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**Version of item:** Presented version



# **Being useful: services for researchers at The University of Northampton**

**Career Development Group National Conference:**

**The Practical Professional**

Bristol, Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2011

**Miggie Pickton**





# Outline

- Context: research at The University of Northampton
- Research support partners
- What do researchers want?
- Research support strategy
- Supporting the research process – some examples
- The research informed practitioner
- Where next?





# Research at Northampton

- About [The University of Northampton](#):
  - Achieved university status and research degree awarding powers in 2005
  - Ambitious plans to develop research capacity
- 200+ research students, ??? research active staff – numbers are rising
- Increased focus on supporting the research community
- Like other universities... thinking about satisfying funders, increasing research impact, developing research environment, the REF...





# Information support for research

- Research Support Specialist - new post created in 2007 as part of new converged Department of Information Services (INS), tasked with:
  - Prioritising needs of researchers within Information Services strategy and planning
  - Leading on services to support researchers e.g. information skills training, repository, REF
  - Representing Information Services on university research committees e.g. Research Committee; Research Degrees Committee; Research Support Forum
  - Providing point of contact and signpost to other library, IT and non-departmental colleagues...



## Research support partners

- Academic Services (INS) – academic liaison; research collections; resource licensing; IPRs; learning technology; marketing
- Information Management (INS) – library systems; website
- Customer Services (INS) – hardware and software support; logins; technology in research spaces
- Graduate School – inductions and training; thesis preparation and submission
- Knowledge Exchange – preparing for the REF; bidding for funding; Knowledge Transfer Partnerships; business development





# Serving the research community

Collectively we serve a range of researchers:

- Research students, research active staff, research leaders

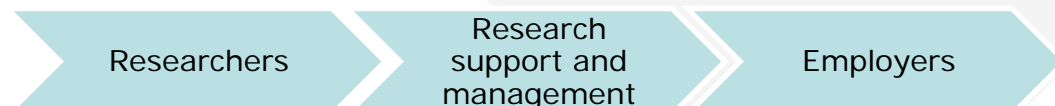
Plus those who support them:

- Research administrators, research managers, research trainers

And those who employ them:

- Directorate, Deans, line managers, 'the University'

The needs of these stakeholders will vary e.g. depending on their priorities, their accountabilities, their career stage and the demands of their specific project





# So what does the research community want?







# Questions, questions...

"I'm just about to submit a **bid** to the ESRC which needs to include a **data management** plan. Please could you let me know if you think that there is anything that I need to add..."

"I would like to set up a **research log** or diary ... Is there a Northampton Uni template for this?"

"Could you tell me or guide me to where I can find the Business School's research **ethics policy** for UG and PG studies please"

"I'm trying to find a list/list of **journal impact factors** in health areas ... Any ideas?"

## HELP!!

"Is there anything special I need to do to **access** SAGE journals?"

"Do you know anything about **encryption**? Have patient data on laptop that needs to be encrypted...."

"I am having to analyse [my] food frequency questionnaire and would appreciate some help/guidance in regards to **SPSS** or methods of analysis."

"I've spoken to [tutor] about a journal which I believe is on **order**, ... I was wondering if you knew when we were likely to get access to this."





# Identifying research community needs

Sources of information:

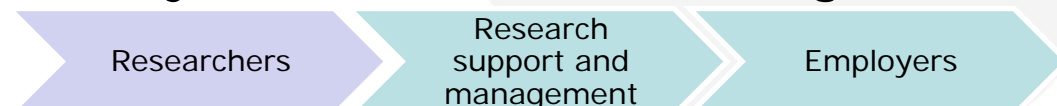
- Face to face meetings
  - One-to-one (formal or informal)
  - Research committees – School and University
  - Research Groups and Forums
  - Training sessions (given or received)
- Email communications
- Joint development of services
- Surveys and focus groups





# Researcher Needs Survey

- Undertaken June 2008, [reported](#) September 2008
- Responses from research active staff as well as research students
- Examined:
  - Use of and attitudes toward existing services
  - Opinions re potential new services
  - Plus opportunity for general feedback
- Provided evidence base for subsequent decision-making and service changes
- Recommendations made for immediate action / further investigation / action subject to additional funding





# Research Strategy

A useful service will also be responsive to organisational strategic goals:

- University Strategic Plan
- Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy
- Information Services Plan
- Information Services Research Support Strategy and Plan





# INS Research Support Strategy 2008-2013

In response to research community needs we identified five principle objectives:

1. To provide access to research-level physical and electronic **resources** and to the technologies necessary to exploit them.
2. To provide individual and collective **support and training** opportunities for researchers.
3. To collaborate with other Schools and Departments in the support of **research processes** at the university and in the pursuance of business and community engagement.
4. To provide appropriate **physical and virtual spaces** to support research activity.
5. To ensure the engagement of Information Services staff in **research and innovative practice** and in the dissemination of this practice.







# Supporting the research community – some examples







# Core support from the library

Information skills  
training

Face to face and  
online

Research  
collections

Access to external  
resources

One to one  
support

Researcher Help  
Desk

Research support  
website

Guides on  
research topics



Researchers

Research  
support and  
management

Employers



# Information skills training

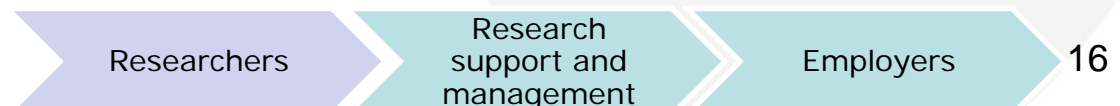
- Inductions, evening classes, Saturday schools
  - Basic information skills (e.g. searching; Metalib)
  - 'Advanced' information skills (e.g. finding highly cited papers, alerting via email and RSS)
  - Other research related topics e.g.
    - Making the most of the web for research (collaboration, communication, dissemination)
    - Preparing theses for electronic submission
    - Managing research data
- Online training modules (Epigeum)





## Other information support

- One-to-one support – by email (mainly), by phone and in person
- Researcher Help desk – weekly, at alternate campuses
- [Research support web pages](#) (currently under development)
- [Guides](#) – aimed at researchers, on research-relevant topics e.g. Web tools for researchers; Measuring research performance





# NECTAR

- The Northampton Electronic Collection of Itheses And Research
  - The university's institutional repository
  - Mainly metadata but aspires to full text
  - Mediated service, involving Schools and INS staff
  - Used for research reporting (high value to research managers)
  - Potential use for staff performance measurement

<http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk>





## Electronic theses

- Submission of final, post-examination copy of thesis in electronic form mandatory for Northampton students starting their research degrees from January 2008
- The electronic copy of the final thesis to be visible externally through NECTAR and EThOS, the British Library's thesis service
- Support from Information Services:
  - Training sessions for research students and their supervisors
  - Advice on IPRs e.g. 3<sup>rd</sup> party copyright
  - Joint support with Graduate School for submission process





# University publishing

- [Northampton Open Journals](#)
  - Uses open source [Open Journal Systems](#) software
  - The collection:
    - Open access, peer reviewed journals
    - Edited by members of the university, supported by international Editorial Boards
    - Ratified by University Research Committee
  - So far, only one journal – [Enhancing the Learner Experience in Higher Education](#) – but interest shown (at all levels)
- [University of Northampton ISBNs](#)

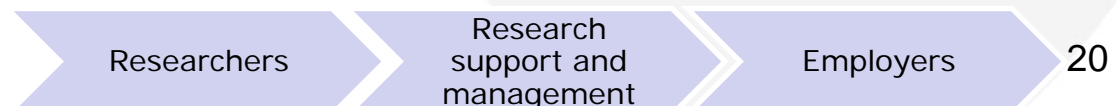






# Research Data Management

- [Research Data Project](#) : aimed to investigate how researchers at UoN create, use and store datasets
- **Method:** based on [Data Asset Framework](#) methodology, comprising an online survey of researchers' data management practices followed by in-depth interviews with researchers
- **Results:**
  - Informed new [research data policy](#) and procedures for the university
  - Will support improved data management practices and enable researchers to meet funders' requirements





## Support for the REF

- Data collection in NECTAR, the institutional repository
- Research reporting (including personal and research group bibliographies)
- Advice and guidance:
  - bibliometrics and citation analysis (other measures of impact?)
  - choosing where to publish
- Tracking progress in the sector
- Membership of REF Working Group





# Being a research informed practitioner





# Research in practice

- Doing and using your own research delivers benefits:
  - To the individual: e.g. new variety and interest; increased job satisfaction; development of new skills; support for professional development; understanding of research process
  - To the institution: contribution to research targets; evidence for value or impact; support for decision-making; problem solving; service improvement; engagement with users at a new level
  - For those involved in research support: **improved credibility and empathy with researchers**





# What next?





# Organisational change

- New Vice Chancellor
- Professional Services Restructuring:
  - Deconvergence with IT
  - Staff cuts...
  - ... but more resource for research support 😊
- Continue to monitor strategic aims
- Continue to nurture professional relationships
- Continue to listen and respond to the research community





## In planning...

- Upgrade NECTAR software to meet REF requirements
- Implementation of Research Data Policy through advocacy and training
- Overhaul of research support web pages
- Investigate potential Current Research Information System (CRIS) – joint project with Research Office
- Development of two new Northampton Open Journals, and shared ownership of one with another university

Making our service useful to Northampton's research community.



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