Facilitating successful cross-campus partnerships to further the university research enterprise

Rebecca Bryant, PhD
Senior Program Officer, OCLC Research
bryantr@oclc.org
@RebeccaBryant18
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2753-3881

28 April 2021
We acknowledge and celebrate the Indigenous people on whose traditional land and airways we meet, and pay our respect to the elders past and present.

If you are unsure whose land you are currently residing upon, we encourage you to visit native-land.ca.
Today’s presentation

• Why
• Who
• What
• How

oc.lc/social-interoperability
Project overview and team

Scope
US research universities
Non-library stakeholders
Focusing on research support activities (not T&L)
Administrative units, NOT researchers

Methodology
22 semi-structured interviews
Convenience sample
Discussions with RLP partners

Outputs
OCLC Research report
RLP webinar series
Blogs & discussions

Rebecca Bryant, PhD
Annette Dortmound, PhD
Brian Lavoie, PhD
Project goals

- Examine & document the perspectives of non-library campus stakeholders in research support
- Offer a framework for enriched understanding
- Document areas where cross-institutional collaboration is particularly rich
- Offer strategies and tactics for success
Research support

Services that enhance researcher productivity, facilitate analysis of research activity, and/or make research outputs visible and accessible across the scholarly community and beyond.
For example:

- Research Data Management (RDM)
- Research Information Management (RIM) (i.e., CRIS)
- Research analytics/BRI
- ORCID adoption

"I don't think that the campus [RIM system] would have been successful as a library-only initiative. . . . It's been absolutely critical that it was backed by the [office of research] because I think that's also helped keep it to be more of a campus-wide perspective."
Libraries are increasingly working with other campus units

Job posting: Library Chief Data Strategist, University of Rhode Island, USA

This position will work with the **Office of Institutional Research** and DataSpark (Library-based data analytics unit) to identify avenues to increase faculty and researcher success. Working with internal (e.g. MakerspaceURI, Launch Lab, Think Lab, and the AI Lab) and **external (e.g. the Office of Advancement of Teaching and Learning; the Office of Community, Equity and Diversity; Division of Research and Economic Development; and IT) partners**, the incumbent will plan and implement experimental and innovative activities to **cultivate and expand synergistic relationships**.
Research support is an enterprise task
“Well up front, I would say I can't get anything done without partnerships.

I mean it's just absolutely essential to partner, whether it's with centers, institutes, department chairs, academic deans, research deans, all the above.”
Social interoperability

Creation and maintenance of working relationships across individuals and organizational units that promote collaboration, communication, and mutual understanding.

While “technical interoperability”—different technical systems working smoothly together—may be a more familiar concept, social interoperability is of growing importance in a landscape where cross-campus partnerships are becoming both more prevalent and more necessary.
Working across campus can be HARD
Working across campus can be HARD

“It all takes longer and has more dependencies than you think.”
Universities are "complex adaptive systems"

Term used by systems engineering & former university leader William Rouse.


“Implementing a campus RIM (CRIS) system is like "herding flaming cats."
6 characteristics of complex adaptive systems
1. Non-linear & dynamic

- People may respond in disproportionate ways
- System may appear random or chaotic
- Example:
  - Most of the time you have difficulty getting any attention, but then one day one person blows something all out of proportion.
  - Boom! Your director is unnecessarily involved.
2. Independent agents

• People have a lot of freedom to be self-directed: in research, activities, behaviors.
• No one *has* to work with you, especially if their goals don’t obviously align with your interests.
3. Goals & behaviors differ or conflict

- Heterogeneous interests and goals
- Leads to internal conflicts & competition

- Example:
  - Unit won’t share “their” data to support an institutional effort you are leading.
4. Intelligent & learning agents

• Individuals adapt in this environment, in order to achieve their personal goals

• In turn, they influence the system, creating instability

• People can end up working at odds with each other.
5. Self-organization

- A lot of independent self-organization, outside of existing hierarchies of faculties/colleges and departments
- This can lead to duplication of efforts and services
- Example:
  - Multiple units have developed their own reporting systems
6. No single point of control

- Decentralized
- Units—and individuals—operate in a federated manner with a high degree of autonomy
- Mandates rarely work
- Example:
  - Backlash from faculty when they weren’t “consulted” on an effort they see as heavy-handed.
  - Vote of no confidence

“Mandatory is your first and fastest way to fail... [because] you aren’t going to dictate anything to anybody.”
The result?

• Incentives > mandates
• Agility > efficiency
• Self-organized heterarchical networks are the primary mechanism for getting work done
The institutional stakeholders
A Conceptual Model of Campus Research Support Stakeholders

Communications

Academic Affairs

Research Administration

Faculty Affairs & Governance

Information & Communications Technology (ICT)

The Library

THE UNIVERSITY

“A conceptual model of campus research support stakeholders” by OCLC Research from Social Interoperability in Research Support: Cross-campus Partnerships and the University Research Enterprise [https://doi.org/10.25333/wyrd-n586], CC BY 4.0
Academic Affairs

Individuals responsible for overseeing teaching, learning, and research activities at the university

Examples:
• Provost/deputy vice-chancellor (university’s chief academic officer)
• Deans and directors
• Department/school heads
• Directors of graduate study
• Faculty and staff

“Nobody knows what the %*@# a provost does.” —Provost
Research Administration

Campus units that help advance the university’s research activities, such as securing external funding, developing institutional strategy and policy, and providing oversight of issues having to do with responsible research conduct, ethics, and grant administration

Examples:
• Vice President of Research
• Office of Research
• Research Development Office

“... we do whatever we can to keep our researchers focused on doing their research so that they’re not doing other things that they shouldn’t have to do.”
The Library

Connect students and faculty with the information resources they need for education and research

Examples:
- Disciplinary liaisons
- Scholarly communication
- Digital humanities institute
- Publishing

“Because so often, librarians are forgotten. Our expertise is completely forgotten, and we’re the last people to be considered]. So faculty are shocked when they realize, “oh, you can help me with my data? Oh, you can help me think through this . . . publishing considerations, whatever it might be.”
Information & Communications Technology

Units responsible for supporting a wide array of technology needs on campus, research, learning, and more.

Examples:
- Storage, high-performance computing resources
- Digital collaboration tools, research software
- Email services, telecommunications, networking
- Learning management systems
- Technical consultation and support

“What we hope for is the things that make sense to be run from a central point kind gravitate and migrate toward the central unit.”
Faculty Affairs & Governance

Supports faculty members in their careers and scholarly activities, as well as those related to faculty governance.

**Examples:**
- Annual reviews, merit increases, promotion & tenure
- Contract renewals, sabbaticals
- Faculty searches, hiring, start-up funds
- Faculty senate/governance
- Local [AAUP] chapter, faculty union

“... the human touch and coordination behind the scenes to make sure that all the units are working together in the way that they should, that all the efforts are strategically aligned.”
Communications

Responsible for promoting, marketing, or otherwise raising awareness about university programs, accomplishments, initiatives, and other activities

Examples:

- University communications or public affairs office
- Corporate relations, alumni relations
- Communications officers in academic units, research office, and more

“that kind of connecting, communicating, developing of networks . . . is probably the most vital thing that I do.”
Examples of cross-institutional collaboration in research support

• Research Data Management (RDM)
• Research Information Management (RIM, CRIS)
• Research analytics
• ORCID adoption

“Research development has worked hand in glove with the library on the public profiles on our campus.”
Stakeholder Interest in Research Support Areas

Communications
- RIM
- Research Analytics
- ORCID Adoption

Faculty Affairs & Governance
- RIM
- ORCID Adoption

Information & Communications Technology (ICT)
- RIM
- Research Analytics
- ORCID Adoption

Academic Affairs
- RDM
- RIM
- Research Analytics
- ORCID Adoption

Research Administration
- RDM
- RIM
- Research Analytics
- ORCID Adoption

The Library
- RDM
- RIM
- Research Analytics
- ORCID Adoption

"Stakeholder interest in research support areas" by OCLC Research, from Social Interoperability in Research Support: Cross-campus Partnerships and the University Research Enterprise [https://doi.org/10.25333/wyrd-n586], CC BY 4.0
Comments on the Library as a Partner

- Central campus unit and trusted, “agnostic” partner for sustainable projects
- Recognized expertise in
  - metadata
  - licensing
  - vendor support/negotiations
  - research impact/bibliometrics
- But …
  - Services/value proposition can be diluted by desire to “be everything for everyone”
  - Overemphasis on values, to the neglect of others’ needs and interests
  - Slow-moving, less urgency than other parts of campus. Need to move at same pace as researchers
  - Lack of confidence among librarians can hinder effectiveness. Need to see themselves as equal partners
  - Discomfort with finances; “unrealistic” desire for everything to be “free”
Facilitating Social Interoperability
Key Takeaways about Successful Intra-campus Social Interoperability

- Secure buy-in
- Know your audience
- Speak their language
- Offer solutions to problems
- Timing is essential
- Find opportunities to connect
- Leverage shared staff
- Find “connectors”
- Manage personalities
- Be confident in your value
- Manage resistance
- Invest the energy

"Key takeaways about successful intra-campus social interoperability" by OCLC Research, from Social Interoperability in Research Support: Cross-campus Partnerships and the University Research Enterprise (https://doi.org/10.25333/wyrd-n586), CC BY 4.0
Strategies

• Know your audience
• Speak their language
• Offer concrete solutions
• Secure buy-in
• Timing is essential
Relationship building

Find opportunities to connect:
• Formal & informal
• Committee work
• Faculty governance
• Standing meetings
• Create communities
• Hallway conversations

Leverage staff connections like shared or embedded staff

Photo by Aubrey Rose Odom on Unsplash
Troubleshooting

• Find “connectors”
  • Hubs that cut across networks
  • Executive support

• Know your value
  • Stay focused
  • Say “no”

• Manage personalities
  • Work with who you can
  • Don’t burn bridges
Challenges

- **Investing energy**
  - Relationship-building takes time & effort
  - Ongoing as partners change
  - Collaboration & speed often trade-offs

- **Managing resistance**
  - Consult early & often
  - Be sensitive to partners’ autonomy & competing interests

- **Emerging roles in research support**
  - Roles can be ill-defined & over-burdened
  - Isolation
Use it
A Conceptual Model of Campus Research Support Stakeholders

Communications
- Graduate College - Charlie
- Research Office - Marty

Academic Affairs
- Graduate College - Alexi
- Melissa

Faculty Affairs & Governance
- V Provost - Faculty Affairs
- Faculty Senate

Research Administration
- Council of Research Deans
- Research Development
- Sponsored Programs
- Tech Transfer

THE UNIVERSITY

Information & Communications Technology (ICT)
- Division of Management Information - Andi
- ICT - Tracy has good relations there
- Campus EDW
## Stakeholder Strategy Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals &amp; relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Script for learning about other stakeholders

A script for learning about other units used at Rutgers University-New Brunswick

1. In what major ways do you see the University’s work and focus changing during the next 2-3 years?

2. How are these changes affecting the work and focus of your school/department/program (unit)?

3. What are your unit’s goals for the next 2-3 years?

4. What about your responsibilities within the unit? What are your top priorities?
Thank you!

Rebecca Bryant
@RebeccaBryant18

Annette Dortmund
@libsun

Brian Lavoie
@libranomics