services. For each alternative there was a choice of e.g. *have, have not, planning, specifically for researchers*. All 13 faculty libraries or the equivalent within LUB answered the survey (Voog et al., 2013)³.

³ A synthesis of the answers in the survey is published as an appendix to the report, Voog et al. (2013) *Tillgänglighet, närhet och*

The support services offered at the various libraries are generally focused around parts of the research process dealing with *Collecting material* and *Communicate results and make data accessible*. This might be a reflection of these parts being the ones with the highest number of options to choose from in the questionnaire. However, the literature review also identifies these parts of the research process as being the areas where most support services are offered. These are areas where libraries traditionally have been active, such as the organization and retrieval of information.

Under *Collecting material*, we find, for example, that the vast majority of libraries provide its researchers with different forms of courses and support in information retrieval. Ten of the thirteen faculty libraries uses a system of liaison librarians; a way to organize the library in which individual librarians are connected to particular departments or disciplines in order to create useful and relevant connections with researchers, teachers and students. In the part *Communicate results and make data accessible* support on Lund University's open repository, Lund University Publication (LUP), is an obvious function for all faculty libraries. About half of the faculties also provide information and/or offer support on issues related to open access, self-archiving and the changing OA requirements of research funding agencies. As for processes related to *Start a research project* and *Process/analyze/write*, there are fewer functions to choose from than in the other two parts of the process. This may be seen as a reflection on how libraries have interpreted the research process and their role in it. Only a few libraries answered that they offer support services that fall under *Start a research project*, such as *Help with the development and design of the researchers' publication lists in project applications* and *Provide/communicate information about research funding* (auth. transl.). Ten of the thirteen libraries identified that they guide researchers in their search for material to new projects, but this service could also be seen as part of *Collecting material*.

The functions/support services to choose from under *Process/analyze/write* mainly concerns instructions and/or support on a variety of software, primarily reference management programs such as RefWorks and EndNote.

These results together with the literature review formed a background for areas to focus on in the next part of the project.

Project part 3: Focus groups interviews with researchers

Focus group interviews is a method that allows participants in a group to discuss a certain topic that is introduced by a moderator. The moderator sets the framework without taking active part in the discussions, but ensures that the conversation keeps going and stays within the framework. The information that can be retrieved from a focus group interview is how the participants talk about a certain phenomenon, in this case how the researchers perform their research (see e.g. Wibeck, 2000).

The method was chosen in order to develop a deeper understanding of the researchers' needs, as well as key obstacles in their research process; and to visualize parts where library services can make a difference. The schematic model of the research process was used as a framework, where the researchers were asked to discuss how they work in each part; and what obstacles they experience. To avoid an evaluation of current support services at the different libraries, the researchers were asked to reflect on all aspects and problems that they might experience in their research process, regardless of whether it is related to the library or not.

Seven focus group interviews were conducted and each took approximately 1.5 hours. Each focus group consisted of researchers from a specific faculty, but typically from different departments⁴; and we strived to mix positions, age and gender. The transcribed interviews were analyzed individually at faculty level and jointly at the LUB level. Many of the researchers' experiences of the research process were similar regardless of which faculty they are affiliated with. The most obvious being the lack of time, funding and the fragmentation of time, stealing important focus from the actual research. However, there are also aspects connected to their specific disciplines influencing their experiences of obstacles or lack thereof. Although always present, funding was more important for some researchers, while others were more concerned with problems of getting easy access to archival material. Many obstacles are related to the parts *Collecting material* and *Communicate results and make data accessible*; and as the literature review shows, fast and easy access to material is a pre-requisite for the researchers. When it comes to communication it is evident that there are many new things that the

⁴ One of the seven focus groups was conducted at the University Library (UB) that does not belong to a specific faculty but is a public research library.

researchers have to learn and incorporate into existing publishing strategies. Not the least in relation to open access issues, the reproduction of myths and misinterpretations were common. It also became clear that some obstacles described by the researchers already should or could have been solved within existing support services from the libraries. However, the libraries have not been fully successful in marketing these services and reaching out to the researchers.

One area where many researchers are struggling is in the first part of the process, to *Start a research project*. They express troubles to stay informed of relevant funding, and to keep updated in their research areas. Many are unaware of the support offered centrally from Lund University (from the Research Services unit). The question is whether this is an area where libraries should develop support services, and whether to do this in collaboration with the central unit? Libraries are more likely to meet with the researchers on a daily basis and could therefore work as an interface to the central service unit.

We believe that focus groups interviews are useful for librarians to learn more about specific users. A major advantage in this case was the shift of focus from the librarians' point of view to the researchers' perspectives. Not only were the researchers asked for their opinion, but the free form of focus groups interviews also allowed the researchers to set the agenda within the topic introduced by the moderator. The interaction between the participants contributed to an understanding of how certain topics were perceived, which help understanding why some misconceptions and myths are reproduced within certain groups. This aspect also holds a challenge for the moderating librarian since the method, in order to work, does not allow for the moderator to interfere in the discussion and start to correct facts or take another point of view.

Results

Altogether the three parts of this project works as a stepping stones for the faculty libraries and LUB as a whole to develop relevant research support services in the future. The main findings are:

- A researcher's everyday life is influenced by a lack of time, money and the possibility to focus on his/her research.
- The librarians must understand how work is done throughout the whole research process in order to be able to offer relevant research support services.
- All research support services need to be accessible, visible and developed in close proximity to the researchers.
- The development of support services must be done in relation to the research practices within the different disciplines; there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution when it comes to research support services.
- The library needs to create alliances with other units in the organization supporting research and researchers. We do not have to do everything.
- By working close to the researchers and relevant units, the support services –as well as the knowledge and skills of the librarians – become known and visible.
- The project can also be used as a model for librarians to develop knowledge about the everyday life of the researchers and their needs in terms of research support services. The project is also an example of how a network library organization, such as LUB, can work together and develop insights on common questions, share experiences and create forums for the further development of professional skills.

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