Social Interoperability in Research Support:

Cross-campus partnerships and the university research enterprise

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To develop robust research support services throughout the entire research life cycle, people and departments, including the library, often need to break through internal silos to collaborate. Effective *social interoperability*—the creation and maintenance of working relationships between individuals and organizational units—in higher education requires a thorough knowledge of campus partners.

The OCLC Research report *Social Interoperability in Research Support* explores the social and structural norms that shape cross-campus collaboration and offers a conceptual model of key university stakeholders in research support. The authors conducted interviews with practitioners from a wide range of campus stakeholders in research support.

The report describes campus networks involved in both the provision and consumption of major categories of research support services and concludes with recommendations for establishing and maintaining successful cross-campus relationships.

Written primarily for academic librarians, the report can also inform the work of other professionals in campus units such as academic affairs, faculty affairs, research administration, or campus communications.

The interviews informing this publication were conducted prior to the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, but the findings are no less relevant. The need for increasing cross-campus social interoperability is likely to be amplified due to the current pandemic and its longer-term effects.

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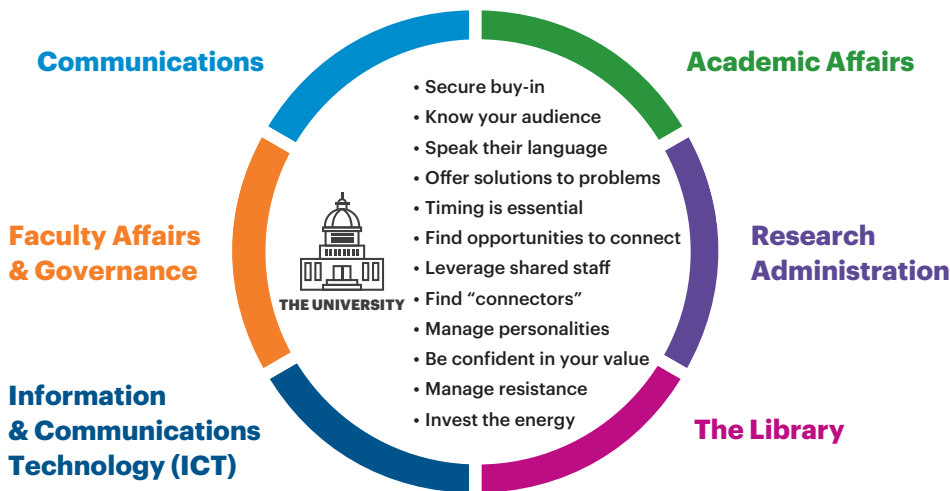
Report highlights

US research universities are highly decentralized, complex systems, filled with independent agents who sometimes work at cross purposes. This challenging environment calls for relationships that promote collaboration, communication, and mutual understanding.

The essential first step in building successful partnerships is to know who the other stakeholders are, what they do, what they prioritize, and how they see themselves contributing to the university mission. The report offers a conceptual model of campus research support stakeholders.

Key practices for successful cross-campus social interoperability

Communications

Academic Affairs

THE UNIVERSITY

- Secure buy-in
- Know your audience
- Speak their language
- Offer solutions to problems
- Timing is essential
- Find opportunities to connect
- Leverage shared staff
- Find "connectors"
- Manage personalities
- Be confident in your value
- Manage resistance
- Invest the energy

Faculty Affairs & Governance

Research Administration

Information & Communications Technology (ICT)

The Library

The report also synthesizes lessons and best practices from our conversations in key research support service areas—research data management (RDM), research information management (RIM), research analytics, and ORCID adoption—on how to optimize social interoperability in research support.

KEY FINDINGS

- Developing and stewarding trusted relationships in a decentralized organization like a university is essential for successful cross-campus partnerships.

- Without effective social interoperability, duplication of systems and services is common. And progress can be slowed by the necessity of first securing buy-in across stakeholders on campus.

- Persuading someone that something is in their own best interest to is a powerful tactic in an environment where mandates do not exist or do not work.

- Considerable investment of energy and time is necessary for building and maintaining relationships, but the rate of return is usually quite high.
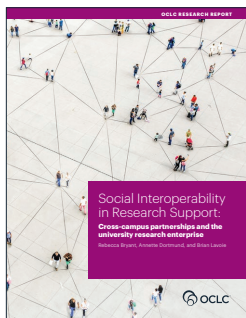
Download the free report at oc.lc/social-interoperability

Learn more about social interoperability in successful cross-campus partnerships, download the report, and more.

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