

A need for an intense collaboration: assessing the ways in which librarians are supporting research in Italy

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## 'A need for an intense collaboration'

Rossana Morriello assesses the ways in which librarians are supporting research in Italy

In line with other countries, in Italy many academic librarians are working inside and outside the library walls to support researchers in all aspects of the research lifecycle.

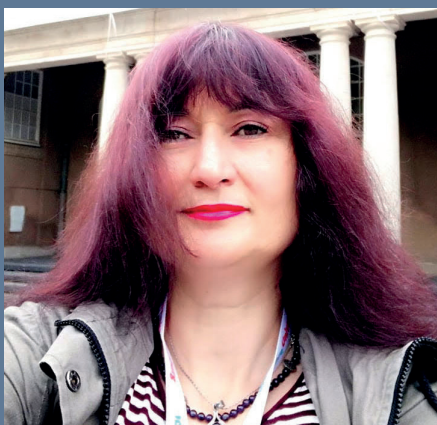
Involvement of librarians in such activities can follow different organisation models:

- Librarians work in research support services or other services supporting research assessment and quality;
- Research support activities are located in library services where a special office has been created to support research and some librarians are involved specifically in those activities; and
- Research support activities are located in library services with no changes in the previous organisational structure.

The most specific areas that require librarians' expertise are management of the Current Research Information System (CRIS) and the institutional repository, support in the assessment procedures, and support in the development of open access.

Most universities, in Italy, use the same D-Space-based CRIS, IRIS (Institutional Research Information System <https://www.cineca.it/en/content/iris-institutional-research-information-system>), developed by the Consortium Cineca (<https://www.cineca.it/en/content/about-us>), a non-profit organisation providing IT solutions for education and research, now part of the Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR <http://www.miur.gov.it/>). Each university has its own installation of the CRIS but the system has many common features so that universities can work together, and with Cineca, to implement necessary features through sharing and discussion in some national work groups. This allows us to share experiences and find common solutions to the many challenges we have.

Most challenges and activities are a consequence of the methods of research assessment lead by the national evaluation agency, Anvur (<http://www.anvur.it/en/>). Anvur collects data directly from the IRIS system of each university, for the main research assessment exercise, VQR (Valutazione Qualità della Ricerca – evaluation of research quality), as well



**“Societal impact is becoming more and more important as a measure of return on public investment in universities”**

as other kinds of assessment and career development procedures. Therefore, quality of data in CRIS and repository is crucial, and librarians are primary actors in guaranteeing the quality of what is nothing else than a kind of catalogue.

The first VQR research assessment exercise, covering the years 2004 to 2010, began in 2011 and the results were published in 2013. Researchers had to select their three best publications which were evaluated by a panel of experts called GEV (Gruppo di Esperti della Valutazione). There were 14 panels that conducted the evaluation of more than 180,000 outputs, based either on bibliometric indicators (with minor peer review) for bibliometric sectors or peer review for non bibliometric sectors. A second research assessment exercise in 2015/16 for research outputs covered the years 2011 to 2014 with mainly the same criteria (but researchers had to choose only the two best publications).

Italian national assessment of research is strongly based on bibliometrics (for bibliometric sectors, of course), and also

for the evaluation of research career advancement ASN (Abilitazione Scientifica Nazionale), in the new framework set in 2012 by a law (DM n. 76, 7 June 2012) which states the kind of indicators to be used. Therefore, academic librarians involved in supporting research are required to understand and manage bibliometrics and databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, and have a deep knowledge of impact factors, h-index, SNIP and other indices. There is a great debate in Italy, as much as in other countries, about the effectiveness of this kind of evaluation and its long-term consequences on the development of science.

A point of attention in the evaluation is the 'third mission' of the university. The last VQR assessment increased the importance of the third mission, as a signal of the impact of the university on society, and particularly of public engagement activities.

Societal impact is becoming more and more important as a measure of return on public investment in universities, but also as an opportunity to increase and improve knowledge transfer and participation of citizens in science. Indicators for evaluating the third mission were still weak in the last VQR, but they will certainly become stronger in the next assessment exercise, expected in 2020. Anvur recently announced a partnership with Research England (<http://www.anvur.it/news/hascela-partnership-tra-anvur-e-research-england-2/>) to study and exploit models for the evaluation of the third mission. Research England has recently introduced the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) for assessment of the third mission, which will presumably be a model for Anvur.

Libraries and librarians are involved in supporting the third mission of the universities for the evaluation, but they can also have an active role in the organisation of public engagement events.

A recent topic that developed rapidly in Italian universities is Agenda 2030. In 2015 the United Nations published the Sustainable Development Goals, a set of 17 goals to be reached by 2030, with 160 targets and 240 indicators (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>).



