Successful Librarian-Academic Research Partnerships

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Background

We librarians have much to contribute to research. We have great database searching skills, we are organised and have a good eye for detail. However, there are no established pathways for this transition from traditional librarian roles to being embedded into a research project.

This is an example of a successful partnership between a librarian and a professor in a longitudinal bibliometric research project. We studied the citation counts of 146 professors and associate professors at the University of Melbourne in Google Scholar, the Web of Science and Scopus.

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Key Contacts

Researchers obviously are the main target. However, relationship to the staff in the Office of Research in the faculty/school is also useful, particularly the Research Manager and the Associate Dean of Research.

While faculty contacts are important it is critical to seek support from your higher management.

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Challenges in Partnership

- Time management is the most obvious and biggest challenge when juggling your daily role as well as a research project.

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- Prepare for a learning curve. You are introduced to new tasks, concepts and processes and sometimes have to play 'catch up'.

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Beneficial Professional Traits

Sometimes being in the right place at the right time is all you need to create a Librarian-Academic Research Partnership. However, there are actions that assist in the process.

- Be visible, attend faculty functions and spend time with researchers.
- Be proactive in seeking opportunities. It is worthwhile to think broader than your current role.
- Do not be shy to 'sell' yourself, even though that may feel unnatural to you.
- Translate your skills to a language that makes sense to researchers. Avoid library lingo.
- Demonstrate that you are a team player, reliable, flexible, committed, communicative with a 'can do attitude'.

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Benefits of Partnership

For the Librarian/Library

➢ Increase the visibility of librarians and our skills, particularly in areas that are non-traditional.
➢ Skill building opportunities, such as an opportunity to learn about research methodologies, ethics application process, research data management in practice and publication process.
➢ Further publications and/or partnering opportunities with other researchers.
➢ Being more visible in the faculty brings you more closer to the faculty.

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For the Faculty

➢ Greater information exchange is very apparent.
➢ You get to learn facts about the faculty and the department and in turn the researcher learns about the library and its services that can benefit them or their faculty/department.
➢ Researcher can inform the faculty/department on recent library developments.
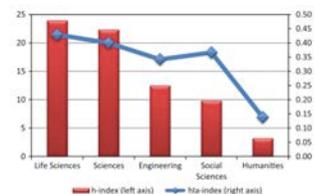➢ Contribution to faculty's research outputs.

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Research Outputs

Development of a metric called the **annual individual h-index (hla)** that potentially provides a more comprehensive picture of the research impact. The hla-index represents the average annual increase in the individual h-index (Harzing, Alakangas & Adams, 2014).

h-Index compared with hla index for different disciplines

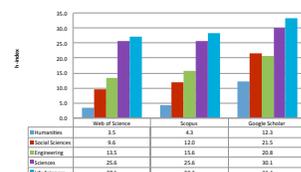
In addition to hla we looked at the coverage and stability of Google Scholar, Scopus and the Web of Science over a two-year period and concluded that all three databases were relatively stable, but had differences in coverage (Harzing & Alakangas, 2016).
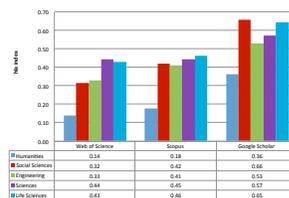
1. Quarterly % increase in the number of citations July 2013–July 2015

2. Average h-index per academic for five different disciplines in three different databases, July 2015

	Web of Science	Scopus	Google Scholar
Humanities	3.5	4.3	12.3
Social Sciences	9.6	12.0	21.5
Engineering	13.5	15.6	20.8
Sciences	25.6	25.6	30.1
Life Sciences	27.1	28.3	33.4

3. Average hla per academic for five different disciplines in three different databases, July 2015

	Web of Science	Scopus	Google Scholar
Humanities	0.14	0.18	0.36
Social Sciences	0.32	0.42	0.66
Engineering	0.33	0.41	0.53
Sciences	0.44	0.45	0.57
Life Sciences	0.43	0.46	0.65

References

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