



How can libraries work with University Research Services? A case study from Northumbria University.

UKSG eNews 549

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About Northumbria University

Northumbria has sixteen academic departments across four faculties with over 1700 academic staff. Our strategy, which began in 2008, embeds quality research at the centre of everything that we do and has seen us transformed into a research-intensive university over the last few years. In the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 we submitted 1095 research active staff (up from 343 in REF 2014) – we had the UK’s biggest increase in research power for the second time. Our research grant and contract income has risen from circa £4.5m in 2014 to £20m in 2022, and it is growing.

In 2022 Northumbria University was named Times Higher University of the Year. The award recognises our transformation to become the UK’s first research-intensive modern university.

About me

I am the Researcher Skills Development Manager in the Policy Team in Northumbria’s Research & Innovation Service (RIS). RIS is a centralised service that offers professional support to our academic community across the whole research and innovation lifecycle. With over sixty members of staff, we support and enable our academic community to do excellent research with impact. We are here to help academic colleagues to navigate the complex research ecosystem, whether that be putting together funding applications, grappling with IP, planning for impact, creating a spin-out company or anything in between – we have our academics covered.

Researcher skills development

As Researcher Skills Development Manager, I am keen to work with all professional services within the University that offer researcher development, to make sure that we have a holistic

offer covering all four domains of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework. The Vitae Framework identifies the key skills that academics need to thrive as:

- Knowledge and intellectual abilities
- Personal effectiveness
- Research governance and organisation
- Engagement, influence and impact

While RIS can cover many of the key skills requirements of the four domains, it is only when working with colleagues across the organisation that we can provide that holistic approach. Broadly, the University Library and academic departments cover knowledge and intellectual abilities; human resources/organisational development cover personal effectiveness; RIS covers research governance and organisation; and marketing and RIS cover engagement, influence and impact. We also cross promote and deliver researcher skills development activities with other professional teams and are currently looking at developing different delivery modes to make researcher skills development more accessible to our PGR student, academic and technical staff communities.

Building and maintaining the relationship

Working with the University Library Scholarly Comms Team has grown organically over the last few years, relationships have developed while working jointly on cross-University Working Groups. A representative from the Library (Head of Library Learning & Research Services) is on the Researcher Development Steering Group where we develop strategy, manage and monitor Researcher Development Concordat & HR Excellence in Research commitments. There is also Library representation on the REF Preparations Working Group to advise on data checking, validation and collation of outputs. It also helped that we recruited a colleague from the Scholarly Comms Team into the RIS Policy Team as our new Research Culture and Quality Manager - although I'm not advocating poaching colleagues from other teams, it has certainly been brilliant to bring a different expertise and perspective into the Policy Team.

We have set up regular catch ups between the RIS Policy and Library Scholarly Comms Teams to look at where we can work together on events and training, share best-practice and just generally catch up on what everyone is working on and what are our current challenges. Some of the joint activities that have come out of those regular discussions include:

Induction review: having completely overhauled our own in house RIS induction we have turned our sights to how professional support services can work together to better on-boarding new colleagues. Rather than each professional support service having their own separate programme, how can we work together to present a more holistic offer to new academic and technical staff. Work on this is ongoing and there is a way to go but having those regular catch ups, knowing what each team is working on, helps us to cross-promote and signpost our services to the research community wherever possible.

RIS/Library Joint Drop-in Sessions: how do we better engage with academic and technical staff in their own spaces? We have discussed having a research day or research week in the Library Research Commons or in Faculty/Department communal spaces. RIS and the Scholarly Comms staff would be around to answer questions and have the human interaction

with colleagues that is lacking in some of our 'raise a ticket' enquiry systems. Will our research community engage, that remains to be seen but at least we will be raising the profile of both RIS and the Library and we might make a few new friends along the way.

Working together on large events: we used some of our Enhancing Research Culture budget to support an Open Research Week. We worked in conjunction with UK Reproducibility Network local lead to launch some new UKRN activity, followed by a week of sessions raising awareness of current and emerging open research practice. This included sessions on student publishing as a learning tool, participatory research, narrative CVs, rights retention and much more. You can see some of the sessions here: <https://library.northumbria.ac.uk/openresearch/week-2023>. This is now an annual event and is becoming an open research practice resource as we share the recordings and Powerpoint slide decks.

Bitesize Guides: we developed a series of short online guides covering a range of research related topics. The Scholarly Comms Team have contributed Bitesize Guides around open research practice and publication. Originally designed as 2 side A4 hard copies that we could distribute at training and development sessions, we are reviewing the content and format with a view to making them into short, animated guides or videos which underpin our in-person development offer.

Research Collaboration Intelligence: The Scholarly Comms Team has helped us gain valuable research insight and intelligence on collaboration and outputs through SciVal reporting to identify:

- - Collaborative research strengths
 - Strong international collaborations
 - Research topic matches for potential collaboration
 - Highlighting links with industry
 - Interdisciplinary strengths
 - Benchmarking performance against the sector

None of this is rocket science but the more we come together and understand each other's areas of work, breaking down silos between departments and services, the more we can achieve. The research landscape is a large and complex beast and understanding and celebrating all of the roles that enable and support research is necessary if we are to have a sustainable and thriving university research ecosystem.

By the way, did I mention Northumbria won **Times Higher** University of the Year 2022 – we are all extremely proud of what we have achieved by working together!

If you want to read more about the benefits of Research Offices and University Libraries working together, here are some interesting reads:

- [Understanding researcher needs and raising the profile of library research support](#)
- [Libraries and the REF: how do librarians contribute to research excellence?](#)
- [How Academic Libraries Can Support Research Offices More Effectively](#)
- [The Value of Libraries for Research and Researchers](#)

- [The role of academic and research libraries as active participants and leaders in the production of scholarly research](#)
- [Enhancing Integrated Library System Collaboration with the Research Office and Faculty](#)