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The UK Research Reserve (UKRR) — Challenging Identities, Nurturing Collections and Delivering a Service

by **Frances Boyle** (UKRR Manager) <f.boyle@imperial.ac.uk>

Introduction

The Creature which is UKRR

The UK Research Reserve (UKRR) is a coordinated, collaborative, systematic approach to collection management for *low use print research journals*. The scheme, funded by the **Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)**,¹ is a partnership between the UK's higher education (HE) sector and the **British Library (BL)**.² It is an exemplar of a shared services programme³ initiative.

This collaborative approach shapes UKRR's priorities whilst delivering value to its cross sectoral partners. While superficially UKRR may appear to be primarily about processes, workflows, and data matching, its purpose is, above all, to support a sea change in how institutions view and manage their physical collections, both now and in the years ahead. The underlying issues are complex, but the most beguiling is cultural change, which UKRR promotes by subsidizing member institutions for their contribution.

UKRR Basics

First and foremost UKRR is a pragmatic solution to a legacy issue. It seeks to:

- safeguard the UK's research information infrastructure;
- free up valuable space in UK HE libraries to support changing institutional priorities, such as teaching, learning, and improving the student experience;
- achieve substantial capital savings in UK HE.

The aims are achieved by:

- coordinating the retention of three copies of each title across the membership. The primary copy will normally sit in the UKRR collection, held on its behalf by the **BL** in its loanable collection. A further two copies wherever possible will be held in the collections of UKRR members;
- encouraging libraries to free up space by securely disposing of additional copies of material already held in UKRR or not at risk within the UKRR community.

While these are deceptively simple aims, the two primary goals could be viewed as contradictory. UKRR balances de-duplicating research journal collections with building a national research collection from the journals offered for de-duplication, to safeguard access to the journal content.⁴ Therein lies the fun!

UKRR Facts

A prototype UKRR was tested on the HE sector as a pilot project in 2007-2008. The pilot, led by **Imperial College London**, eventually comprised eight university libraries.⁵ Phase 2 began in 2009 and is funded for five years. For background, some salient facts:

- 29 UK university members;⁶
- Members pay a subscription;⁷
- During the pilot phase:
 - Over 11,000 metres of shelf space were released;
 - More than 8,000 titles were added to the Research Reserve;
- As of July 2010 over 21 kilometres comprising 18,000 titles have been submitted to UKRR;
- 15 kilometres of shelf space released;
- £4.5m of capital cost savings;⁸
- More than 50 new titles added to the **BL's** loanable collection.

The Cruel World into which UKRR was Delivered

So what sort of world was UKRR born into? Since the pilot phase in 2007-2008 much has changed: the economic turnaround has affected public funding globally. This significantly altered landscape crucially prompts the question whether the maturing UKRR demonstrates the nature or nurture theory⁹ of development behaviour i.e., is it on a par-

ticular development trajectory because of, or despite the surrounding turbulent times?

Whilst UKRR's aims have not changed since the outset, the reality of tightening funds within HE may affect expectations of it. It is even more important for UKRR to demonstrate value to both its funders and members. As members are investing both staff and money in UKRR they must demonstrate the value and benefit of their participation to their local communities too.

Planet UKRR and its Challenges

a) The Big D — The Digital Evolution

In the UK and elsewhere we have all long acknowledged the significant duplication of research journal holdings across the university sector. The emergence of e-sustainable research journal backfiles, particularly in the STM area, increased the viability of the UKRR. So universities are able to take account of not only *inter-institutional duplication* but also *intra-institutional duplication* with parallel holdings in both traditional print and electronic formats.

The evaluation criteria to assess e-sustainability vary between institutions. The most important of which are post cancellation access, whether the material is in a trusted archiving programme, e.g., **UK LOCKKS**, **Portico**, **CLOCKKS**, and the quality and comprehensiveness of the available digital files. The latter is particularly important in advocacy work undertaken with academics. However, it is clear that the availability of e-sustainable backfiles with comprehensive coverage is one of the key considerations for UKRR members selecting material to offer to UKRR¹⁰ (50% of material offered to UKRR falls into this category).

b) The Big C — What is a Collection?

Do physical collections define a library, or indeed a university as a whole? The notion of a cloud library and its shared collections has been eloquently outlined by a number of commentators,¹¹ and UKRR sits well in this model. But perhaps UKRR is more than a distributed shared collection as it seeks to provide the connective "vapour trails" between the distinct but associated cloud forms. The service it provides is the joining up of the de-duplication of local collections and the building of the research reserve. An integral part of the value of UKRR is that members' collections are strengthened because they no longer stand in isolation but rather as links in the research reserve chain.

c) The Big U — The Users of the Collection

In "libraryland" we sometimes concentrate on the complexities of process at the expense of a broader vision. In the case of print collection management, particularly in these straitened times, we need to revisit the fundamental questions: what, how, why, and for whom do we collect?

The answers will obviously differ from institution to institution and indeed over time.



UKRR is pragmatic: we recognise that some academics in some universities will continue to prefer their journal holdings to remain onsite, and are interested in the physical object and not just the content. Addressing these local issues is a major part of the UKRR members' work and they offer material only after local consultation.

UKRR can support the members' own collection management policies: "what to de-duplicate?" is in effect a risk management analysis carried out at the institutional level.

Meanwhile, user numbers, needs, and expectations are evolving. Current research¹² into user behaviour, such as the Libraries of the Future¹³ project, will present scenarios about how libraries may operate in the near future. The role of the library and its valued services may differ greatly from those currently on offer. How this will help determine the

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future use of the physical estate to house collections is something to be considered by any shared print initiative.

d) The Big S — How do we House all this Stuff?

Space is an ever present challenge, and as such will always be a spectre on the shoulders of librarians; its relentless characteristics are that it costs and it's finite. There have been many models evaluating material costs¹⁴ in different circumstances. Of course it is important to factor in recurrent facilities costs and the opportunity cost of any released space.

One thing is clear: the increasing pressure on space encourages libraries to sign up to UKRR. Members have remodelled and used the released space creatively to support their particular institutional requirements: increasing the number of study spaces, provision of additional workstations or the creation of new social interactive space e.g., a refreshments area.

Most libraries espouse zero growth collection policies but in reality these are often far from easy to achieve. There are often conflicting demands on collection managers to take full advantage of the opportunities which digital content brings whilst still accommodating the growth of traditional print collections to support new courses and research areas within their institutions. For successful implementation there needs to be academic engagement and awareness of issues to harness support of core local collections rather than comprehensive holdings.

e) The Big J — The Material in the Research Reserve

A collection in any academic library is a diverse and dynamic beast. UKRR focuses on one facet of that beast — research journals; further refined to low use print journals. UKRR does not itself prescribe what *low use* is as this is defined locally by the member institution. This latitude is essential if any collective scheme is to gain the trust and support of its members.

The other big issue in regard to journal holdings is data integrity. UKRR operates at a high level of granularity so the quality and timeliness of the holdings data is crucial.

f) The Big I — Does Collaboration affect an Institution's Identity?

Stepping away from the process, the significant and long-term impact of UKRR as an example of a shared collection strategy, is about far more than collection management policies. It encourages members to challenge their institutional and departmental identities. If taken to its logical conclusion it challenges any library's traditional role in the academy.

In the UK we are in a sustained period of austerity with substantive public sector budget cuts forecast. It is a time of change where the number, nature, and role of our higher education institutions will be challenged. There are bound to be ramifications for the service providers within the institutions, so prioritising what needs to be done in-house and what can be shared, at a reduced cost, is commonplace.

Libraries will be scrutinising:

- What is valuable?
- What can safely be compromised?
- What to standardise?
- What to share?
- What contributes most to the core aims of the home institution?
- What benefits do levels of investment reap?

In this climate UKRR needs to demonstrate ongoing value and sustainability once its dedicated funding ceases in 2014.

Conclusion

On a simplistic level it would seem unlikely for stakeholders to take issue with any of UKRR's aims. The most compelling argument for shared print collection schemes like UKRR is "If not now, when?"¹⁵ The challenge ahead is to ensure that UKRR and its ilk are sustainable for as long as they are needed. This is as much about "hearts and minds" as it is about number-crunching and workflows. In the prevailing climate any collaborative initiative must deliver tangible value and benefits to participants and funders from the outset. There must also be flexibility in its processes and mechanisms so that individual institutions can maintain their identity, influence, and reputation whilst contributing to the collective. Efficient content discovery and delivery must underpin any successful shared collection scheme.

The key factors which make UKRR's current business model a peculiarly British affair are:

- It takes a pragmatic approach;
- There is an existing centralised, robust document supply service trusted by the HE sector i.e., the **British Library Document Supply Centre**;
- A moment in the national zeitgeist receptive to cultural change;
- An expanding HE sector with increasing student numbers;
- Funding to kick-start the scheme.

At its simplest UKRR can be seen as a club. Its members chose to sign up, and there are shared benefits, but also rules and obligations. However, the glue linking the collective is a shared vision: protecting the UK's research information infrastructure. It is hard to argue with that. 🍷

Endnotes

1. <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/>
2. <http://www.bl.uk/>
3. http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2006/rd15_06/ A shared services model seeks to provide services in a cooperative way, by sharing processes and when appropriate technology, without compromising the local needs and priorities of the individual stakeholders.
4. Further details on the process at <http://www.ukrr.ac.uk/members/default.aspx>.
5. **Universities of Birmingham, Cardiff, Exeter, Liverpool, Newcastle, St Andrews, Southampton & Imperial College London**
6. Full membership at <http://www.ukrr.ac.uk/news/default.aspx>.
7. <http://www.ukrr.ac.uk/faq/default.aspx>
8. Based on figures from the Higher Education Space Management Project 2005, updated using the relevant toolkit. EMS statistics 4Q2007
9. Galton, F. 1869. *Hereditary Genius*. London: Macmillan at <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=waQRAAAAYAAJ&ots=YEX4vMw3EN&dq=francis%20galton&pg=PR3#v=onepage&q&f=false>
10. This is substantiated by evidence from recent surveys conducted by **JISC Collections** on the demand for backfile archives
11. The Idea of Order: Transforming Research Collections for 21st Century Scholarship (Washington: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2010), available at <http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub147/pub147.pdf>. **Constance Malpas**, "Cloud Library Findings," presentation available at <http://www.oclc.org/research/events/20100617ala.pptx>.
12. http://www.efc.co.uk/projects/researchers_of_tomorrow.jsp
13. <http://www.futurelibraries.info/content/>
14. <http://www.clir.org/pubs/abstract/pub147abst.html>
15. <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=BvM-Ku4OO2AC&pg=PP1&ots=OT1KwMPyt&dq=%E2%80%9898%20lf%20not%20now%20when&pg=PA31#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Rumors

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Speaking of books and actors, just got a fabulously great book from **John D. Riley** called *Superpostapocalypticexpialodocious* (whew — hope I spelled that right!). It's a collection of **New Twisted Tales**. They are

all my favorites but the one that cracked me up was called **Orphan Works**, a collection of truly hilarious book titles. One of my favorites — *Pickles as a Means of Fostering International Understanding*. Guess you have to be there!

The always-smiling **John** is one of the prime actors in the **skits** which I can't wait for this year! Did you know that the **very first**

skit was in 1986. It was penned by one of my favorite student workers, **Joni Rousse** who is now a hospital administrator in Birmingham, Alabama, with two kids and one husband! I remember that the **skit** made fun of **Dorinda Harmon** (one of the first **Charleston Conference** administrators), **Regina Semko** (our Registrar), and yours truly picking out the

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