Proud2Know
Facilitating knowledge development

10 elements to a library research support strategy

There are great opportunities to be had for libraries in the area of research support. A well-considered strategy will help you make that a success.
Based on discussions with academic libraries over 10 years, and research into library research support services across the world, I have brought together my 10 points for how libraries can approach this far-reaching area.

1. **Demonstrate the clear value you will bring to the research community.** One short and powerful message (i.e. USP: Unique Selling Point) that relates to the needs of your research community is a must have. This clear mission will be one of the researchers' key points of departure to change their perceptions of the library as a partner in research support.

2. **Show how the library is transforming into a new partner for research support through collaboration.** Make the case for facilitating the optimisation of new research support services by increasingly working together with your researchers, and with existing internal research support services and institutions. Shape new research support services together. As a new more connected and informed partner for research, the library can provide improved services that further facilitate the growth of academic knowledge.

3. **Sharpen up your understanding of your stakeholder and users' needs and translate them into concrete demand-driven calls to action.** Analyse your stakeholders. Who can support or delay your efforts? Discuss, explore and experiment with new ideas and engage with your users whilst developing your strategy. Involve your users at the beginning of your plan, and not merely to verify it. This will ensure that you really know what they want now. As a result, your plan and service offering will be demand-driven rather than supply or product-driven and therefore one that delivers real value to your users.

4. **Reveal and publicise your priorities to your stakeholders, and commit to your research community.** Focus and signpost a few key areas where you want to target your resources and staff's efforts. Make choices and commit to them and convey the extra value you will bring to your researcher that he/she couldn't get elsewhere.

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5. **Develop a roadmap for service development to focus your financial and staff resources.** List your ambitions, i.e. goals and objectives and above all *what* you intend to deliver, ideally using measurable indicators. Making them measureable brings more accountability to your users and management and ups ambition and productivity levels.

6. **Systematically utilise lessons learnt from your previous challenges and errors building them into future solutions.** Taking time to reflect on how to improve current processes and services with your team and users is essential. Systematically addressing past lessons learnt together with future risks will save you time and effort in years to come. Build these into your strategy, building new approaches based on a strong foundation.

7. **Get your goals in focus to be seen as an expert in clearly defined areas of need.** Don't cast your net too widely. Concentrate your resources in certain areas to go in deeply to provide excellence in what you do. Use your network to source expertise from outside to provide additional expertise.

8. **Address the areas for up-skilling library staff to address new service delivery challenges.** Incorporate plans on how to develop your staff to demonstrate how you will deliver new excellence in new areas of library support. Have a mechanism in place to refocus and up-skill your staff to be able to adapt and react to the changing needs of your users. This can include how you intend to train and up-skill existing staff in new areas and how to resource new expertise elsewhere internally and externally.

9. **Include the conditions to provide a sustainable and strong research support service offer.** Delineate the financial and organisational conditions necessary to ensure your plans come to fruition, for example including strategies and methodologies to up-skill staff.

10. **Develop a strategy for remaining relevant in years to come.** Build in a plan on how your library intends to adapt and grow with new research, ICT, information and knowledge demands over the next years. You may commit to delivering present-day solutions and/or you may drive new ones in specific areas of expertise.

What are your essential elements for planning your research support strategy?