Changing research practices

The Coalition for Innovation and Scholarly Communication (CISC) identified and commented upon a number of issues relating to changing patterns in scholarly communication. Much however, has happened since those studies and a number of groups, for example the Australian Peak Libraries Forum, have identified the need for a study to provide a snapshot of research practices and access to information in the scholarly community.

Professor John Houghton and Colin Steele have established significant reputations in researching and publishing on the issues of scholarly communication. The commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) have recognised this expertise and funded a study of research practices to feed into the debate on systemic infrastructure issues. Following liaison with the convenor of the DEST Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee, John Shipp, DEST have approved REP funding of $148 000 (including GST) to Victoria University for a research project entitled 'Changing research practices in the electronic information and communication environment'. The project will be carried out by John Houghton (Victoria University) and Colin Steele (ANU), and will be completed by mid–2003.

An abstract of the study proposal follows:

Outline

There are a number of inter-related factors driving changes in the ways in which researchers create, communicate, access and manage information. Among the more significant of these are increasing demand for commercialisation and productivity and the impact of information and communications technology (ICT) with consequent changes in the patterns of accessing information and communicating findings. It is only by understanding the evolving needs of researchers and the emerging mechanisms for meeting them, that we can begin to consider the effective resourcing of their activities at individual, institutional and national levels. Consequently, this project will examine evolving research practices, asking how is the practice of research in various fields changing, and what are the implications of those changes for how researchers will do their work in the future and what sources and resources they might need?

Outcomes

The main outcome will be a report that presents the findings in both detailed and summary form. It will be structured to reflect the core questions and issues raised, and seek to inform policy for the future support of research activities in Australia. An important spin-off will be a short report on what we learn about good research practice in each area.

Management

John Houghton (Victoria University) and Colin Steele (ANU) will manage the project, with research support in the conduct of the survey. A project reference group will be formed to guide and support the project.

Contacts: John Houghton, Professorial Fellow, Centre for Strategic Economic Studies, Victoria University, phone 02 6282 1981, e-mail john.houghton@pobox.com or Colin Steele, director Scholarly Information Strategies, Australian National University, phone 02 6125 8983, e-mail colin.steele@anu.edu.au.

A copy of the full proposal is available on request from John Houghton (john.houghton @pobox.com) or from http://www.netspeed.com.au/jhoughton/ProjectOutline.pdf. ▪