

RESEARCH BRINGS TOGETHER PRACTITIONERS AND ACADEMICS

A research project brings together practitioners and academics, from the two different but inseparable worlds of library and information practice and theory, to collaboratively advance meaningful, relevant, timely, strong and rigorous solutions to real world problems. Practitioners have in-depth experience of real-world library and information settings and their associated issues. At the same time, in research land, equipped with knowledge of the research cycle, academics are encouraged to investigate real world information problems.

Given the complementary strengths of practitioners and academics, a collaborative relationship allows each to contribute to addressing the other's concerns and professional interests. Practitioners can assist academics to identify pressing and troubling questions in real-world library and information practice, as well as the depth, different aspects and implications of those questions. Academics can support inquiry about practice in real-life settings, by bringing theoretical and methodological rigour for robust investigations. Within such a collaboration, each party balances out what is often absent from the other's world, while maintaining their own professional identity.

For such a collaboration to work constructively, practitioners and researchers must work together in all phases of a research project, from problem identification and research design, to theory building, and disseminating the research findings. Coming from the heart of library and information settings, practitioners provide fruitful insights to describe the practical aspects of the profession that need to be explored. They also support the data collection phase by knowing which aspect of the workplace setting will allow for collecting the richest and most valuable data. Jointly disseminating the research findings ensures that the findings are written so as to be accessible to both the library and information practitioner audiences as well as the academic community.

To further maximise the impact of this type of collaboration, practitioners and academics are encouraged to continue their partnership as

co-researchers beyond each research project. This is to apply their findings and bring about real change in day to day library and information services. This is when the two work together to translate into practice the theoretical understandings resulting from the research. This translation process brings the practitioner-academic collaboration into a full circle of practice-theory-practice.

The collaborative journey of practitioners and academics that started from the real life of practitioners comes to a close in the same place it commenced: in practice, with a positive impact upon services, programs and policies, enhanced by theoretical understandings. In an ideal world, this end point will serve as the starting point for another journey, to generate an unending cycle of inquiry, which is necessary for the ongoing maturing of the profession.

We, at the ALIA Research Advisory Committee (RAC) comprise practitioners and academics. We are keen to generate, encourage and advocate the types of collaborations that bring together library and information practitioners and academic researchers. We invite the community of *INCITE* readers to contribute to the dialogue between practitioners and academics, for more informed practice and impactful research. A dialogue like this helps the library and information community gain a more vivid perspective on the potential and value of applied research collaborations. The dialogue also leads to identifying gaps and requirements that need to be addressed to realise such collaborations. ✨

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