

Research Support at University of Porto Libraries

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case study describes the research support services provided by the libraries of the University of Porto (U.Porto). The university is composed of 14 teaching units (each with its faculty library), and each faculty has a wide range of research units. U.Porto has a high research activity, which compels libraries to keep pace with the evolving researcher needs, adapting and creating new services that respond to those requirements. From a global perspective, the overall mission of these libraries is to ensure and promote access to information resources made available by U.Porto to the academic and scientific community, both in physical and electronic supports. More specifically, this case will detail the services already provided in the context of research support, ranging from specialized training sessions in scientific publishing, reference management software, or search in bibliographic databases to the creation of thematic guides, support on the publication of scientific journals from within the university, and bibliometric studies.

INTRODUCTION

With more than one hundred years of history, the University of Porto (U.Porto) is one of the largest universities in Portugal, covering teaching and research in all areas of knowledge (social sciences, humanities, applied sciences, natural sciences, and arts). Starting with two faculties (Science and Medicine), and growing especially after the Portuguese revolution in April 1974, the University increased the number of faculties to fourteen. Considering the historical and structural evolution of the University, faculties have

a significant management autonomy, and libraries depend almost exclusively on the faculty director and the faculty budget (which results in very different size faculty libraries).

Despite the distributed management approach of the libraries, which promotes the proximity to each community by its specialized library, the development of information technologies and communication infrastructures, the institutional participation in consortia (as a whole and not only as single faculties), and the proximity of processes with the development of joint programs, all resulted in the creation of central services at the Rectorate (implemented in a shared services approach). For the libraries, this rationale allowed the collective acquisition of information resources and the share of systems: ALEPH is the management system used by all libraries; DSPACE is the shared institutional repository; and participation on B-On national consortium is managed by central services.

This case study aims to describe the Research Support Services provided by the Libraries of the U.Porto and how they contribute to the research output and success of the University. Following the evolution of U.Porto from a teaching school to a research orientation university, libraries are adapting their services to the development of the needs of their users: from centrality in management of local spaces to study and collection development oriented by scholar curricula, libraries implemented services to support online identity, research results publication geared by Open Access policies, and management of new electronic systems to support the evolving research processes.

To compile information from the different U.Porto Libraries, an online questionnaire was developed and sent to each library director. The survey starts with a brief characterization of the library including data about the collection, the spaces, and the staff. Next, it requests information on the services provided to support research, organized in services oriented to the research processes, then services adapted to the researcher and finally services oriented to the science communication and publication. Two additional sections, considering the specificity and current relevance, were added: research data management and infrastructures.

The questionnaire analysis confirms the perceived libraries' orientation of the services to support the publication process, clearly contributing to the growth of the number of published papers in international journals with top relevance in each research area, and the leading position of the U.Porto as a science producer in Portugal. Another result of the analysis of the questionnaire is the evidence of the evolution of library spaces to adapt to the new needs of the users is already in place or being planned by most of the libraries. Also, it is observed that collection development processes are adapting to the research needs involving researchers and research structures in the selection processes (more and more in electronic supports).

A set of new services to support research data management is required in the libraries' services portfolio, and should be developed as a common service from all U.Porto Libraries with centralized services, but also a manifest local faculty presence to manage the direct researcher and research groups' proximity should be considered. Online presence is referenced as an issue, and communication with the community has to be improved: both the university libraries' website and each library's one should be improved with a clearer presentation of the services to support the research processes (none of the sites has a research specific access point).

This case study is organized in three sections: the first section briefly presents the University of Porto and its organization, with particular focus on research and innovation infrastructures; the second section characterizes the U.Porto Libraries, their information resources, and information professionals; and the third section presents the research support services reported by libraries directors in the online questionnaire; libraries websites information and other promotion materials, and the personal knowledge

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