

BDS BLOG

Researching the researchers: how do researchers work?

As workloads increase, and funders of research demand more for their investment, the way researchers work has never been so important. What do we know?

There is a growing body of research specifically on academic researcher behaviour and needs. These studies range from background studies of the scholarly 'ecosystem' in which researchers operate to more detailed studies of researcher behaviour and attitudes. They show the points at which researchers need information, the kind of information they need and how they access it.

Although there are many types of research, and many ways of carrying it out, there is general agreement on the key steps which are:

- Identifying a potential research topic
- Reviewing existing knowledge to identify where new information is needed
- Drafting a research proposal and obtaining funding
- Carrying out the research and compiling results
- Dissemination and peer review of research findings (e.g. through publication in academic journals)

Information usage is highest initially at the literature review stage and next at the stage of compiling findings for publication. For understandable reasons, individual researchers tend to use a relatively small number of tried and tested resources and services in locating the information they need. However, there is increasing evidence that information gathering using established methods is becoming more challenging for researchers. These challenges in locating the right information and their implications for research are discussed in my next blog.

References and further reading

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