

# New management systems, new skills for librarians: implementing a process-oriented management system at the Library of the University of Almeria (Spain)

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## Streszczenie

In recent years, European Universities have been immersed in the search for formulas that meet the requirements of new management systems, based on the rationalization and assessment of both economic and human resources. Nowadays, the adaptation to these goals is a constant in the implementation of different management models, contributing to suit the patrons' needs to the new environment: continuous analysis of working procedures, updating of librarian competencies and adjustment of new organizational structures to new methodologies.

This paper presents a reflection about the changes that have taken place during the last decade at the Library of the University of Almeria (Spain), since the adoption of a process-oriented management system and the definition of the continuous assessment of working procedures. Concurrently, the abilities of the staff have been adjusted to the new situation, on the basis of the definition of the skills needed for the achievement of the library goals.

It is described how new library services have been implemented through the analysis of the patrons' needs: the Research Support service, or the Services and Resources Assessment service, have been set up in order to make the library budget more effective and rational.

Librarians' skills needed for these activities are analyzed, so the library staff can be appropriately trained, with the main objective of adjusting the Library goals, the librarian capabilities and the University needs through the performance evaluation of each position in this Service.

## Słowa kluczowe

university libraries, process-oriented management system, librarian competencies, Library of the University of Almeria (Spain)

## Introduction

In recent years, the Public Administration has been immersed in a changing process to render their working systems more flexible in order to make them more efficient and targeted to the needs and expectations of their citizens.

In Spain, the Universities, far from being unconcerned to these processes, have become an active agent in this change, due in part to their natural need for adapting to new times and, on the other hand, in response to the new University situation, being constantly questioned in times of economic crisis. Undoubtedly, this change affects very substantially the field of their management, and is a challenge in terms of the need for change in the existing organizational culture, and especially in the structuring of their working procedures.

If we focus on this last topic, the systems of tasks organizing, we can observe that for years there has been a tendency to base the administrative organization on the processes and not on functional units, to analyze what is being done and to present results and data. These changes obviously affect the organizational structure and those who compose it, the staff, who need to have skills to be able to perform their duties, these skills acquired through training provided by the Institution.

The Library of the University of Almeria has adopted, after ten years of application of quality tools, these requirements in such a way that processes and identification of each of the procedures associated with them (as well as the definition of competences and behaviors) are the basis upon which the activities and the organisation of this Service have been built.

Traditionally, the ideas of section / service (not the processes) were too rooted in our library. For this reason, our actions were focused on a concept of 'compartment' that, far from encouraging the efforts towards common goals, has brought as a consequence that the tasks were too specific with the consequent lack of interrelation.

Our goal is to streamline administrative procedures seeking greater efficiency and effectiveness, and avoiding unnecessary and repeated actions through cooperation between the different agents involved in a process. This idea of process section or service has a special relevance in terms of its effects from improvement in the internal information flow by encouraging horizontal communication between different units to facilitate the coordination between them. The analysis of common processes and their coordination as a way of working is essential.

## Methodology

The identification of the process approach requires a dynamic orientation, i.e., once a process is designed it is necessary to implement it and take measures that will allow us to check the degree of performance and check if the desired outputs are produced. It is not necessary, at this stage of maturity of the University, to explain how a process oriented approach works, but it is useful to highlight the importance of adequate and realistic measurement for control and improvement of the processes, and in this case, for improvement and control of the work we do on a regular basis.

In this sense the use of indicators is imposed on two levels:

1. The performance indicators, of great utility for management positions
2. The indicators referred to working procedures and their associated tasks, or operational indicators, of great utility for technical positions.

Finally, a consequence of this system is encouraging work toward objectives. It is necessary to set the desired value of any indicator at a given time, or to quantify the objectives that we set for specific periods.

These actions have lead us to data analysis over objectives achievement, workloads, tasks automation, compliance with the needs of new services... rethinking and modifying the working procedures and creating others according to our patrons' current requirements.

Similarly, it has become necessary to analyze the generic and technical competences that all library staff must develop to carry out the activities that are embedded in any process.

## Background

In 2005 all the Andalusian Universities established the generic competences that all staff should demonstrate in their work. This competency management system comes backed by the Spanish Law 7/2007, of 12 April, on the Basic Statute of the Public Employee (BOE 13 of April 2007)[1], that considers selective processes based on "competences", and also by the Model for the Financing of the Public Andalusian Universities (2007-2011)[2] (one of its objectives is "the development and full implantation of a management system based on processes and competences"), and even by agreements between Universities for the approval of working conditions of the Administration and Services staff in Andalusian Public Universities[3]. In this sense, different "position types" with different competences are set.

So far we have been talking about generic competences that are defined as an "observable behavior that is causally related to a good or excellent performance of a concrete task in a given organization" at the University of Almeria.

It is from 2008 when we began to work on technical skills as directly related to the performed position. Thus, for each professional profile technical competences and associated behaviours are set. And they are framed in the working processes that any working profile is involved.

Therefore, we can:

- know all the needed behaviours for each professional profile and for a specific process
- check the degree of mainstreaming of the behaviors in the different professional profiles involved in each process
- and, in this way, ensure that processes are conducted in accordance with the established mission.

### Case study

In this context, the generic and technical competences for two recently created positions at the University of Almeria are shown below, as well as the associated behaviours that are needed for the development of the processes in which they are involved in.

Firstly, the position of Research Support Manager is analysed. This position has been catalogued as a Type 2 Position (at the same level for all Public Universities in Andalusia). Its generic competences are:

	RESPONSIBILITY LEVEL	RELATED COMPETENCE	FUNCTION TO BE PERFORMED
TYPE 2 POSITION	STRATEGIC RESPONSIBILITIES	<i>CUSTOMER FOCUS</i>	To ensure proper attention to internal and/or external customers, seeking information about their problems, alternatives to solve them and their advice.
		<i>COMMUNICATION</i>	To design and maintain a communication strategy allowing the team to clearly identify the objectives of the service, area or unit.
		<i>TEAMWORK/COOPERATION</i>	To encourage and motivate the team that constitutes the service/section/area/unit
	SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES	<i>TEAM DEVELOPMENT</i>	To develop the team with the knowledge of those tools that allow a better management of the objectives of the Service/Area/unit
		<i>PLANNING/ ORGANIZATION</i>	To manage complex projects simultaneously, performing checks and coordinating the current processes.
		<i>ANALYTIC ABILITY (Problem Analysis)</i>	To develop logical analysis, identify problems, recognize significant information, search and coordinate relevant data.
		<i>RESOURCEFULNESS/ AUTONOMY</i>	Anticipate events that may occur in the short and medium term, creating opportunities and minimizing potential problems, evaluating the consequences of decisions, responding to changes and applying different forms of work.

Table 1. Type 2 Position (Approval of working conditions of the Administration and Services staff in Andalusian Public Universities).

As we can see, they are generic skills that all the Type 2 Positions at the University of Almería, regardless of the Unit in which they work, must have for a "good or excellent performance of their work". But also, depending on the particular position in a given service or unit, they must have some technical skills associated with their professional profile. For example, the Research Support Manager must have the following skills with their corresponding behaviors (associated to a range of technical competencies):

COMPETENCE 1	Knowledge of specific techniques and regulations in the Area: updating and revision: It is referred to technical abilities and knowledges, procedures, etc., and there can be regulations, technical instructions, etc. It also contains the revision and up-to-dating of these knowledges, so the staff must recycle and update them. Knowledge about computer tools is not analysed in this competence.	
	Behaviours	Information searching and retrieving: Management of tools and procedures that allow to validate the reliability and accuracy of the retrieved information.
		Information searching and retrieving: Design of information retrieving strategies
		Information searching and retrieving: Development of information services adapted to the users' needs with a cost/efficiency criteria
		Collections Management: Scientific production management, elaboration of instructions and procedures to promote the open access to scientific information.
		Information Services Management: Design and development of services and products to satisfy the users' needs
		Definition and supervision of the current regulations in order to guarantee their application
COMPETENCE 2	Technology knowledge and use: It refers to any knowledge relative to technological tools, electronic equipment and any aspect related to new technologies. It is related to the handling and updating of these knowledges, so the staff keep revising them.	
	Behaviours	Information searching and retrieving: Control of advanced functions and evaluation of tools and databases
		Analysis, assessment and implementation of technological developments
		Knowledge and handling of the tools used at the Library, as well as not library specific tools
COMPETENCE 3	Knowledge Management: Identifying, definition and processing of information to convert it into knowledge, so it can add value to the Organization. Creation and transfer of knowledge and experience for the Organization, so it can be used for other parts of the same organizations as an available resource. This process includes the identification, use, transfer and organization of the existent knowledge, as well as the creation of a new one, improving the innovation process at the Organization.	
	Behaviours	Information searching and retrieving: Spreading of information and knowledge among Library staff.
		Information Management: Organization, structure, design and assessment of information systems
		Information Management: Cooperation with other projects in the Organization to organize, structure and implement other Information Systems at the University
		Cooperation in collaborative projects with other Universities
		Supervision of the pertinent technical documentation and production of technical reports

Table 2. Technical skills associated with Research Support Manager.

As a result of the significance that in recent years has been attached to the evaluation of the activity carried out in the library, another position newly created is the Analysis and Evaluation of Resources and Services Manager. It's a position catalogued, as in the previous case, as Type 2. However, technical competencies are different, as is shown below:

<b>COMPETENCE 1</b>	<b>Knowledge of specific techniques and regulations in the Area : updating and revision.</b>
<b>Behaviours</b>	Information searching and retrieving: Management of tools and procedures that allow to validate the reliability and accuracy of the retrieved information.
	Users' Training and Informational Alfabetization: Assessment and introduction of improvement actions.
	Collection Management: Management and evaluation of the University collection management procedures around the information resources selection and acquisition: vendors and providers, donations, bidings, etc.
	Collection Management: Management and assessment of the cataloguing procedures to guarantee the quality of the records, participation in collective catalogues and cooperative cataloguing policies
	Information Services Management: assessment for services
	Definition and supervision of the current regulations in order to guarantee their application

<b>COMPETENCE 2</b>	<b>Technology knowledge and use. It refers to any knowledge relative to technological tools, electronic equipment and any aspect related to new technologies. It is related to the handling and updating of these knowledges, so the staff keep revising them.</b>
<b>Behaviours</b>	Information searching and retrieving: Control of advanced functions and evaluation of tools and databases
	Analysis, assessment and implementation of technological developments
	Knowledge and handling of the tools used at the Library, as well as not library specific tools

COMPETENCE 3	Knowledge Management: Identifying, definition and processing of information to convert it into knowledge, so it can add value to the Organization. Creation and transfer of knowledge and experience for the Organization, so it can be used for other parts of the same organizations as an available resource. This process includes the identification, use, transfer and organization of the existent knowledge, as well as the creation of a new one, improving the innovation process at the Organization.
Behaviours	Information searching and retrieving: Spreading of information and knowledge among Library staff.
	Information Management: Organization, structure, design and assessment of information systems
	Information Management: Cooperation with other projects in the Organization to organize, structure and implement other Information Systems at the University
	Cooperation in collaborative projects with other Universities
	Supervision of the pertinent technical documentation and production of technical reports

**Table 3. Technical skills associated with Analysis and Evaluation of Resources and Services Manager.**

As a case study, we will analyze the position "Research Support Manager" whose name was adopted in the last reform of the Relationship of Positions of the University of Almería, carried out in 2009. This name responds to the need for a more personalized service to the research activity that takes place at the University and that increasingly has extended beyond the limits of the Institution, through Technological Based Companies created in the University, projects and activities carried out in collaboration with other universities through the different Campuses of International Excellence, agreements with companies of our surroundings, and Research Centres located at the University, as well as the scientific research activities carried out by the Research Groups of the University of Almería.

With the University being conscious of the investment in electronic information resources, mainly oriented to research activities (more than 60% of the Library budget plus the investment made by the Library Consortium of Andalusia - CBUA), an existing position is reconverted. The former position belonged to a stage when the advice on-site and the printed formats were predominant, and now it is converted into a new position with a new role, in which easy access to the electronic resources is the regular working activity.

This position becomes (along with other ones created under this same philosophy) the demonstration of the maturity of the Process Oriented Approach Organization. Thus, in its tasks, in the services in which the activity of the Research Support Manager is reflected, activities contained in almost all processes are involved, as outlined below.

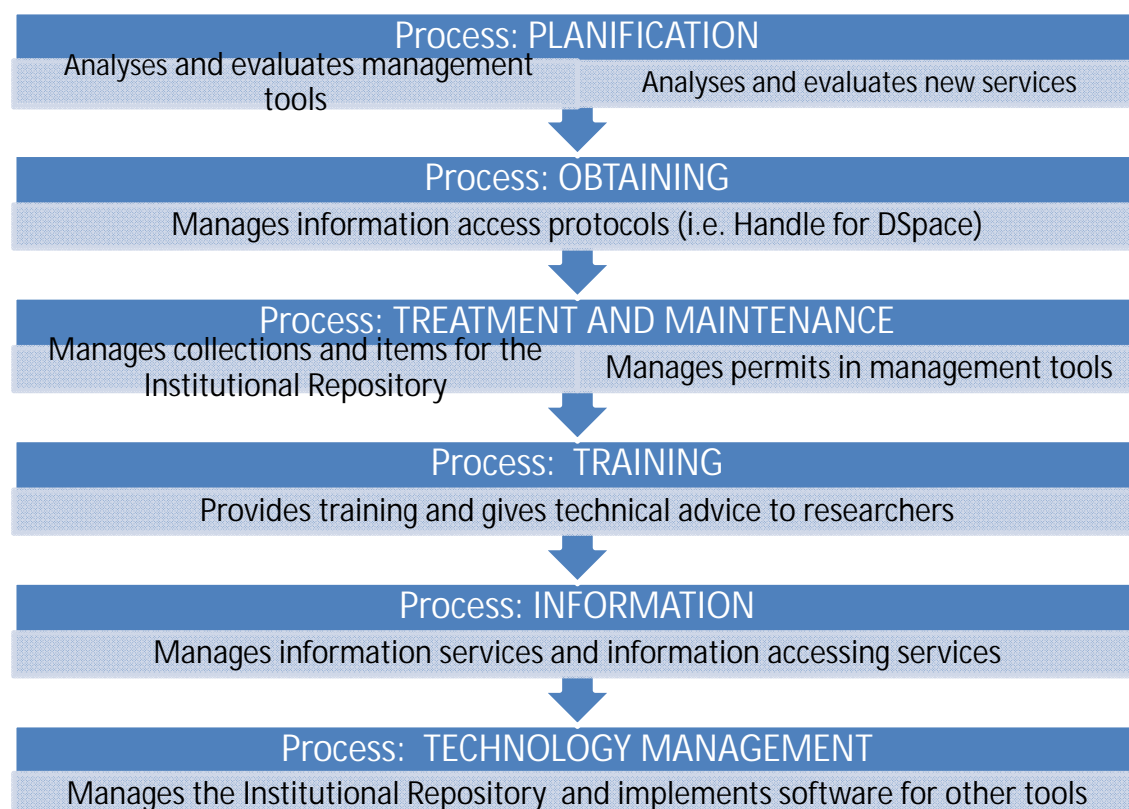


Table 4. Activity of the Research Support Manager and processes.

This interaction with several processes is not only a Library scheme, but a trend fully in accordance with the interconnection of Services at the University level, this is why the objectives of the Research Support Manager are fully integrated in the role of the library as a participant in the generation of knowledge in the University.

This is materialized not only in the support to researchers in their use of information resources, an activity that could be called the "only" one up to this moment, but in other more focused tasks to increase the visibility of the scientific work of our researchers by providing tools that allow positioning the University in numerous rankings that are measuring the research role of institutions worldwide, especially nowadays, when everything is measured in numbers.

But we are not only implementing the tools: our library paper also focuses on advising the researchers about the publication and dissemination of their research through the different media that the current information society puts at their disposal.

All these procedures and tasks are oriented to only one goal: that the works of our researchers get known worldwide as a benchmark of excellence of our Institution.

In addition, it should not be forgotten (speaking again about "numbers"), that much of the funding for our universities goes together with both National and European Calls. These Calls, which try to measure the quality and positioning of the research at the University, or are attached to the submission of development plans that involve funding, in many cases must go backed by evidence. Here, the role of the library is decisive as a consultant and an expert in location and processing of information and data.



Another fundamental objective of this new position should be framed in the interconnection with other University Services. In this sense, the joint work with the Postgraduate Service for the management of our Doctoral Theses and Master Theses, the collaboration with the Office of Transfer of Research Results for the visibility of our patents, as well as the advising for Technological based Companies, are just three examples of the path we must follow.

There are many actions that have been carried out (implementation of the institutional repository, training and advice on assessment and accreditation processes for researchers, positioning of our repository in aggregators and search engines, social networks...) but there is no doubt that there will be many more, since the research is the fundamental pillar at our University, and from our Library we must offer our full support to it, as it appears reflected in our Improvement Plan for 2013:

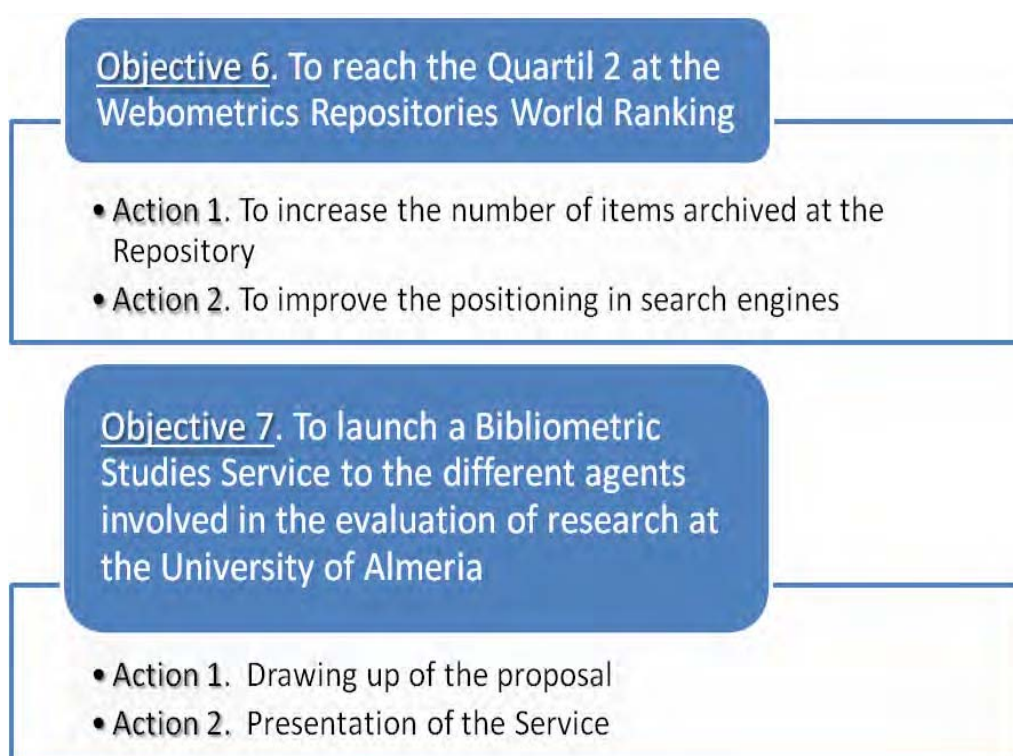


Table 5.

The proposal for this new service aims to materialize in offering our researchers and Institution:

- Bibliometric reports, related to the scientific activity of our researchers, and to calls that may involve funding for the University.
- Technical reports comparing the scientific production of the University of Almería in relation to other Spanish or European Universities that develop research on similar scientific and technical fields, to position the University of Almeria in relation to other universities for reference.
- Reports on emerging areas of research in those fields of knowledge of the University of Almería, and as well, reports on the research activity intended for dissemination in order to know what is done in the University and what results are produced by the research carried out with public funds.
- To expand the range of advice on scientific communication and evaluation of the science and the preparation of applications and calls.
- To assist in the promotion and marketing of scientific activity increasing its visibility.



## Conclusion

Thus, a change of mind is essential at the time of development of organizational charts and positions supply. It is not a question of creating new structures based on changes. A thorough analysis of the activities already developed in the library, and of the necessary competences for the objectives that we set, is absolutely necessary. Only this way shall we achieve the adequacy between the service that we want to offer, the way we should do it, and the requirements that we need to be able

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