Researcher Unbound and National University of Singapore (NUS) Libraries' Evolving Role in Supporting University Research:
Going Beyond Service

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a discipline-neutral entity, knowledge exchange, and nexus of the university, the National University of Singapore (NUS) Libraries is the ideal conduit for bringing together faculties and departments to facilitate cross-disciplinary education and research. This case study gives a detailed walkthrough on the creation and design of the Research Skills Framework (RSF), which forms the backbone for all information literacy programmes (ILPs), specifically the flagship Researcher Unbound (RU) programme and RU Symposium, and shares challenges faced and future improvement plans. The exploration, design, and continual improvement of the programme ensured that NUS Libraries provides relevant and timely research support and enhances the digital information literacy skills of the NUS community. This programme continues to be a work in progress drawn from participants' feedback, attendance, experience, and insights from seven semestral runs and cumulative total of 172 workshop sessions.

BACKGROUND

The National University of Singapore (NUS) is the nation's oldest higher education institution. From a modest medical school with just 23 students in 1905, NUS has become a global high-ranking university with a key mission — to educate, inspire and transform through transformative education and multi-disciplinary research[1]. NUS is home to 17 faculties and 29 research institutes where approximately 41,000 students, 2,500 faculty, and 4,100 researchers learn and work, and where multidisciplinary research finds innovative solutions for local and global emerging problems.

Supporting NUS' educational philosophy[2] to nurture students to become well-rounded individuals with questioning minds, who possess resourceful and enterprising spirit in public and private life, and cutting-edge research, NUS Libraries aligns its strategic goals and objectives to achieve these outcomes:

- Facilitate student success,
- Advance teaching excellence,
- Increase research visibility & impact,
- Enhance organizational excellence, and
- Create value for the world.

NUS Libraries has been transforming library services and spaces rapidly since 2017 to support the university's mission more effectively and closely. However, the key role of NUS Libraries remains unchanged, that is, to connect people to collections, people to people, and people to spaces to generate ideas and new knowledge through the following:

- Collections: Curate, procure and provide access to print and electronic resources through various entry points, based on research, teaching and learning needs.
- Services: Facilitate research and learning through easy access to required information.
- Education: Design and conduct Information Literacy Programmes (ILPs) and workshops for students and staff, including online learning.

This chapter aims to provide a case study on how NUS Libraries provides research support to the university's community, with a focus on its flagship programme Researcher Unbound. The chapter will detail the evolution and development of the programme, adapting to the needs of the users, and explains the rationale for the implementation of a workshop series to provide instruction, awareness and knowledge to the members of the university.

With eight physical libraries supported by 146 staff, the library has a print collection of over 2.9 million books and journals, and a mega digital library consisting of more than 930,000 e-books, almost 100,000 e-journal and e-newspaper subscriptions, and 700 databases. The library also has specialised rare collections, such as the Singapore/Malaysia Collection, which comprises publications and grey literature written about or in Singapore, Malaysia and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It also hosts several in-house databases to support research, e.g. PERIND, which indexes journal articles and books about Singapore, Malaysia and ASEAN that are not indexed elsewhere; ScholarBank, the university's institutional repository; and the Biodiversity Library of Southeast Asia, an open access digitised collection of Southeast Asian biodiversity literature.

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