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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Practitioner research in an academic library: evaluating the impact of a support group

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This paper explores how a support group has contributed to building a culture of research practice at Flinders University Library. The brief of the Research Working Group (RWG) is to develop a culture of research and professional reflection in the library’s professional staff. The RWG has three broad goals against which to measure its impact: to develop the professional staff’s skills with regard to research engagement; to encourage analysis and investigation of the Library’s services and resources; and to engage more widely with the library profession and the wider higher education community through presentation and publication of research results. Professional staff completed a questionnaire examining their participation in research, their confidence in undertaking research, and plans for future research projects. The results were analysed with reference to the first goal of the RWG. The importance of practitioners undertaking research is increasingly being recognised as a core value in academic libraries. Many support groups for librarians undertaking research have been described in the literature, but few have evaluated the impact of such a group. This paper seeks to evaluate the impact of the RWG on the professional staff at Flinders University Library to date.

Keywords: practitioner-researchers; academic libraries; staff development.

Implications for best practice

- Participation in research can be encouraged by library management through implementing a support group.
- Academic librarians use and value a range of supports in undertaking research, including resourcing, peer support and mentoring-style support.
- Confidence to undertake research can be a predictor for success.
- Offering a confidence survey prior to conducting research provides useful indicators of training requirements.
Introduction

This study examines the impact of a support group for practitioners undertaking research, named the Research Working Group (RWG), at Flinders University Library. It continues on from a previous paper by the authors detailing the establishment of the RWG and the first approximately two years of its pilot period, in which an undertaking was made to measure its impact on the library’s professional staff (McBain, Culshaw and Walkley Hall 2013, 457).

Set up with the brief to ‘develop a culture of research and professional reflection’ (McBain, Culshaw, and Walkley Hall 2013, 460), the RWG has three broad goals: to develop the professional staff’s skills with regard to research engagement; to encourage analysis and investigation of the Library’s services and resources; and to engage more widely with the profession and wider higher education community through presentation and publication of research results.

This paper deals with the first goal and asks the question: have the professional staff’s skills developed with regard to research engagement since the implementation of the RWG? While the other goals of the RWG are no less important, it is too early in the life of many of the projects to measure their impact on practice or the on publication or presentation of results. Instead, baseline measures of these will be taken, against which we can benchmark in the future.

Background

Flinders University Library employs around 90 staff across four locations, approximately half 40% of whom are working at Higher Education Officer (HEO) levels 5 or higher. Entry level librarians are usually employed at HEO levels 5 or 6, depending on their previous experience. Like the majority of librarians working in Australian universities, they are employed as professional (that is, non-academic) staff. However, not all members of staff working at HEO 5 or higher are librarians and so the term ‘professional staff’ has been used to indicate that this study includes both the librarians and non-librarians working at these levels.

The idea of a support group for practitioners undertaking research arose at the time of a shift in priorities for university libraries across Australia, namely the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative. This has provided new opportunities for university libraries to engage with the research process, through research reporting, institutional repositories and bibliometrics. Around the same time, there was also generational change in the leadership team at Flinders University Library. The previous management culture had largely been driven by service delivery and pragmatism, resulting in a ‘practitioner service model’ rather than the ‘research culture model’ (Schrader, Shiri and Williamson 2012, 149). It was thus timely to consider how the Library’s professional staff might more effectively engage with the research process and researchers themselves.

The RWG was initially established for a three year pilot in mid-2010. It is supported with an annual resource allocation of $10,000. This is to enable staff to participate in training and development of their research skills, to buy necessary resources such as special software, and to
fund time release for staff working on research projects. The RWG is led by a Chair who is a member of the Library’s Senior Staff Committee, with the support of a Consultant who has significant research experience. The Chair administers the resource allocation, negotiates for time release with members’ supervisors, and makes recommendations to the Library Executive for the selection of RWG projects. The Consultant assists the Chair and acts as a mentor and advisor to the members of the RWG. The group’s members comprise those staff undertaking research projects, as selected by the Library Executive through an EOI (Expression of Interest) process. Entry to the RWG is voluntary and, as involvement is considered a professional development opportunity, open to continuing staff working at HEO levels 5-8.

There have been seven projects supported by the RWG to date. Of these, one is completed and two more are nearing completion, with the remainder are at various stages of the research process. All projects have been selected on the basis of their alignment with the University’s strategic plan and the Library’s operational goals. Many evaluate the library’s services or resources: for example, a usability study of the discovery layer, evaluating the undergraduate library assignment, assessing information literacy skills of first-year science students, and examining ebook usage. A list of publications and presentations that have arisen from RWG-supported projects to date is documented in Appendix 1.

**Literature review**

Many case studies have described support for academic librarians undertaking research, especially from a US and Canadian academic library perspective where there is the incentive of tenure for librarians to publish. Fewer papers describe the practice where there is no such incentive, such as in Australia or the UK. This literature review focuses on support offered to academic librarians undertaking research and publication in both tenured and non-tenured situations. Examples where such support has been evaluated are also discussed.

The experience of academic librarians as practitioner researchers has been well documented in the literature and includes explorations of motivation (Clapton 2010), barriers to research (Fox 2007), the role of research methods education (Luo 2011), and the experiences of discrete groups such as new professionals (Bradley 2008). The value of a support group - whether it be peer support and mentoring, writing support or support through resourcing - has often been cited as a necessary component of a successful research culture (Blessinger et al. 2010; Cirasella and Smale 2011; Fallon 2012; Gratch 1989; Lee 1995; Sapon-White et al. 2004; Stephens et al. 2011). However, the majority of these studies deal with the tenure process of academic librarians in the United States and Canada. There are only a few examples of how librarians are supported to undertake research where it is not required for promotion (Allen 1986; Fallon 2010; Haddow and Klobas 2004; Hall, Kenna and Oppenheim 2011). Furthermore, there has been little examination of the impact of support groups, even though this is acknowledged as the logical next step (Sapon-White, King, and Christie 2004, 419).

Stephens et al. (2011) describe the Texas A&M University Libraries Research Committee's role and function in supporting 89 tenure track librarians over a 6 year period. Support included project funding and an annual half-day research forum at which librarians shared their research,
practiced presentation skills and received constructive criticism. More than half of those who received support went on to present or publish the results of their research (536). Fennewald (2008) discusses factors leading to publication by tenure track librarians at Pennsylvania State University, describing the many formal support mechanisms in place, such as funding allowances and formal mentoring program, as well as a Library Faculty Organization and a Research Committee. Interviews with 38 randomly selected librarians found that tenure was not the only motivator in conducting research; many were also motivated by 'intellectual curiosity', 'professional obligation' or 'personal satisfaction' (107). Schrader, Shiri, and Williamson (2012) offer a Canadian perspective, presenting the results of a survey of librarians from the University of Saskatchewan which focused on research experience, activity levels, and learning needs. They found that more than two thirds of respondents were involved with research at the time of the survey (154). None of these papers offer an evaluation of the impact of their research support models, although Schrader, Shiri, and Williamson (2012) recommend a follow up study in five years as part of an evaluative process (158).

An evaluation of research support was undertaken by Sapon-White, King, and Christie (2004) at Oregon State University libraries. Their Library Faculty Association 'provides a framework to support a culture of scholarship in the libraries' (407). A short questionnaire was developed to measure participation in research and to solicit views on the Association's effectiveness. They found it had a positive influence on members' work lives but also noted that, as it was a relatively new initiative, further study would be needed to determine its impact (419). At RMIT University library in Australia, where librarians undertake research and publication voluntarily, a study was undertaken of their support group which focuses specifically on writing and publishing (Sullivan et al. 2013). The Get Published Group was established with the specific aim of increasing the number of publications and conference presentations by library staff -- at least 75% of members were to produce a publication output over a 2 year period (694). This target was surpassed, with the most dramatic increase in outputs in book reviews (700). However, there were also 'soft' benefits such as the increased collegiality gained from bringing together colleagues who would not ordinarily work together (701). Similarly, Fallon (2012) describes the outcomes of an Irish research support model which uses a blended group learning approach to improve academic librarians' skills and motivation to publish. While soft and hard outcomes of the program are reported, including confidence building and an increased motivation to write as well as a number of papers in progress (19-21), it is also acknowledged that 'the writing process takes time … [and] It is likely that it will take up to a year for some of the outputs of the program to find their way into the literature or conferences.' (23).

Others have evaluated research support more broadly. Havener and Stolt (1994) surveyed academic librarians in Oklahoma to explore whether there is a correlation between institutional support and formal and informal professional development activities, including support for research (26). Their findings indicate that when institutional support for research was provided, research productivity is 'dramatically higher than that of their non-supported counterparts.' (33) This was most evident in the publication rate of journal articles, with those receiving support twice as likely to publish journal articles as those lacking institutional support (34). More recently, Sassen and Wahl (forthcoming) surveyed the deans and directors of ARL academic libraries to determine the extent of support provided to encourage research and publishing activities (7). These findings were then compared with a similar study done in 1987, finding that
requirements for librarians to undertake research have grown over time but that most support measures have also increased, particularly internal funding (18).

The background to, and implementation of, the RWG at Flinders University Library is explored in detail in a 2013 paper (McBain, Culshaw and Walkley Hall). This paper outlines the context in which the RWG was formed, the structure and governance of the group, and the group's operation. It also describes the first four projects supported by the RWG. Although no structured data were collected prior to the group's formation, the professional staff were extensively consulted for feedback on the draft discussion paper written by the University Librarian. Near universal attendance at the discussion sessions indicated strong interest in the RWG from professional staff (452). Furthermore, the paper gave an undertaking to review the RWG for its impact on professional staff. This paper now seeks to fulfil that undertaking.

Methods

The goal of this survey was to discover what impact the RWG has had on the professional development of staff at Flinders University Library working at levels HEO levels 5-8. This cohort of staff was chosen as they are eligible to apply to undertake a research project and join the RWG. We developed a multi-part questionnaire using the online survey tool, SurveyMonkey, as our survey instrument. This paper concentrates on a subset of the questionnaire, a copy of which can be found in the Appendix.

The questionnaire subset asked respondents about their past and current involvement with research as part of their employment at Flinders University Library in order to measure any changes in participation in research. It also asked respondents to rate their confidence in performing the steps of the research process. Responses were sought on the institutional supports used in undertaking research projects, and how useful respondents found them. A further question sought answers about future plans for research.

Some of the questions in the survey instrument were modelled on those that have previously appeared in the literature, including Kennedy and Brancolini’s confidence scale (2012). We also used a definition of research cited in their paper: 'The process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems/questions/hypotheses through the planned and systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data... [it] may be applied or theoretical in nature and use quantitative or qualitative methods' (Powell, Baker and Mik, 2002, in Kennedy and Brancolini 2012, 432). This definition also appeared at the start of the questionnaire so respondents would be clear about what we meant by research.

Ethics approval for the study was sought and obtained from the University’s Social and Behavioural Research Committee. The survey instrument was tested by colleagues outside the target population prior to distribution, with some suggestions incorporated into the final version.

The survey was distributed by email to the total population; that is, the 34 members of staff in the HEO level 5-8 range at Flinders University Library, as identified by an internal staff list. The email comprised the formal request for participation and links to the information sheet and letter.
of introduction. The email also contained a link to the survey; by clicking on the link, respondents indicated their informed consent. The survey was open initially for two weeks, then extended for a further two weeks to allow for staff absences. All members of the target population had the opportunity to respond, and respondents self-selected to participate.

**Findings**

The survey had a satisfactory response rate of 76% (n=26). Of the 26 participants who began the survey, 25 finished it. However, the one unfinished survey was deemed to be complete enough to be useful and was included in our final analysis in the interests of using all available data from our small population. Furthermore, not all respondents were directed to answer all questions, depending on their answers at certain points of the questionnaire. So as to be clear about the results, we have reported the total number of respondents (n) at each question.

**Participation in research**

The questionnaire first asked respondents whether they had undertaken any research while employed as professional members of staff at Flinders University Library, and if so in what capacity. This was not limited to direct involvement in RWG projects, as we were seeking to gauge the extent of participation regardless of its nature. 10 respondents (n= 26) indicated they are currently undertaking research, and 5 (n=26) indicated they had previously conducted research. Of those currently undertaking research, all were doing so under the auspices of the RWG. Of those who had previously conducted research, 1 had completed their RWG-supported research project, leaving just 4 respondents who had undertaken research prior to the implementation of the RWG.

We were also interested in indirect participation in research projects by professional members of staff. On occasion, other professional staff have been asked to assist with a research project without being a formal member of a research team. We asked whether respondents had assisted with a research project; 13 respondents (n=26) answered that they had. Examples of assistance have included, but are not limited to, facilitating and note taking with focus groups, testing survey instruments, facilitating usability group sessions, set-up of hardware or software, coding or analysing data, or proof-reading of manuscripts. (See Table 1.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in research</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previously conducted research</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently conducting research</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisted with research project</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We then filtered the responses to remove those who had no current involvement in research in any capacity. Six respondents indicated that they had not previously conducted research, were not currently conducting research, and had not assisted with any research projects. A further 2 indicated they had been involved in a research project in the past but were neither assisting with a project nor currently involved. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Current non-participation in research ($n=26$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in research (filtered for current involvement)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No involvement currently</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous involvement only</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total non-participation in current research</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These responses indicate that 18 respondents (69%) are involved in research, whether through direct participation, assistance with a project, or a combination of both. We need to be mindful that self-selection in the survey may contribute to a positive bias in response to this question, and also acknowledge that it does not represent the entire target population. However, at least 18 out of the 34 staff working at levels HEO 5-8 have some recent involvement in undertaking research, which represents 52% of all the professional staff at Flinders University Library. This is a significant increase in the number of staff involved in research since the implementation of the RWG. Although difficult to make a direct comparison with other reports in the literature of participation in research, this number compares satisfactorily with the 62% of respondents who reported they had conducted research in Kennedy and Brancolini's survey of US academic librarians (2012, 436) and the two-thirds of respondents at the University of Saskatchewan who were involved in research at the time of that survey (Schrader, Shiri, and Williamson 2012, 154). Given that the librarians at Flinders are undertaking research in a voluntary capacity, with no requirement for tenure or promotion, these results are very pleasing.

For those respondents who answered positively to having completed a research project, a follow-up question asked whether they had published or presented the results of their research. Not surprisingly, this number was small, with just 2 indicating that they had published or presented their results externally. This number has already been exceeded since the introduction of the RWG, as the list of externally disseminated publications and presentations in Appendix 1 shows. Many of these were completed since the survey was conducted. However, our survey findings give us a benchmark against which future measures of publication and presentation can be taken.
Confidence to undertake research

Respondents were asked to rate their confidence in undertaking the individual components of the research process. We adapted the confidence scale developed by Kennedy and Brancolini (2012) to measure this. Respondents (n=25) were asked to rate their confidence on a scale of 1 ('not at all confident') to 5 ('very confident'). Confidence is related performance and achievement (Kennedy and Brancolini, 2012, 434), and we were interested to see where our respondents felt least confident in order to direct resources to support them. It will also give us a baseline measure to see if confidence levels change as a research culture evolves.

As seen at Table 3, the mean rating of confidence was 3 or above for most of the steps. However, respondents expressed slightly lower confidence at the beginning of the research process, namely ‘Turning an idea into a question that can be tested’ and ‘Designing a project to test your idea’. These results can be used to inform the supports and staff development opportunities offered through the RWG in the future.

Table 3. Confidence to undertake the separate steps of a research project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps of the research process</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean rating</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turning an idea into a question that can be tested</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing a project to test the question</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing a literature review</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying research partners, if needed</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering data</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing data</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting results in written format</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting results verbally</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining format/s for external dissemination</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kennedy and Brancolini acknowledge that 'Confidence in one’s ability to complete the discrete steps in a research process may be different from actually performing the tasks of research' (2013, 440). Further study would need to be done to draw out if confidence is a predictor of research success at Flinders University Library.
Supports used for research

The Library offers various supports for research projects through the RWG. In order to determine the frequency of their use, we asked respondents what supports they had used by selecting all that apply. Responses were sought only from those who had answered positively about their involvement with the RWG (n=11). The results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Supports used by respondents undertaking research (n = 11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Used by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer support of the RWG</td>
<td>8 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/advice of RWG Consultant</td>
<td>7 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular meetings and reporting back to RWG</td>
<td>9 (81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time release for research work</td>
<td>5 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of workspace away from regular desk</td>
<td>1 (0.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of survey software</td>
<td>9 (81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of documentation from other projects</td>
<td>10 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Support/advice of RWG Chair</td>
<td>1 (0.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it is gratifying to see that all supports offered by the RWG have been used to varying degrees, it is important to note that the frequency of use does not necessarily indicate value to the respondents, and further study would need to be done to examine this fully. Although the RWG was not explicitly designed to be a peer mentoring group, members have used these supports -- regular meetings, peer support, support of the Consultant, and as mentioned in the ‘other’, the support of the RWG Chair -- most often. Respondents also heavily used documentation from previous projects. Respondents accessed time release from regular duties less often than might have been expected, with fewer than half using this support. It was expected that there be a greater uptake of this, given that time for research is often cited as a barrier (Clapton 2010, 15; Fox 2007, 10; Kennedy and Brancolini 2012, 438). However, it may be a cyclical trend; other research has shown that uptake of research resourcing can vary greatly year by year (Stephens et al. 2011, 535).

We subsequently asked the respondents to rate the usefulness of each support offered by the RWG. A five-point scale was developed, with 1 being 'not at all useful' to 5 being 'very useful'. Respondents were asked to rate only those supports they had used. The aggregated results can be seen in Table 5.
Table 5. Usefulness of research supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer support of the RWG</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/advice of RWG Consultant</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular meetings and reporting back to RWG</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time release for research work</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of workspace away from regular desk</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of survey software</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of documentation from other research projects</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peer support, and the support and advice of the RWG consultant rated most highly, with only slight standard deviations on both. It is obvious that our practitioner-researchers value their colleagues’ advice and assistance, and we may need to consider a more structured way to offer this given its high value and high use, indicated by the previous question. Peer support and mentoring have both been endorsed in the literature as successful strategies for encouraging research (Cirasella and Smale 2011; Tysick and Babb 2006; Blessinger et al. 2010). Similarly, time release and survey software -- both funded from the RWG’s annual resource allocation -- are valued very highly. It is evident that a combination of supports is needed and should continue to be offered. Again, this is supported by the literature, with Fennewald (2008, 112) identifying that a range of factors are significant in contributing to research productivity and Sapon-White et al. (2004, 418) noting that although uptake of some of the supports offered at Oregon State University was small, they were valued by those that did use them.

A later question in the survey asked for feedback on the RWG generally, and many respondents chose to reiterate the importance of support for their research. Of the 11 comments, 7 mentioned support specifically. One described support as 'essential for invigorating a research culture', another stated 'the mentorship of senior staff made all the difference to the project'. The one negative response suggested that there wasn’t enough support, saying 'more support from managers [is needed] … there isn’t enough opportunity to be involved if you are not part of the core research team.' The emphasis on support in this general feedback supports the high value that was also placed on its usefulness. Other studies have similarly concluded that the collegial support of peers is an important factor in a thriving research culture, with Fennewald finding that “Librarians who are motivated to do research and publish appreciate being surrounded by like colleagues.” (2008, 112).
Future participation

The final part of the questionnaire asked about future participation in research. We asked respondents whether they had any future interest in conducting research, and if so in what capacity. To the former \((n=26)\), 12 answered yes and 3 no, with 11 undecided. Table 6 shows in what capacity those who answered positively \((n=12)\) would like to be involved in research.

Table 6. Future interest in research projects \((n =12)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future research participation</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single researcher</td>
<td>2 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint researcher with academic staff</td>
<td>5 (41.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead researcher of a group project</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of a team in a group project</td>
<td>4 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was most interest in working collaboratively for future research projects, with most respondents indicating they would like to work with an academic partner, and the next largest cohort preferring to work in a library-based team. This interest in group-based research bodes well for the continuing development of a research culture at Flinders University Library, as we have already found that those projects done by groups are an excellent way to share both the research workload and the opportunity to be involved. Although this survey did not seek to understand why respondents may be undecided about future research, this would be a useful topic for further study.

Limitations

This is a small-scale study of the impact of a research support group for academic librarians at a single institution. Its limitations include the small size of the total population which precludes any detailed statistical analysis. Furthermore, this study has deliberately focused on the impact of the support group on the professional staff’s development with regard to their research skills; consideration has not been given to the impact on the library nor the university. Further analysis at a later date, when RWG projects have reached maturity, would round out the evaluation of this group's impact in the broadest sense.

Conclusion

The core goal of the RWG is to contribute to the development of a culture of research and professional reflection, as a staff development mechanism. It has contributed to this goal: we found that more than half of the professional staff working at HEO levels 5-8 are involved with
research in some capacity since the introduction of the RWG. This should be to the long-term benefit of their professional performance and thus also to the library and the university.

Flinders University has goals to strengthen its research performance. Consequently, the Library is being challenged to show how it supports research in new ways. We hope that librarians who engage with the research process will be well placed to shape our services for researchers in the future. The Library is using this enhanced understanding of the needs of researchers as one of the drivers of its eResearch@Flinders initiative (Nixon et al. 2014). In the teaching and learning area, work being done under the auspices of the RWG has been presented in University forums and has created new opportunities for partnerships; for example, two RWG supported projects have turned into joint endeavours with academic staff, an unexpected bonus which has led to enhanced mutual understanding.

The RWG involves a commitment of resources and so should be assessed as to how it contributes to the University’s strategic goals and to the Library supporting these goals. More time is needed before doing this, to allow projects to mature. Further study should then be undertaken to assess the RWG’s impact in a broader sense. However, even in its short lifetime, the RWG has had a positive impact on developing practitioner research skills at Flinders University Library. We will continue to monitor the group and encourage its evolution to ensure the group remains relevant.

Note

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Libraries as Learning Organisations Symposium, 1 November 2013, Queensland University of Technology. The revised paper published in this issue of the *Australian Library Journal* has been double-blind peer reviewed to meet the Department of Education’s HERDC requirements.
References


Appendix 1: Externally disseminated publications and presentations arising from RWG-supported projects to date


