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## A scholarly spring?

**Becoming evidence-based librarians**

**Altmetrics: new measures of impact?**

**Supporting group learning**



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# Evidence-based library and information practice: small steps can make big differences

Virginia Wilson advocates an evidence-based approach to library practice.

As any librarian knows, library and information practice is a growing and ever-changing field. Decisions must be made, practices reviewed, processes and workflows examined, policies updated, and technology implemented. Very often, these activities are undertaken with a background of past work experience, consultation with colleagues, and common sense. However, there is more in a librarian’s arsenal than that. There’s research evidence. And that is where the idea of evidence-based library and information practice (EBLIP) comes in. EBLIP is a way of practicing librarianship, offering both a conceptual framework and practical tools.

From 2000 to 2002, three definitions of EBLIP were published by librarians working in the area: Jonathan Eldredge from the USA, Andrew Booth from the UK, and Ellen Crumley and Denise Koufogiannakis from Canada. The commonality among all three definitions is an emphasis on finding the best available research evidence and using it in a practice situation. Additionally, Crumley and Koufogiannakis’ definition encourages librarians to conduct their own research studies if the evidence is not available and to add to the body of LIS evidence by publishing or other means of dissemination. However, the idea is not to use research evidence for decision-making to the exclusion of knowledge gained over the span of a professional career, discussions with colleagues, or common sense. Instead, the idea is to use research in addition to these methods of undertaking professional practice – it can give you a part of the picture that may have been missing until now.

## The steps

EBLIP arose from evidence-based medicine when health librarians adopted the concepts and applied them to their own practice. Since then, EBLIP has spread to all library sectors, although it is probably most common in academic libraries. The steps of EBLIP are as follows, and can be applied in any situation and in any type of library:

**1. Formulate a question** The issue that is confronting you in your library has to be translated into an answerable question. It is helpful to use a matrix to help construct the question, such as PICO or SPICE. PICO is an acronym for Population, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcome. SPICE is the acronym for Setting, Perspective, Intervention, Comparison, and Evaluation.

**2. Find the evidence** Good quality quantitative and qualitative studies are acceptable evidence. You can also search beyond the bounds of library and information science for research evidence that will be applicable to your work. Areas such as business, marketing, education, and management can yield research that is helpful in a library or information context. If there is nothing in the literature that directly pertains to your issue, you may consider conducting a research study yourself to gather evidence, and then consider publishing your results to increase the body of evidence in that area.

**3. Appraise the evidence** All research evidence is not created equal. Critical appraisal involves assessing the evidence to ensure it is reliable, valid, and relevant. Critical appraisal checklists can be helpful.

**4. Apply the evidence** This can be a challenging step because it is often not easy to translate research evidence into your particular situation, especially if some of the key factors in the study do not match your situation. However, it is important not to disregard research that is not directly applicable – it may just need to be locally validated or perhaps it can inform your overall situation indirectly.

**5. Evaluate the results** After using research evidence to inform your practice situation, evaluate how the process went. Was there a desired outcome? What would you do differently? And evaluate yourself as an evidence-based practitioner, too: how was the process of formulating the question, finding, appraising, and applying the evidence?

While the notion of steps may suggest a linear progression through to a looked-for outcome, EBLIP can often be an iterative process, and it is always a good idea to be a reflective practitioner during these steps.

### The barriers – and tips for overcoming them

You might be thinking that the steps of EBLIP sound fine, but that such a process would not go over well in your organisation. There are known barriers to practicing the evidence-based way:

● **Access to resources** Finding or accessing the research evidence can be an issue. Not all libraries can afford to purchase or subscribe to LIS journals, databases, or other materials. Open access is going a long way to breaking down this barrier. The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) lists 125 library and information science journals in various languages under the Social Sciences link. There is an open access, peer-reviewed journal specific to EBLIP which I will discuss in greater length below.

● **Lack of research skills, or lack of confidence in research skills** In North America, there is a requirement in all ALA-accredited library schools for students to take at least one research methods course. These courses offer an overview of what one might expect to encounter as a practicing librarian, as well as some practical research experience. Still, when librarians graduate and start practicing, there can be a lack of confidence in the skills they were taught. Much continuing education pertains to research. Skills can be built up over time. Teaming up with a like-minded colleague can help to alleviate some of the fear around conducting research. Journal clubs, research groups, and online discussions about research

can also help to break down this barrier.

● **Lack of time** Lack of time is a barrier that everyone can probably identify with. Our work days are filled with tasks that must get done. Who has time to delve into the research evidence when the questions need to be answered now? Ultimately, EBLIP can save time in the long run because it can increase the chance of successful decision-making. It is important that EBLIP be integrated into workflows and not just seen as one more task to do.

● **Management that does not support this approach** Management that does not support the evidence-based approach is a serious barrier. Management sets the budget, the work schedule, and access to continuing education. In fact, if you have management that is on board with EBLIP, many of the other barriers dissolve. How does one get management on board? One way is to show the value of EBLIP by incorporating it into a project or a task. Success can foster buy-in and you can gain momentum that way.

### Worldwide EBLIP activity

Initially, EBLIP got a huge push from librarians in the UK, Canada, and the US. Australia and Sweden were not far behind. Now, there is worldwide interest and participation in the EBLIP movement from countries including, but not limited to, Belgium, Denmark, India, Nigeria, Brazil, Finland, Norway, Serbia, Turkey, Germany, Indonesia, Morocco, Italy, Qatar, The Netherlands, Jamaica, and Malaysia.

This global interest is supported by the biennial International Evidence Based Library and Information Practice conference. The first of these conferences was held in Sheffield, UK in 2001. EBLIP2 took place in Alberta, Canada. EBLIP3, EBLIP4, and EBLIP5 were held in Brisbane, Australia; North Carolina, USA; and Stockholm, Sweden respectively. EBLIP6 was held in 2011 in Salford, UK; and the 7th International Evidence Based Library and Information Practice conference, EBLIP7, will be held in Saskatchewan, Canada, from 15-18 July 2013. The EBLIP conferences provide cutting-edge programming, excellent networking opportunities, and entry into a community that is involved in uniting research evidence and practice.

The open access journal, *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, is based in Canada but is international in scope. The journal was first published in 2006 and subsequent years have seen the development of rich and varied content, including peer-reviewed original research and peer-reviewed evidence summaries. For

evidence summaries, writing team members are assigned a published research article to critically appraise. The articles are summarised using a structured abstract and the summary writers offer commentaries that discuss the research methodology and recommend possible practical uses for the research. Evidence summaries are extremely useful to librarians and information practitioners in that they present research which may not normally be accessible, and provide suggestions for applying research to practice situations.

### Taking part

Evidence-based library and information practice can open up a new world of practice applications. As more practicing librarians use research evidence, report on their research use, conduct research themselves, and disseminate those findings, the body of LIS literature will become more robust. The research literature needs all kinds of perspectives, from LIS scholars to practicing librarians. For someone entertaining the notion of becoming an evidence-based practitioner, even small steps can make big differences. Form a journal club and practice critically appraising research articles. Make a point of reading the evidence summaries in *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*. Attend the 7th International EBLIP conference. Find like-minded colleagues with whom to explore the possibilities. These are exciting times in the world of library and information practice. Active participation via EBLIP is one way to take part. 

**Virginia Wilson** is Librarian at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada.

To download the open access journal, *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, visit <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/EBLIP>

For more information on EBLIP7, the 7th International Evidence Based Library and Information Practice conference, visit <http://eblip7.library.usask.ca>

# Fostering a group learning culture at the Open University of Sri Lanka

For open and distance learning to succeed, institutions must offer learning environments which support the particular needs of these students. **Wathmanel Seneviratne** reports on new facilities at the Open University of Sri Lanka, developed through observations of student behaviour.

This article explores a new learner support facility launched at the library of the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL), the behavioural patterns observed among students, and the impact of the new facility on overall library usage.

The OUSL library system consists of the main library in Colombo, five regional centre libraries, and 18 study centre libraries scattered around the country.

## Open and distance learning environments

It is important to recognise the difference between the learning environment of a traditional mode university and that of an open and distance learning (ODL) institution. The pedagogy in the traditional set-up is based on face-to-face interaction, where greater teacher-student familiarity, understanding, communication and interaction are ensured. In an ODL environment, by contrast, teachers do not necessarily interact with students except within very limited hours scheduled by the faculty, and it is not compulsory for the student to attend.

In a traditional set-up, the teacher delivers core knowledge within a given subject area, while the students must obtain more detailed knowledge from other learning materials. Face-to-face sessions mean it is also possible for students to have any areas clarified by the lecturer. The main academic exercise of an ODL teacher, however, is the writing of course materials and books for the programmes offered by the university, and recommending extra text-based and multimedia learning materials. In the ODL environment, the student is an independent, self-motivated learner and their learning pattern is very much resource-based.

## Student behaviour in an ODL setup

Although ODL students are independent learners, it is a longstanding practice that they form small groups to perform study tasks. It is visible everywhere on the campus – students get together and work in locations such as faculty corridors, canteens, informal shelters, steps, etc. By their own account, they enjoy the freedom of learning in groups, and peer learning has thus become one of the most popular methods among distance learners. Nevertheless, they encounter some disturbances that have a negative effect on their learning outcomes.

The university provides Wi-Fi access, but this is confined to particular areas. Therefore, students do not have access to the internet unless they place themselves closer to those areas or enter a computer laboratory or library. This may be difficult for some groups.

In the resource-based learning model, students have to use online learning and submission systems (Moodle based), audiovisual materials recommended for study units, recommended texts and workbooks, and other digital media in completing their study tasks. Access to these facilities and materials, however, is limited for learning groups when they study outside the library or faculty lab. A preliminary survey conducted by the library indicated that the groups are constantly disturbed by fellow students, and the unexpected joining of ad-hoc learners to more regular groups disturb consistent learning patterns and the speed at which they learn. Weather conditions can also have an unfavourable effect on groups when they learn in the open.

## Why they prefer the library

According to focus group discussions conducted by the library, students were keen to use the library for peer learning, if the library was able to provide the necessary facilities.

Availability of internet access (both wired and Wi-Fi) for their laptops, access to a multimedia room, the collection of course materials and question paper archives, availability of other recommended text and multimedia materials, and a learning environment with fewer disturbances are all attractive to students.

Groups communicated that they would like the library to provide physical spaces for group learning, for it to relax reading room rules, allow other books to be brought into the library, provide a separate silent learning area, position computers with internet access closer to group spaces, and offer a coffee machine/milk outlet.

## The introduction of group learning

In response to these discussions, it was decided that group learning would be allowed on a limited basis within the library. At first, only the upper area of the library was provided for group learning but, within six months, students automatically started occupying the lower area as well.

To meet the students' requirements, the library introduced some changes to the physical arrangements and to reading room rules and regulations. Individual study carrels were arranged closer to the legal collection (as most of the serious and individual learners belong to the department of legal studies), and bigger tables were arranged in the reading rooms of both the upper and lower floors, accommodating six to eight students each. Cushioned settee-type chairs were arranged in sitting room style on the ground, mezzanine, and first floors to accommodate ad-hoc groups. Four PCs with internet access were provided on the first floor and a few more are planned for the mezzanine. Laptop charging is allowed within the library and mobile phones are also permitted, if set to silent mode. Above all, we removed the 'silence' boards that hung in different places: a radical step forward.

As well as the physical adjustments, some rules were relaxed to allow students to bring in their course materials and workbooks with photocopied materials (after showing the materials at the entrance gate, etc.) Previously,



A learning group at the OUSL library

The group learning culture promoted in the OUSL library has boosted the library's image, its resource usage, and the number of visits for 'social networking'.

undergraduates were unable to bring any such texts into the library due to instances of book theft. Learning groups are also allowed low-voice discussions, audible enough to manage the learning within the group.

#### Observations

Over a year has elapsed since the changes were made, and there have been some notable successes:

- The number of library visits increased from 58,746 to 94,163 in 2011 – an increase of some 60%
- Groups behaved in a very cultured manner. Initially, library staff had to remind them to control the noise, but they very soon understood the ideal behaviour
- The computers placed at reader bays are highly used
- Students report that they are less disturbed and that learning time has increased constructively as a result

- The usage of material is high, including audiovisual materials, increasing from 162,002 to 201,993 during 2011 – a 25% increase; the number of books to be shelved has increased accordingly
- There have been no complaints from serious learners within the past eight months, with only a few complaints at the very beginning of the process

Surveys were carried out to establish students' satisfaction in achieving their learning targets. It was understood there are still some requirements unfulfilled from the users' point of view, such as being allowed to bring text books from outside the OUSL collection into the library (a rule the library could not relax because of the need to safeguard its collection) and installing a coffee machine inside the library (which the management found difficult to cope with). However, it was decided to place a coffee machine at the entrance, outside the library.

The group learning culture promoted in the OUSL library has boosted the library's image, its resource usage, and the number of visits for 'social networking', all of which makes the library alive and vibrant. The positive impact of enabling Wi-Fi access for students' laptops is seen in the greater numbers visiting the library web portal and e-repository of question papers and articles – the latest daily web visit recorded 2000 per day – as well as increased use of the onsite and online enquiry service. Above all, it is a happy scenario to see a cheerful community of learners within the OUSL library, trying to achieve a common learning target: a degree. **L**

**Dr Wathmanel Seneviratne** is Librarian at the Open University of Sri Lanka.

# The ‘scholarly spring’: revolutions in scholarly communication

**Jason Priem** urges new thinking in the scholarly publishing process, and outlines some emerging thinking on ‘altmetrics’.

In 1990, Tim Berners-Lee created the web as a tool for scholarly communication at CERN. In the two decades since, his creation has gone on to transform practically every enterprise imaginable – except, somehow, scholarly communication. Here, instead, we lurch ponderously through the time-sanctified dance of dissemination, 17th century style. The article reigns. Scholars continue to wade the vibrant, diverse results of their creativity and expertise – figures, datasets, abstracts, annotations, claims, reviews, comments, collections, workflows, discussions, arguments and programmes – into publishers’ slow molds to be cast into articles: static, leaden information ingots.

Growing numbers of scholars, though, are realising that this approach is no longer the best we can do. We’re defrosting our digital libraries, moving over a million personal reference collections online to services like Zotero and Mendeley – and, in the process, making the open reference list a new kind of publication. Scholars are flocking to Twitter and scholarly blogs to post ideas, collaborate with colleagues, and discuss literature, often creating a sort of peer-review after publication. Emboldened by national mandates and notable successes, we’re beginning to publish reusable datasets. We’re sharing our software as publications and on the web. The journal was the first revolution in scholarly communication; we’re on the brink of a second, driven by the new diversity, speed, and accessibility of the web.

The poster child for this ‘scholarly spring’ is Twitter. There’s been terrific interest in scholars using Twitter to discuss and cite literature, for teaching, to enrich conferences, or less formally as a ‘global faculty lounge’. We recently finished a large study to get better data on these uses.

Instead of asking for self-identified scholars on Twitter, we started out with a list of around 9,000 scholars from five US and UK universities, then searched for their names on the Twitter API. After manually confirming all the

matches, we downloaded all the tweets each scholar had made and coded the content of these. The graphic opposite has some details of our findings.

Results like these are encouraging for those of us who see social media and related environments as the natural next frontier for communicating scholarship. It seems that scholars, without waiting for approval from the mandarins of the publishing industry, are beginning to explore and colonise the web’s wide-open spaces.

But perhaps the most exciting thing about this nascent scholarly ‘great migration’ is that the new, online tools of scholarship begin to give public substance to the formally ephemeral roots of scholarship: the discussions never transcribed, the annotations never shared, the introductions never acknowledged, the manuscripts saved and re-read but never cited. These backstage activities are now increasingly tagged, catalogued, and archived on blogs, Mendeley, Twitter, and elsewhere. As more scholars move more of their workflows to the public web, we are assembling a vast registry of intellectual transactions – a web of ideas and their uses whose timeliness, speed, and precision make the traditional citation network look primitive.

There is growing interest in employing these new data sources to inform alternative metrics of impact, or ‘altmetrics’. These altmetrics have three powerful advantages:

1. They’re much faster. Once a scholarly article is published, it takes years for citations to that article to accumulate. But it can take just days for, say, Reddit posts or tweets to show up: in another Twitter study, we found that nearly half the links to peer-reviewed articles appeared within a week of those articles’ publication. This speed could be harnessed to make real-time, personal filters that inform scholars what’s groundbreaking across a broad set of fields. As the velocity and volume of science grow, this could be very valuable.

2. If I cite something, it probably had an impact on my work. But what kind of impact? Most of us have read articles that informed our thinking in important ways, but for a variety of reasons have not had the opportunity to cite them. Just looking at citations, we’re missing many kinds of impact on many diverse audiences, including clinicians, practitioners, educators, and the general public. To borrow language from another paper we’re working on, we should be replacing one-dimensional impact thinking with the idea of ‘impact flavours’.
3. Finally, this approach allows us to break the centuries-old monopoly of the peer-reviewed article or monograph on scientific communication. We can measure reactions not just to these articles, but also to blog posts, datasets, or videos.

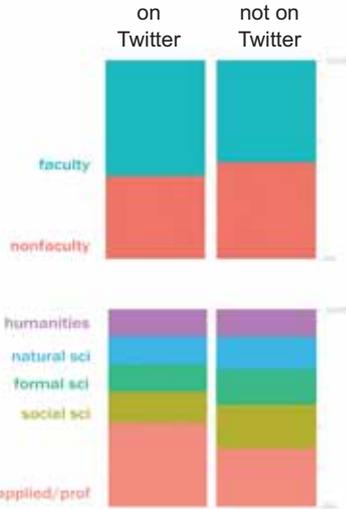
What if every scholar in the world had such a system? We might do away with journals entirely. The web can disseminate and archive products for nearly free. The slow, back-room machinations of closed peer review could be replaced by an open, accountable, distributed system that simply listens in to expert communities’ natural reactions to new work – the same way Google efficiently ranks the web by listening in to the crowd-sourced ‘review’ of the hyperlink network.

Of course, this particular vision may not pan out, and individual social media environments will, of course, come and go. But to hang our hopes on a particular vision or tool is to miss what is truly revolutionary about this moment. The journal monoculture, long the only viable approach to scholarly communication, is beginning to yield at its fringes to a more diverse, vibrant, online ecosystem of scholarly expression. This new ecosystem promises to change not only the way we express scholarship, but also the way we measure, assess, and consume it. **L**

**Jason Priem** is a PhD candidate at UNC-Chapel Hill’s School of Information and Library Science, USA.  
<http://jasonpriem.org>

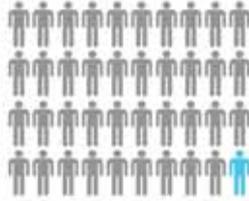
# Prevalence and use of Twitter amongst scholars

No one rank ( $X^2 = 11.2$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .12$ ) or discipline ( $X^2 = 2.4$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .02$ )\* is significantly over-represented on Twitter:



\*We use .01 significance level due to the high n and large number of tests.

**1 in 40** scholars active on Twitter



**5 tweets** per week

Percentage of tweets that are scholarly:

non faculty **15%**  
faculty **30%**

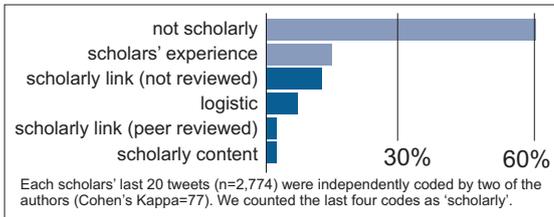
## Method

We selected five diverse, representative US and UK universities. Using manual searches of department web pages, we compiled a list of all the scholars (defined as full-time faculty, postdocs or doctoral students) at each one, yielding a sample of 8,826.

We then used Twitter user/search API to find Twitter user profiles that matched our scholars' names. 3,019 scholars returned more than 20 potential name matches: This 'common name group' was removed from the sample. The remaining scholars returned 17,177 Twitter accounts; around half of these had no identifying information and were discarded. For the remaining 8,038 accounts we used a combination of automatic scripts and manual inspection to make positive matches between scholars and accounts, considering evidence from departmental web-pages and the Twitter profile fields for name, location, description, URL, username and picture.

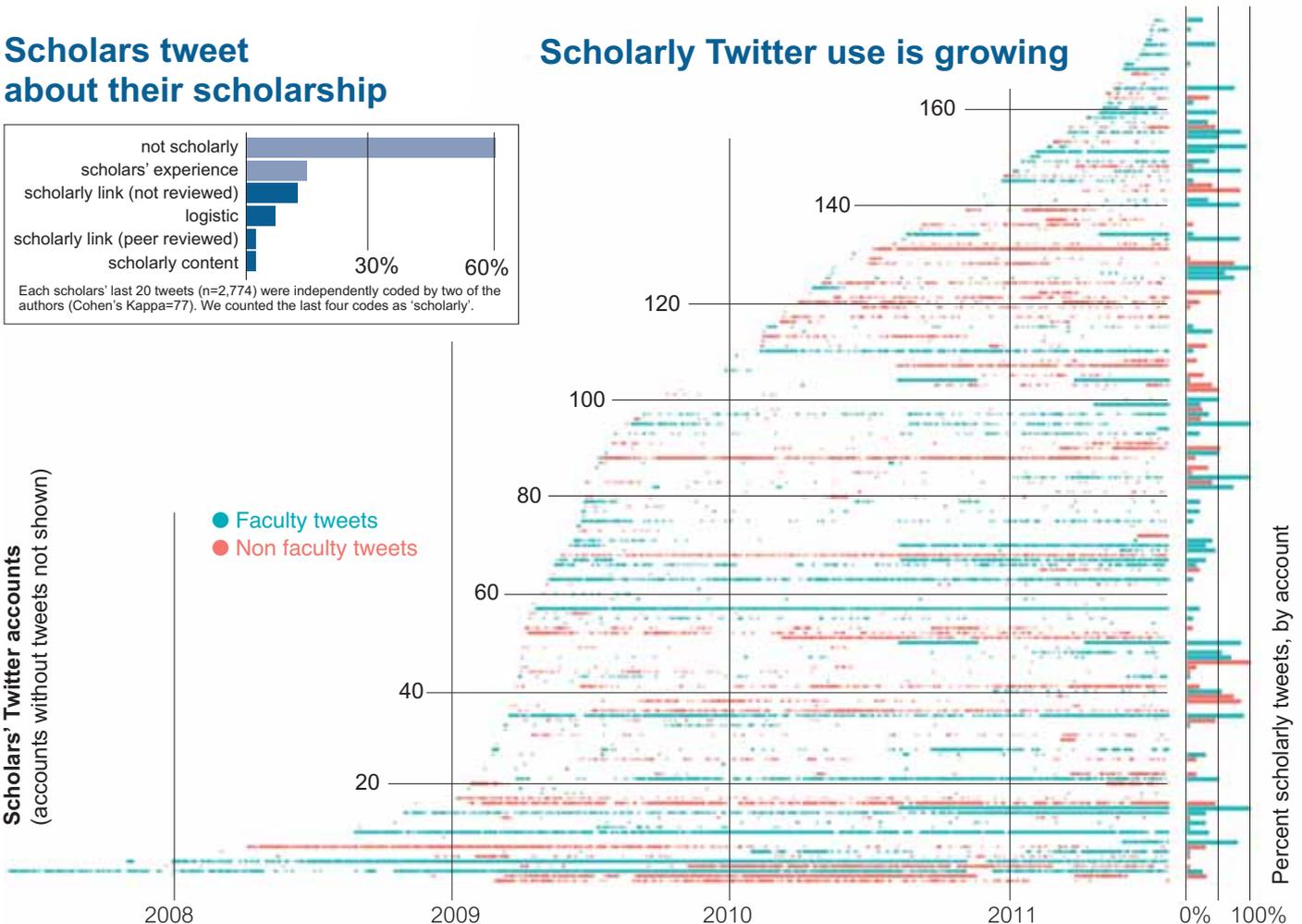
This gave us a list of 230 scholars with confirmed Twitter accounts; this number is certainly an undercount, since many accounts did not have enough information for a positive ID. We then returned to the Twitter API to gather all the public tweets for these users.

## Scholars tweet about their scholarship



Each scholars' last 20 tweets ( $n=2,774$ ) were independently coded by two of the authors (Cohen's Kappa=.77). We counted the last four codes as 'scholarly'.

## Scholarly Twitter use is growing



# Scholarly reading habits: demonstrating library value

**Carol Tenopir and Rachel Volentine** explore what academics' reading habits can tell us about the value of a library's electronic collections.

It seems an obvious statement to make: scholarly reading is at the heart of much of what happens in a university, from research to teaching. But is it possible to measure the level of scholarly reading taking place? And, in measuring it, can we help to demonstrate the value of the library to the activities of scholars and students? A study undertaken by the University of Tennessee for the UK's JISC Collections suggests that this might be possible.

Measuring the value and return on investment of the academic library and its collections has become more important as budgets are strained, costs of materials and services increase, and libraries rethink their services and collections. Many assessments of library value focus on usage. However, assessing the value of collections should include not only a simple measure of usage, but also consider how access to these materials impacts the research, teaching, and other core activities of university academic staff. A new report, *Scholarly Reading and the Value of Library Resources*, analyses the article, book, and other publication reading patterns of UK academic staff, measures how these readings shape and influence their work, and looks at the relative use of library-provided material. Six UK universities participated in the project, which was funded by JISC Collections in partnership with the University of Tennessee's Center for Information and Communication Studies.

## What academics read – and why

Academics read a variety of scholarly materials every month: we found that, on average, they read 22 articles, seven books, and ten other publications. If we multiple the average number of readings by the average time spent per reading, we found that academics spent nearly five eight-hour work days each month dedicated to scholarly reading. What's more, the library plays an especially important role: we found that two-thirds of article readings came from the library collection, mostly the electronic collection. Interestingly, books are more often purchased or received from the publisher, except in the case of academics

under 30 who rely more on their libraries for books. Unlike articles, scholarly books are most likely to be in print form, rather than electronic. Other publications (such as conference proceedings, government documents, or magazine articles) are more frequently obtained as either a free copy from a publisher or from a website.

Library collections particularly support the research and teaching missions of the university. Scholarly readings improve academics' results, change/broaden/narrow their focus, and inspire new thinking. Our study revealed that research is the most frequent purpose of reading, whether article, book, or other publication. 67% of articles obtained, 52% of books and 40% of other publications were for research. Teaching accounts for around 12% of articles read and 28% of books read, whereas other publications are used more for keeping up to date (28%).

Academics demonstrate the value that scholarly materials bring to them by investing their time in reading. Value is also shown by the high-quality results academics receive from their investment. Almost all comments echoed this positive theme. As one respondent comments: 'Scholarly articles play an absolutely vital and fundamental role in my teaching and research. Neither activity would be possible or plausible without them'. Another states that scholarly publications are 'absolutely crucial and it would be impossible to imagine scholarly life without them'. Words like 'crucial' and 'essential' were commonplace.

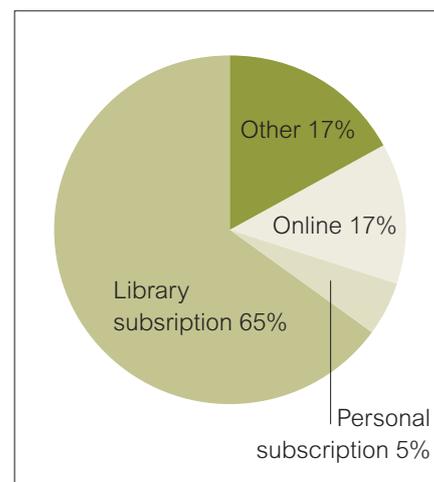
## New ways in – social media

In addition to traditional scholarly material, academics are also interacting with social media. Nearly half of the respondents participated at least occasionally in one or more of the social media tools we examined (Twitter, blogs, podcasts, online videos, and user comments in online articles). Participation is more frequent than creation, though, with only a quarter of the respondents reporting that they create content using social media tools. High-frequency users or creators of

social media are more likely to be aged 50 or younger and to read more scholarly materials than others; social media use is thus closely linked to research activity. Social media are not replacing traditional scholarly resources for research and teaching, but are enhancing their use.

## Getting there fast

As mentioned above, nearly two-thirds of article readings in the universities surveyed are obtained from the library; over 90% of these are from the electronic collections. The second most frequent source of articles is a website or free online journal (Figure 1). Academics not only use the library's collections to obtain articles, they also use the library's search tools to become aware of relevant items. One respondent explained: 'It is important to get an article almost immediately through an online subscription. There is far too much information out there and very little time to screen through and read articles. I find that there is less chance of reading an article when there is a delay between the time of finding the article and getting hold of it'. Library services which allow for a seamless transition from finding a relevant article to downloading or reading the full-text are the most valuable.



**Figure 1: Where academics obtain articles**

Academics have limits on their time, and want access to articles in the most convenient and fast manner possible. As one respondent comments: 'Without wide electronic access

"Academic reading habits clearly demonstrate the value of the library collections, especially e-journal collections."

through library subscriptions, many aspects of my work would either take substantially longer or be done to a lower standard'. Another says: 'Subscriptions to electronic journals improve my research and make it faster and easier for me to perform my job effectively'. Not only does it take less time to find and obtain articles from an electronic source, academics can read them wherever it is convenient. Most articles obtained from the library are read from the office or home. Although a majority of readings come from the library virtual collections, only 2% of article readings are actually read in the physical library (Figure 2).

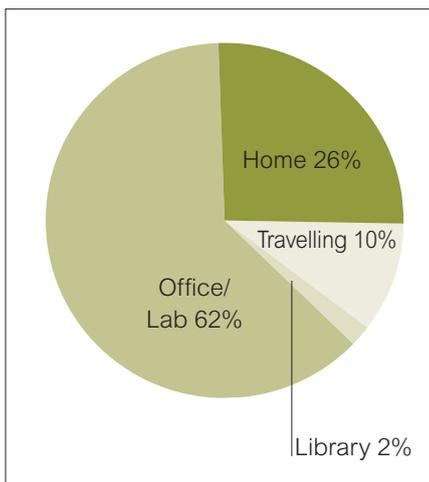


Figure 2: Location of article readings

When it comes to e-collections, diversity is also important. While many article readings are from the first 18 months of publication (46.9%), academics also read older articles, including 11% which are 15 years old or more. Older articles are more likely to be obtained from a library, suggesting that back files, as well as current subscriptions, are a key investment.

### What does this tell us?

Academics are drawn to the rapidity and convenience of the library's e-journal collections. While we can only speculate on why academics are not obtaining books from the library, it may be that the convenience and speed of access is not equal to electronic journal collections. E-journal collections allow academics to browse thousands of journal titles and millions of articles. Electronic books

would potentially address some of these issues.

Other publications are easily accessible from online sources, such as government and conference websites. Therefore, academics do not need to seek them out in the library's collections. It may also be that academics do not always realise that their library provides other publications. Additional marketing of these resources may increase their use.

Academic reading habits clearly demonstrate the value of the library collections, especially the e-journal collections. This is shown in the number of things academics read, the amount of time they spend reading, and the outcomes of this reading. The e-resources provided by the library are essential to continuing academic success. Expanding library e-collections, in terms of the type and diversity of material, is crucial to maintaining the importance and value of libraries in the future.

Academics currently turn to library collections for scholarly articles because it is a convenient and diverse resource. As more content becomes available freely online, however, the library may face competition. As we have already seen with book and other publication readings, there are popular alternatives to the library. But the library's current success may hold the key to expanding its collections of other scholarly materials. By understanding why and where academics turn for scholarly material, the library can focus its goals for the present and the future. The value of scholarly reading will not diminish with time, but the role of the library remains uncertain unless it continues to meet the needs of its users. L

**Professor Carol Tenopir and Rachel Volentine** are, respectively, Director and Research Coordinator at the University of Tennessee's Center for Information and Communication Studies, USA.

The report, *UK Scholarly Reading and the Value of Library Resources*, is available at [www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/news/UK-scholarly-reading](http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/news/UK-scholarly-reading)

When economic circumstances are challenging, university administrators often talk more frequently about needing to do more with less, productivity dividends, continuous improvement, and operational efficiency and effectiveness. In the case of publicly funded institutions, there may also be talk about improving the stewardship and accountability of public funds.

Something else that is often mentioned as a means of achieving similar outcomes with fewer resources (or, at least, the same level of resources) is process improvement or enhancement. That is, through deliberate and systematic review, actions can be taken to identify, analyse, and improve existing business processes to deliver more efficient ways of working, improved quality, and/or reduced costs.

This has relevance to library leaders because so much of the operating cost of an academic library is tied up in the salary and benefits paid to library employees. At the University of Saskatchewan, for example, approximately 96% of our library operating grant goes to pay employee salaries and benefits.

Over the last year, the university has run an institution-wide Service and Process Enhancement Project (SPEP), which has involved an assessment of the university's administrative functions for improvements in quality and efficiency.

Within the library, we also turned our attention to learning more about process improvement methodologies. An investigative team reviewed the literature to help us all get a better understanding of the concept and methodologies, and presented their findings to library employees. Their work was impressive.

The team's investigations found there are a range of methodologies available. Many are directly relevant and transferrable to academic library contexts. For example: Kaizen, Six Sigma, Lean and Customer-Inspired. Our team then practiced some of the key steps from these methodologies on a process we currently have in place to report and resolve e-access problems reported by library users.

The results of our local experience included an improved understanding about methodologies, an opportunity for some shared action learning by a team of staff, and a realisation that methodologies developed outside of higher education can be both applicable and appropriate within an academic library setting. L

**Dr Vicki Williamson** is Dean of the University Library at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada.

# News round-up



Nick Mulhern, ACU Librarian, highlights recent developments in the field.

## Open access

The latest **Berlin 9 Open Access Conference**, the first to be hosted in the US, aimed to 'examine how open access can amplify and improve each phase of the research process'. A report on the meeting, included in *College & Research Libraries News* (73:2, February 2012), refers to the 'shared vision that many of the speakers presented of open access as an integral part of the infrastructure supporting scholarly research'.

[www.berlin9.org](http://www.berlin9.org)  
<http://crln.acrl.org>

A **Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB)** has been developed by the OAPEN Foundation with SemperTool, to help trace (peer-reviewed) books published under an Open Access licence.

<http://bit.ly/IBetck>

A **Global Open Access Portal (GOAP)**, launched by UNESCO, aims to give 'information for policymakers to learn about the global OA environment and to view their country's status, and understand where and why Open Access has been most successful'.

<http://bit.ly/uifSzX>

This year's **Open Access Week** has been scheduled for 22-28 October 2012.

[www.openaccessweek.org](http://www.openaccessweek.org)

As part of the **OAPEN-UK** project on open access to scholarly material, a series of focus group meetings have been held with librarians, researchers, and repository managers; each reviewed issues raised by the transfer to open access models for the humanities and social sciences. A related focus group report is planned, as is the outcome of the project's (first) annual benchmarking survey.

<http://oapen-uk.jiscebooks.org>

## Library associations

The IFLA-supported initiative, **Building Strong Library Associations**, organised its first congress in February this year (hosted by the GLA in Berlin), and was attended by representatives from Botswana and Cameroon, among other countries. Each has reported increases in membership since the start of

their respective programmes. The Gates Foundation is a committed supporter of the scheme.

<http://bit.ly/xtwp2y>

The **Canadian Library Association (CLA)** has recently outlined its new mission as the 'national public voice for Canada's library communities'.

<http://bit.ly/JluO6D>

LIANZA's (New Zealand) recent '**Strengthen the Profession**' survey results summarise and prioritise the issues which it will aim to represent as a professional association for library staff.

<http://bit.ly/J6GqGf>

Among IFLA's current five key initiatives (all linked to the strategic plan) is an **International Librarianship Leadership Development Program** which aims to 'raise the voice of the profession, national, regionally, and internationally'.

<http://bit.ly/y7XBhw>

## Research support

**Coming of Age: Strategic Directions for Digital Repositories** is a survey undertaken by CIBER Research Ltd. The study surveyed library directors and individual researchers on the form, use, impact, and potential of digital repositories. Some researchers 'felt that subject based repositories are better placed than institutional repositories to meet their needs'.

[http://ciber-research.eu/download/20120306-Charleston\\_Coming\\_of\\_Age.pdf](http://ciber-research.eu/download/20120306-Charleston_Coming_of_Age.pdf)

**Digging into Data**, an international project to encourage new humanities and social science research using large-scale data analysis, has announced the research teams which have been selected for funding (some UKP 3 million in total). The scheme, which is funded by research organisations internationally, is to sponsor collaborative research involving HEIs in Canada, the UK, and the US, among others.

<http://bit.ly/yzJjYw>

A collaborative project involving National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA), the National Library of Australia, the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER), and the Eidos Institute, aims to examine how **grey literature**

is produced, disseminated, preserved, and made accessible. The project's researchers are based at Swinburne University.

<http://bit.ly/INUVk6>

**INASP** – the International Association for the Availability of Scientific Publications – has 'Research, Information and Development' as its theme for its 20th anniversary Symposium, set to take place in Oxford, UK on 20 June 2012. It will consider research communication and how research can contribute to development, both currently and in the future.

<http://symposium2012.inasp.info>

The **Research Information Network (RIN)** has been re-launched with a new site, but continuing its 'research and analysis to enhance understanding of the rapidly-changing scholarly communications landscape'. Open access use, information literacy, accessibility of research findings, and library impact are among its current projects.

[www.researchinfonet.org](http://www.researchinfonet.org)

The British Library for Development Studies (BLDS), with RIN, has continued an information literacy project, with the aim of developing resources to help support the work and needs of **information literacy trainers in Africa**. A workshop was organised in South Africa as part of the project.

<http://bit.ly/JnjsN>

Further updates have been made available on an Ithaka S+R programme – **Research Support Services for Scholars**. The information needs of different academic disciplines, and their various 'evolving research practices' in the UK and the US, are being reviewed. History and chemistry are among the subject areas covered (interim reports have already been published), the aim being to help inform future information provision.

[www.researchsupportservices.net](http://www.researchsupportservices.net)



# Recent publications

Nick Mulhern, ACU Librarian, summarises.



## Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Academic and Research Libraries

A statement of principles, developed by and for academic research librarians in the US, describing where fair use applies. Eight different situations are described with the factors, in each context, which could weaken or strengthen the case for fair use. It represents a consensus of (surveyed) opinion on related issues (e.g. teaching and learning, special collections, user needs, and institutional repositories), not as definitive legal advice, but to help guide thinking.

[ARL; American University; 2012]

<http://bit.ly/eL9ZQv>

## Electronic Doctoral Theses in the UK: a Sector-Wide Survey into Policies, Practice and Barriers to Open Access

A joint report on the current context of access (and barriers) to electronic theses, informed by a UCL-sponsored (2010) survey of UK institutions. It acknowledges that the level of openly available electronic theses is 'still very small', but those which are accessible can nevertheless attract 'significant attention'. IP and copyright, and uncertainty as to the response of publishers, staff, as well as students, are among the concerns raised and reviewed by the study. The survey is described as the 'first such clear and detailed view'.

[Barnes, T.; Moyle, M.; Brown, J.; Sadler, K.; UKCGE; JISC; UCL; 2012]

<http://bit.ly/K5ldgF>

## Key Issues for e-Resource Collection Development: A Guide for Libraries

An IFLA guide which summarises advice on collection policy, selection, evaluation, licensing, and the renewal of e-resources (which includes journals, books, databases, and images). It is a useful clear overview of issues to consider in the acquisition of any electronic resources, with a glossary of terms.

[Johnson, S. et al; IFLA; 2012]

<http://bit.ly/xK7kML>



## Preserving Email

Emails are, as the report notes, ubiquitous, ephemeral, and valuable precisely because 'people typically use it to record information that was not intended for wide revelation at the time of sending'. This Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) study reviews the issues, standards, and recommendations (for institutions, individuals, and the digital preservation community) in preserving email, with the hope that we 'can make the preservation of trusted email records a systematic part of our everyday operations'.

[Prom, C.; Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) in association with Charles Beagrie Ltd; 2011]

<http://bit.ly/zAVIcm>

## Re-Skilling for Research: an Investigation into the Role and Skills of Subject and Liaison Librarians Required to Effectively Support the Evolving Needs of Researchers

The information needs of researchers, how the skills and knowledge of subject librarians match these, examples of current library/information support, and training opportunities, are all considered in this RLUK mapping study. The changing research environment, quickened by new technology, is a factor, though the report reveals a 'skills gap in a number of key areas'; the demand for an 'enhanced role for subject librarians is already being felt'.

[Auckland, M.; RLUK; 2012]

<http://bit.ly/yh5tSK>



## Research Environment Study: a series of reports on Kenya, Malawi, Pakistan and Bangladesh undertaken by the Research Information Network on behalf of the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications

Detailed research profiles summarised for four countries which are involved in INASP's PERii initiative (Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information) – Kenya, Malawi, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. For each country there is: an outline of policy frameworks,

priorities, and funding structures, information on the universities and research organisations, research interests, and outputs (by publication). Apart from their use in making comparisons internationally, and showing how research contexts have – and are – changing, such country profiles aim to help inform future programmes. Indirectly, the differences also indicate the extent to which research support is integrated and collaborative, and so the role which libraries and information centres can play in maintaining and coordinating the resources on which effective research depends.

[INASP; 2012]

<http://bit.ly/I6zAGv>

## Proceedings of the 2010 Library Assessment Conference (Building Effective, Sustainable, Practical Assessment)

The importance of library assessment is reflected in the scale of these conference proceedings (some 788 pages), while its effect on all aspects of library responsibility is shown the variety of issues covered (space, teaching and learning, organisation, data, and marketing). Processes and models, as well as wider debates over library value and futures, are included. The emphasis is on the academic/research library environment.

[Hillier, S.; et al (eds); Univ of Virginia Library; ARL; Univ of Washington; 2011]

<http://bit.ly/zH0mg0>

## Open Access: Impact for Researchers, Universities and Society

A briefing note on OA's impact as it applies to: research staff (visibility, usage, citation), institutions (competitive profile, knowledge transfer), and society (local/national economic returns and social benefit).

[Swan, A.; RLUK; SCOUNL; 2012]

<http://bit.ly/zq9Hv2>



# Comment



**Jonathan Harle**, Programmes Manager at the ACU, launches our new comment and opinion section – an opportunity for Network members to share their views. If you've got something to say, we'd love to hear from you.

In this issue of *LINK*, Jason Priem suggests a need to radically re-think the way in which scholarly communications are tracked. New digital tools are emerging, he says, which not only allow us to measure the flow of research knowledge in new, richer ways, but which also demand that we do so, if we genuinely want to understand what's happening in the world of scholarship. If he points to a very dramatic change in the wider landscape of research, Wathmanel Seneviratne's article discusses what to some might appear a more modest set of changes, but which are significantly transforming the local learning environments of Sri Lankan students.

The articles share a common thread: as developers use digital tools to create new research metrics, increasing numbers of students from all over the world are undertaking part of their learning online and, for many of them, such tools will be an important way in which they find new things to read.

*LINK* has been going for over four years now, and during this time we've had many other thought-provoking contributions from across the ACU community – from Australia to Zambia, and from information analysts and digital curators to library leaders. For the most part, these have been concerned with present-

As the HE sector changes, and the demands facing libraries – and the opportunities presented to them – continue to grow, there are a whole host of wider issues which would benefit from greater discussion and debate.

ing and discussing services being developed within university libraries. But as the HE sector changes, and the demands facing libraries – and the opportunities presented to them – continue to grow, there are a whole host of wider issues which would benefit from greater discussion and debate.

It's with this in mind that we're opening up this section of every issue to comment and opinion pieces. If you've got something to say, we'd love to hear from you.

Perhaps you're exercised by the debate over the future of scholarly communications, from open access to alternative metrics; or perhaps you're concerned with how we rethink professional training. Perhaps there's a local, national or international HE issue which you feel has particular implications for libraries, but isn't receiving enough attention at present. Perhaps there are new avenues which you think libraries ought to be exploring, or something distinctive in your region that could benefit from being discussed on a more international platform. Alternatively, you might be a lecturer, researcher, or other member of university staff with views on the direction that libraries need to take.

We're looking for fairly brief, tightly-argued pieces – of between 500 and 750 words – which aim to engage, inform, and persuade. Pieces will differ from the usual *LINK* feature or profile – which typically present a project or initiative at a specific library – by taking a bigger issue in higher education and libraries and offering an informed, professional view. We know our Network members have lots of fascinating ideas and insights to share, so why not have your say?

For more information, or to submit an article, email [libraries@acu.ac.uk](mailto:libraries@acu.ac.uk). 

The Association of Commonwealth Universities



#### Editorial team

Jonathan Harle, Nick Mulhern,  
Dorothy Garland

[libraries@acu.ac.uk](mailto:libraries@acu.ac.uk)

[www.acu.ac.uk/libraries](http://www.acu.ac.uk/libraries)

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The Association of Commonwealth Universities  
Woburn House  
20-24 Tavistock Square  
London, WC1H 9HF  
United Kingdom  
Tel: + 44 (0) 20 7380 6700  
Fax: + 44 (0) 20 7387 2655

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