On supporting scholarly communications in scientific research institutes

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It is nearly a year since I left the cosy confines of a post-92 university library (1992 was the year the UK Government granted university charters to a number of former polytechnics and HE colleges) to join comrades in the scientific research institute sector and, as such, now is a good opportunity to reflect on the similarities and differences between the two sectors, especially with regard to open access (OA) publishing support as we enter the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) era in 2018.

2018 will be significant for my own institution too as Rothamsted Research will be celebrating its 175th anniversary then as the official home of the longest running scientific experiment in the world (the Broadbalk Experiment which started in 1843). This gives my own library and information services (LIS) extra impetus (as if we needed any more!) to support scholarly communications as effectively as possible.

So what have I noted so far? Similarities and parallels abound, for while we do not have the throughput of users or the equivalent collection size and stock turnover of university libraries, research institute libraries are functioning predominately as e-libraries with legacy print (and heritage) collections to maintain. No surprise then that site and space consolidation projects and/or departmental library closures are something that we have in common. We too are highly dependent on consortia deals negotiated by Jisc Collections or amongst ourselves to make our small stretched budgets go further and subscribe to core e-resources that we could not otherwise afford individually, such as Web of Science. Thankfully, like all areas of librarianship in which I have worked to date, there is a healthy professional support network of partner institutions to help us achieve this – BRILCOM for the BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council) funded institutes and RESCOLINC for the wider RCUK (Research Councils UK) funded institutes.

Although we do not have to worry about TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) and REF (Research Excellence Framework), we do have an equivalent reporting burden in the form of the annual ResearchFish submission for RCUK which requires our scientists to report on all forms of research output, impact and engagement. Research institute libraries are increasingly assuming greater responsibility for administering this thanks to their existing gatekeeper roles for publication metadata and OA budgets.

We are much smaller in size both in terms of manpower (eg often no more than 2.5 FTE staff in the life sciences sector) and information resources budgets (probably £350,000/annum on average). This means we cannot afford or justify library systems, technologies or software long since regarded as core components in the academic sector. Our newer scientists often come to us from the

university sector and are surprised to find that we do not have a link resolver system for example or even, in the case of Rothamsted, barcoded stock (one of my many projects this year)!

The technological differences also extend to the lack of LIS repository systems for scholarly communications, let alone current research information systems (CRIS). Instead, traditional repository functionalities are handled in part by research institute library management systems (as the official record of staff publications) and in part by large-scale discipline repositories such as Europe PubMed Central (OA dissemination) or research data repositories hosted by NERC such as the environmental datasets from the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH). However, this situation does reflect the (funded) reality for OA publishing post-Finch in the research institute sector: Gold OA route for publications and Green OA for large research datasets.

And what of the future? The key areas where I personally believe both university and research institute LIS could benefit from a national or sector-wide approach are, inevitably, open access (OA) and article processing charges (APCs) management. For it seems that we are all grappling with the same problems, including:

- multiple pricing models
- multiple different payment methods
- multiple author rights' workflows
- multiple prepayment schemes, systems and eligibility criteria
- OA funding eligibility checking across multiple funders and grant coding schemes
- differing post-publication reporting requirements.

In my view, sector agencies, funding bodies and publishers need to come together to reduce the inordinate amount of duplication of resource and inefficiencies in the status quo. The acid test to apply in such discussions being that, if we were to start again with APCs from scratch, would we have ended up with what we have now?

Examples of initiatives could include:

- Exploring the potential for a centralised Jisc managed (?) APC payment platform in recognition of the fact that we are often nothing more than payment transaction intermediaries at present between funder and publisher.
- Ask UKRI and the research councils in their new form to consider centralising OA administration (as they have been trying to do with reporting via the ResearchFish system) rather than perpetuate the current highly inefficient system in which lots of individual funds are distributed to hundreds of institutes who then have to create their own duplicated admin setup to interpret, administer, process and report back on them, without even considering the overlap in infrastructure connected with dissemination. This could be, in effect, a national CRIS.
- JISC Collections to work with UKRI, building on their existing agreements with the big publishers on OA prepayment schemes to get national Gold OA prepayment schemes in place offset against lower big deal (database-style) journal subscription agreements.

Eimear Evans' *UKSG eNews* editorial earlier this year highlighted the office of scholarly communication approach to research support. This is one of the many responsibilities we research institute librarians currently undertake alongside our other operational and strategic responsibilities. I strongly believe that it represents the future for LIS in our sector. Norwich Biosciences Institute (NBI) are already ahead of the game in terms of getting their metadata curation and associated single input multiple output (SIMO) workflows in place across their institutes and the scientists drilled and incentivised to use them in order to get their work OA-funded and disseminated. This is a Heineken strategy or opportunity for LIS to refresh the scholarly parts that nobody else is able (or willing!) to take on or reach!

(Thanks to Frank Norman at the Francis Crick Institute for his input into this article.)

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