FOR-EU LIB Group

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University Libraries:
Key Players in European University Alliances

Survey on the role and activities of university libraries in European University Alliances

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The FOR-EU LIB group, a professional sub-group of the informal FOR-EU inter-alliance network, has undertaken an in-depth study of the role and activities of libraries within European university alliances under the European University Initiative (EUI). The group brings together 90 library representatives involved in 40 alliances across Europe, with the aim of sharing best practice and highlighting the crucial role of libraries in the success of the alliances. The survey, conducted between February and March 2024, gathered responses from 55 universities representing 27 different alliances.

Below are some of the key findings of the survey and a series of recommendations for libraries in European university alliances to impact and advance the goals of their alliance.

Active library participation: A key success factor.

The findings show that early involvement of libraries in alliance activities promotes more cohesive and effective collaboration. Libraries involved in projects from the outset demonstrated a greater ability to overcome challenges.

Key areas of focus: Open science and interlibrary co-operation.

The integration of open science practices has emerged as a priority for many libraries, as have the significant efforts to build strong, interconnected networks of librarians to enhance knowledge sharing and collaboration within their alliance and beyond.

However, the study also highlights ongoing challenges, particularly in terms of securing funding, navigating different institutional policies, and engaging libraries in alliance activities in an inclusive dimension. Finally, the findings suggest that expected benefits such as budget efficiency and internationalization have not yet materialized to a significant extent.

In this context, the FOR-EU LIB group proposes the following recommendations.

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Recommendations for libraries in European University Alliances to impact and drive alliance goals

1. **Encourage early involvement**: Take the initiative to involve libraries from the beginning of alliance activities to ensure consistency and shared progress.

2. **Create an organic relationship**: Clearly define the role of libraries within the dynamic and collaborative structure of scholarly networks, highlighting areas where librarian expertise can enhance the functioning of the Alliance.

3. **Adopt a bottom-up strategy**: Adopt an inclusive, bottom-up management approach of the librarian working groups to facilitate wider dissemination of information and active participation in library initiatives.

4. **Develop librarian networks**: Establish robust and sustainable networks of librarians to enhance knowledge sharing and collaboration, creating interconnected communities of practice across institutions.

5. **Build a community**: Unite internal and external stakeholders in the design of the library's multi-functional services, demonstrating the library's potential as a driving force in internationalisation efforts and fostering an open culture.

6. **Share good practice**: Consistently share best practices and successful strategies among libraries of the Alliance to continuously improve and innovate library services and operations.

7. **Promote volunteerism**: Foster a culture of volunteerism through the formation of working groups and steering committees that ensure broad representation from all Alliance libraries.

8. **Proactively address challenges**: Develop comprehensive strategies for securing funding, navigating institutional policies, and engaging all libraries to overcome challenges and ensure active participation in Alliance activities.

9. **Turn threats into opportunities**: Leverage collaboration within and across Alliances to address challenges such as staff shortages and excessive library workloads.

10. **Leverage cross-Alliance knowledge**: Connect with other alliances to benefit from the expertise of their experienced groups, complementing internal knowledge with broader insights.

More information:

- Executive summary and survey results are available here
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