

NEW DIRECTIONS AND CHANGING PERCEPTIONS: ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS AS COLLABORATORS, MENTORS AND INFLUENCERS

INTRODUCTION

The Griffith University academic librarian role has been slowly redefined over the last decade primarily due to the exponential growth and impact of information technologies and to Griffith's changing strategic directions and business priorities. Continual refinement of the role has ensured current, relevant and value added services are being delivered whilst acknowledging the changing needs of our academic community (Sparks et al., 2013).

Previous positions such as Academic Services Librarian, Liaison Librarian, Collection Librarian and Faculty Librarian required skills around collection management, reference services and information literacy and worked with the entire academic community including undergraduate and postgraduate students and academic staff.

Today, the newly created Griffith University Discipline Librarian role requires different skills sets such as consultancy, partnering, mentoring, data management, advocacy around scholarly communications including open access and open data, and providing targeted support to higher degree research (HDR) students, early career researchers (ECRs) and academics.

OBJECTIVES

This paper will analyse changes to the librarian role and will outline how the Discipline Librarian (DL) role has developed over the last two years, moving away from traditional librarian services and towards a more targeted approach that delivers newly created services supporting scholarly impact throughout the research lifecycle.

A strategic change in the service model delivery and a review of research support services identified new services and skills sets that would be required by DL's. An audit of existing research skills identifying potential skill gaps indicated most DL's would require additional training and development. This paper will also discuss the capability framework and maturity model used for skills development.

The authors, employed as Discipline Librarians, surveyed their peers to discover individual perceptions around the newly defined role and also to identify challenges or perceived barriers in communicating the new role and services to their community. Survey findings will be discussed.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

National context

The current Australian higher education sector operates in an uncertain landscape whereby federal funding has become an increasingly competitive market and the importance of mutually beneficial industry engagement and partnership crucial to delivering innovation and success. Government agencies are now investigating ways to determine how research funding is generating desired outcomes, translating beyond traditional academic success to enable economic drivers to benefit society, cultures and the environment.

Griffith context

Griffith University, is a multi-campus research intensive university ranking in the top 3% (Griffith University, 2016) of universities worldwide. The University's teaching and research occurs across five campuses in South East Queensland with approximately 50,000 students and an alumni network of more than 200,000 graduates. The University's vision is to become one of

the most influential universities in Australia and the Asia Pacific region and in order to contribute to these priorities, several high level goals have been established. These goals include provision of an excellent educational experience for students; to continuously improve our research performance and through our research, deliver social dividends; to attract and retain staff including teaching, research and professional support; to be a sustainable university and to increase engagement with the Asia Pacific region. (Griffith University, 2013)

Information Services (INS) context

The Division of Information Services (INS) is a centralised and integrated service model, supporting the University's academic community and priorities through the provision of a range of information and technology based services. A recent organisational restructure of the Division has seen the establishment of eight leadership portfolios ensuring our services are aligned and responsive to the University's strategic priorities and imperatives.

INS portfolios now include Library and Learning Services, Information Management Services, Information Technology Services, Project Management Office, INS Planning and Engagement, eResearch Services, Information Technology Infrastructure and Enterprise Information Systems. The establishment of the eight portfolios enables INS flexibility and agility, retaining focus and adding value by supporting and contributing to the University's priorities and imperatives. Of the eight portfolios, Library and Learning Services (LLS) and the Information Management (IM) portfolio are primarily library focused and forward facing.

INS values people, learning, leadership and innovation and its' mission is to enable the creation, synthesis and dissemination of knowledge through an integrated service model delivering opportunities to provide value, and the development of partnerships supporting and contributing to our community successes.

Previous Information Services (INS) challenges

One of the key challenges facing INS, similar to other service providers within the academic environment, is to maximise the benefits provided to our community in a resource constrained and competitive environment. Traditional planning, service and investment models have been challenged and new and innovative ways of sourcing and delivering systems and services created.(Griffith University, 2013)

A major review of the Divisions' service model was initiated post restructure with the objective to ensure products and services offered to our community were relevant and delivered value. The LLS Portfolio review resulted in the streamlining of research support services to ensure the ability to deliver relevant support for researchers and the academic community to maximise scholarly impact.

Parallel to the research support services review, an in depth analysis of the existing research environment identified emerging trends occurring around research data management, data storage and text mining, creating potential opportunities for LLS to work with Griffith's eResearch Services portfolio offering integrated library and scholarly information services (Sparks, et al 2013).

Using the Skills Framework for the Information Technology Age (SFIA) template (SFIA Foundation, 2015), the Library Capability Framework was established to enable the LLS portfolio to determine if staff were moving in the right direction in terms of skills development required to successfully support the delivery of newly created services. LLS discipline teams consist of various positions and employment levels and the major challenge was to measure current skills sets and capabilities of staff to identify gaps in skills, training and professional development.

Transferrable skill sets

Given the evolving librarian role, some skills are increasingly seen as transferable allowing new opportunities for DLs to work in other portfolios within INS. In 2015, a Discipline Librarian was seconded to a Senior Change Manager position in the Project Management Office portfolio on a project deliverable across all academic disciplines. The DL faced challenges in terms of working in a different portfolio culture, project management requirements, timeframes and accountability and a fast paced dynamic environment. Daily meetings to discuss current tasks and issues whilst co-developing a communication plan with the second project Change Manager became part of the norm. The DLs ability to understand the organisational structure, acknowledgment of various needs and differences amongst the discipline groups and research centres and an understanding of the environment in which they co-exist along with the ability to know who, when and how communications should occur provided deep insight into the development of the project Communication Plan.

In 2014 another librarian was seconded to a change and communication coordinator position for an INS operational level change initiative. The librarian's transferrable skills in the areas of project and change management, knowledge of the INS portfolios and the ability to work and communicate across teams were invaluable skills required for the role.

Training and Development

A 2016 review of the Service Catalogue across all portfolios within INS is currently underway with LLS and IM Directors investigating several service and delivery capability framework models that will enable staff to continue with skills self assessment. An example is the skills required by DL's to deliver research data services. While there have been advances in developing training programs, INS recognises that "some data planning services are still

relatively immature” (Searle, Wolski, Simons, & Richardson, 2015) and that more opportunities are required to further develop skills.

Our current training and personal development maturity framework allows staff to develop skills via formal and informal training methods. Some of the training and professional development opportunities range from online webinars, external professional workshop attendance provided by the Australian National Data Service (ANDS), Queensland University Libraries Office of Cooperation (QULOC), Open Data Institute (ODI) of Queensland and also via internal forums such as the LLS initiative, the Research Knowledge Network (RKN). The RKN forum enables DLs to suggest topics for which they would like to develop further skills or knowledge and a guest presenter is invited to speak on the nominated topics. Topics covered by the RKN since its inception includes perspectives from an early career researcher; open data; academic integrity; library carpentry, and systematic quantitative literature reviews.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research is to trace the evolution and maturing of the faculty/liason librarian role at Griffith University and to understand the perceptions DLs have of the new role.

Firstly the position descriptions of each incarnation of the librarian roles from 2007 to 2014 were analysed. Each position description was compared and contrasted and differences and similarities identified in the way roles were described in the key accountabilities and selection criteria. The SFIA Library Skills Framework was used to analyse the keywords and terms used in the key accountabilities and selection criteria, categorising them into knowledge and skill areas.

The DLs were surveyed about ten key skill/knowledge areas integral to their role. They were asked how important each area was to their role; their level of skill and ability in these areas;

and how often they advocated and consulted in these areas. DLs were also asked to respond to questions about partnerships they had formed with researchers and the academic community, their mentoring roles and new skills development in the changed role.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Position Description Analysis

Four position descriptions of the librarian roles from 2007 until 2014 were analysed. Each position description described a different role but all were versions of the faculty/liason librarian role. Roles analysed include:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Year created</u>	<u>HEW (Higher Education Worker) Level</u>
Faculty Librarian	2007	6
Academic Services Team Member: Collection	2010	6
Academic Services Librarian	2011	6
Discipline Librarian	2014	7

Each position description was analysed for similarities and differences. Firstly, the language and verbs used to describe roles was assessed. Roles as described in the 2007, 2010 and 2011 position descriptions reflect a more service oriented role with words such as: *contribute; support; identify; maintain; inform* and *provide* used. The 2014 Discipline Librarian position description marked a change in language with words such as: *partner; review; develop* and *manage* used. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: Word Clouds of verbs used in position descriptions

Faculty Librarian (2007)	Academic Services Team Member: Collection (2010)
<p>A word cloud for the Faculty Librarian (2007) position. The most prominent words are 'Contribute', 'Support', 'Develop', 'Identify', 'Promote', 'Manage', 'Evaluate', 'Provide', 'Organise', 'Maintain', 'Assist', 'Liaise', 'Deliver', 'Work', 'Perform', 'Collaborate', 'Select', and 'Market'.</p>	<p>A word cloud for the Academic Services Team Member: Collection (2010) position. The most prominent words are 'Identify', 'Maintain', 'Operate', 'Evaluate', 'Collect', 'Collaborate', 'Select', 'Develop', 'Negotiate', 'Review', 'De-select', 'Analyse', and 'Manage'.</p>
Academic Services Librarian (2011)	Discipline Librarian (2014)
<p>A word cloud for the Academic Services Librarian (2011) position. The most prominent words are 'Inform', 'Maintain', 'Provide', 'Facilitate', 'Identify', 'Negotiate', 'Foster', 'Operate', 'Contribute', 'Collaborate', 'Use', 'Select', 'Collect', 'Analyse', 'Evaluate', 'Support', and 'Identify'.</p>	<p>A word cloud for the Discipline Librarian (2014) position. The most prominent words are 'Review', 'Provide', 'Partner', 'Develop', 'Manage', 'Engage', 'Support', 'Analyse', 'Maintain', 'Inform', 'Coach', 'Lead', and 'Support'.</p>

Secondly, aspects of the role that stayed consistent across position descriptions were analysed. Many of the personal characteristics required and described in the selection criteria remained the same throughout each version: Interpersonal and communication skills; the ability to work both independently and in a team; flexibility and adaptability to change, remained consistent across the position descriptions.

Thirdly, additions and subtractions from the key accountabilities in the position descriptions as they evolved were analysed (Table 1). Using the 2007 Faculty Librarian position as a baseline, it was identified that accountabilities such as *understanding scholarly information and publishing, research and scholarly impact reporting, leadership, partnering with academics, coaching staff and management of projects* were added to the role. *Reference services, collection management and information literacy* roles were removed.

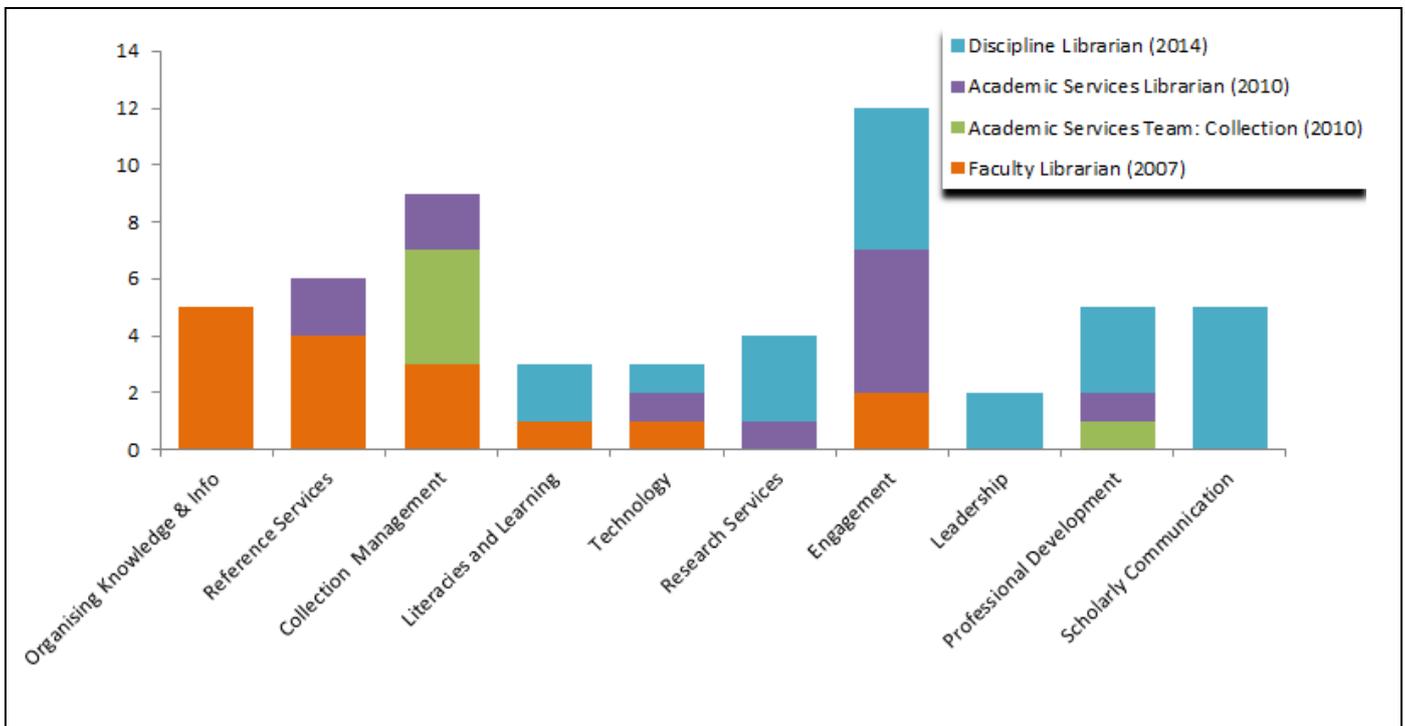
Table 1: Roles and Skills added and subtracted from each position description			
Faculty Librarian (2007)	Academic Services Team Member: Collections (2010)	Academic Services Librarian (2011)	Discipline Librarian (2014)
Added	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of the scholarly information and publishing trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis and reporting of research publication and citation patterns and trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership, initiative and innovation Partners with academics Coach and develop the capability of staff Management of projects
Subtracted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General reference services Information Literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collection management 	

Finally to gauge the evolution of the librarian positions, the key accountabilities and selection criteria in each position description were mapped against the SFIA Library Skills Framework categories. Keywords and key statements within the position descriptions were assigned to one or more of the 12 skill categories in the Library Capability Framework (Table 2). Two of the categories, Reference & Research Services and Data Management & Scholarly Communication, were split into their component parts so individual analysis could occur. Statements that referred to general or personal characteristics were excluded.

1	Client Value
2	Organising Knowledge/Information
3	Reference Services
4	Research Services
5	Collection Management
6	Engagement
7	Literacies & Learning
8	Technology
9	Leadership
10	Professional Development
11	Data Management
12	Scholarly Communication

Figure 2 indicates the number of times a keyword or key statement in the key accountabilities of each position description matched a category in the SFIA Library Skills Framework.

Figure 2: Key Accountabilities mapped to SFIA Library Skills Framework categories

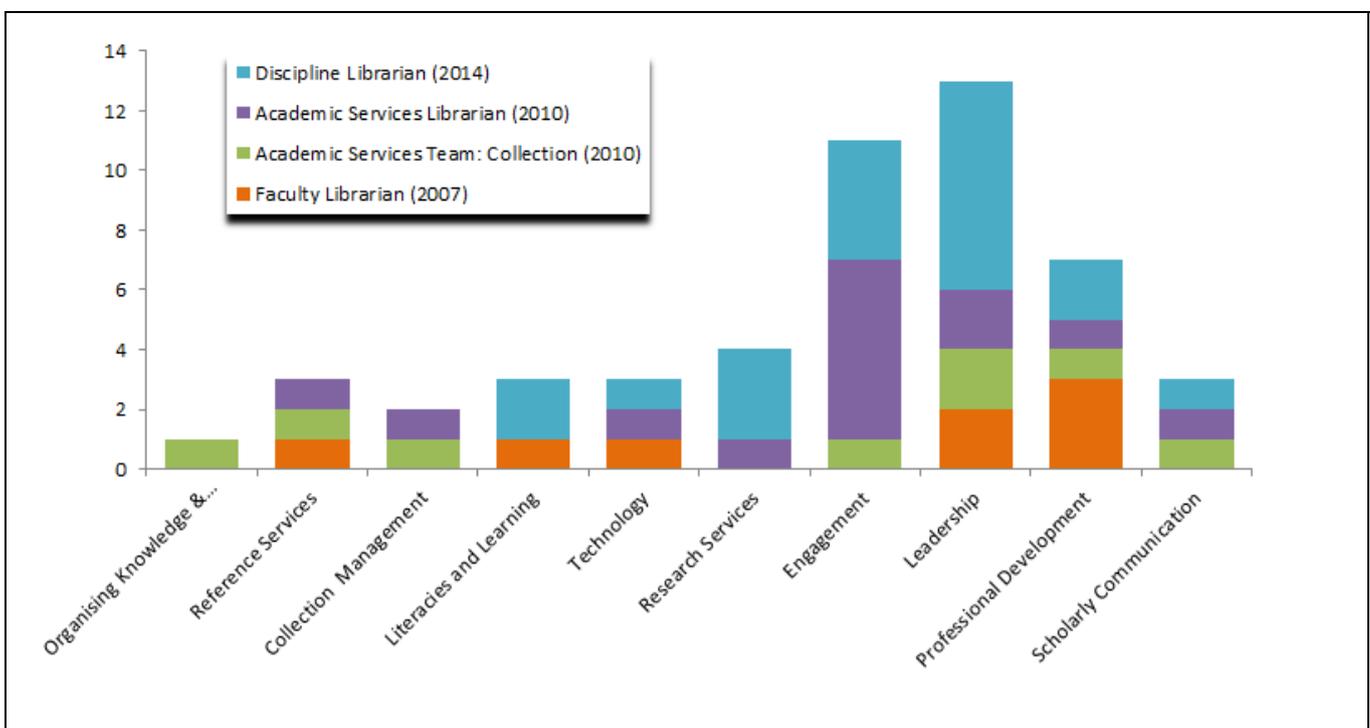


Key accountabilities in the 2007 Faculty Librarian position description include keywords and statements around organising knowledge and information, reference services and collection management with no mention or alignment to research services, leadership, professional

development and scholarly communication. Accountabilities around research services and professional development were introduced in the 2011 Academic Services Librarian position and the 2014 Discipline Librarian position introduced statements aligned to leadership and scholarly communication.

Figure 3 shows the number of times a keyword or key statement in the selection criteria of each position description matched a category in the SFIA Library Skills Framework.

Figure 3: Selection Criteria mapped to SFIA Library Skills Framework categories



Similarly to the key accountabilities, the statements in the selection criteria reflect the maturing of the librarian role, as statements around organising knowledge & information, reference services and collection management were removed from the Discipline Librarian job descriptions. The dominant categories in the selection criteria of the Discipline Librarian role are Research Services, Engagement and Leadership.

Discipline Librarian Survey

The DL's were surveyed about the Discipline Librarian role. In the survey they were asked questions about skill/knowledge areas, partnerships with academics, mentoring and new skills. Nine of the eleven DL's responded to the survey providing an 80% response rate. Respondents came from each of the four discipline based teams with three respondents from the Arts, Education and Law team, two respondents from the Business team, two respondents from the Health team and two respondents from the Science team.

Skills/Knowledge Areas

In the first part of the survey DL's were asked to rate how important they thought a skill and knowledge area was to their role and to rate their skill in that area. Figure 4 shows the averaged responses to those questions. Frequencies of which DLs consulted or advocated in the skill/knowledge areas were also surveyed with responses shown in figure 5.

Figure 4: Average responses to importance of skill/knowledge and average response to how DL's rate their skills and knowledge in those areas

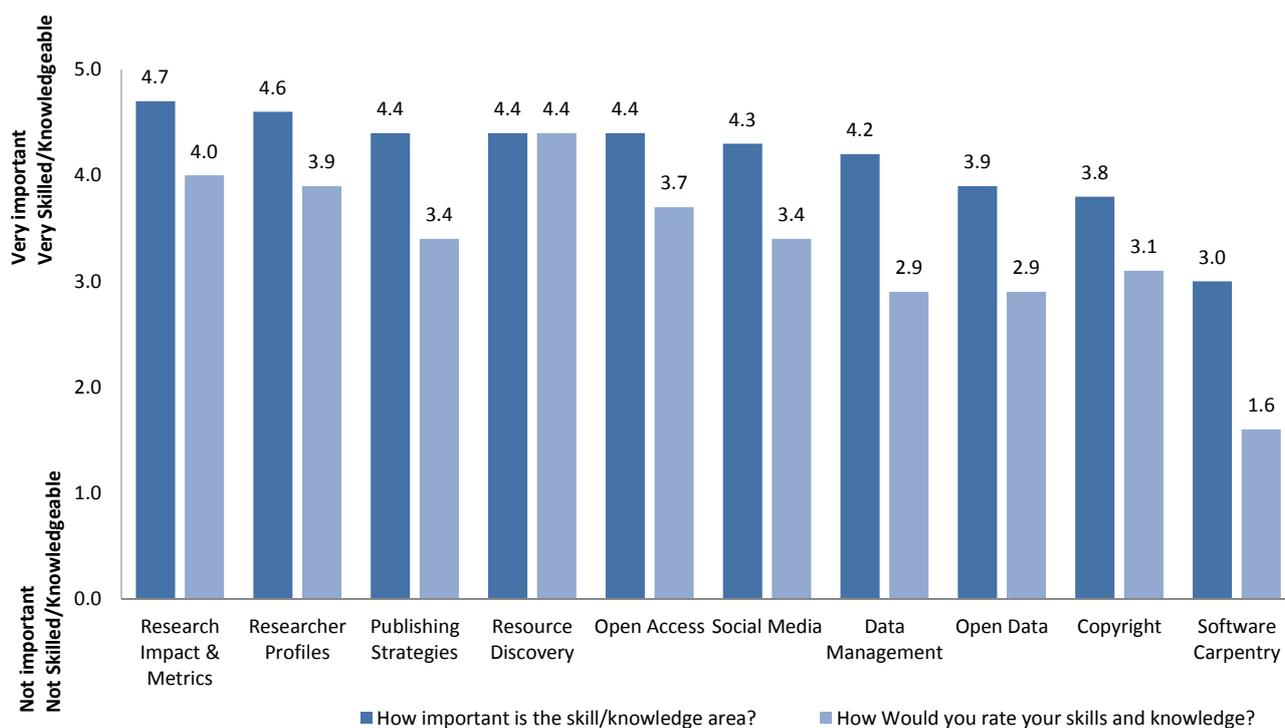
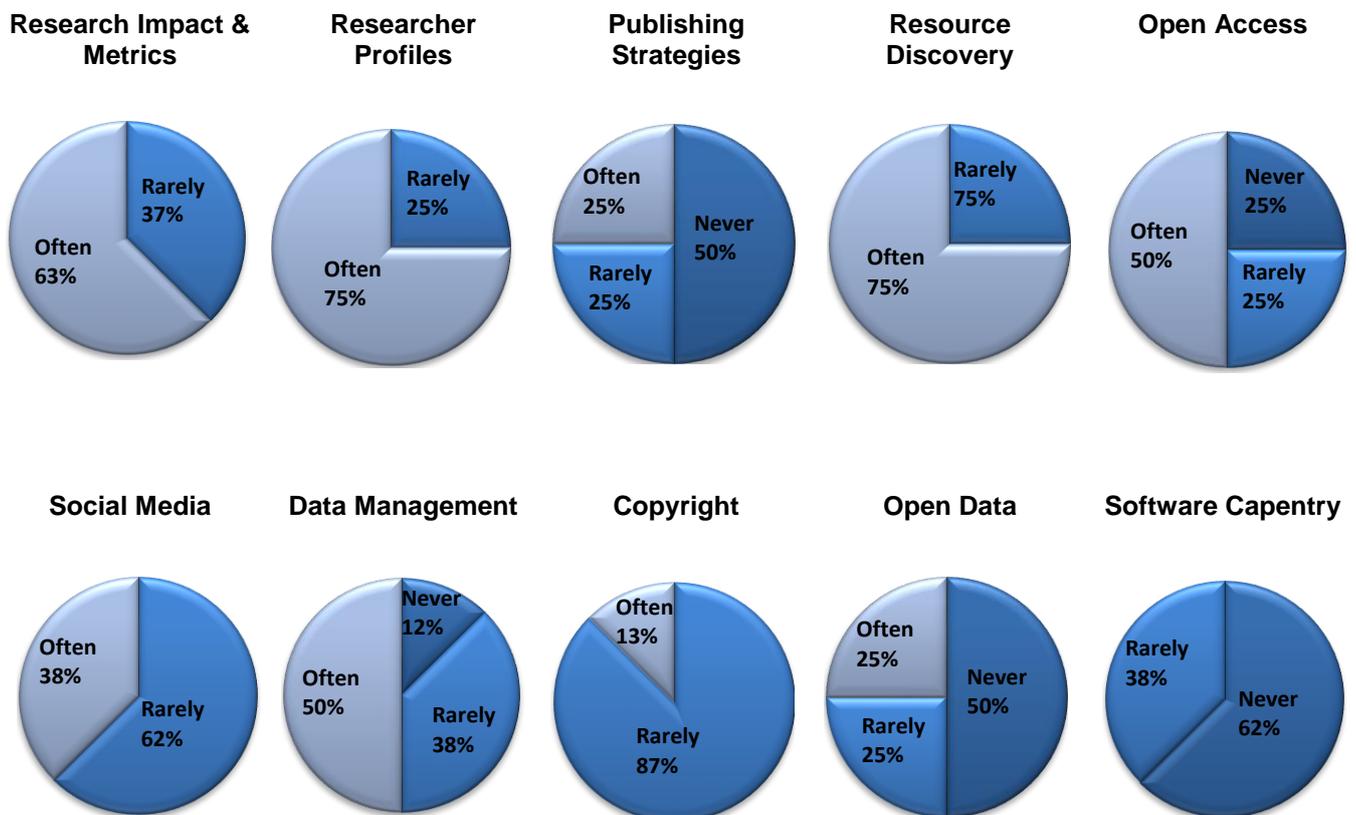


Figure 5: Frequency of how often DL's consulted or advocated in the skill/knowledge area



DL's responded that Research Impact and Metrics was the most important knowledge/skill area in their role, closely followed by Researcher profiles. They also responded that their skill levels were reasonably high in these areas. DLs also consulted and advocated in these areas with 63% of respondents reporting that they consulted on Research Impact and Metrics often and 75% of respondents reported that they consulted on Researcher Profiles often. One respondent noted, "The area of research impact is evolving rapidly. It's so important to keep up-to-date in this area as the researchers can easily be left confused. The waning influence of JIF's [Journal Impact Factors], the changes to HERDC [Higher Education Research Data Collection] and the funders' increasing requirements for research to be made open access - it's an ever changing landscape with many different players. We need to be the experts in this area". Another respondent noted, "This is an area where the discipline focus of our role is

important because it allows [for a] tailored approach, which research impact and metrics requires”.

Although the importance of knowledge and skill around publication strategies was high, respondents rated their skills in this area relatively low. Other areas respondents rated their skills low in were Data Management, Open Data and Software Carpentry. “RDM [Research Data Management] services represent a relatively new development in library service offerings” (Corrall, Kennan, & Afzal, 2013). One respondent noted that in terms of research data management services, “there are a lot of little good things going on, but not one big coordinated push”.

INS recognises the importance of research data management (RDM) services and acknowledges “information services staff, including librarians, will need more opportunities to develop knowledge and skills to support these services as they evolve” (Searle et al., 2015). Griffith’s current eResearch infrastructure, related research policies and best practice guidelines in terms of data management practice and solutions throughout the research lifecycle are considered very mature. However in terms of DL skill set development, national bodies like the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) and the Australian National Data Service (ANDS) will continue to play an important role in that development via webinars and workshops. (Brown, Wolski, & Richardson, 2015)

The area of software carpentry is a new and emerging area that librarians are becoming skilled in through programs such as the library carpentry initiative. Although most DL’s reported that they never consult in this area, 38% reported they do, albeit rarely. One respondent noted, “I certainly know where to refer people who would have problems with coding/programming, but would be underqualified to help them myself”. Another respondent commented, “Developing skills in this area and tools is a no brainer. Our clients are using them, with some varying degree of competence and literacy. In many cases it is [an] assumed knowledge for a HDR and

so there is a support gap”. The same respondent added “We are very slow to move however, we are very focussed on a few traditional tools like EndNote”.

Partnerships

O’Brien and Richardson (2015) argue that “If we are to deliver value and impact in an environment of disruptive innovation we must seek out strategic adaptive partnerships”.

Rodwell and Fairbairn (2007) argued “While the liaison librarians have traditionally undertaken this ‘go-between’ role, there appears to be greater expectations by library management that this engagement with the client groups should intensify and even move to a higher level, with a stronger focus and participation of the Faculty Liaison Librarian as an equal professional partner in the research, teaching and learning functions.”

DL’s were asked to describe any partnerships they have established with researchers and academics. The two areas that DL’s were forming partnerships around were Research Impact and Data Management. One respondent reported, “I have developed a few good working relationships with academics, one as a result of a research impact query at promotion time....these are academics who I am in touch with on an ongoing basis”. Another respondent gave an example of developing a partnership with a research centre, having worked with them on a major bibliometric project. Another is performing a data mapping exercise with a research centre. This aligns with O’Brien and Richardson’s (2015) assertion that the obvious areas where libraries can create significant value and impact for research is by strategically partnering in 1) maximizing the impact of research outputs and 2) managing research outputs, particularly data, as an asset.

Some of the strategies DL’s are using to create partnerships include: attending school meetings, HDR colloquiums and milestone presentations, research seminar series, morning

teas and lunches. One respondent commented, "...always need to do my homework beforehand as you need that special hook sometimes".

Creaser and Spezi (2013) found that "librarian's lack of confidence to approach faculty to offer help, lack of understanding of researchers' needs, and seeing faculty as 'self-sufficient' in research, appear to be key barriers" in engaging with academics. This was reflected in the barriers and challenges that the DL's reported when trying to develop partnerships with academics. One thought it was the "historical perceptions of librarians' role" and another commented, "I think that researchers have a perception of librarians and of what they can do – and I think that most of them see us as a service in the periphery of their work". One cited a lack of understanding of the research communities' pressures and roles. Other comments included "...until academics actually need you for something, it is hard to make the connection" and "Although we have so much to offer them, sometimes it's things they don't really want to have to think about ... many of them just see this as more 'noise' in their professional lives".

However others noted that it "requires brave and constant communication to build relationships" and "very rewarding but takes time to engender trust". One respondent suggested, "maybe as more librarians become researchers themselves, the academic community might be more willing to take us seriously as partners" and "when we think about doing research...maybe we should be thinking about getting an academic on board as well".

Mentoring

Mentoring of junior librarians is a new accountability included in the Discipline Librarian position. Formal and informal mentoring relationships are recognised and DL's were surveyed regarding their mentoring experience. While 50% of respondents reported a formal mentoring relationship, 55% reported informal mentoring relationship. It is interesting to note, that respondents rated the informal mentoring relationships more successful. One respondent

reported, “one of the best aspects of the DL role. Definitely increases own knowledge and understanding while acting as mentor for others”.

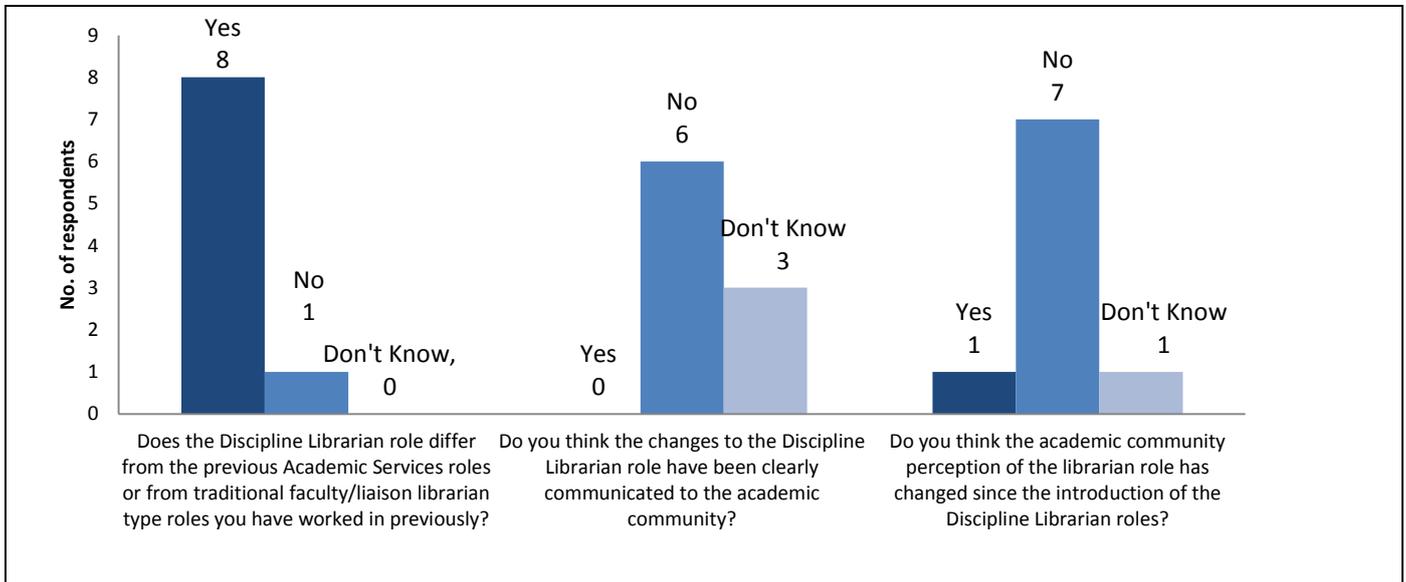
Discipline Librarian role

The Discipline Librarian role has fundamentally changed from the preceding faculty/liaison librarian roles and as part of the research, the DL’s were surveyed on their perception of the change and whether they thought the academic community’s perception of the librarian role had changed (Figure 6). Overwhelmingly the DL’s said that the role did differ from previous librarian roles. One respondent commented, “...The DL role (for me) is much more focused on researchers and the research lifecycle but the collection management experience definitely comes in handy when dealing with e-text queries and subscription reviews”. However, one respondent noted, “Tasks around collection management are still haunting me and take up such a lot of time. There are positives about academics contacting me about their textbook requirements as it’s a great opportunity to engage, but the administration involved in it takes a large amount of my time”.

Interestingly, most did not think changes to the role had been communicated to the academic community. Also, a majority of the respondents indicated that the academic community’s perception of the librarian role had not changed. Creaser and Spezi (2013) found that “Communication, including liaison work with departments and individual members, was found to be paramount to fend off traditional – and possibly now obsolete – views of academic libraries. The difficulty lies in getting the message across about what the modern academic library is about, and how librarians can help faculty in their teaching and research through the provision and delivery of teaching and research partnerships.”

One survey respondent commented “...they still think of the library as bricks and mortar, books and databases and ditto librarians. They don't see the other things we do as library related until we inform them”.

Figure 6: Perception of changes to the librarian role

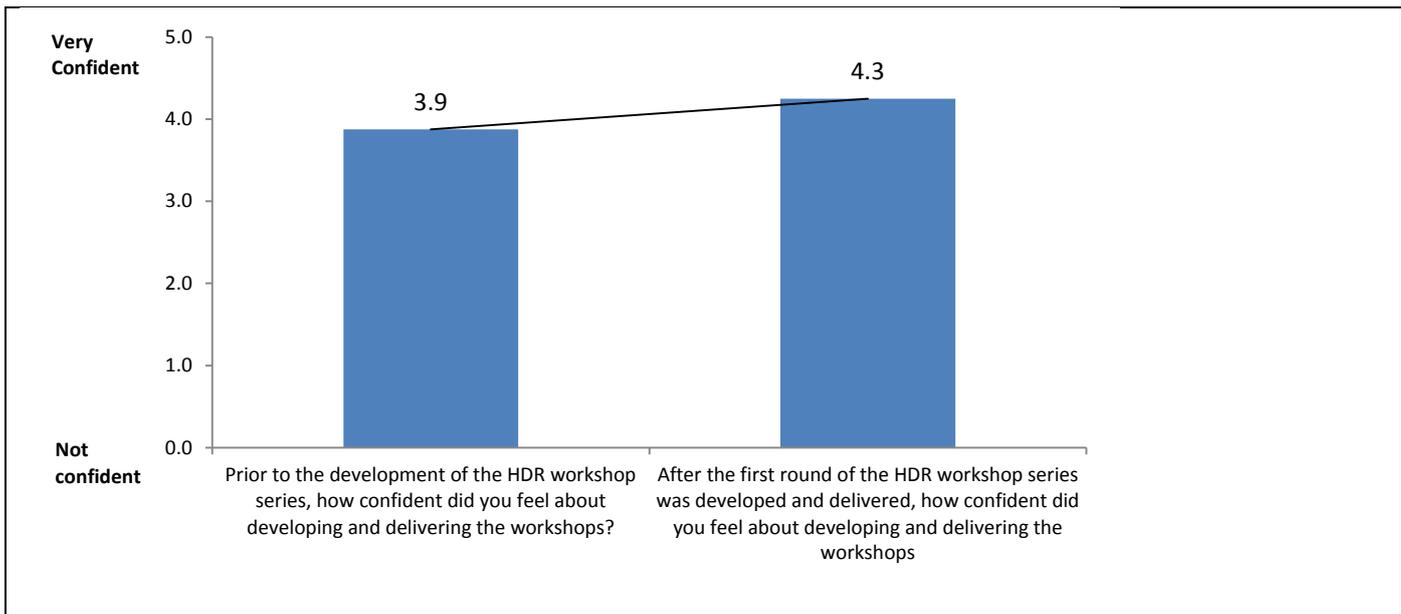


Higher Degree Research (HDR) Workshop Series

One of the achievements of the Discipline Librarian group over the last 18 months has been the development of a series of specialised workshops for HDR candidates. It was observed that the process of creating and delivering the workshops, that began soon after the creation of the Discipline Librarian role, saw a noticeable increase in the confidence of the librarians in their knowledge of the content they were creating and in the delivery of the workshops.

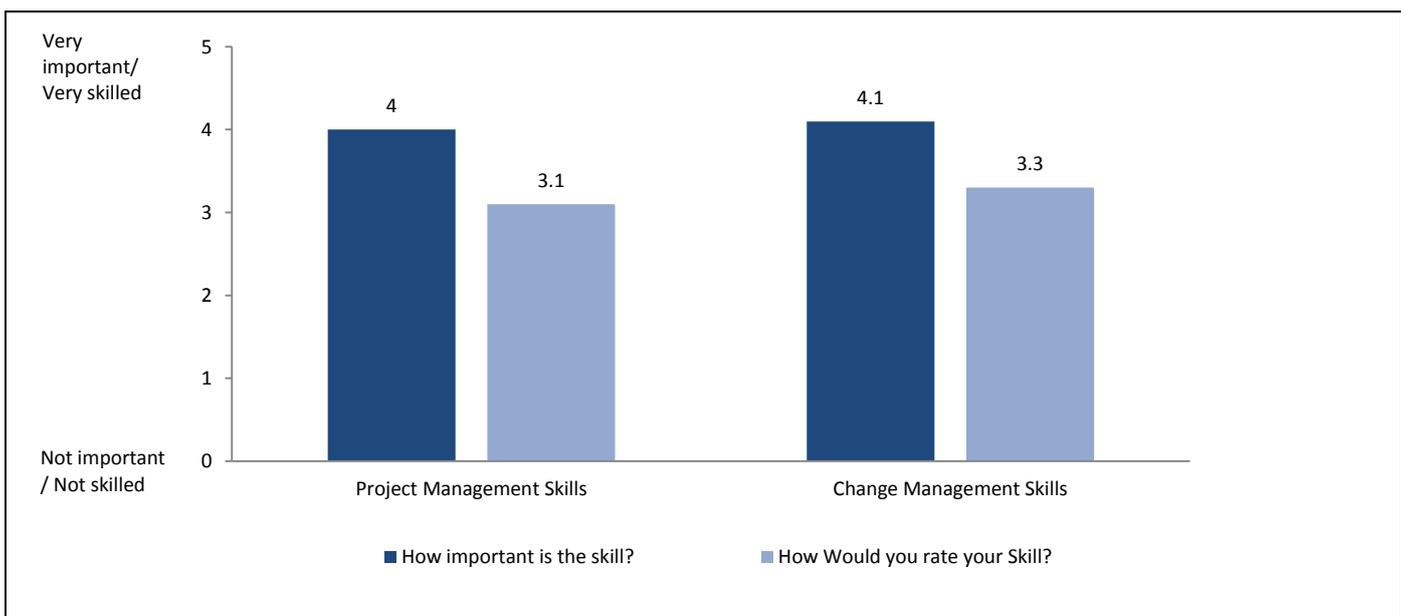
Respondents were asked to compare their confidence in developing and delivering the workshops before and after the first round of the workshops were completed. There was a definite increase in confidence during this process. (Figure 7)

Figure 7: Confidence in developing and delivering HDR workshop series



Lastly, DL's were questioned about skills not traditionally associated with librarian roles such as Project Management and Change Management skills and were asked to rate the importance of these skills. While these skills were acknowledged by respondents as important, the librarians did not rate their skills or capabilities highly. These skills will become increasingly important in the role with DL's aligned to future projects.

Figure 8 : Average response to importance of skill and average response to ability in the skill



CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the evolving Griffith University librarian position descriptions and the findings of the DL survey, it can be established that whilst a majority of DLs are aware of the new skills sets required for the current services, not all librarians have developed the levels of capabilities in all identified skills sets. It can also be established that a majority of the DLs do not think that the academic community's perception of the librarian role has changed since the creation of the DL role. However, it is positive to note that the DLs are aware that their roles are evolving forward.

According to O'Brien & Richardson (2015) it is "inevitable that disruptive innovation is the new normal, requiring new ways in which organisations must evolve if they are to create value and impact". Organisations and information services providing services to support our academic communities must also evolve if they are to create value and impact.

The green open access initiative and the need for smart infrastructure to allow researchers to remain connected to their data and tools are the type of future challenges and opportunities facing academic libraries and support services in the foreseeable future. Librarians are developing into contemporary information workers who will continue to strengthen capabilities as they strive to support academics in achieving research goals.

This paper should be of interest to those libraries in the process of revamping their service model. Through our redesigned service model and newly defined librarian role, we are positioned to create more meaningful partnerships and to lead the conversations in our areas of expertise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to PVC INS Linda O'Brien and Dr Joanna Richardson, Library Strategy Advisor INS Griffith University for their inspiring insight. Authors are also grateful to Louise Howard, INS Director for her constructive comments on improving our paper.

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