

Demonstrating value remains elusive goal

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Providing evidence of value remains an elusive goal for academic libraries across geographic borders, according to a new report published today. The findings are the results of a six-month research project commissioned by SAGE, which sets out recommendations for academic libraries to enhance their working relationship with academic teaching and research staff. 'Working together: evolving value for academic libraries' was undertaken by LISU, a national research and information centre based in the Department of Information Science at Loughborough University (UK).

Findings from three geographic areas, the United States, United Kingdom and Scandinavia, indicated that there is no [systematic evidence](#) of the value of academic libraries for teaching and research staff. Despite this, librarians noted that they receive positive feedback about the support the library provides, but there is a perception that academic staff do not really know how to use all that the library can offer.

The findings are based on eight case studies: in the USA at Purdue University; Towson University; University of Utah; and Wake Forest University; in the UK at the University of Nottingham and University of Sussex; and in Scandinavia at Karolinska Institutet, Sweden and; Oslo and Akerhus University College, Norway.

Additionally a survey was undertaken by 630 librarians in the same regions to compare findings.

Outlined in the report are three key issues identified by librarians as

being central to working together with faculty. These are: value measurement and perception; working together with researchers and teachers; and raising awareness about library products and services. The report sets out examples of best practice and makes a series of recommendations for libraries and university management to improve the perceived value of academic libraries with teaching and research staff.

Chief recommendations

The report highlights the need for individual libraries to develop teaching skills: embedded teaching and co-teaching are extremely valued by teaching staff, who can observe the benefits in the quality of the assignments they receive from students. Communication was also viewed as a key. This includes building an increased understanding of marketing skills, as well as greater personal relationships with teaching and research departments. Confidence in librarianship skills and the motivation of library staff to take on these new roles was seen as vital to success.

Library managers can also support these changes, the report advises, by supporting staff in acquiring new teaching skills, and reviewing resource allocation to enable librarians more proactive contact time with research and teaching staff. It also advises the systematic collection of evidence of value, suggesting that this be a specific responsibility for a senior member of library staff.

There are also recommendations for senior university managers. The findings showed that the engagement of the library with teaching and research staff should be multidimensional, or in other words should take place at all levels of the institution, not just between librarians and departmental liaison staff. This is seen as an important means to raise the profile of the library, and demonstrate its value to the wider institution. Where library staff had an equivalent status to teaching and research

staff, they found it easier to promote their services, as they were seen by those staff as partners in the teaching and research process. Ensuring such status, they summarise, may be a daunting culture change, but is vital in fostering good personal relationships between the library and [teaching](#) and research [staff](#).

More information: The full report can be accessed here:
libraryvalue.wordpress.com/report/

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