

Importance of Library Research Support Services in top three QS Ranking Universities.

Veena A. Prakash¹, Naina S. Peters²

¹ Information Scientist, R.T.M Nagpur University.

² Research Scholar & Librarian, Hislop College, Nagpur

Abstract

Library Research Support Services (LRSS) is an emerging and popular area in Higher education university libraries, whose increasing importance has been well documented since the early 2010's, this paper aims to identify the status of LRSS provided in the top three university libraries of QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) world university rankings system. The present paper is discussing the importance of library research support services to help meet a university's strategic research goal. The suggested recommendations highlight those service areas which are most in need of improvement.

Keywords: Academic libraries, Library research support, University rankings, Higher Education Institutions

INTRODUCTION

Research and publishing have become strategic priorities in Higher Education Institutions because of the pressure on universities to improve their ranking through research and educational excellence (Riera Quintero et al., 2012; Si et al., 2019; Weaver and Richardson, 2021). As a result, research support services (RSS) emerged throughout the world. Changes in research and innovation during the last few years have been prompted mainly by events which affected our economy and society. Library research support services play a pivotal role in enhancing the global ranking performance of universities by directly contributing to their research visibility, academic reputation and productivity. These services encompass a range of functions, including research data management (RDM), bibliometric and citation analysis, open-access publishing support, digital repositories and scholarly communication training. According to Forsman et al. (2012.p.181). RSS can be defined as "Specific information services to promote research by meeting the unique information needs of the researchers within a particular institution". Tang and Zhang (2019), have specifically link such services with a researcher's information needs based on the research lifecycle, i.e. from the inception of a research problem to its completion. Library and Information Support referred to the range of resources, services, and technological tools provided by academic libraries to enhance research productivity and dissemination. This includes access to databases, institutional repositories, bibliometric tools, research data management, and scholarly communication platforms.

QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World University Rankings

The QS World University Rankings is among the most influential and widely cited global ranking systems in higher education. It was originally part of a joint venture between Times Higher Education (THE) and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), which collaborated from 2004 to 2009 to produce a single global ranking. In 2010, the partnership ended, leading to two independent systems: THE World University Rankings and the QS World University Rankings (QS Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd., 2023). Since then, QS has established its own identity, focusing on a broad conception of university excellence that integrates academic reputation, employability, and international diversity along with research performance (Hazelkorn, 2015).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Jia Tina Du and Nina Evans (2021) investigated the use of a university library academic service to assist in research information seeking and the role and value of the academic services in support of research from the view points of both academic users and librarians. Findings include library online databases and interlibrary loans and document delivery as the services most familiar to and utilized by the academic users, Assistance in searching for resources in and out of the library, Subscribing to the databases and maintaining access, as well as providing training on research skills were major roles and values of the university library as perceived by academic users in research support.

Padhan, Dharendra Kumar and Naidu, G. Heasundar (2021) explores the research support provision in India's Higher Educational Institution (HEI) libraries. Library websites of the top 25 ranked HEI's in the research domain of NIRF-2021, were investigated to know the status, provision, strength and weakness of research support services in academic libraries. Research related visibility, resources, and services. Findings of the study reveal that HEI libraries are substantially well placed in institutional repositories, e-database of Theses and dissertations and faculty research profiles

Si, L., Zeng, Y., Guo, S., and Zhuang, X. (2019) conducted a study to aims to understand the current situation of research support services offered by academic libraries in world leading universities and providing useful

implications and insights for other academic libraries. This paper makes a comprehensive investigation of research support services in academic libraries of top –ranking universities worldwide. The findings will help academic libraries improve research support services thus advancing the work of researchers and promoting scientific discovery.

Fernandez-Marcial, Viviana et al. (2016) conducted a study to aims to analyze the services offer to support research in a selection of libraries from the most important international universities. The selection of the institutions is based in the academic rankings position. The final objectives are to demonstrate the relevance of the library role in the research process of its community, trying to establish a bidirectional relation between universities and their libraries. The research method they have used the observation of the selected libraries WebPages, with a checklist where the most relevant services to support research processes are identified.

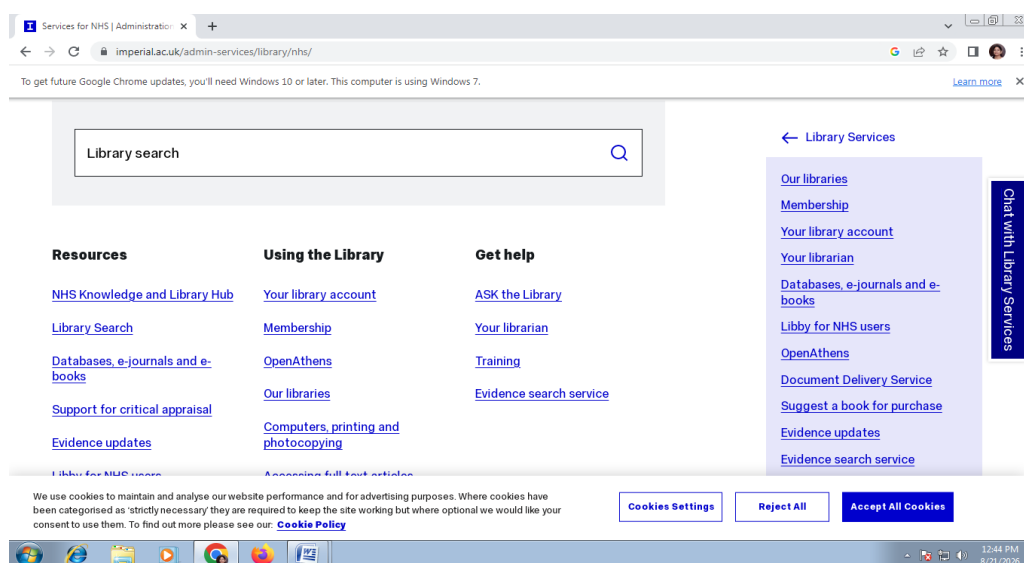
Keller, A. (2015) examined, the ongoing changes within Australian university libraries to support research. This study gives an overview of the adjustments made to libraries service portfolios and the changes in the roles and responsibilities of subject or liaison librarians. This study discusses five research support services: institutional repositories, open access, bibliometrics and enhancement of research impact, support for research students and research data management. The study reveals three measures or approaches that were taken by senior management to build up and sustain efficient and effective research support services: Rationalization of student services, Focusing activities of liaison librarians on research support and creation of subject specific teams to achieve better affectivity and efficiency gains, definition of new positions responsible for research support.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To Know the visibility of research support services being provided by Higher Education institutions libraries
2. To understand the academic library research support services being provided by HEI libraries
3. To present the best practices of academic libraries in research support services.

Library Research support services in Top three QS Ranking Universities

1. Imperial College, London⁹.



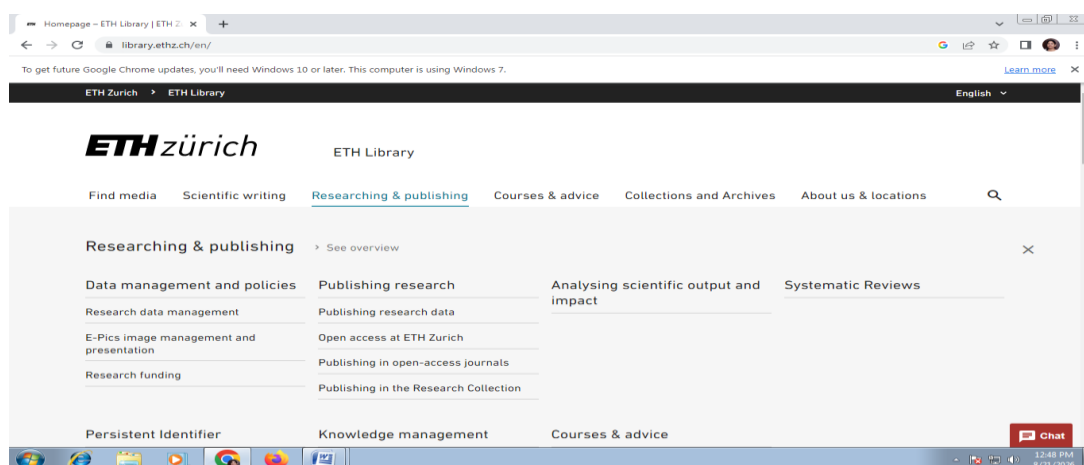
<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/library/nhs/>

The library research support services at Imperial College, London are strategically structured to provide holistic academic and research support to its diverse need of students, faculty and external users. The library portal is intuitively designed with an emphasis on accessibility, user-friendliness, and digital integration. Upon entering the college website, users are greeted with a visually engaging homepage that highlights a collaborative and technology-enabled study environment, reflecting the library's alignment with contemporary pedagogical and research needs. The library services section falls under the broader "Administration and Support Services" of the university, denoting the library's central role in academic administration. Key services include dedicated assistance for new students, which helps acclimate them to library usages norms, as well as support for using library spaces and systems effectively. The section titled "Find books and online resources" is indicative of the library's dual emphasis on both traditional print resources and a wide spectrum of digital databases and journals. The subject support service reflects an embedded model where subject librarians are likely available for

personalized academic assistance, including one-on-one consultations, subject-specific training and resource curation.

A distinctive feature of Imperial college library services is its provision for learning and teaching support, which highlights the library's collaborative engagement with faculty to enhance curriculum design and academic delivery through curated resources and instructional tools. Equally important is the "Research Support" service, which facilitates the research lifecycle from literature reviews and data management to publishing and compliance with open access mandates. The presence of a contact feature ensures responsive communication and query resolution, suggesting a strong user-support ethos. Furthermore, the website architecture, integrated search bar and collapsible menu interface all point towards a digital-first approach, facilitating seamless navigation for users across devices.

ETH, Zurich

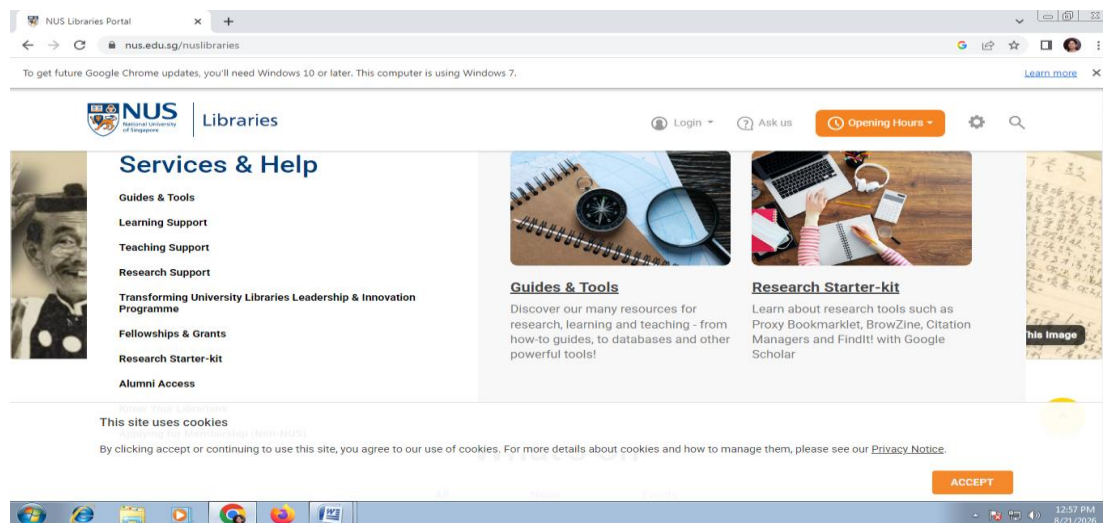


<https://library.ethz.ch/en/>

The ETH Zurich Library also known as ETH-Bibliothek, represents one of the most comprehensive academic knowledge repositories in continental Europe. It serves the learning, teaching, and research needs of students, faculty and the broader scientific community. The "Searching and Using" section is structured to assist users in both physical and digital media access. It includes services such as borrowing physical media, accessing electronic resources, submitting order forms and using FAQs tailored for private individuals. Notably, it includes tools for managing references and academic knowledge such as citation management, research topic tracking and shared reading lists via Leganto.

In the "Researching and Publishing" segment, ETH Zurich highlights its commitment to high impact scientific communication. It offers extensive support in areas like scientific writing, plagiarism checks, AI-based writing assistance and data management services such as "Open Access at ETH Zurich" and "Publishing in the Research Collection" foster open science and promote global research visibility. Additionally, dedicated services are provided for evaluating research output and citation impact, enabling users to gauge their scholarly influence. The "Archiving and Digitizing" category reflects ETH Zurich's leadership in preserving and sharing scientific legacy. The library manages a robust infrastructure for digital long-term preservation, image archiving and access to the ETH Zurich University archives. It also offers digitization services and open data initiatives, including access to the API platform and Digital scholarship services, all grounded in legal standards to ensure ethical dissemination and reuse.

National University of Singapore



<https://nus.edu.sg/nuslibraries>

The library services at the National University of Singapore (NUS) reflect a sophisticated and student-oriented system that integrates both traditional borrowing facilities and innovative support structures for teaching, learning and research. Under the borrowing and requests section, the library offers a comprehensive list of services aimed at optimizing access to resources. These include loan privileges, reserving and renewing items, reporting lost books and requesting the use of equipment for academic purposes. One of the notable features is the provision of intra library loans, enabling users to request materials from any branch within the NUS library network. Moreover, specific services for academic staff such as the placement of materials in course readings or reserve books and reading (RBR) ensure instructional alignment with available resources. In addition, users are encouraged to contribute to collection development by recommending books, articles or other materials for purchase.

The services and help section demonstrates the library's holistic support system designed to assist a diverse user base. It provides access to guides and tools that help students and researchers navigate databases, citation systems and digital platforms. Learning and teaching support is available to both students and faculty, along with dedicated research support, indicating a strong emphasis on the academic lifecycle. Additionally, the presence of programmes such as the transforming university libraries leadership and innovation programme and information on fellowships and grants reflect a strategic focus on leadership development and funding awareness. The provision of online tools, alumni access and avenues for external membership, including know your librarian services and application for non NUS individuals suggests a commitment to both inclusivity and community outreach. These features ensure that library services extend beyond the immediate campus environment to serve broader academic and public stakeholders.

The collections section underscores the diversity and richness of NUS's resource holdings. A part from core academic materials, the libraries house new arrivals and maintain policies for collections development to ensure resources remain current and relevant. A unique strength of the NUS libraries lies in their special collections, which offer curated materials of historical or academic significance. The library blog maintained by the librarians themselves, offers insights, commentary, and news about the collections, enabling users to stay updated with the latest developments and discoveries within the library system.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the research support services of Imperial College London's library reflect a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and forward-thinking academic infrastructure. The institution integrates traditional library functions with modern digital tools, personalized academic support, research facilitation, and cross-sector collaboration. The services are clearly aligned with global best practices in academic librarianship, particularly in terms of user engagement, resource accessibility and pedagogical integration. ETH Zurich library stands out for its dynamic integration of traditional and digital services. It not only facilitates access to resources but also empowers its academic community with sophisticated tools for managing research data, ensuring publishing integrity and preserving institutional knowledge. Hence ETH Zurich library, as a benchmark in academic library excellence within the QS top ranking institutions. The National University of Singapore's library services represent a

comprehensive and integrated model of academic support, blending conventional library operations with modern digital innovations. By offering a wide spectrum of borrowing options, instructional support tools, digital literacy services and access to rich, diverse collections, NUS libraries function not merely as repositories of knowledge but as facilitators of academic excellence, research advancement, and lifelong learning.

Suggestions:

1. In this technology-led era, libraries need to adopt AI technology to keep pace with the changing technology and improve library research support services in higher education institutions in India.
2. All the higher education institution's library should establish research support services section and librarians having research skills should be appointed for the guidance of the researchers.
3. Incorporating on demand AI-powered research support and implementing a hybrid staffing strategy can improve LRSS's accessibility and efficiency.
4. Considering the limited budget of libraries, public-private partnerships can be the best option for incorporating technology into libraries of higher education to improve research support services.
5. Standard operating procedures (SOP) should be framed with the help of liaison librarians and researchers for establishing LRSS in the university libraries.
6. University libraries should offer online tutorials regarding LRSS on the university's webpage.
7. Administrators, Policy makers should prioritize research data services by redirecting existing resources (financial and human) and by seeking collaboration with other organizational units to obtain relevant resources and support.

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