

RiLIES2: Final Report

Executive summary

The aim of RiLIES2 was to develop research resources and training materials (1) to support librarians and information scientists in their use of published library and information science (LIS) research, (2) to help direct their own research activities, and (3) to ensure that the research that they conduct themselves has impact. The Library and Information Science (LIS) community was consulted to determine its needs for such support and training materials. In response a number of resources were then developed in social media, leaflet and presentation form. This work was conceived as a follow-on project to the 2011 Research in Librarianship Impact Evaluation Study (RiLIES1).

Over the course of the project two main themes emerged as important. First, *ownership and sustainability* is a key problem with any materials created as an output of a project such as this. In this case, the Chartered Institute of Information Professionals (CILIP) and – more specifically – its Library and Information Research Group (LIRG) were generally regarded as obvious candidates to take long-term responsibility for the materials generated from RiLIES2. A number of other possible options also emerged, including the short-term placement of the materials on the archived Library and Information Science Research Coalition web site. The question of *fully-supported continued and coordinated development of materials* once project funding ceases was also a concern, particularly given past experience of once-successful tools that have later died due to lack of on-going support.

The problems faced by the LIS practitioner-researcher community in the identification and use of resources to support their research work also emerged as an important theme from this study. In short, these issues are not well-understood by those who wish to help address them. This signals that there is a *need for community consensus* around such problems so that those who seek to provide librarians and information scientists with “solutions” do so in full recognition of the fundamental issues.

The project has been successful in:

- clarifying the support and training needs of LIS researcher and researcher-practitioner community, and the issues to address in meeting them;
- producing a number of materials (1) to support librarians and information scientists in their use of published library and information science (LIS) research, (2) to help direct their own research activities, and (3) to ensure that the research that they conduct themselves has impact.
- establishing that the LIS Research Coalition web site can act as a useful home for LIS research training and support materials in the immediate future until a longer-term solution is established;
- providing evidence that can be used by CILIP, and its special interest group LIRG, in the development of their work to support LIS researchers and practitioner-researchers in the future.

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Web site: <http://lisresearch.org/rilies-project/>

Fuller details can be found in the main body of the report below.

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1 Scope and objectives

RiLIES2 was commissioned by the Board of Directors of the Library and Information Science Research Coalition as a follow-on project to the Research in Librarianship Impact Evaluation Study carried out by the Centre for Social Informatics at Edinburgh Napier University in 2011 (RiLIES1¹). RiLIES2 aimed: (1) to develop research resources and training materials to support librarians and information scientists in their use of published library and information science (LIS) research; (2) to help librarians and information scientists direct their own research activities; and (3) to ensure that the research that this community conducts has impact. The LIS community was consulted to determine the needs for such support and training materials. In response a number of resources were then developed in social media, leaflet and presentation form. This report describes and evaluates the outcomes of the RiLIES2 project.

RiLIES2 comprised four main activities:

1. The identification of existing resources and good practice in the community as relevant to the project themes of (1) consuming LIS research; (2) conducting LIS research; (3) maximising the impact of LIS research undertaken.
2. The development of a series of training and good practice materials as related to the three activities described in (1) above.
3. The identification and development of community space for the hosting of LIS research materials, including links to existing sources and the new materials created as part of the RiLIES2 project.
4. Materials launch.

The project team also committed to write a report for the LIS Research Coalition Board, with an associated executive summary to be used as the Board sees fit, for example as a press release.

The RiLIES2 project team comprised Hazel Hall, Peter Cruickshank and Christine Irving of the Centre for Social Informatics, within the Institute for Informatics and Digital Innovation, at Edinburgh Napier University. They were assisted in the second half of the project by Maja Ilievska, a British Council funded intern placed within the Centre for Social Informatics for three months as part of the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Expertise (IAESTE) programme in summer 2012. The project was completed between February and July 2012.

¹ Full report at http://lisresearchcoalition.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/rilies1_report.pdf

2 Planned activities and their outcomes

2.1 Identification of existing resources and good practice in the community

Desk research was conducted in the initial stages of the project in February and March 2012. It built upon earlier work for the LIS Research Coalition web site and the findings of RiLIES1 to identify materials related to the support and training of LIS researchers and practitioner-researchers in their research activities. This ensured that the project team did not replicate existing provision of resources in the later stages of RiLIES2, and to identify the best format and “home” for the materials to be produced.

In April 2012 LIS professionals based in the UK were invited to complete a short survey to elicit feedback on the resources identified in the first stage of the project. The survey was intended to determine the level of use and usefulness of each of the resources identified, and to identify any further resources that may have been overlooked in the initial desk research. The survey findings helped shape the outputs to meet the aims of the project in a way that would maximise the impact on the LIS research and practice communities, and acted as a reminder to the target community of the range of resources already at its disposal.

The level of response to the survey (87) was lower than expected, and most responses came from two particular sectors: academia and healthcare. This reflects the on-going challenge of engaging LIS professionals in debates and discussion around the broad theme of LIS research, and particularly those from across a full range of sectors, including public and special libraries. Despite the limitations of the data set, however, it was still possible to use it as a source of new ideas for evaluation, and help direct the plans for RiLIES2 in the second half of the project.

The survey findings were valuable in confirming that the community would value the development of the proposed outputs of RiLIES2. It also provided evidence of a low level of awareness of resources that already exist to support LIS research – even amongst those with keen interests in LIS research. The survey results also showed a strong desire for the development of a centrally-funded community-maintained directory of LIS research resources, held in a known location, with (crucially) a long-term commitment to its maintenance.

The project’s efforts in its latter stages were therefore focussed in two directions:

1. To raise awareness of existing, but under-used materials (as opposed to the duplication of existing resources of which LIS researchers and practitioner-researchers are unaware).
2. To explore a strategy to address the issue of long-term commitment to resource curation.

2.2 The development of a series of training and good practice materials

The main finding from the survey was that respondents had little interest in the development of an extensive range of brand new materials to support LIS research. Exceptionally a few suggestions were made for the provision of brief guides to very specific topics².

In response to the survey findings the project team first concentrated its resource development work on the creation of navigational tools to direct the community to existing high quality training and good practice materials. This work involved extending the content and links on the LIS Research Coalition web site to provide access to materials on:

1. LIS research results;

² This was beyond the scope of RiLIES2, but could be pursued at a later date by another agency such as LIRG.

2. how to conduct research;
3. how to reach people and networks with interests in LIS research;
4. sources of research funding;
5. events at which to hear about or disseminate LIS research;
6. research impact.

A number of leaflets in pdf format were then designed on these topics.

The final set of materials developed for RiLIES2 comprised three PowerPoint files. As a set these presentations: (a) provide an overview of the RiLIES projects; (b) introduce the new resources; and (c) propose possible means of addressing the question of how to establish a centrally-funded community-maintained directory of LIS research resources, held in a known location, with a long-term commitment to its maintenance.

A full list of these project outputs is given in section 4 below.

2.3 The identification and development of a community space

In June and July 2012 effort was directed into exploring the options for a LIS research linking system. Such a system would serve as a central community-maintained access point to link to useful information about LIS practitioner research work and other “small” projects, the details of which are normally very difficult to find. The intention was to present to the community a number of models or prototypes of systems for possible future investment (as opposed to a full working system). In the long-term a fully-operational LIS research linking system could serve as a directory of LIS practitioner research and provide pointers for the improvement of practice, as well as a route for practitioner researchers to publicise their work, and extend its reach and possible impact.

Initial work on the linking system involved researching the “market”. First, activities in the JISC LIS mailing groups were observed. The lists comprise a valuable source of information on how LIS practitioners collaborate to solve “small” research questions in an informal and practical way. Typically this is done by individuals who (1) post questions to mailing lists; (2) gather data from others who offer their opinions, expertise, and stories of their own experience of the matter in question; (3) analyse the data gathered; then (4) sometimes (but not routinely) post a summary of their findings to the lists. Other informal online sources of news of smaller unfunded projects were also identified, such as descriptions of workplace research in individual and team blogs, and Masters dissertations posted online.

The second phase of the work on a possible linking system considered the characteristics of these more “informal” sources of information on LIS research, and possible platforms that could bring them together in a suitable format. Existing models that implement other collaborations by the LIS community were also taken into account. These included the six-monthly *Library day in a life*³ project, where library staff and students from all over the globe share a day (or week) in their life through blog posts, photos, video and Twitter updates, and the *LIS Publications*⁴ wiki, which profiles outlets for the publication of LIS research.

As a result of this research four options were identified for discussion: (1) a community blog; (2) a wiki directory; (3) Google drive; and (4) social bookmarking. A further option was the implementation of a community-owned link curation engine. Such an engine has been developed by a project entitled Access to Local Information to Support Self-Management (ALISS)⁵. The ALISS

³ <http://librarydayinthelife.pbworks.com/w/page/16941198/FrontPage>

⁴ http://slisapps.sjsu.edu/wikis/faculty/putnam/index.php/Main_Page

⁵ <http://www.aliss.org/>

engine is an online index designed for people with long-term illnesses to access local information to help support the self-management of their medical conditions. An LIS linking system could be developed using the same underlying technology, should adequate resource be made available in the future to set up the system infrastructure.

2.4 Material launch: LIS Resources Briefing Session

The materials produced for RiLIES2 were launched at a briefing session hosted by LIRG and held at CILIP headquarters in London on 10th July 2012. The event was offered as a free half-day session designed to attract as many practitioners as possible without too great an impact on internal staffing levels and training budgets. Thirty-eight individuals participated, the majority of whom were LIS practitioners.

Following an overview of the RiLIES projects, the delegates learnt about the extended content and links on the LIS Research Coalition web site that provide access to materials on: how to conduct research; how to reach people and networks with interests in LIS research; sources of research funding; events at which to hear about or disseminate LIS research; research impact.

The subsequent discussion raised awareness amongst those present of the evidence-base that can be used to support high quality information services delivery, along with online tools that can be used to access relevant sources of information. There were opportunities to ask questions, provide feedback and offer suggestions. The session also provided a forum for discussing the long-term research support needs of the library and information science research community and opportunity to gain feedback from the community on the RiLIES projects.

The RiLIES project team was particularly interested in delegate ideas related to the need for a centrally-funded community-maintained directory of LIS research resources, held in a known location, with (crucially) a long-term commitment to maintenance, as identified as a priority in the results of the survey completed in the early stages of RiLIES2. This was discussed with reference to the five options for a linking system, as highlighted above.

Two main themes emerged from the discussions. First, it was generally agreed that a key problem with any resource is its *ownership and sustainability*. A number of suggestions were made as to which bodies should take a coordination role in the maintenance of any future service. These ranged from professional groups such as LIRG, to major bodies such as publishers and the British Library. A related issue is the provision of resources for *coordination and continuity* once project funding ceases. Participants referred to a number of examples of short-lived successful tools that have subsequently died due to lack of core funding.

The second theme that emerged from the discussion was that the issues faced by the LIS practitioner-researcher community in the identification and use of resources to support their research work is not well-understood. This signals that there is a *need for community consensus* around the problems to be addressed so that those seeking to help with a technical solution do so in full recognition of the fundamental issues.

There was no evidence of a strong preference for any of the proposed technical solutions. However, it was clear that any solution would need to address a variety of issues such as:

- Information overload: this includes issues around quality of contributors, contributions and access;
- The clarity of purpose of the tool: including the extent to which the tool should hold content rather than links to existing external content;
- Risks around ownership and continuity of content if “freemium” services such as Mendeley, Zotero or Delicious are adopted;

- Restricted access imposed by employers, for example due to blocking of sites or continued use of legacy browsers.

Several participants mentioned that the planned upgrade to CILIP's web site may provide an opportunity for a new platform to be developed.

3 Community engagement and embedding

3.1 Community engagement February to July 2012

The key actors in the LIS research and researcher-practitioner community include the LIS professional bodies, in particular CILIP and its special interest group concerned with research: the Library and Information Research Group (LIRG).

Christine Irving took responsibility for the community engagement element of RiLIES2. This was facilitated through her membership of the national LIRG committee, and her involvement in the discussions around CILIP's review of its professional skills and knowledge base (PKSB)⁶. Irving also took responsibility for ensuring that the RiLIES2 materials launch was hosted as a LIRG training event. Hazel Hall (also a LIRG member) assisted Irving in this work. Hall also engaged in CILIP's consultation process on professional skills and knowledge, calling for research skills to be highlighted as part of the core professional expertise of LIS professionals.

3.2 Embedding of the RiLIES outputs for future exploitation

The engagement activities noted above highlight the possibility for the RiLIES project outputs to be embedded in the wider community with the support of LIRG and CILIP. For example, LIRG could "adopt" the six categories of LIS resources identified above, and work with CILIP to ensure that these are linked to the resources associated with CILIP's PKSB as it is developed in the coming months. Equally LIRG might be willing to host an LIS research resources session as part of its calendar of events.

A major drawback of LIRG responsibility for embedding the outputs of this project (and particularly the on-going task of resource curation), however, is its reliance on volunteer committee members. When such resources rely on such volunteer labour they are often vulnerable to changes in the circumstances of the individuals involved. In recent years, for example, once-valuable LIRG resources have disappeared when key individuals have resigned their committee roles. The work of the British Library (BL) to create a "new LIS research resource pages on the BL website, along with facilities for communication via a blog and Twitter" as highlighted by Jubb⁷ in July 2012, will help address the question of the long-term curation of the online resources created for RiLIES2.

⁶ <http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobs-careers/professional-knowledge-and-skills-base/pages/professional%20knowledge%20and%20skills%20base.aspx>

⁷ <http://lisresearch.org/2012/07/30/building-on-three-years-of-achievement-the-next-stages-for-the-lis-research-coalition-community/>

4 Dissemination outputs

4.1 Blogged RiLIES2 project news

The RiLIES2 team blogged news of the project and its interim results on seven occasions between March and July 2012, as detailed below:

- Introducing RiLIES2: <http://lisresearch.org/2012/03/07/introducing-rilies2/> – posted 7 March 2012
- Invitation to complete the RiLIES2 project poll: <http://lisresearch.org/2012/04/03/wininvitation-to-complete-the-rilies2-project-poll/> – posted 3 April 2012
- RiLIES2 project poll findings: <http://lisresearch.org/2012/05/10/rilies2-project-poll-findings/> – posted 10 May 2012
- Updated links pages: share your expertise with the RiLIES team: <http://lisresearch.org/2012/06/16/updated-links-pages-share-your-expertise-with-the-rilies-team/> – posted 18 June 2012
- Research into practice: LIS research resources briefing: <http://lisresearch.org/2012/07/10/research-into-practice-lis-research-resources-briefing/> – posted 10 July 2012
- LIS research resources briefing: workshop evaluation: <http://lisresearch.org/2012/07/17/lis-research-resources-briefing-workshop-evaluation/> – posted 17 July 2012
- RiLIES2 wrap-up, resources, and future plans: <http://lisresearch.org/2012/07/27/rilies2-wrap-up-resources-and-future-plans/> – posted 27 July 2012

A Twitter account was used to highlight when these news stories were available, as well as to tweet other items of interest to the RiLIES community. At end July 2012 there were 200 followers of @LIS_RiLIES.

4.2 Updated links and resources on the LIS Research Coalition web site

The outputs of the review of online resources and feedback from the survey were used to update the links and resources on the Coalition's website. The main pages are:

- *Resources directories and repositories* - to access LIS research results: <http://lisresearch.org/links/multiple-resource-listings/>
- *External resources* - to access web sites and tools on how to conduct research: <http://lisresearch.org/links/lis-resources/>
- *LIS research centres and networks* - to reach people and networks with interests in LIS research: <http://lisresearch.org/links/resources-networks-and-research-centres/>
- *Research funding sources* - to identify sources of research funding: <http://lisresearch.org/links/research-funding/>
- *LIS events: general listings* - to identify events at which to hear about or disseminate LIS research: <http://lisresearch.org/events/lis-events-general-listings/>
- *Research impact* - to learn about research impact: <http://lisresearch.org/research-impact/>

4.3 Sample leaflets and flyers

Sample leaflets and flyers were made available under a Creative Commons licence covering:

- *Making your LIS project really count:*
<http://lisresearchcoalition.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/leaflet-how-to-create-a-lasting-legacy.pdf>
- *Where to find resources to help with LIS projects:*
<http://lisresearchcoalition.files.wordpress.com/2009/09/leaflet-lis-resources.pdf>
- *Planning for impact: examples:*
<http://lisresearchcoalition.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/rilies-planning-for-impact.docx>

4.4 Workshop presentations

- *Research into practice: library and information research resources briefing*
<http://www.slideshare.net/LISResearch/ri-lies-lirg1>
- *Research into practice: the present situation*
<http://www.slideshare.net/LISResearch/research-into-practicethe-present-situation>
- *ALISS Engine* <http://www.slideshare.net/LISResearch/ri-lies-lirg3>

4.5 RiLIES1

In addition, the project team members continued to disseminate details of the RiLIES1 project in the form of a series of six “highlights” posts⁸ on the LIS Research Coalition web site, and two conference presentations:

- Hall, H. (2011). Strengthening the links between research and practice: the Research in Librarianship- Impact Evaluation Study (RiLIES). Invited presentation at Online 2011, London, 1st December 2011. (Slides available at www.slideshare.net/LISResearch/strengthening-the-links-between-research-and-practice-the-research-in-librarianship-impact-evaluation-study-rilies)
- Hall, H., Cruickshank, P., & Taylor-Smith, E. (2012). Realising the value of RiLIES: the Research in Librarianship Impact Evaluation Study. Paper presented at the 4th International Conference on Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries, Limerick, Ireland, 22-25 May 2012. (Slides available at <http://www.slideshare.net/LISResearch/presentation-on-the-rilies-projects-at-qgml2012>)

⁸ Listed at <http://lisresearch.org/rilies-project/>

5 Project evaluation and impact

5.1 Evaluation of activities

The success of RiLIES2 can be summarised in terms of the specific activities planned in the original proposal as follows:

Planned activity	Result
The identification of existing resources and good practice in the community as relevant to the project themes of (1) how to consume research; (2) how to do research; (3) how to maximise the impact of research undertaken.	This work was the central theme of the project and motivated the initial survey and responses to it, including the updating of the Links pages at: http://lisresearch.org/links/
The development of a series of training and good practice materials on (1) how to consume research; (2) how to do research; (3) how to maximise the impact of research undertaken.	This included the development of material listed at: http://lisresearch.org/research-impact/ An important finding of RiLIES2 is that there already exists much useful material. The issue for the community is <i>finding</i> it, hence the importance of the creation of a links directory, and the need for a community space that is useful and <i>used</i> .
The identification and development of community space	Several technical options were identified and evaluated. However it became clear that there is some groundwork to prepare before creating a community space. This both in terms of building a community consensus as to the requirements of any community space, and clarifying how concerns relating to ownership and sustainability of this resource can be addressed.
Materials launch	The materials were launched at the LIRG workshop. All material is published under creative commons with the expectation that it can be further developed in the future.

5.2 Impact

It is difficult to directly measure the impact of a project of this nature, particularly in the short-term. However, a number of claims can be made.

First, the RiLIES2 project has gone some way to clarify further the support needs of the LIS researcher-practitioner community. It has highlighted that the issues to be addressed in meeting these needs are more complex than might initially be thought, particularly when the question of technical “solutions” to supposed “problems” are under consideration.

Second, much of the benefit of this work to date has derived from the identification and bringing together of scattered resources, and then raising the awareness of the materials amongst the wider community. The potential longer-term value is evident in the continued use of the resources assembled beyond the lifetime of the RiLIES2 project itself. Since the completion of the project the main RiLIES2 web page on the LIS Research Coalition web site is the third most frequently accessed

after the home page (first), and the main page for RiLIES' sister project Developing Research Excellence and Methods (DREaM) (second).

A further key impact of RiLIES2 has been to stimulate discussions amongst the LIRG committee members as to how they can address the needs of the broader UK LIS researcher and practitioner researcher community (including the LIRG members). RiLIES2 has provided evidence of the community's requirements, and generated ideas for future initiatives that may be undertaken by LIRG. This is timely given CILIP's focus on the CILIP PKSB, as discussed above. If LIRG decides to follow up the findings of RiLIES2, then this should lead to a number of positive outcomes, for example: the strengthening of links between LIS research and practice; better support for those engaged in LIS research to ensure that their work has impact; a more strategic approach to research work amongst LIS professionals at all stages of the research cycle.

There is still work to be done to address a clear need of the UK LIS researcher and researcher-practitioner community: the establishment of a centrally-funded community-maintained directory of resources in a known location with (crucially) a long-term commitment to maintenance. The Internet is already littered with abandoned or poorly-maintained directories and out-of-date resources. In the current environment the RiLIES project team conclude that the only realistic approach is to coordinate a community response to the question of curating and sharing resources. The key question here is from where, or by whom, it can be coordinated.