

“The Future Depends on What You Do Today”: The Library as a Leader in Open Science

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UCL (University College London) strongly supports the implementation of Open Science policies and practices. The library has taken the lead in the university across all eight areas of Open Science: the Future of Scholarly Communication, the EOSC, FAIR data, Skills, Research Integrity, Rewards, Altmetrics, and Citizen Science. UCL has modified these themes slightly to better fit its academic requirements, developing ambitious programmes and services to support the change of culture which is required. From the future of scholarly publishing, with the formation of UCL Press as the UK’s first fully open access university press, to research data management, rewards, research integrity and next-generation metrics, UCL has become a leader in Open Science. This chapter analyses the success of UCL to date, describes the challenges, shows the benefits, and indicates what future steps are being planned to deliver a culture where Open Science is the default, thus delivering on the prophecy of Mahatma Gandhi, one of UCL’s most illustrious alumni, ‘The future depends on what you do today’.

INTRODUCTION

What is the role of a library service in a research-intensive university in supporting the university’s activity in Open Science? Is Open Science a topic which should be led by the academy, or can a University Library play a role here? In some countries, academic leaders have been appointed as Open Science champions. In others, such as the UK, it is the University Library which has taken on such a role, either through the University Librarian themselves or else via the appointment of a senior manager to reach out to academic members of staff. The purpose of this paper is to look at possible roles that the University Library can play in this debate through a particular case study, that of University College London (UCL).

University College London (UCL)

UCL is the third oldest university in England, after Oxford and Cambridge, founded in 1826. It is renowned for ‘disruptive thinking’, a characteristic inherited from one of its earliest supporters Jeremy Bentham, the utilitarian philosopher (UCL, 2020b). It was Bentham who first invented the word ‘international’. Amongst English universities, UCL is the

- 1st in England to welcome students of any religion or social background;
- 1st in England to welcome women to university education;
- 1st in England to teach English, German, Chemistry, and Engineering;
- 1st in England to have a fully Open Access University Press, UCL Press.

As much as League Tables are a significant indicator of quality, UCL scores as follows:

- 8th in the world (QS World University Rankings 2020)
- 4th in Europe
- 1st in London

Academic excellence is where the university excels. UCL has/is:

- 29 Nobel laureates
- 11 academic faculties
- 42,100 students
- 13,360 employees
- 1st in the UK for research strength (REF 2014)
- 440 undergraduate programmes
- 150+ nationalities represented by the student body
- 675 postgraduate programmes

UCL has a total group income of £1.45 billion, of which £476.3 million is from research grants and contracts (UCL, 2020a). The university has an unparalleled reputation for academic excellence underpinned by creative and innovative thinking with a global perspective. UCL has 250,000 alumni in 190 countries. 48% of its students are international students and 29% of UCL’s students studied abroad in 2017/18; 35% of the staff are also international. The picture created by this data is one of a vibrant community engaged in research, teaching, learning and knowledge exchange.

The State of Current Literature on the Role of Universities in Open Science

Much is written about the topic of Open Science. In Europe, the debate has been shaped by a number of Declarations and activities, many emanating from the European Commission and these are listed on the Commission’s Open Science Platform (European Commission, 2020). Particularly important was the Dutch Presidency of the EU in 2016. Here, the promotion of Open Science was a major plank of the Dutch Government’s activity during their presidency. This resulted in the Amsterdam Call for Action on Open Science (2016). Its vision consisted of four components:

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