



University Library

**Benchmarking survey of research support provided
by 1994 Group libraries**

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1. Introduction

In April 2007, the Research Information Network (RIN) and Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURL) published their joint report into *Researchers' use of academic libraries and their services*. [1] This national study raised the profile of the importance of the research support currently offered within University libraries, whilst identifying the challenges for librarians and researchers in ensuring that this support is effective, both now and for the future.

Whilst a national survey is very useful for identifying trends and behaviours, the authors wanted to focus on research support at a more local level, benchmarking services at Loughborough University Library against similar sized institutions. Most national reports include the Russell Group universities whose resources are significantly greater than those at Loughborough. As such, this report concentrates on the level of research support offered across the 1994 Group of universities and identifies the range of levels of service, as well as showcasing best practice within this group. This report then follows the spirit of other 1994 Group work discussed by Patterson [2] and Alston and Nicholson [3].

2. Methodology

There are 19 institutions currently within the 1994 Group and as the benchmarking survey was to be undertaken alongside the other duties of the research support team, it was decided that mainly quantitative data should be produced by the survey. To ensure that the questions covered by the survey related to current practice in the majority of the institutions, the websites of the libraries of all of the 1994 Group were scanned, along with a selection of Russell Group libraries which have research interests similar to Loughborough's. This enabled the team to identify the main areas of research support currently offered across the range of institutions and to structure the survey.

Once the key sections of the survey had been identified, an electronic survey was constructed using [UCCASS](#) [4] open source software. It was piloted on colleagues at Loughborough and at Stirling University to check for technical hitches and effective wording. Despite this the software worked imperfectly and we are grateful to the persistence of some of our respondents. Most questions were 'tick box' answers, with space for comment provided at the end of the questionnaire. The questionnaire forms Appendix 1. It covered the period 2005-2006 so that the data would be readily available and could be used in conjunction with published Sconul statistics. Some analysis of these Sconul statistics has been used to augment the survey. The survey was distributed by email to the 1994 Group librarians in August 2007 with a return

date of the first week of September. It was felt that distribution during a relatively quiet period such as the summer would ensure a good response. 14 responses were received (approximately 79%), from the university libraries of:

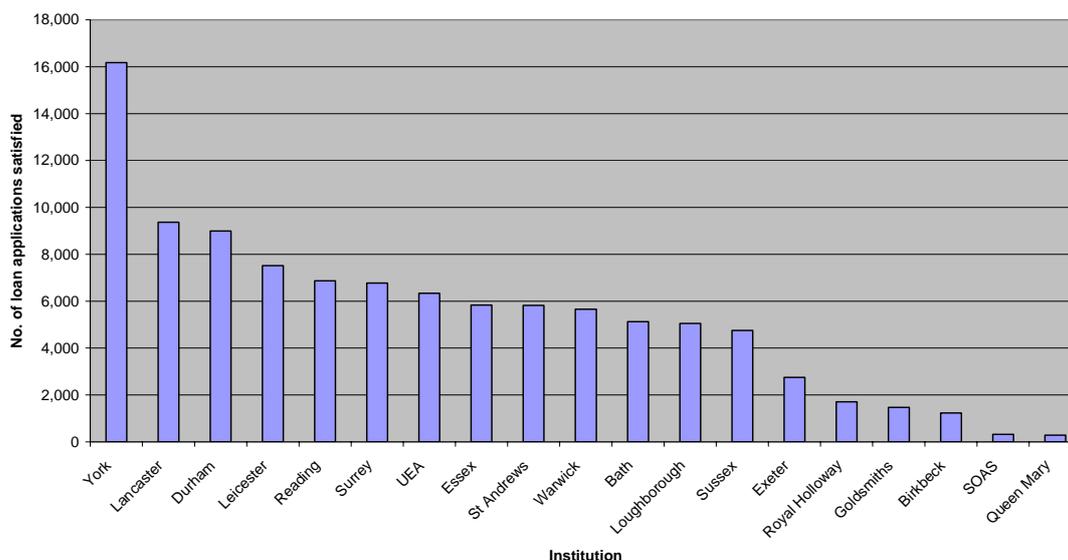
- Bath
- Birkbeck
- Durham
- Exeter
- Goldsmiths
- Lancaster
- Leicester
- Loughborough
- Queen Mary
- Reading
- St Andrews
- Surrey
- Sussex
- York

3. Key Findings

3.1 Obtaining materials

Increasing investment in e-journal provision has reduced the frequency with which researchers visit their libraries and, as both a Loughborough e-journal survey [5] and a RIN survey [6] identified, researchers use a variety of methods to obtain material not available in their own library. Although inter-library lending (ILL) is declining in the numbers of items fulfilled, due to increased availability of electronic full text, Sconul statistics [7] show that document supply continues to be a key service provided by libraries for researchers. Inter-library loans provided by each 1994 Group library can be compared in Table 1. Drives to make the ILL process more efficient and effective tend to focus on electronic ordering and delivery.

Table 1
Interlibrary loans applications satisfied 2005/06



Since the Electronic Communications Act 2000, the acceptance of electronic signatures, as opposed to written personal signatures has been a moot point within libraries [8]. Some libraries insist on personal signatures for all inter-library loans before a request can be fulfilled. It is therefore interesting to note that ten of the 14 respondents permitted electronic requests for inter-library loans from their users. Unfortunately our survey did not identify at which point the users would need to physically sign to obtain the item or if electronic signatures were used.

Secure Electronic Delivery (SED) is a relatively new service from the British Library which requires users to view and/or print out an electronic version of a journal article or book chapter within a restricted time period. The electronic version is delivered by email and therefore goes direct to the researcher's desktop. Although it is a service which is offered to all libraries, it can only be said to be well established in three of the survey respondents, with one reporting that it is used for 100% of staff requests.

One of the services that had been identified as being offered in one of the Russell Group libraries and, anecdotally, was popular with researchers, was the delivery of newly purchased books or inter-library loan books to a researcher's departmental address. At the moment this service is not offered by any of the 1994 Group libraries who responded to the questionnaire.

3.2 Mediated Searching of Databases

Approximately ten years ago, mediated searches of databases by librarians were a necessity for researchers who needed to find information held in complicated 'pay as you use' database services, such as Dialog, Datastar and Lexis-Nexis. However, in the last decade web-based databases provided via

annual subscription have become the norm. These are increasingly accessible and have user-friendly interfaces so that they can be searched by all. Publishers have also become aware of the marketing opportunities offered by providing services which can be accessed directly by researchers themselves. Despite this there are databases which form niche services which may be important sources for a minority of researchers. These are available on a 'pay as you use' basis, hosted by services such as Dialog. Time-pressured researchers may also sometimes ask librarians to do literature searches on their behalf. The team wanted to investigate to what extent the 1994 Group libraries responded to these demands.

The mediated searching of 'pay as you use' databases from hosts such as Questel-Orbit and Dialog is offered by four universities. Of these, only two fulfilled more than ten searches in 2005-2006. Mediated searching of 'free at point of use' databases was also offered at four institutions with all of these reporting more than 20 searches in 2005-2006.

3.3 Special Collections

Over recent years, there have been a number of funding opportunities for the digitisation of special collections. Although not all of the universities which comprise the 1994 Group are well known for their special collections, of the 14 institutions who responded, six have digitised some of their special collections. The majority of institutions also have plans to digitise at least some of their collections, although only two have the funds in place. Only four of the libraries stated that they had no plans to do any digitisation at the moment.

3.4 Electronic Reference

In recent years publishers have recognised electronic reference, like all e-books, to be a growth area with competing products, such as *Oxford Reference Online* and *Gale Virtual Reference* products becoming available. E-reference is increasingly being seen as a means to replace the traditional, space-intensive, printed reference collection within the library building. Libraries are also seeking to counter student reliance on the easy access to non-peer-reviewed websites, such as *Wikipedia*. In 2005-2006, the majority of our respondents (eight) spent over £20,000 on electronic reference materials; two spent between £10,001-20,000; and one spent between £5,001-£10,000. Only three had spent less than £5,000.

3.5 Reference Management

Bibliographic software, which enables the storage and manipulation of bibliographic references, is a product for which librarians recently have had to develop their skills. In some institutions the software itself might be provided by IT departments but the support, as our survey shows, is increasingly offered by the library. All of the respondents actively supported at least one product.

Our respondents demonstrated that there is a range of bibliographic software available to researchers in the 1994 Group universities and that they often offer a choice of products to their users. The most popular software is *Endnote*, which is provided by twelve institutions and its cut down web version offered by ISI, *Endnote Web*, is also offered by seven institutions. *Refworks* and *Reference Manager* are both offered by three institutions. Nine institutions offer their users a choice of two or more products, although only five actively support more than one.

3.6 Training available to researchers

Training of researchers from PhD level upwards received added incentive after the Roberts Review [9]. Indeed one of the respondents mentioned Roberts funded sessions as one type of training offered. The survey results indicate that a wide range of training is available via the 1994 Group libraries.

All 14 institutions offer literature searching training, with bibliographic software/reference management training provided by twelve. Current awareness training is the next most popular session with ten institutions providing this. Five institutions offer training on how to get the most from the Web or Web 2.0. It is interesting to note that topics which are not traditionally seen as library based are also being provided by the libraries.

Topics offered are:

- avoiding plagiarism (offered by 4 libraries)
- where to publish (2)
- copyright (2)
- institutional repositories (2)
- special collection awareness (1)
- open access publishing (1)
- an introduction to e-journals (1)
- self-assessment and career choices (1)
- marking and giving feedback (1)
- careers inside and outside academia (1)
- CVs and applications and interview skills (1)

All except one library offer researchers training on more than one topic. The greatest number of topics offered is over nine, including a session on who's citing whom, which is a topic which might increase in popularity depending on decisions about the format of the RAE replacement.

As well as providing group training on a range of topics, all of the libraries offered one-to-one training, even when the library did not have traditional subject librarians.

3.7 Dedicated research space

The availability of research space within the libraries is quite mixed. The most common form of space available is the group study room, which is available in 11 of the 14 responding libraries and can be booked in advance at eight of these. Groups rooms are only available exclusively for researchers in two institutions. Individual study rooms are available in seven libraries and can be booked in advance in five. They are for the exclusive use of researchers in only one institution. In the majority of libraries, 11 out of the 14, there is no research space reserved exclusively for researchers, whilst three libraries do not have any individual study rooms, groups study rooms or space which they consider to be equivalent to this. It would interesting to investigate this aspect further to discover how researchers in the institutions felt about this situation and whether it is the libraries responding to the lack of visits from researchers or whether the researchers do not feel that the library has the appropriate space to attract them to visit.

A recent report from Edinburgh University [10] highlights the dilemma concerning dedicated research space. Sheila Cannell writes “ It goes very much against the egalitarian principles, but I know that many places try it quite successfully. I have actually asked this question to a largish number of groups in Edinburgh and by and large people come up with the egalitarian answer – but then we get complaints when researchers can’t find a space in the part of the library they want to work in at exam time.” (p45)

3.8 Support for the RAE

Given the funds resting on a successful RAE submission, it is unsurprising that library support is offered by most libraries. The most popular form of support was finding bibliographic data (nine libraries) and nine libraries also offered advice on how to find Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) which were a feature of RAE2008. Help on how to publish was offered by two libraries. Other assistance offered was:

- “A librarian seconded to the RAE Office for one year to manage the bibliometric process plus management of physical research outputs”
- “Support for institutional RAE Database. Support for submission of the RAE return.”
- “The Library itself checks the bibliographic details & DOIs for research outputs for the RAE submissions. We also record and store all printed items submitted for the RAE.”
- “We offer EndNote training and support to Admin staff compiling research publication lists. We gather other information/data at the request of schools/departments”
- “Checking/quality control of data for RAE submission. Collation of hard-copy RAE materials.”
- “Verification of bibliographic data. Checking DOIs. For non-DOI items, collecting PDFs from publishers or scanning from print originals. Verification of physical items.”

- “Collecting research outputs, and collating to forward to Hefce. Standardising RA2s
Collecting data such as DOIs and publication dates”

3.9 Dedicated research support librarian results

This question was included to indicate whether 1994 Group libraries saw the need for an overt statement about research support. Only five universities have someone whose role is dedicated to research support. It is not possible to determine whether these libraries are more effective in research support and clearly the other libraries may see pre-existing staffing structures as robust enough to support research effectively.

3.10 Management of research outputs

The survey results suggest strongly that the open access movement is supported by the majority of the respondents. Most respondents (12 out of 14) store research papers electronically and a further one will launch its institutional repository in spring 2008. However, whilst institutional repositories are increasingly commonplace, the survey showed that submission of electronic theses and research data are at present relatively uncommon. Only two of the institutions have electronic theses available and only two are storing research data. As the storage of data on open access is a subject which has only recently become high profile and is contentious within some subject areas because of ethical and technical concerns, these results are not surprising at the present time. [11]

3.11 Support for e-research

This question was intended to elicit information on any innovative support which libraries were offering in terms of e-research. There is little to indicate that as yet libraries have revolutionised their service provision to accommodate e-research though two comments may suggest that this is under consideration in some libraries:

“Under discussion with research departments but support underdeveloped at present”

“Assistance with individual research-related enquiries. However, we are planning to offer an entirely new research-orientated library facility within the next few years”

This is clearly an area which will need further investigation in the future. Other comments about support were:

“advice on e-research data sources”

“Sessions for certain Faculties' researchers”

“Academic Liaison Librarian, E Resources Librarian and Special Collections Librarian support”

3.12 Sconul statistics

Sconul statistics for serials, inter library loans and e-journal downloads were examined to see the quantity of e-journals available in the different libraries, with the inter-library loan totals and downloads being taken as indicators as to the effectiveness or quality of the titles. It is interesting to note the variations in number of serials across 1994 Group libraries. See Table 2 for total serial subscriptions and Table 3 for e-journal subscriptions. Both are sourced from Sconul statistics 2005/06. Figures are included for all 1994 Group libraries not just those who responded to the questionnaire.

Table 2
Total serial subscriptions

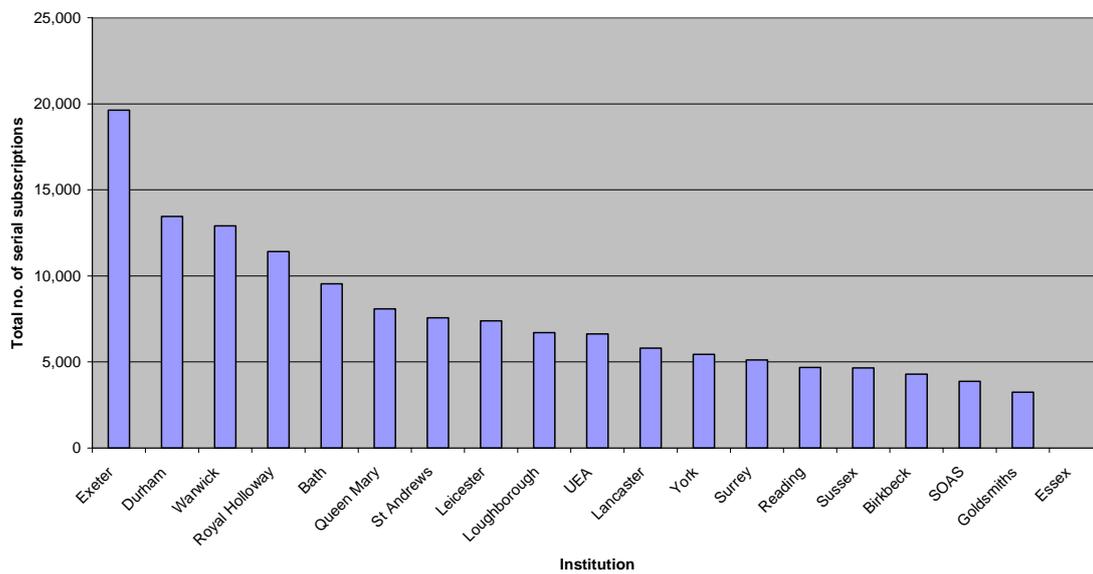
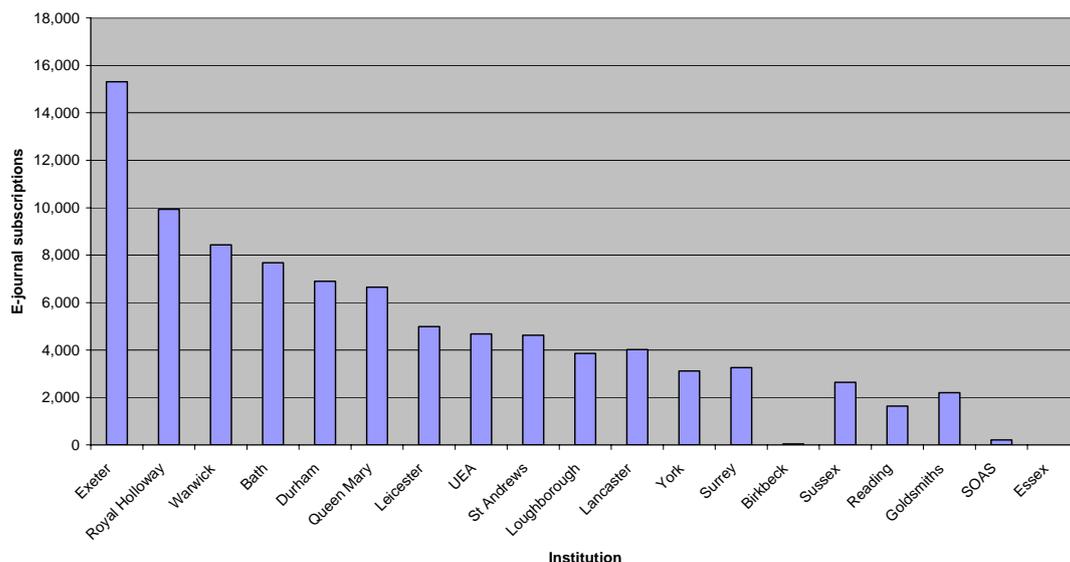


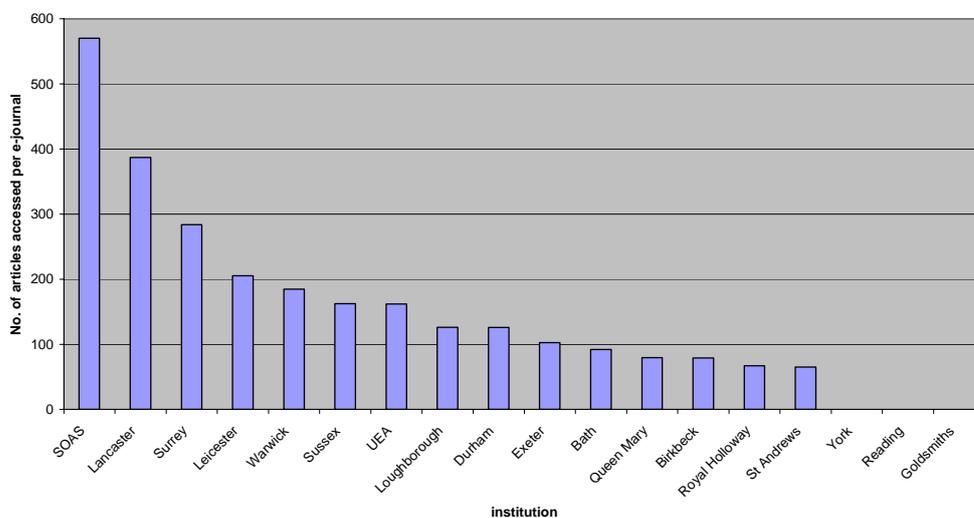
Table 3
E-journal subscriptions



These figures, of course, reflect an institution's mix of courses and strength in science and technology subjects will tend to lead to high numbers of electronic subscriptions due to researcher demand. A medical or law school will also ensure a need to supply large numbers of titles.

The e-journal downloads are a new feature in Sconul statistics this year and an attempt has been made to derive an index of effectiveness of e-journal subscriptions by dividing the number of successful downloads by the number of e-journals. This measure could be used to indicate how effective academic libraries are either in choosing appropriate titles to support their researchers or in guiding researchers to articles they need (perhaps using and promoting link resolver technology). Table 4 shows how our libraries fare in this and illustrates that a smaller number of carefully chosen journals can be very effective in providing researchers with what they need.

Table 4
Articles accessed per e-journal



4. Conclusions

All of the 1994 Group libraries who responded to the survey view research support to be an important aspect of their work. This is demonstrated by the wide range of services offered. However, there is a differing level of support in the variety of subject areas covered by the survey, which will lead Loughborough to explore the provision of extra or enhanced services to its researchers.

Whilst all of the libraries view inter-library loans as a service provided for researchers and the majority allowed electronic requests, secure electronic delivery was not considered to be well-used in the vast majority of institutions and none of the institutions provided the delivery of printed materials directly to the researchers.

It was interesting to see that mediated searching of 'free at point of use' databases was well-used in all of the few institutions that offered this service, whereas the more specialised 'pay as you go' services were only quite well-used at half of the few institutions which offered this. This suggests that academics value the skills of librarians in searching databases even when the interfaces are getting more user-friendly or that they at least value someone else doing this work on their behalf as they are so time-pressured. It is an area which perhaps merits further investigation by those institutions which do not currently offer even a limited service of this type.

Also meriting further investigation is the fact that whilst the majority of the institutions want to digitise some of their special collections, only a few have funds in place. Those that have succeeded could share good practice amongst the Group to help those who have the will but perhaps not the expertise in the bidding process or have unrealistic expectations as to the type of project that is likely to receive funding.

The wide variation in spending on e-reference products within the Group should also cause pause for thought for the few institutions in the lower spending bracket. However, it must be remembered that e-reference materials are not just provided to support researchers within an institution and whilst spending can be seen as an indicator as to the importance of e-reference within an institution, it does not indicate to what extent the products are used or provide details of the exact range of products provided.

All of the libraries offered researchers support beyond traditional information materials. The wide variety of training sessions on offer to researchers across the Group shows the diverse skill set that the librarians are developing, as well as the amount of training that they supply both on a one-to-one basis and in groups. Slightly more concerning was the lack of dedicated research space offered within the library building and it would be useful to take this investigation further to discover if this has any impact on researchers within the institutions.

Whilst it is not yet clear exactly what form the future RAE equivalent will take in all disciplines, the benchmarking survey results suggest that 1994 Group libraries will continue to adapt their services to their researchers to meet their needs. There is no clear 'leader' in best practice across all of the subject areas covered by the survey but there is breadth of support within the different areas, which has been highlighted. Each university has to support its own researchers within the constraints of its budget, organisational structure and ethos. It is hoped that all members of the Group will be able to use the results of the survey and this report to further enhance their services to support researchers.

5. Recommendations for Loughborough

The authors feel that other institutions may like to know which areas we will focus on in order to enhance our support for research. Recommendations which will inform our future operational plans are:

1. Loughborough should promote its Secure Electronic Delivery more widely to researchers and consult with researchers via its Library Users' Committee, Library Liaison Officers and Departmental Research Committees over the reasons for the low take-up of this service by researchers.
2. Loughborough should investigate how other university libraries have enabled electronic requests for inter-library loans and introduce such a service, with guidance from our copyright experts.
3. Loughborough should explore further the provision of a cost- and time-effective service to deliver printed resources directly to researchers in their departments by consulting with Russell Group universities to see how widely this service is provided, to discover the mechanics of such a service and its popularity with researchers.
4. Loughborough should consider how it can effectively provide mediated searching of both 'pay as you go' and 'free at point of use' databases taking into account the time pressures on its academic librarians. It should investigate the correct level of publicity for such services and how they could be promoted to researchers to be included within the costing for research bids.
5. As Loughborough is not intending to digitise any of its special collections at present, it should maintain a watching brief on other 1994 Group university digitisation projects.
6. Loughborough should investigate which e-reference products are provided by 1994 Group libraries, their popularity, cost and their relevance to its own user group through the provision of trials.
7. Loughborough should provide greater publicity to its researchers about the types of research space it provides and investigate their suitability for researcher needs, whilst maintaining an awareness of the needs of the other users of the Library.
8. Loughborough should investigate further the demand within the University for a research data repository and identify the types of data which might be

deposited. As part of this, it should also keep a watching brief on national developments in the area and continue to identify best practice from other 1994 Group libraries which the intention of following this up, if a need to establish a data repository becomes clear.

9. Loughborough will seek permission within the university to make electronic theses submission mandatory (at the moment it is voluntary).

Acknowledgments

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10. Cannell, Sheila *The Changing research environment: implications for library space*. Sconul Focus 40 Spring 2007
11. See Research Information Network, *Stewardship of digital data: a framework of principles and guidelines*, RIN, 2007 <http://www.rin.ac.uk/data-principles> [Accessed 14th December, 2007] for an outline of the issues involved in data curation.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire survey

1. [*] Please state your university

University Names

2. OBTAINING MATERIALS

Can users make inter-library loans (ILLs) requests electronically?

No

Yes

3. For 2005/06 please estimate the percentage of ILLS which were transmitted by Secure Electronic Delivery (SED)

4. Does your Library deliver newly purchased or ILL books to researchers in their departments?

No

Yes

5. MEDIATED SEARCHING OF DATABASES

Does your Library offer mediated searching of "pay as you use" bibliographic and other databases (e.g. those supplied by DIALOG or Questel-Orbit)?

No

Yes

6. How many "pay as you use" mediated searches were carried out in the 2005/06 academic year?

0

1-10

11-20

More than 20

7. Does your Library offer mediated searching of "free at point of use" databases (i.e. your main offering of web based databases) for researchers too busy to do it themselves?

No

Yes

8. How many "free at point of use" mediated searches were carried out in the 2005/06 academic year?

- 0
- 1-10
- 11-20
- More than 20

9. SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Have you digitised any special collections which are intended to support research? (Do not include digitisation of course packs or other teaching materials.)

- No
- Yes

10. Do you plan to digitise any special collections?

- Yes - funds in place
- Yes - if funds can be found
- No

11. ELECTRONIC REFERENCE

In 2005/06, was your spend on electronic reference materials

- £0 - £5,000
- £5,001 - £10,000
- £10,001 - £20,000
- more than £20,000

REFERENCE MANAGEMENT

Which bibliographic software services are centrally purchased, available campus-wide in your institution and actively supported through training courses offered by the library

	EndNote	EndNote Web	Procite	Reference Manager	RefWorks	WriteNote	Other.
12. [*] Available	<input type="checkbox"/>						
13. [*] Actively supported	<input type="checkbox"/>						

14. TRAINING AVAILABLE TO RESEARCHERS

Please indicate which of the following are taught formally by library staff

(Tick all that apply)

- Literature searching
- Bibliographic software / reference management
- Avoiding Plagiarism
- Current awareness
- How / where to publish
- Getting the most from the Web / Web 2.0
- Report writing
- Other

15. If you offer other training courses please list them here

16. One to one consultations

Does your library offer researchers one-to-one consultations with subject librarians?

- No
- Yes

DEDICATED RESEARCH SPACE

Please indicate which of the following types of spaces are available, bookable and dedicated to researchers sole use in your library

	group room	individual study room	other	none
17. Bookable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Exclusive to researchers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. SUPPORT FOR THE RAE

Which of the following services are available in support of RAE2008

- Finding bibliometric data (JCR, Ulrichs etc.)
- Advice on finding DOI s
- How to publish
- Other

21. Which OTHER service(s) in support of RAE2008 do you provide?

22. In addition to general subject support is a member of Library staff dedicated to research support?

- No
- Yes

23. MANAGEMENT OF RESEARCH OUTPUTS

Are any of the following types of material systematically managed and shared electronically somewhere in your institution?

(Tick all that apply)

- Research papers
- Research data
- Theses
- other
- none of these

24. Please detail any support that the Library provides for e-research

25. Please detail any support for research not covered elsewhere in the questionnaire

26. [*] Please supply a contact name and email address to enable any clarification to be sought. Results of the survey will also be disseminated to this address.

