SCONUL Focus
Volume 69, pp. 74-77
https://arlgdarts.wordpress.com/archive/

Changes in the research support landscape over the last ten+ years:

reflections on the DARTS conference series 2005–2018

Anna Barefoot
Information Specialist
Barrington Library
Cranfield University
a.l.barefoot@cranfield.ac.uk

Hilary Cooksley
Subject Librarian
Library
University of Bath
h.c.cooksley@bath.ac.uk

Jenni Crossley
Library Research Manager
Library Services
University of the West of England Bristol
jennifer.crossley@uwe.ac.uk

Abigail Heath
Information Specialist
Charles Seale-Hayne Library
Plymouth University
abigail.heath@plymouth.ac.uk

Alastair Sleat
Subject Librarian
Library Services
University of the West of England Bristol
alastair.sleat@uwe.ac.uk

Mandy Smith
Information Specialist
Barrington Library
Cranfield University
m.j.smith@cranfield.ac.uk

Claire Stevens
Deputy Head of Library
Plymouth Marjon University
cstevens@marjon.ac.uk

The copyright in items published in *SCONUL Focus* remains the property of the author(s) or their employers as the case may be.

DARTS: a potted history

The 'DARTS' conferences began back in 2005, instituted by the South West branch of what was then the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals' University, College and Research (UC&R) Group (now 'Academic and Research Libraries Group' – ARLG) with the aim of providing a dedicated event for librarians and information professionals with an interest in research support. The topic had been covered as a one-day conference in the West Midlands, but there hadn't been a research event in the south west, or anything residential. It seemed appropriate to put the 'R' back into UC&R!

We chose Dartington Hall on recommendation. This is a beautiful fourteenth-century estate with stunning mediaeval architecture. The snappy name 'DARTS' went with Dartington of course, and we eventually thought of some appropriate words to fit – 'Discover Academic Research Training and Support'.









For DARTS1 in 2005, the librarian of the then on-site Dartington College of Arts organised a musical interlude given by some students. Generous sponsorship enabled us to have a champagne reception, and a raffle with prizes of Dartington crystal. It was a very special event in flaming June with a relaxed vibe, attracting attendees from across the country.

Delegates at that first conference said they wanted more, and DARTS2 happened four years later. Musical interludes and champagne ceased to feature once we got to DARTS3 in 2012, but the tranquil and inspiring setting, along with the intimate and enthusiastic vibe of the event, means DARTS has continued to be very special.

Themes that have emerged over the course of the conference series are explored below, with links to speaker presentations provided where available.

The RAE to the REF: open access, bibliometrics and impact

How has the research landscape changed since the inaugural DARTS conference? One consistent thread has been research assessment. At DARTS1, it was the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), but by DARTS2 we were hearing about the development of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) from Graeme Rosenberg (Higher Education Funding Council for England[1]), whilst Nicola Cockarill explained how the REF had been piloted at the University of Plymouth. At DARTS3, Anna Dickinson (HEFCE) provided an update on how impact, outputs and the environment would be key elements of the new REF.

As a result of REF2014, open access and impact were high on the research agenda by DARTS4, which included related talks from Neil Jacobs of JISC, Yvonne Budden of UKCoRR (United Kingdom Council of Research Repositories), and Miggie Pickton from the University of Northampton. Neil discussed the complexity of funder compliance when publishing open access, the Finch Report's recommendation of the gold route, and Research Councils' support of both gold and green. Not to mention the rise of the dreaded APC (Article Processing Charge)! Yvonne gave much-needed practical advice and top-tips on how to be compliant at the local institutional level, providing context through the eyes of the University of Warwick. The key messages were how to support confused researchers, encourage engagement with the repository and make use of the block grant from RCUK. Essentially, advocacy, advocacy, advocacy!

Miggie demonstrated how libraries could support researchers to evidence and measure impact through traditional methods such as bibliometrics and new routes such as altmetrics. She explained how impact summaries must address the questions of who will benefit from a piece of research and how (socially, economically or environmentally), suggesting that we as librarians could use similar impact measurements (such as usage statistics, user feedback and uptake of new services) to prove the value of our own practitioner research.

At DARTS5, open access was still a hot topic. Martin Eve (Birkbeck, University of London) provided an update on the current state of play and the continuing challenges we face with implementation and advocacy. Meanwhile Katie Evans (University of Bath) looked at the use of bibliometrics to improve institutional rankings and to prepare us for REF2020. She demonstrated the use of research analytics for benchmarking, improving our publishing strategy, cultivating impact and winning research funding.

Research data management

Research data management (RDM) has become an increasingly important area of research support, especially since the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council issued their requirements for data management in 2011, for enactment by 2015. 2011 also saw the launch of JISC's second Research Data Management programme, which funded a series of projects to lay the foundations for effective RDM across a range of institutions. Participants in the JISC programme were more than willing to share their experiences, and RDM featured on the agenda of two of the DARTS conferences.

At DARTS3 in 2012, two complementary talks looked at the place of librarians in the development and delivery of institutional research data management services. Jill Evans, Gareth Cole and Hannah Lloyd-Jones (University of Exeter) focused on 'Creating and maintaining a sustainable research data management service'. They gave an overview of what research data and research data management are, why they are important, and how librarians fit into the service delivery. They also shared some research that they had carried out demonstrating the areas in which researchers themselves felt they needed training in order to engage effectively with RDM. In her paper 'Why is the library leading on this? RDM and university libraries', Judith Stewart (UWE Bristol) looked at the skills that equip librarians perfectly to lead on the development of this cross-institutional service, and some of the benefits and challenges that this area of work could bring to library services.

DARTS4 in 2014 also hosted two speakers on RDM. Jenni Crossley (UWE Bristol) considered the development of RDM services in university libraries since 2012. Additionally, she gave an overview of how RDM had progressed in her institution in a paper entitled 'Research data management: where are we now?' Leigh Garrett (University for the Creative Arts) gave a very entertaining and thought-provoking paper: 'Stuff and data: challenges of RDM in the visual

The copyright in items published in *SCONUL Focus* remains the property of the author(s) or their employers as the case may be.

arts'. One of the most appealing elements of DARTS is that papers usually have a practical audience participation section; Leigh's was no different, and everyone was challenged by the task of managing data for a project relating to the development of a chair and a vase.

The role of the librarian

The changing nature of librarians' involvement in research support has been reflected in both DARTS conference content and the roles of those attending. Early DARTS delegates rarely had dedicated research support roles, whilst by DARTS5 the reverse was true. By 2016 many libraries had developed research support teams, with librarians taking responsibility for institutional repositories, open access, metrics and RDM as well as research collections, archives and information skills support for research students and staff.

A trend towards the use of e-learning to support researchers clearly emerged over the years. Elizabeth Martin (De Montfort University) and Jennifer Coombs (University of Nottingham, DARTS3) shared their experience of creating online tutorials for researchers, a theme which Nazlin Bhimani (Institute of Education, DARTS5) and Sian Bayne (University of Edinburgh, DARTS5) developed further in their sessions on creating online InfoLit resources for PhD Students and embedding digital research in online teaching. The rise of social media also became increasingly significant, with speakers at later conferences highlighting its relevance to the research support context. Jez Cope's practical, hands-on workshop identified ways of connecting researchers through social media (University of Bath, DARTS4). Meanwhile Frances Ryan (Edinburgh Napier University, DARTS5) gave an eye-opening paper about issues around managing personal online reputations: our own, and those of our researchers.

Support for publication has been another area of ongoing interest. Moira Bent and Pat Gannon-Leary (Newcastle University and Northumbria University, DARTS2) emphasised the importance of librarians' role in helping researchers to publish. Miggie Pickton (DARTS3 & 4) built on this by encouraging delegates to engage in more practitioner research themselves.

Talks on researcher library space from Sheila Corrall (University of Pittsburgh, DARTS4) and improving the research student experience from Annie Maddison Warren (Cranfield University, DARTS5) further emphasised the expanding and changing nature of librarians' research support activities. Elizabeth Gadd (DARTS5), meanwhile, highlighted lessons learnt by way of her move from Loughborough's University Library to their Research Support Office. Research support roles were becoming increasingly outward facing, and we were encouraged to look beyond library walls.

The future of DARTS

Planning for DARTS6 is now well under way and Dartington Hall has been booked for the 24 and 25 May 2018. Requests from DARTS5 delegates for future presentations included basic research methods for librarians, basic RDM and even more practical strategies for bibliometrics.

These suggestions gave us the idea of going 'back to basics', taking research support as the theme for DARTS6. Given changing government policies and new developments, the research environment has become increasingly complex to navigate. We're hoping that DARTS6 will help delegates to steer a course, with speakers on topics such as staff development for research support librarians, supporting PhD/early career researchers, as well as something on research support and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

The copyright in items published in *SCONUL Focus* remains the property of the author(s) or their employers as the case may be.

Booking for the conference will open later this year, but we would welcome ideas or suggestions for specific topics or speakers. For further information and to get in touch please see the DARTS website and use the contact details below:

DARTS website: https://arlgdarts.wordpress.com/
Twitter: @arlgdarts, #darts6
Email: arlgdarts@gmail.com

Note

1 All affiliations given are correct at the time of the conference noted, but may since have changed.

The copyright in items published in *SCONUL Focus* remains the property of the author(s) or their employers as the case may be.



https://dspace.org/

Changes in the research support landscape over the last ten+ years: reflections on the DARTS conference series 2005–2018

Barefoot, Anna; Cooksley, Hilary; Crossley, Jenni; Heath, Abigail; Sleat, Alastair ...

2018-12-31
SCONUL
https://arlgdarts.wordpress.com/archive/
Barefoot A, Cooksley H, Crossley J, et al., (2018) Changes in the research support landscape over the last ten+ years: reflections on the DARTS conference series 2005–2018. SCONUL Focus, Volume 69, December 2018, pp. 74-77

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/