Researcher-Facing Librarian Capability Framework: Mapping Exercise

In brief:

- A spreadsheet has been created to help support the mapping of tasks performed by researcher-facing librarians working with inside-out services.
- The spreadsheet can be completed in one of three different ways:
    - By an individual librarian
    - By a group of librarians performing the same tasks
    - By the manager of a group of librarians performing the same tasks
- Record examples of tasks, the associated competencies, and expertise levels, in tabs representing five different types of services.
- No more than 5 examples are required for each section (tab) and there may be occasion where there are no tasks to record. In these cases simply leave the section blank.
- Testing suggests that completing the spreadsheet will require approximately 3-4 hours of time, depending on how many examples you wish to provide and how granular the answers.
- Once completed the spreadsheet should be uploaded to the following survey [http://j.mp/2FAUHmz]. The survey includes seven additional questions and should take no more than a minute to complete.

Contextual Information:

Given the rapidly changing environment, how do librarians identify and develop the competencies that will allow them to both meet the current needs of researchers and be capable of responding to future, yet unknown, needs? To identify professional development opportunities we must first determine the expectations of the role of a researcher-facing librarian and what knowledge and skills they required. A capability framework is a "set of detailed and behaviourally-specific descriptions of the key behaviours, and underlying skills, knowledge, abilities and attributes, which are required for successful performance in an organisation, team, or job" (Catano, 1998).

The University of Otago Library is developing a Researcher-Facing Librarian Capability Framework to support expert practice and inform professional development decisions. Once completed this framework will be made available to IATUL members under a creative commons licence. The framework will be developed in several parts the first of which is this mapping exercise to collect data on the description of roles and tasks of researcher-facing library staff.

The scope:

Lorcan Dempsey has coined the term "inside-out" to describe how Academic Libraries are increasingly supporting the processes of research at their institutions (Dempsey, 2016). Digital scholarship, changes in scholarly communication practices, advancing technology, and the growing use of bibliometrics for research evaluation, are fuelling the evolution of Library Research Support Services. Researcher-facing librarians are increasingly being required to upskill and engage with the research process at deeper, more technical, levels. This exercise has been designed to collect data on the "inside-out" tasks being completed by researcher-facing librarians.

It should be noted that teaching and learning activities, including building online resources using software like LibGuides, are not in scope because they belong to another service category Lorcan Dempsey calls the "Facilitated Collection". There are however exceptions, for example Research Data Management education. The aim of the exercise is not to minimise the importance of these other activities. Nor is it to minimise the importance of the work done by librarians who are not researcher-facing. However, the focus of the framework is on understanding how researcher-facing librarians support the process of research through "inside-out" activities and the scope of this exercise reflects that.

Who is a researcher-facing librarian?

In the context of this exercise, researcher-facing librarians work in university libraries on tasks that are primarily focused on interacting with researchers to support their research. They may be repurposed[1] or new roles. Examples include: Subject Librarian, Reference Librarian, Information Research Specialist, Teaching and Research Librarian, Research Services Librarian/Advisor, Outreach Librarian, Liaison Librarian, Research Data Librarian, Digital Initiatives Librarian. Insider-out services should represent a reasonable proportion of the services they offer but they may have other tasks that fall into other categories.

Mapping exercise:

A spreadsheet has been created to help support the mapping of tasks performed by researcher-facing librarians working with inside-out services.

The spreadsheet can be completed in one of three different ways:

1. An individual librarian completes the spreadsheet and then uploads it as part of completing a short survey
2. A group of librarians **performing the same tasks** collectively complete the spreadsheet and then upload it as part of completing a short survey
3. The manager of a group of librarians **performing the same tasks completes** the spreadsheet and then uploads it as part of completing a short survey

The later survey will upload and capture the circumstances of the spreadsheet's completion. Note that during testing number 2 was the most successful option.

Spreadsheet structure:

The spreadsheet is divided into six tabs. The first five tabs represents different inside-out services. Some tasks will apply to more than one service (tab). In these cases simply record in the tab you believe is the best fit. It is also possible some tasks won't apply to any of the categories but you still feel they fit with the definition of an inside-out service. There is a sixth "other" tab to capture these instances.

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[1] Repurposed roles have been adapted to include new tasks but also contain elements of the previous role, frequently but not always as part of a restructuring. For example, at the University of Otago Reference Librarian roles were repurposed into Liaison Librarians, and then eventually Subject Librarians.

How much of the spreadsheet do you complete?

Early testing indicated that capturing all tasks is unrealistic. Therefore the spreadsheet has been designed to capture data that is representative rather than comprehensive. No more than 5 examples are required for each section (tab) and there may be occasion where there are no tasks to record. In these cases simply leave it blank. Testing suggests that completing the spreadsheet will require approximately 3-4 hours of time, depending on how many examples you wish to provide and how granular the answers.

What information will you be asked to provide?

Within each tab, you will be asked to list tasks you perform and indicate the knowledge, skills and abilities you associate with those tasks. Examples are provided.

You will also be asked to assess the level of expertise in three areas required to do the task well:

Library and Information Science (LIS): The knowledge and skills associated with the profession of Librarian.

Domain/Discipline: The knowledge and skills associated with research in a specific academic domain e.g. Knowledge and skills required to conduct research in Chemistry, Pathology, or English. This question does assume that when performing the task you are doing so to support a researcher from a specific domain.

Research Technology: The knowledge and skills associated with the technology of research including equipment, programming languages, domain specific software etc.

The scale of expertise is beginner, intermediate and advanced. In the context of this exercise:

Beginner: Someone who is able to deliver generic support and education. General awareness of best practice and tools and services that support it.

Intermediate: Someone who is able to provide both generic and tailored education. Able to provide general advice on best practice and the use of tools and services that support it.

Advanced: Someone who is able to highly tailor support, education and advice. Able to give contextually specific advice on best practice and is skilled in the use of tools and services that support it.

The final survey

Once completed the spreadsheet should be uploaded to the following survey [link & QR code below]. The survey includes seven additional questions and should take no more than a minute to complete.

http://j.mp/2FAUHmz

What happens to the spreadsheet and survey information provided?

Participation in completing the spreadsheet and survey is voluntary and all confidential responses will be kept secure. The data collected will be anonymised and no one will be identifiable. By completing and uploading the spreadsheet you give consent for the information you provide to be used within the context of developing a Researcher-Facing Librarian Capability Framework.

References

Catano, V. M. (1998), *Competencies: A Review of the Literature,* Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations and Saint Mary's University, Halifax.

Dempsey, L. (2016), "Library collections in the life of the user: two directions", *LIBER Quarterly,* Vol. 26 No. 4.