

# THETA

The Higher Education Technology Agenda

## Quality over quantity: building an online resource for researchers

Can technology help transform a research culture focused on quantity and not quality? Is it possible to use technology to shift a researcher's mindset away from the comfort of publishing where they always have towards publishing their work in the top journals in their field?

Whilst in the past the Research Quality Framework (RQF) and Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) put no emphasis on publication quality, the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) first introduced a publication quality index in the Australian higher education sector. This resulted in universities having to change from a quantity to a quality focus with regards to publication. This posed a unique challenge as many institutions had to transform a research culture focused on quantity to one focussed on quality.

At Victoria University (VU) we faced a huge challenge trying to raise the standard of our research output. The University has set itself the strategic goal of being in the top 20 universities for research by 2020 (VU Research Plan 2012-2016). This is a very ambitious target and the only way for VU to achieve this is to proactively take steps to modify researcher behaviour.

This presentation will be looking at the contribution the Library is making to help the University achieve this strategic goal. Part of our approach has been to produce online lists of high quality journals designed to make it easier for researchers at Victoria University to identify high quality journals in their specific discipline areas by providing relevant and up-to-date information about scholarly publishing options. We have used LibGuides (which we were already using) as the platform for these online lists because we can easily create and add content to the lists. This means no specialised web design skills are required when we wish to share and update information online. This application of online technology ties in with the conference theme of using technology to support strategic initiatives/changing behaviour. We are using online technology as a platform to raise awareness about research quality and engage with researchers so as to bring about a seismic shift in our research

culture.

The most effective way to produce a list of high quality journals relevant to academics was to discuss the most relevant Field of Research (FoR) with the Director of Research in each College. We then created a list of top journals listed in the ERA for each of the selected FoR codes. The quality index used was the SCImago journal quartile ranking as the rankings published as part of the ERA 2010 are now considered obsolete. The decision to use SCImago as the quality measure was also a reflection of the one of the University's key strategic aims. The VU Research Plan 2012-2016 states its objective to, "improve the publication profile of VU researchers to achieve at least 38% (from 30% in 2009) of publications in the highest quartile of journal quality (e.g. Scopus Q1 journals) by 2016". The VU Research Plan goes further to outline how these citation metrics are to be used in its appointment and promotion policies, "staff appointment and promotion policies will be adjusted to ensure that evaluation of appointment and promotion submissions includes consideration of the quality of research outputs" (2011, p. 12). Given the strategic push of the University, a webpage was created for each College which contained lists of SCImago Q1 ranked journals (and in some case Q2 journals as well) for the FoR codes relevant to the particular College. These lists provide researchers with the top ranked journals available in their fields and related fields of research so that they may better 'target' their research outputs.

Information on where each College currently publishes, including the quartile rankings for each journal was also provided. These lists have been somewhat of a wake-up call for VU researchers. For instance, the data revealed that one particular College had 41% of its researchers publishing in journals that had no ranking, and were thus making no contribution to VU's research reputation. It is our intention to update these lists each year using the HERDC data to ensure that the lists reflect the journals where researchers are currently publishing, but also to ascertain if there has been any improvement in the 'quality' of the research outputs across the different Colleges. With LibGuides allowing easy updating of online information, technology acts as a support to our effort to bring about a change of behaviour – and when the change happens, that change will be noticed as the improved data will be available online.

Using online technology as a platform to engage with researchers, we are planning to run a series of roadshows to the various Colleges promoting the online lists of high quality journals and raising awareness of the importance of choosing a quality journal. We will be pointing out that the lists aren't intended to be prescriptive. They are designed to provide guidance and help researchers in their decision making process. We will be emphasizing the positive impact that choosing a quality publishing outlet can have on the researcher's career.

Our approach to transform a research culture focused on quantity to a research culture focused on quality is innovative – it combines librarians' knowledge and understanding of high quality journals and use of existing technology (LibGuides) to support strategic initiatives/changing behaviour at no extra cost to the University. This topic will be of interest to not just librarians and IT professionals, but also to the broader THETA audience.

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