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Digital Library and Research

Keynote Item

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Digital Library and Research

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Outline of talk

- ◆ Why is the digital library important to researchers?
- ◆ How do researchers' digital needs overlap with/differ from those of students?
- ◆ What do we know about researchers' needs?
- ◆ How can we make things easier?
- ◆ What are the challenges?

Why is the digital library important to researchers?

- ◆ Their time is limited
- ◆ Often they are not on campus
- ◆ Their research is often collaborative
- ◆ They need to be comprehensive in their coverage of information sources
- ◆ In summary, they need access anywhere anytime to everything relevant

How do researchers' digital needs overlap?

- ◆ Access to online catalogues, including union catalogues (eg COPAC)
- ◆ Online inter-library loan requesting
- ◆ Full-text journals
- ◆ Access to general information about library holdings, opening hours
- ◆ Google!

How do researchers' digital needs differ?

- ◆ Access to advanced bibliographical tools
- ◆ Websites of other universities, research councils, grant-making organisations
- ◆ Datasets (eg census)
- ◆ Digitised primary content (eg archives)
- ◆ Scholarly communications (eg pre-prints, institutional archive servers)

What do we know about researchers' needs?

- ◆ Difficult to assess because every research topic is by definition unique
- ◆ Researchers proceed by a process of discovery
- ◆ Researchers often use personal contacts and other libraries more than their home library
- ◆ What did the respondents to the RSLG study say?

Research Support Libraries Group

- ◆ Recent report in the UK – the first ever to address researchers' library needs
- ◆ Survey of 3390 researchers: 4 main needs
- ◆ Print and electronic: hybrid library
- ◆ Better locating and access tools
- ◆ Access to other libraries
- ◆ Access to British Library resources

How have we made things easier?

- ◆ Research portals: LSE's Electronic Library
- ◆ Collaborative gateways: ANGEL, Builder
- ◆ National gateways: Resource Discovery Network
- ◆ In Europe DECOMATE > NEREUS
- ◆ More work in hand: US, Australia, Europe

What are the challenges?

- ◆ Much research material is not yet catalogued online
- ◆ Standards for resource description are patchy (especially for periodicals)
- ◆ Linking technologies are not yet mature and pervasive
- ◆ Middleware is still under construction (eg ANGEL resource manager)

More challenges

- ◆ Access management has a long way to go
- ◆ Publishers are suspicious of e-resource sharing by libraries and users
- ◆ Researchers are reluctant to e-publish
- ◆ Copyright and IPR are unclear in the electronic world
- ◆ Digital preservation poses major challenges

There's a long way to go: the UK vision

- ◆ The RSLG vision is a 10-year one: the Research Libraries Network
- ◆ SUNCAT (Serials Union Catalogue)
- ◆ The UK National Catalogue
- ◆ Metadata creation and cataloguing standards for digital resources
- ◆ Pursuit of new cost models for commercially owned digital content

The RLN continued

- ◆ Development of common standards for authentication and authorisation
- ◆ Programme of action to encourage scholarly communication
- ◆ Programme of work on the needs and costs of digital preservation
- ◆ National Catalogue to include borrowing status as basis for inter-lending

More on the RLN

- ◆ More sophisticated online cataloguing and search tools specifically for researchers
- ◆ Subject specific tools and portals
- ◆ Collaborative collection development for print collections based on National Catalogue
- ◆ Digital preservation and “last resort” archiving

There is a long way to go

- ◆ Research knows no geographical boundaries
- ◆ More European collaboration is needed