




Evaluating the impact of Academic Librarians on their user community


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Why?

- Concern about AL 'redundancies' and demotions – general 'deprofessionalisation'
- Concern that AL role can be undervalued internally
- Follow up to one of the findings of 2008 Research Centres survey which suggested that awareness of ALs amongst research centre staff was low


2



How?

- Pilot study received Faculty Small Grant funding
- Three depts selected; academic staff only
- Qualitative and quantitative data
 - Online questionnaire
 - Face-to-face interviews
- Social network analysis (analyse and visualise communication networks AL ↔ user community)


3



Survey and Interview

- Online survey of academics in CV, EA, MP:
 - 10 responses from CV
 - 8 responses from EA
 - 11 responses from MP
 27% response rate
- Follow-up interviews with volunteers:
 - 2 staff from CV
 - 4 staff from EA
 - 1 staff from MP


4



Observations: skills or traits ALs should have

- Ranked items from a list of 10 skills:
 - #1 (25%) subject knowledge
 - #2 (21%) ability to keep up to date
 - #5 (8%) pedagogic knowledge
 - #10 (c.1%) diplomacy


5



Observations: services ALs should be able to help with

- Ranked items from a list of 19 items:
 - #1 (79%) giving copyright advice
 - #2 (65%) putting content into the IR
 - #3 (62%) finding an impact factor of a journal
 - #5 (58%) teaching students study skills
 - #18 (0%) designing a module
 - #19 (0%) marking assignments


6

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Bottom line?

- 25/29 respondents know they have an AL
 - The other 4/29 were from MP
- 22/29 could name their AL
 - Of the 7 that couldn't:
 - 4/29 from MP
 - 2/29 from EA
 - 1/29 from CV

7

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Social Network Analysis

- Not enough data for many insights
- Main finding showed that job-share partners were equally valued by academics


8

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Interviews

- Types of contact
 - Majority - teaching of skills
- Experience of services offered/delivered
 - Positive
- Selection/acquisition of resources
 - Knowledge varied between depts
- Support for research/teaching
 - Varied – one very protective over research process; teaching role more widely appreciated

9

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What next?

- Dissemination and reflection within the Library
 - Compare our thoughts about ALs with our users
- Reinforce good practice
 - Contacting new lecturers/research staff
- Further research
 - Consideration about how to find out what (if any) impact ALs have on less 'Library centric' users
 - Consider disciplinary differences in use/expectations of ALs
 - Consider how we could 'measure' impact
 - Possibility of doing a SNA for ALs contacts with dept.

10