

**WORKSHOP OUTLINE and SUMMARY**

**Developing a Researcher-Facing Librarian Capability Framework Workshop**

**Background and Rationale**

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[[1]](#footnote-1) are increasingly being required to upskill and engage with the research process at deeper levels.

Given the rapidly changing environment, how do Library managers and directors identify and support the competencies that will allow their staff to not simply meet the current needs of researchers but 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). Capability frameworks are used to inform future professional development activities and assist with recruitment. Training providers, professional registration schemes, and HR programmes also use capability frameworks to inform their learning objectives.

The University of Otago Library is developing a Researcher-Facing Librarian Capability Framework to support expert practice and inform professional development and recruitment 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 to deploy a survey collecting data on the description of tasks of researcher-facing library staff. Information will also be collected on existing frameworks being used to inform professional development. This IATUL 2019 workshop will harness the IATUL community to discuss the needs of library directors and managers in supporting recruitment, workplace planning, succession, performance management, and professional development decisions.

This workshop is relevant to directors and managers of researcher-facing librarians.

**Outcome**

The discussions from the workshop will inform the development of the framework post-IATUL.

**Discussion Questions**

Purpose:

1. Better understand the struggles of directors and managers to recruit and/or develop Librarians in these emerging “inside-out” tasks.
2. Seek to learn about what capabilities library directors and managers value in researcher-facing librarians
3. Provide insight into how to structure the capability framework so that it is useful for directors and managers

Questions:

Your ideal researcher-facing librarian would have these skills, knowledge, and abilities?

**Knowledge**: “Organized sets of principles and facts applying in general domains”.

**Skills**: “Developed capacities that facilitate learning or the more rapid acquisition of knowledge”.

**Abilities**: “Enduring attributes of the individual that influence performance”.

How can we grow inside-out knowledge/skills/abilities within our teams?

What staff development opportunities do you currently utilize?

What are some barriers to staff development?

What are the benefits and limitations of LIS qualifications?

What level of domain/discipline knowledge is required?

What level of Information Technology knowledge is required?

Design exercise:

How should it be structured?

How simple or complex should it be?

How specific should it be?

Should it have levels within each capability described?

How many?

How should they be labelled?

How descriptive should they be?

How would it be presented?

**Approach**

Workshop length: allocated 90 minutes [in reality this was shorter due to the keynote before starting and finishing late].

1. Introductions and outline of session structure
   1. Define aim and scope – To create a capability framework that specific addresses a specific population of librarians in academic libraries.
   2. Capability or competency – Explain how these are defined in the context of this workshop
   3. Setting the scene – define “inside-out, framework focus, and researcher-facing librarian
2. Participants in small groups, pairs or independently (depending on numbers) brainstorm the skills, knowledge, and abilities of current researcher-facing librarians. Worksheet provided. Includes a ‘crystal ball” activity.

Preliminary summary: Initial impression suggests there is general agreement that knowledge and skills in data management, analysis, and visualisation will grow in importance, perhaps even becoming essential in the future. Another growth area is research impact / bibliometrics support although it is noted that the impact of AI may change this trajectory. Abilities to effectively communicate and collaborate seem to feature frequently. The overall picture is that the work of a librarian is and continues to become digital, collaborative, and more enmeshed in the research process.

1. Participants discuss a series of questions about researcher-facing librarians, capabilities required to perform the role, and how to grow these. There are five different worksheets that participants will rotate around.

Preliminary summary: As to be expected in any profession, ongoing professional develop will be necessary. Whether due to poor LIS curriculum design, or simply the environment in which they work, librarians cannot rely on their LIS qualification to provide them with the knowledge and skills required. Professional development will likely be broad, sweeping in to a single point [the librarian] knowledge and skills from a variety of sources including the disciplines they support, other professions they work closely with [for example IT professionals and teachers], and other groups/units/individuals in the library[[2]](#footnote-2). Librarians need to be comfortable with working with specialists, learning from others, and operating at the big picture level as well as in the details. There are, however, barriers librarians will encounter as they build their capabilities. The first is the necessary resourcing required to pursue continuous professional development. While there are a variety of options for professional development, the necessary money and time to allow librarians to take advantage of these are not always accessible. Lack of resourcing also contributes too few opportunities to apply new knowledge and skills, and lack of such application does not help cement learning. Librarians also need to confront their own attitudes and fear. Motivation to learn, change practices, and take risks, starts with knowing why learning, change, or risk taking is needed in the first place.

1. Participants design the bones of a Capability Framework they think would work. May be blue sky but examples will be provided for those who need them.
2. If time allows – as a whole group finish with a free discussion on the topic.
3. Participants fill in final short questionnaire individually.
   1. Position [director, manager etc.]
   2. Do you directly manage any library positions that are, in whole or part, researcher-facing and inside-out?
   3. Do you have a direct role in recruitment or professional development decisions?
   4. Please leave a contact email below if you which to receive a summary of this workshop later and/or would like to contribute as a “Subject Matter Expert” to test and validate the framework.

Information will be recorded in a number of ways:

* Use of whiteboard to record discussion. Should include free parking for issues of interest but beyond scope etc.
* Brainstorming on large sheets of paper
* Paper questionnaire
* Notes taken by the facilitator

This data will be kept secure by the facilitator and used only for the purpose of developing the capability framework. A summary will be provided to interested participants.

**References**

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

Dempsey, L. (2016). Library collections in the life of the user: two directions. LIBER Quarterly, 26(4). doi:10.18352/lq.10170

Inskip, C; (2016) Novice to expert: developing digitally capable librarians. In: Mackenzie, A and Martin, A, (eds.) Developing digital scholarship: emerging practices in academic libraries. Facet: London, United Kindom.

**Shiobhan Smith**

**28/01/2019**

Document Revision History

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Version #** | **Date** | **Description** |
| 1.0 | 28/01/2019 | Initial version of document SS |
| 1.1 | 09/05/2019 | Edited by SS |
| 1.2 | 10/06/2019 | Incorporating advice from SH |
| 1.3 | 14/06/2019 | Changes made after testing |
| 2.0 | 30/07/2019 | Finalised with some preliminary summaries from the workshop |

1. Librarians who work in tertiary libraries and include researcher outreach, liaison and support as core tasks e.g. Subject Librarians, Liaison Librarians, and Research Support Librarians [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Reminds me of the views on a blended professional put forth by Charles Inskip (2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)