



Partners and pioneers: The role of academic and research libraries as active participants and leaders in the production of scholarly research

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www.rluk.ac.uk/ahrc-rluk-scoping-study

An Overview: Research Libraries UK

A consortium of 39 Research Libraries in UK and Ireland

35 universities, 3 national libraries, Wellcome Collection



The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

Constituent council of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
Enables full breadth of Arts & Humanities research



Evidence Base (Birmingham City University)

Research consultancy appointed to undertake research



A scoping study to enable change

Four key questions:

1. What position do academic and research libraries currently occupy as partners in, and leaders of, research?
2. What role could academic and research libraries play?
3. Are there any barriers that prevent this?
4. If so, how can they be overcome?

Designed and delivered over 9 months

- Report and case studies published: July 2021
- Implementation of recommendations: September 2021 -

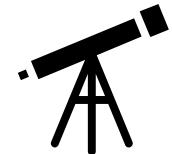
To access: Open your 'phone camera. Zoom in on the QR Code & open the website.



A scoping study to enable change



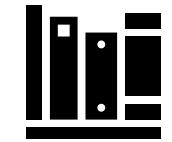
Broad definition: of libraries, inc. archives and special collections, museums and galleries.



Beyond RLUK: included institutions across the research and academic library community.



Geography: UK orientated, international context.



Disciplines: arts, humanities & social science focus, but not to the exclusion of STEM.



Cross-sector: libraries, academics, university leaders, funders, and research managers.

A scoping study to enable change

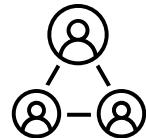
Shifting research landscape

- Places a premium of partnership and impact
- National, institutional and societal drivers



Libraries as **catalysts and conduits of collaboration**

- Collaborative by default
- Leverage position within and beyond institutions



Headline findings: Spectrum of engagement

- **Formal routes:** 24% (34) of library respondents and 42% (31) of academics had been involved in a project in which a library was a partner (> 5 years).
Majority as **co-investigators (85%)**, minority as **principal investigator (38%)**
- **Informal routes:** most common but bring challenges of recognition.
 - Arts and humanities concentration & collections-based strength
 - Information management, digital skills, & public engagement
 - **97% of library staff (140)** and **93% of academics (74)** perceive that collaborative research involving libraries is beneficial to higher education
 - **Perceptions:** of the role of libraries is shifting, but uneven.



Headline findings: What role could academic and research libraries play?

Rising expectations: of libraries leading and partnering in research (over the next 18 months)

20% of library respondents expected to act as a lead organisation (up from 9%)

33% of library respondents expected to act as a partner (up from 21%)

41% of library respondents expect to be involved via another route (up from 18%)

59% of academics expect to collaborate with libraries (up from 42%)

Headline findings: Are there any barriers that prevent this?

Number of barriers identified at individual, institutional, and collective levels



Perception of the library as ineligible for research funding:

- Misconceptions re: the requirement of a PhD or academic contract



Recognition of the library as partner:

- Shared understanding of research and reward structures
- Point at which the library joins a research project important



Capacity and confidence of library staff to conduct research

- Research and its relation to library roles

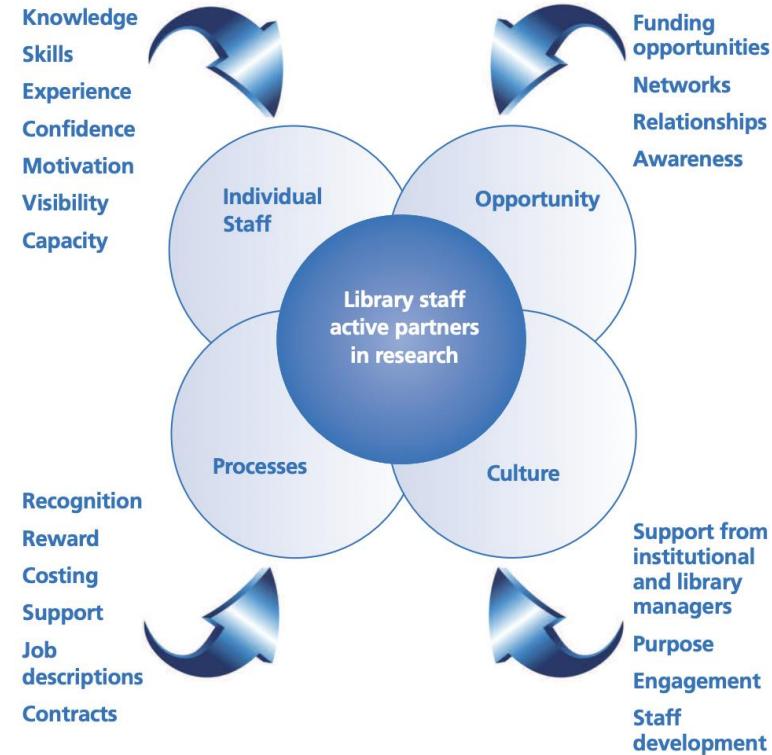
Headline findings: Barriers and how to overcome these

A mixed economy of enabling factors

- Supporting **individuals** & providing **opportunities**
- Revising **processes** & promoting **research cultures**

Report makes **13 far-reaching recommendations** for.....

- **Individuals, for libraries** and their parent institutions
- It identifies potential for **collective action**
- Recommendations for **funders**



Implementation: translating findings into action

Challenge: Capacity

- Little dedicated time to conduct research

Professional Practice Fellowship scheme

- **10 Fellowships**, 6-12 months, > £25,000 (£20k AHRC)
- Collaboratively developed between RLUK and AHRC
- Support research capacity and capabilities
- Highly-tailored to a fellow's research interests
- Announced first cohort in **May 2022**

The screenshot shows a webpage from the RLUK Research Libraries UK website. At the top right, there are links for 'Read about the Fellowships', 'Member login', and a search icon. The main content area features a large QR code in the center. To the left of the QR code, the text 'A Fellow' is visible, followed by '**APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN FOR THE 2022-23 SCHEME DETAILS ARE' and 'For the announcement of the first cohort of fellowships in May 2022'. Below this, it says 'RLUK and AHRC are delighted to offer five fellowships of up to £25,000 per year to support participants and lead institutions. They will provide a career development opportunity for library staff to work in partnership with RLUK and the AHRC in strengthening research capacity and capabilities in libraries across the arts and humanities, and within and beyond the RLUK membership.' To the right of the QR code, there is more text: 'e and', 'FOLLOW IN MAY:', 'allow for further', 'i agendas, be active', 'and institution, and', 'for library staff to', and 'within and beyond the RLUK membership.'

Implementation: translating findings into action

Challenge: Confidence & knowledge

- **52% of library respondents** rated their knowledge of research proposal / grant writing as 'limited' or 'very limited'.

Research Catalyst Cohort programme (February 2022)

- 11 month development programme for a cohort of **18 colleagues from across the library community**.
- Assoc. of Research Managers & Administrators (ARMA)
- First cohort announced in **April 2022**

Read about the Research
RLUK Research Libraries UK
Catalyst Cohort Programme



Implementation: translating findings into action

Challenge: Advocacy

- **Raise the visibility** of research libraries as homes of specialist and technical expertise.

Technician Commitment (February 2022)

- UK university and research council initiative
- Emphasises the specialist expertise of library staff as '**Research Technical Professionals**'
- RLUK became a named supporter in **February 2022**

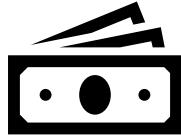
The screenshot shows the RLUK website with a banner reading "Read about RLUK's support of the Technician Commitment". Below the banner, there is text about the commitment and a large QR code. A sidebar on the left contains links related to the commitment, and a sidebar on the right contains general RLUK information.

Summary and final reflections



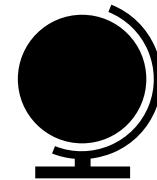
Broker and maintain **cross-sector conversations**

.... and facilitate those within institutions and between colleagues



Need for **continued engagement** with funders and stakeholders

....case studies and **knowledge sharing** internationally



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