IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME

A Report on Research Support and the Research Process under Conditions of Uncertainty

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List of Abbreviations

APC – Article Processing Charge
CBEES/BEEGS – Centre for Baltic and East European Studies/Baltic and East European Graduate School
DAU – Data Access Unit
FTE – Full Time Equivalent
HEI – Higher Education Institution(s)
IHS – School of Historical and Contemporary Studies
IKL – School of Culture and Education
IPA – School of Police Studies
ISV – School of Social Sciences
NMT – School of Natural Sciences, Technology and Environmental Studies
OA – Open Access
PC – Publications Committee
SAS – Södertörn Academic Studies Publishing Series
SH – Södertörns högskola

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Summary

This report is the outcome of an investigation undertaken by members of the 'Open Science and Publishing' team at the library of Södertörns högskola (hereafter SH) about the existing state of research support offered to researchers by the university's library, specifically, and the university, more generally. The investigation was comprised of a questionnaire, yielding 141 responses, and 17 semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the research community at SH. Based on the experiences and self-interpretations of researchers' own research practice, the purpose of the study has been to describe and critically analyse existing research support practices offered specifically by the library at SH in a changing and increasingly complex field of activities (e.g. Open Access agreements, publishing, and data accessibility). A further purpose has been to stimulate a *broader* discussion among other interested parties at SH regarding the future direction of research support.

The report first takes cognisance of ongoing discussions taking place in the fledgling research area on research support provided at higher education libraries, highlighting the need to problematise 'customer-driven' and 'service' oriented models of thinking research support, which have crept into library support practices in recent years. The report is also mindful of the limits of certain categories (e.g. the distinction between 'general' and 'specific' support) that have been deployed in academic discourse to describe the particularities of what it means to give 'research support'. Taking as its point of departure in scholarly literature surrounding the topic, the report understands research support as a dynamic relation, and is to be considered as involving a set of practices that are most effective when they are contextually embedded within the different research areas at the higher education institution. Furthermore, it understands the demands and expectations surrounding research support as something that, over recent years, has undergone renegotiation, reflecting thereby the changing conditions and demands under which researchers themselves apply for, undertake, and publish their research today. Given that the last investigation into 'research support' conducted at SH was in 2013, and since during the intervening years many significant changes have occurred in how research is both produced and

disseminated, an up to date understanding of how best to support researchers in their day to day research practice is paramount.

The central findings of the report are four-fold: (i) Regarding researchers, the report describes how members of the academic community have had to adapt to changing conditions in which 'pragmatism', 'interconnectedness', a 'problem-driven' and 'strategic and tactical' approach to research is today encouraged by the system. Researchers are conscious of the limited time available to them, and are in a constant search for lost time. (ii) Regarding research support, the report identifies a tension between, on the one hand, the need for research support providers to be sensitive to specific and unique problems as and when they arise (often resulting in ad hoc and reactive solutions) and, on the other, the overarching aspitation of offering help and support that, in an anticipatory way, can address the conditions under which such problems may arise in the future (thereby seeking more sustainable and proactive solutions). The problem is that presently, pro-active solutions are too general and are often not considered directly 'relevant' for researchers, while re-active support seems presently more tailored to the specific needs of individual researchers. The report points out that this tension between reactive and proactive support needs attending to. (iii) Regarding existing research support services (e.g. Open Access Agreements, the role of the Publications Committee, etc.), the report identifies that more targeted information needs to be addressed to different researchers affiliated to specific research institutions. The extent of use of, and knowledge about, Open Access Agreements and the Publications Committee is presently dependent upon institutional affiliation. Finally, (iv) research support services provided across SH are presently scattered, unrelated and uncoordinated. Researchers are often unaware of what is available and the connections between different areas offering research support. The report concludes with two sets of recommendations, one of general interest for all interested parties at SH and another (see Appendix) specifically targeted at library operations. The general recommendations are as follows: (i) to engage in targeted and specific contact with the schools, the prefects, the directors of studies and the PhD council, when possible about research support; (ii) to design a 'communication plan' for the library, encompassing both webpages and social media; (iii) to review and renew the mandate for the Publications Committee, and ensure that longer-term strategic decision-making is made regarding the future of in-house publishing at SH. This should include a plan for outreach and informational work; (iv) to ensure that the library is an active partner when discussing research support throughout SH, and finally (v) to improve

collective understanding surrounding help offered to researchers at SH, and relatedly better understand how the various interested parties engaged in research support relate to one another.

Introduction

This report, submitted to all interested parties at Södertörns högskola, examines the present state and future direction of 'research support', defined as specific and targeted administrative assistance given to researchers while they undertake their research activities (whether funded or unfunded). The report is in part evaluative and prescriptive, but first and foremost it is descriptive, in that it roots an understanding and assessment of 'research support' in the lived experiences and reflections of researchers themselves. The premise of the report is that only on the condition that we better understand the actual ways in which researchers undertake and reflect upon the research process – what it means to them, as well as their reflections, experiences and expectations regarding research support – will we be in a better position to assess and improve existing research support provisions. The report has its origins in discussions that took place within the 'Open Science and Publishing' team at the university library at SH in the fall of 2021. Discussions were stimulated by a basic and essential question, simply: 'what is research support?' Where do the responsibilities of members of the 'research support' team begin and end? What facets of this rather general and nebulous term apply directly to the library, and which are of more indirect concern? The authors of the report, then, belong to the library. And while the study was originally motivated by internal discussions, and has as one of its principal addressees library colleagues and library management,[1] it is hoped that the report will stimulate a wider discussion about the research process and its attendant support structures both at Södertörns högskola, more widely, and in higher education institutions as such. After having undertaken this systematic investigation, bringing together 141 responses from an online questionnaire and 17 in-depth interviews, it is our belief that research support constitutes a complex and variegated field of practices at Södertörns

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[1] The authors would like to thank members of the library team for their helpful comments and feedback during different phases of this study. Workshops were conducted with the 'Open Science and Publishing' team in May, which served as an interesting preliminary stage in the analysis of the material. Sara Parmhed also provided the authors with important information and insights into Open Access and APCs. Lastly, a big thank you to Moa Stockstad, who gave invaluable feedback on an earlier draft of this report.

högskola that presently are inadequately coordinated and articulated. A dialogue and discussion, bringing together interested parties from all areas of concern, about the existing state of the research support settlement could have benefits in improving the conditions under which researchers carry out their research, as well as enhancing the research profile at SH, more widely.

Background

It has been nine years since a report into research support was last conducted at this higher education institution. Much has since changed. In recent years, SH in particular, and the academic sector more generally, has undergone profound changes in its operations. Some of these changes are structural, while others are due to contingencies affecting society at large (e.g. global pandemics, economic recession, austerity drives), from which higher education and the publishing industry have not been immune, and to which they have had to adjust (e.g. Harper and Corrall, 2011; Düren et al., 2019; Almeida, 2020; Seale and Mirza, 2020; Decker, 2021). In 2022, we see that the demands on SH as a site of 'research', the community of 'researchers' and the 'research support' team at SH, have significantly increased. A longitudinal study conducted by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (2021), comparing the changes in Higher Education provision in Sweden, between 2010 and 2020, offers some interesting data in this regard. Table 1 (lifted from UKÄ's 2021 annual report) shows the extent of the increase in academic staffing numbers during the last 10 years. Not only have numbers across the board increased by 22%, significantly 'career development positions' (often research dominated) (43%) and 'other research and teaching staff with doctoral degrees' (again often employed for the purposes of undertaking research projects (32%)), have increased at a greater rate. Indicating thereby a general expansion of academic institutions across Sweden. This is offset by some other data that complicates the picture (see tables 2 and 3). While the Swedish Higher Education Authority states that available funds for research has also increased during a ten-year period (now up to 45 billion Swedish Crowns per year), with the sources for external funding diversifying, there is now greater competition for funding grants as well as a growing disparity as to where funds are allocated (with the social sciences and the humanities not only getting substantially less money, but researchers within this field having less time to spend on their research activities). Today, then, is a context of an expanding Higher Education sector but with increasing competition and

uneven distribution in research funding and time, which is impacting on the social and human sciences especially.

	Number of FTEs 2010	Gender distribution (%) Women	Men	Number of FTEs 2020	Gender distribution (%) Women	Men	Change 2010–2020 (%)
Total	**26,500**	**43**	**57**	**32,340**	**46**	**54**	**22**
Senior lecturers	7,120	43	57	9,660	47	53	36
Professors	4,510	21	79	5,250	31	69	16
Lecturers	5,740	55	45	5,000	60	40	-13
Other research and teaching staff without doctoral degrees	3,640	46	54	4,890	49	51	35
Other research and teaching staff with doctoral degrees	2,870	42	58	3,780	46	54	32
Career-development positions	2,620	46	54	3,750	46	54	43

Table 1 (taken from UKÄ 2021 annual report). Number of researchers and teaching staff at HEIs 2010-2020, gender distribution (%) and changes (%), by employment category (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2021).

Field of research	Total funding	Direct government funding	External funding	Other external funding (%)
Total	**44.82**	**19.38**	**25.23**	**56**
Natural sciences	11.13	4.63	6.47	58
Engineering and technology	7.35	2.70	4.63	63
Medicine and health sciences	14.73	5.93	8.71	59
Agricultural and veterinary sciences	2.58	1.15	1.42	55
Social sciences	6.20	3.16	3.02	49
Humanities and the arts	2.84	1.81	1.03	36

Table 2 (taken from UKÄ annual report 2021). HEI direct government funding and external funding for research and third cycle education in 2019, per field of research, SEK billion (Swedish Higher Education, 2021).

	R&D Number	Percentage of total R&D FTEs	Percentage of research funding
All fields of research	**21,000**	**100%**	**100%**
Natural sciences	5,400	26%	25%
Engineering and technology	3,300	16%	16%
Medicine and health sciences	5,200	25%	33%
Agricultural and veterinary sciences	600	3%	6%
Social sciences	3,500	17%	14%
Humanities and the arts	1,400	7%	6%
No field of research	1,600	8%	-

Table 3 (taken from UKÄ annual report 2021). Number of R&D FTEs, percentage of all R&D FTEs and percentage of total funding for research and third-cycle education, per field of research, in 2019 (Swedish Higher Education, 2021).

Coupled with these material conditions are other significant changes affecting research practice and research support alike. Research demands have shifted because of a greater emphasis on Open Access, internationalisation, and changing priorities with respect to publishing. In 2013, 'Open Access' (OA) was an already established system, which had significantly altered the dynamics of research outputs (e.g. dissemination, funding, etc.). However, the subsequent development of Article Processing Charges (APCs) as a means for publishers to offset the costs of 'Open Access' by charging authors/institutions directly, have today made the situation even more complex (e.g. Khoo, 2019; Halevi and Walsh, 2021).

The increasing pressure to publish in academic journals with 'high impact metrics', where APCs are highest, and the expansion of 'predatory journals' in academia that have sought to fill and exploit the gap between unfunded (and poorly funded) researchers and publishing businesses, are two concrete problems that have emerged in recent years (Solomon and Björk, 2012; Fontúrbel and Vizentin-Bugoni, 2021). Under the more generic term, 'Open Science', OA has been joined by the aspiration to make data freely available. Ideas such as a DAU (Data Access Unit), and the infrastructural support and day-to-day running of 'research data' systems are becoming a reality for researchers and research support providers alike. With OA growing, issues and concerns from researchers have emerged resulting in unexpected needs and demands for new services. Research support is by no means a static one, and since 2013 much has changed.

'Open Access' is a significant element in the increasing drive towards 'internationalisation', both for the profile of SH as an institution for research and learning, and the research outputs generated therein. A policy document from 2012 stated that 'internationalisation' is a substantive principle for operations at SH (1910/40/2012), 'defin[ing] the entire university's activities'. In 2012, 'internationalisation' meant principally the establishment, expansion and sustaining of international networks (on the research side), as well as (on the side of teaching) cultivating a learning environment that would encourage cultural exchange and multiperspectivism, alongside preparing students for the demands of the international labour market. Fast forward to *Handlingsplan för internationalisering* 2021–2024 [Action plan for internationalisation 2021–2024] and the principle of 'internationalisation', both in its meaning and scope, has expanded a great deal. Among the multiple goals mentioned in the document is one highly relevant for research support: 'To facilitate and support the university's researchers in international publishing through clear and simple forms of publishing support'. The

document further adds that service providers at SH should work with the 'simplification and clarification of publications support surrounding language editing, proofreading, translating, and editing work', and to this end to 'collect inspiration from other universities'. In addition, the existing Södertörns högskolas utvecklingsplan 2020–2024 [Södertörn University's development plan 2020–2024] communicates a vision 'to develop and ensure the long-term support for research and postgraduate education with a focus on Baltic and Eastern European Studies' (Södertörns högskolas utvecklingsplan 2020–2024, 2019; *Handlingsplan för internationalisering* 2021–2024, 2020). A point that, as part of the internationalising vision, presses directly upon research support questions.

Review of the 2013 Report, *An Overview of Research Support Activities,* and its outcomes

In 2013, a similar investigation about research support was conducted at SH (see: *Översyn av bibliotekets forskningsstödjande verksamhet*, 2013 [Review of research support activities in the Library]). This investigation was requested by the Faculty Board and the Publications Committee (Dnr752/40/20), in order to 'develop the library's services, support and contact points focusing on the university's research' (*Översyn av bibliotekets forskningsstödjande verksamhet*, 2013). The 2013 review into research support activities (*Översyn av bibliotekets forskningsstödjande verksamhet*, 2013) resulted in a report and generated considerable data. The data accumulated was valuable, but the report was not equal to the material it set out to analyse. In retrospect it should be considered a missed opportunity. The specific recommendations proposed were vague and general. They amounted to the following:

1. To improve communication channels between library service providers and the academic collegiate (including institutions, researchers, lecturers).
2. To become more effective at communicating and informing research support users about the available assistance and services.
3. To put in place support for doctoral students (with the establishment of, perhaps, a doctoral course or a seminar series in collaboration with the Publications Committee) (*Översyn av bibliotekets forskningsstödjande verksamhet*, 2013).

Regarding (1) and (2), the same problems remain in 2022. This reveals as much about the way these proposals were articulated in the 2013 report's findings as it does the obdurate nature of the problems facing users and providers of research support. The general tone of the recommendations made it difficult for them to be turned into achievable and measurable goals. Describing 'how' and 'in what ways' communications could be enhanced, for example, would have enabled better materialisation of these recommendations into sustainable and effective practice.[2]

The third recommendation had greater specificity. While the idea of a course for new doctoral researchers was not realised, more obvious and concrete steps have been taken in the years since 2013 to improve support offered to the doctoral research community at SH. In general, some of the issues raised in 2013 are equally relevant today (especially points (1) and (2)). What is needed is a more structured inquiry into these problems, with more detailed and task-specific recommendations (see final section of this report), as well as a willingness to set aside resources and worktime in order to concretely address them.[3]

Cognisant of the drawbacks with the previous Report from 2013, it nonetheless made an important conceptual distinction between 'broad' and 'specific' research support. The 2013 Report explained that while 'broad research support' includes what the library traditionally offers researchers, such as the acquisition of books, scientific journals, databases and interlibrary loans of materials, 'specific research support' focuses on, for example, issues such as OA, and requires non-traditional skills. While the tasks comprising 'general research support' have been institutionally and structurally embedded within the day-to-day operations of library services, 'specific research support' is inherently more dynamic.

Stating its interest in the 'specific research support' that SH offered at that time, the 2013 Report contained three distinct fields of activity:

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[2] A further problem was that after the publication of the 2013 Report, for one reason and another, not enough effort was made to draw out the implications from it, and translate the proposals (however few and general they were) into concrete practice. The authors would soon go elsewhere, leaving the content of the report as no more than sitting 'potential'.

[3] In recent years, more detailed reports and memoranda have been written addressing the need for improvements and revisions in research support, indicating that existing practices need clarification and elaboration. These reports, and the discussions that have arisen as a result, were however not based on a systematic and extensive survey of present views from both SH's research community. This inquiry has sought to address this lack.

1. To assist with finding scientific information.
2. To help with referencing software.
3. To offer publishing and publications support. (*Översyn av bibliotekets forskningsstödjande verksamhet*, 2013).

Does this three-fold distinction capture the real activities and priorities that research support deals with in a changed and changing situation today? Which 'specific' tasks and demands are left unaccounted for in the 2013 report? Are any less important now than they were then? Do they require further specification and internal differentiation? Where exactly do we stand with respect to 'specific research support' as providers and users of such support at SH? How do users and providers experience and reflect on and over specific research support? Do their priorities and expectations differ? And if so, how to bring experiences and horizons of expectation into better alignment?

Previous surveys in Sweden

As stated at the beginning of this section, SH in particular, and the higher education sector nationwide, has undergone important transformations in its research and research support operations over the last decade. Thus, SH is not to be understood in isolation, but as part of a wider context of universities and higher education institutions, in Sweden and beyond. Significantly, SH's *Handlingsplan för internationalisering* 2021–2024 has as a directive to 'gain inspiration from other models of research and publications support services provided at other universities'. This constituted part of the remit of the 2013 review (*Översyn av bibliotekets forskningsstödjande verksamhet*, 2013), which had an explicit comparative component. At the same time other universities have carried out their own investigations into the research support services they provide (Eklund, 2013; Voog et al., 2013; Aspengren et al., 2015).

In a comprehensive and multimodal qualitative study, a report written at Lund University had as its aim to 'present an image of the everyday work undertaken by the university's research community', drawing out among other things budgetary constraints, atomisation and fragmentation of research work, and the possibilities of research innovation and expansion of research networks. The findings from Lund centred on three key principles: that 'research support' needed to be 'accessible', 'proximal', and 'visible' for

its researchers (Voog et al., 2013). Each of these principles opened up for specific and detailed suggestions for enhanced research support.

In 2013, University of Borås also embarked on an investigation into research support. It drew on material collected through a bespoke survey, interviews and focus group interviews. Like Lund, Borås had based its study on the same extensive literature review (i.e. Wiklund, 2012). Noteworthy in the report is that researchers were subdivided between senior and PhD-students, to differentiate between the needs of the two groups. The investigation led to eight themes being identified, among which were "creating a meeting place for researchers" and "increasing the knowledge about library support" (Eklund, 2013, pp. 21–22).

While more methodologically restricted and analytically modest, a 2015 report from Göteborg reaches similar conclusions, stating that what is required 'more clear and visible information about library support services' (Aspengren et al., 2015).

These reports from other universities are helpful in further adumbrating the issues and questions with which the Swedish higher education system has been grappling surrounding research support. There is a general convergence regarding research findings and recommendations, specifically with a greater emphasis on making the library support for researchers visible. The obvious problem is that all the reports are at least six years old. The circumstances and trends have changed significantly, arguably shifting towards a new paradigm surrounding how 'research support' is understood and handled today.

Research aims

The aim of this report is to systematically investigate, describe, and critically analyse existing research support practices offered specifically by the library at SH in a changing and increasingly complex field of activities (e.g. Open Access agreements, publishing, and Data accessibility). A further purpose is to stimulate a *broader* discussion among other interested parties at SH, about the future direction of research support. These aims have been carried out through a multi-modal qualitative study (i.e. a questionnaire and in-depth interviews with researchers), affording an opportunity for researchers to express and reflect upon the meaning of the research process for them, and to explore their understandings, experiences and expectations surrounding research support. Since the principal demographic for research support are researchers themselves, then it stands to reason that for a proper assessment of existing research support to be possible, in the library and perhaps beyond, then such an assessment must be rooted in the experiences and reflections of its 'users'. On this basis, the following questions have been explored in the study:

- What does the 'research process' entail for researchers at SH today? How have the ways in which research is undertaken changed in recent years, according to researchers? What new and real challenges does a researcher face? And what differences exist between different research schools at SH, as well as between junior and senior scholars?
- How does existing 'research support' reflect the lived experiences and actual practices of doing research and being a researcher at SH?
- How are the different expectations and experiences about research support and the research process, expressed by researchers coming from different research schools and traditions, to be negotiated by research support administrators?
- Which aspects of the library's existing research support mandate are not in step with the changing needs of, and demands placed

upon, researchers, and are thus in need of updating?
- What aspects of research support are hidden and require greater visibility and focus?

The overarching purpose, then, is to identify and improve existing research support at the library (and beyond) in a changing set of contexts and circumstances. For such improvements to be effective, not only is an overview of the present system necessary, required also is a better account of what it means to do research and be a researcher today.

Previous literature

It has been well documented in the scholarly literature, as well as experienced first-hand by those working at academic libraries, that research support has become an increasingly important, complex, and multifaceted part of the central operations of a university library (Si et al., 2019). What is meant, precisely, by research support is, *prima facie*, simple enough to ascertain. The term is widely understood as those activities that address the needs of university researchers in the data gathering, storage, publication, dissemination, and public visibility of research outputs.

As remarked earlier, a good starting point here is to conceptually delineate 'general' from 'specific' library support, recognising that research support is *specific*, thereby requiring defined and particular knowledge and specific areas of competence (Jensen, 2012). Not only this, but by virtue of not being *general*, it is the nature of such targeted support to be subject to greater variance and change.[4] This accounts for the fact that there is no one exhaustive and robust list of tasks that account for the entirety of research support. This situation has led some to comment that staff and management have to adopt a different sensibility towards how they reflect upon their work, shifting from a 'library-centred' to a 'service-oriented' approach (Hakala and Nygrén, 2010; Hicks, 2015). The upshot being that by adopting a 'service-minded' approach, where 'universities should market their services in the same way as companies market their products' (Hakala and Nygrén, 2010), help can be better tailored to specific individuals, offering higher 'customer satisfaction' from users, and thus an enhancement of the profile of the academic institution (Hicks, 2015; Atkinson, 2016; Del Bosque et al., 2017).

While sensitive to the relational and dynamic features of research support, we are sceptical of the discursive frames adopted by such literature and the idea of 'service-centred' practice as a cure-all, not least because the model on which such recommendations are based is in fact a symptom of the problems

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[4] This point could easily be overdrawn, though. As was expressed by a librarian at SH, so-called 'general support' is not entirely static either, and is itself subject to change and alterations too. This is very true. Therefore, it would be better to talk about 'specific research support' as more likely to change over time while maintaining specific contact with a 'researcher' in need of support.

academic institutions face today rather than a solution (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Jarvis, 2014). A rise in critical literature on the encroachment of market-logics and the grip that New Public Management discourse has on how problems and solutions are articulated and understood in higher education, generally, and library provisions, specifically, highlights the corrosive effects that the imposition of these models have had on staff morale and day-to-day practices (Almeida, 2020; Düren et al, 2019; Minogue, 2001; Sloniowski, 2016) not forgetting the conditions for research and researchers.

The library as a gendered space – the librarian as a gendered worker

Research support entails a specific relation between those in need of support and those responsible for providing it. This relation is labelled in a variety of ways in the literature. Some researchers would prefer to understand research support as a set of 'services' that are offered by the service provider to the customer (McCaffrey, 2013). Others describe the relation in more functional terms (provider–user), and others still by way of the couplet researcher–librarian. The way the two roles comprising this relation are described in the literature (and by extension in everyday university activities) is not insignificant, because the terms used to discuss research support frame the limits and possibilities of the practices that comprise it, positioning research and administrators in particular ways, shaping experiences, establishing patterns of expectations, and modes of conduct.

All of the abovementioned ways of describing the relational roles entailed in research support are inadequate. We have already raised some short critical remarks about the shortcomings of framing research support in light of the service–consumer relation. Some critical remarks will now be directed at framing research support in terms of the researcher–librarian relation. Clearly, there does seem an obvious rationale for doing so. Any system of research support will include active researchers in need of support and help from library administrators responsible for offering this support. Nonetheless, some questionable presuppositions underwrite this way of conceiving the dynamics of research support. As some scholars have drawn attention to, the 'active' researcher in need of support and the librarian providing that support is itself inscribed in a gendered division of labour, wherein an imbalance of expectations, demands, visibility and resources can be indexed.

Notwithstanding the fact that men and women occupy both positions, the fact remains that, globally, less than 30 per cent of researchers are today

women (e.g. UNESCO, 2014), with recent data published about Swedish academia, indicating that 42 per cent of academics are female (Vetenskapsrådet, 2019).[5] At the same time, and as Revitt (2020) points out in a study of Canadian libraries, 75 per cent of librarians are women. That the library and the university are gendered environments can place unintentional biases and implications for librarians and university staff alike. Moreover, Revitt, (2020) reminds us that the role of the librarian is the result of a series of discursive constructions. One outcome of this process is that an individual librarian's work is often made invisible, instead being recontextualised as an accomplishment of the library as a whole. When working with researchers, and giving support, this is rewritten to be the library, not the librarians work (Revitt, 2020, pp. 29–30). In contrast, researchers are the active and visible part of the 'research process', and the way they relate to those offering research support can often be as an afterthought or as assistance that is provided by an anonymous functionary. The librarians themselves are written out of the narrative of the research process, even if they remain a constituent (but unseen) part of it. Instead, librarians are promoted elsewhere, as the 'face' of the library. A search on any search engine for a "Librarian" will give the results of a smiling woman standing close to bookshelf, possibly with a stack of books in her hands (Revitt, 2020, p. 28). Again, just as was the case with understanding research support in terms of a 'service' and a consumer' – or 'provider and user' – the description of the research support relation by way of the structural positions of 'librarian' and 'researcher' hide particular assumptions about the nature of 'research support' that require problematisation.

Librarians' work with researchers

'Service and consumer', 'provider and user', 'librarian and researcher': ultimately, the inadequacies of each conceptual pair in understanding the dynamics of research support lies in the fact that they do not capture the complex relational dynamics of the phenomenon, not least because the framing is too dichotomous and static. An article by Engeström et al. (2012) seems to offer a corrective to this. Dismissing what they see as a too rigid and simplified understanding of research support, often predicated on a one-to-one relation between provider and user, their study reframes research sup-

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[5] Also see a recent report published by SULF (2022), entitled: *Spotlight on Gender Equality: when insecurity overshadows everything,* which documents the disproportionate precarity and uncertainty experienced by women academics, in contrast to men, in Swedish Higher Education.

port practice by shifting focus away from an agent-centred perspective toward a problem-driven approach. Research support happens within and between constellations of tasks, interlocking areas of concern, fluctuating needs and expectations. Under these circumstances, Engeström et al., (2012); see also Kaatrakoski and Lahikainen, (2016) favour the metaphor of 'knotworking' in order to do justice to the complexity of research support tasks, where there is a constant process of binding, unbinding, rebinding between particular nodes of research and support activity. As the authors figuratively describe: 'knots are made in order to work on a shared object. These knots are less fixed than teams and can adapt to changes more rapidly. New knots can be formed when circumstances so require' (Engeström et al., 2012). Thereby facilitating, according to the study, more innovative, relevant and problem driven research support. As Kaatrakoski and Lahikainen (2016) describe, a knotworking librarian can be seen as an embedded librarian, who gives input to a research group when needed, but like a knot can be tied and untied as needed. Here Kaatrakoski and Lahikainen (2016) alongside Engeström et al., (2012) provide food for thought, and at the very least offer up an alternative language and a different perspective through which to think the complexity of research support, doing so in a way that saves it from the simplifying assumptions of the service–consumer, librarian–researcher and provider–user relations.

The role of the academic librarian has been transformed during the last few decades. Since 2000, a shift in academic publishing has taken place, impacting on both researchers and librarians alike. The shift towards Open Access (OA) publishing has led universities to invest in institutional repositories, which often are located at the library; support for these and guidance in OA publishing (at the time *Gold* and *Green*) became a library task. Negotiations of Article Processing Charges (APCs) has also become an unanticipated task for those administering research support. The amount of new knowledge and challenges that the new online publishing and research contexts have thrown up brings with it issues surrounding the effecttive dissemination and transmission of that knowledge to relevant interested parties constituting the network of research support.

Previous studies have highlighted the everchanging space in which librarian and researcher meet and navigate. For example, Hansson and Johannesson (2013) interviewed librarians at two Swedish university libraries on how they understood their own work. Against the background of a marked shift towards OA publication, Swedish university libraries and librarians were asked to be in charge of the institutional repositories and guide resear-

chers through the OA process, exemplified in the cases of University of Skövde and Linnaeus University.

Summary of previous research

In the foregoing pages, we have presented three strands of the existing academic literature addressing research support undertaken by librarians and library work in general.

The first strand included a look at how a shift towards New Public Management has impacted on university libraries during the 2010s. During the past decade, it has been recommended that librarians begin seeing themselves as service providers, shifting the tone away from librarians as experts in their own domains to becoming service-oriented providers. This shift in how librarians understand their own profession is not without negative effects. During this time-period we also see a shift towards a focus for a more Open Access oriented publishing system, thereby leading to a demand for different forms of support.

In the second strand, we have accounted for the librarian as a gendered profession. Empirically, while a higher percentage of librarians in Sweden are female, most researchers at the university remain male. This, in combination with the increased focus on the library providing a "service", raises the question: to what degree are librarians doing gendered work? The work a librarian undertakes does includes more outward facing jobs where she must be supportive, at the same time she is made to do invisible work.

The third and final strand focuses on how librarians interact with researchers. This included studies about contrasting expectations from researchers and librarians about the meaning and content of research support. While researchers are often generally happy with the support they receive, there is nonetheless an unspoken assumption that the level of assistance should be higher. On the side of the librarians, informants felt that the existing structures within which such support is provided are often too rigid and, sometimes, unresponsive and underutilised. Included in this part was also an example of a different way of working with researchers, namely, knotworking, which, according to the authors, is more sensitive to specific, multiple and often individuated problems encountered by researchers.

These three strands have been highlighted because they show the difficulties modern academic libraries face in an increasingly marketised and gendered division of labour. They also have the merit of identifying the discursive lenses through which research support in modern academic libraries

is understood and related to. These discursive lenses are worth critically analysing, since they are integral in framing present research support practices and structures for both research-users and admin-providers.

Methodology

In this section, we will present how this study was conducted. As already stated, the overarching aim is to systematically investigate, describe, identify, and critically analyse existing research support practice offered by SH in a changing and increasingly complex field of activities. The motivation for doing so is based on the acknowledgement that:

1. The nature of research support has changed significantly since the previous study was conducted in 2013.
2. With an increasing and diverse number of tasks constituting the 'research support' structure at SH in 2022, an investigation into how these tasks hang together in a clear and coordinated way is needed.
3. Expectations and perceived needs of researchers and those offering research support do not always converge and thereby require attention.
4. Weaknesses in aspects of existing research support need to be identified, with a focus on what should be prioritised and improved moving forward.

Given these stated aims, the study is multi-modal and qualitative in nature. Data collection and analysis has been drawn from a combination of (i) a preliminary questionnaire sent out to all members of the academic community at SH, in order to get a general picture of research support use and evaluations thereof, and (ii) in-depth interviews conducted with individual researchers, with the purpose of developing the general picture from (i) by capturing richer and detailed accounts of the assorted demands, needs and expectations among researchers and their affiliated departments. Previous studies from other universities have also adopted a mixed method and qualitative approach, often harnessing a combination of questionnaires, interviews and focus group interviews, (e.g. Eklund, 2013; Voog *et al.*, 2013; Aspengren *et al.*, 2015; Klain Gabbay and Shoham, 2019). Moreover, at SH mixed method studies have been used at the library yielding good results (see

Thorsson and Linder, 2020). Indeed, it has been customary for libraries themselves and researchers on library activities to conduct questionnaires and surveys. On the side of the library, questionnaires have been a means to measure 'customer satisfaction' (perhaps as an unfortunate sign of the times!), that is, as a way of assessing quality and adjusting services for efficiency and responsiveness to patrons. For researchers, surveys provide an effective way of amassing high volumes of data amenable to statistical and quantitative analysis. What a survey lacks in granulated and detailed responses, it compensates for by ensuring potentially wide coverage, thus helping to capture general trends. In itself, though, the survey has limited value; at best it captures a moment in what respondents feel on particular topics (as pointed out in Holmes and Parsons, 2016, pp. 20–21), and if used iteratively, can even track how attitudes and opinions about a given set of issues change over time. For our purposes the survey was used as a preliminary phase in the data gathering process, ensuring wide and extensive coverage of researchers, where basic but general information about existing views about research support could be garnered.

The data gathered through the questionnaire has served as the basis for the in-depth interviews with members (professors, senior researchers, doctoral students) at specific schools. The harnessing of in-depth interviews has been central in soliciting more detailed and qualitatively richer accounts of experiences and expectations of researchers about the research process and research support, in a way that can better account for the differences and diversity in institutional and departmental traditions regarding research and publishing.

To ensure questions were tailored to specific representatives of different research institutions (e.g. IKL, NMT, IHS, ISV), semi-structured interviews were conducted, and took place within a four-week period during Spring 2022. These interviews have brought to light specific problems within and between departments and schools at SH regarding 'research support', problems that would have gone undetected by the more rigid and generic questionnaire. These problems took on several forms: (i) perceived problems identified by researchers at schools surrounding existing research support (*unrecognised needs*); (ii) perceived problems identified by research support team with respect to relations with research departments at SH (*unrecognised support*); (iii) problems arising because of a variance in needs and expectations between 'research areas' and between 'research areas' and the research support team (*unrecognised complexity*); (iv) any other issues unaccounted in the above.

Data

As stated above, the data used in the survey consists of two datasets: one questionnaire and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The data was gathered during the spring of 2022. The questionnaire has been used as a basis for collecting preliminary data and informants for the interviews.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was open to all institutions at SH and was made available online between 14 and 27 of February. At the start of the second week a reminder was sent out for academic staff to participate. The questionnaire was available in both Swedish and English. Before sending out the questionnaire, institutional prefects, the deputy vice-chancellor and the dean of research, were met with. The seniority of these contacts helped to spread the questionnaire to respective researchers within their own schools. All research active personnel were encouraged to participate, yielding 141 completed questionnaires, see Figure 1 and Table 4 for a breakdown between schools. The data from the questionnaire has been saved to excel and analysed in both excel and Matlab.

	NMT	**ISV**	**IKL**	**IHS**
PhD-student	2	3	9	5
Senior lecturer	16	21	17	8
Professors	4	7	16	7
Others	5	4	9	2

Table 4: Informants from each school participating in the questionnaire from question 1, "To which school do you belong?". Here limited to the four largest schools. Note: the category Others includes Post-docs and Adjuncts, as well as those who did not answer, only filling in the comment box.

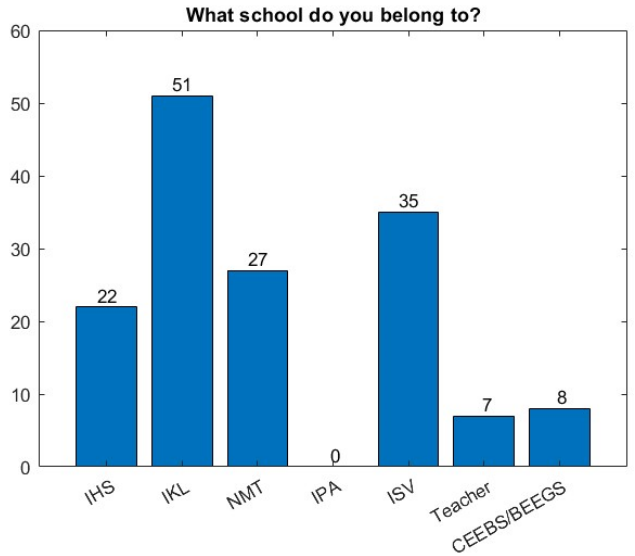

Figure 1: Question 1, "To which school do you belong?" Number of participants in the questionnaire across each school, as well as those affiliated to the teacher program and CEEBES/BEEGS. This question was multiple choice so participants could choose several options.

Interviews

Informants were recruited from the questionnaire, which asked whether any participants would like to participate further in an interview on research support. Participants shared their e-mails and were contacted by the library. Of the 26 who said that they were interested in being approached for interview, 17 were willing and had the time to participate.

The interviews took place in March and April 2022. Since there were still restrictions in effect due to the pandemic, we offered respondents the choice of conducting the interview either via zoom (digitally) or at the library (physically). In addition to this the informants were sent a letter of consent and an information letter on the study. The interviews lasted around 60 minutes, and all were recorded. All audio has since been transcribed and then deleted. The majority of the informants were senior researchers, with several years of experience (13 senior researchers, 4 PhD-students or Post-Docs), (see Table 5

for breakdown of participants between schools). The interviews were conducted in Swedish or in English, depending on the informant's preference.[6]

School	IHS	IKL	NMT	ISV	Teacher
Participants	2	7	5	1	2

Table 5: Informants participating in the interviews, divided by their school.

Limitations

As with all data, the dataset amassed has its limitations. The participation rate in the questionnaire was 28,9% (the estimate is that there are 488 available researchers at the time the questionnaire was conducted). While this is a good participation rate – in fact a slight improvement to the previous questionnaire conducted by the library on research data in 2019 (24,1%) (Thorsson and Linder, 2020, p. 6) – we would have ideally received a higher rate of participation, in order to have a fuller coverage of the different groups of researchers at Södertörn. Few 'Post-Docs' and 'Adjuncts' participated in the questionnaire, while the largest representation came from senior lecturers. While this reflects the general composition of researchers at SH, we still wished for greater participation in all researcher groups.

With respect to interview participation: participants were recruited by sending out information to those in the questionnaire who had filled in their e-mail on question 37. The informants were largely senior researchers (12 of 17) and as seen in Table 5, many of them belonged institutionally to either IKL or NMT. This skews the results slightly. But there is also the factor that there is perhaps a bias in who chooses to participate in a questionnaire and then a subsequent interview. The participants and informants are thus more likely to be invested (and perhaps have positive connotations about support provisions) than those who opted out of both questionnaire and interviews. We thus perhaps lack negative voices on research support, both regarding what specifically the library offers and beyond its remit.

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[6] All quotes from both questionnaire and interviews used in the report have been edited for clarity (when deemed necessary) and translated from Swedish to English (again, when necessary to do so).

Presentation of results and analysis
The 'who', 'what' and 'how' of research support

To analyse and assess the present state of research support requires three things. First, rather than dare to analyse research support that abstracts it from its embeddedness within the unique dynamics and institutional profile at SH, one must be cognisant of the specific situation within which existing research support is provided therein. Second, an analysis and assessment surrounding the quality and effectiveness of existing provisions for supporting researchers in their ongoing research tasks cannot be divorced from an understanding of the research process itself. Therefore, a consideration of research support provisions (on the administrative side of the university's operations) must take into account what it means to conduct research today: how it is undertaken, under what conditions? What specific pressures do actual research active scholars face in their everyday practices, what emphasis do they place on particular phases of doing their research; where does the research process begin and end, and what are its intermediary phases, etc.? And third, it is a question of not only getting a better handle on the 'research process', to which research support is to be responsive, but to present a characterisation of the image of the 'researcher scholar' at SH. It is for this reason that in-depth interviews were undertaken with researchers, in order to ascertain how actual researchers themselves reflect on their own research, rooting this in their lived experiences and self-interpretations of being a researcher and doing research in a changing, complexifying and globalising academic system.

All interviews undertaken with researchers began by inviting participants to talk about their own research itinerary, both over time (*diachronically*) and in the present (*synchronically*). What this has helped to make possible is to give some indications regarding (i) the *specificity* of the academic milieu but also an insight into (ii) the lived existence of a researcher at SH. Two preconditions for building up a more detailed and case sensitive picture of the possibilities and obstacles surrounding research support.

Södertörns högskola

In 1995, the Swedish *riksdag* approved an application to establish a new higher education institution in Stockholm, with the purpose of improving higher education provision and opportunities in the southern suburbs (Riksdag, 1994/95:UbU11). From its inception, SH was identified as a higher education centre that would principally specialise in both the fields of the humanities and the social sciences. That, onus was placed on the former is particularly noteworthy, since, even already in the late nineties and increasingly over the last twenty years, funding and institutional support for the humanities, both respect to teaching and research, has been detrimentally affected by the restructuring of higher education on both a European and global level (Belfiore, 2014; Bulaitis, 2018; Frassinelli, 2019). A professor, who was already part of the early stages of development at SH, recalls that, with a prospect of having an established research career at another university, and on the way already to getting docent status, a move to the newly established SH was risky, but was nonetheless 'a unique opportunity and worthwhile to setup a new institutional setting, with both research and funding for research and teaching, up to postgraduate level, offered' (Interview 10). At such a formative stage, this was merely aspirational, and in the process of trying to establish institutional support, much *ad hoc* work had to be undertaken: 'originally, we had an assignment to design a one semester … course, things were pretty loose… and it is pretty absurd when one reflects on things now, we had no positions, we received a monthly salary for a limited time, and we were told: if you get the students you can continue and go again the next term' (Interview 10). A similar experience was relayed by another humanities professor, who in the early years had to cope with a huge workload under precarious working conditions: 'they were very rough years' (Interview 14).

It is important to underline these beginnings, because, in the last three decades, SH has grown exorbitantly. While, in the mid-nineties, expectation was that student numbers would be around 4,000 students, SH has today around 13,000 enrolled on its courses and programmes. Secondly, while, in its early years, the emphasis was on undergraduate teaching, by the 2010s this higher education institution has acquired the rights to examine its own PhD students in several subjects, and has established distinct research areas to which doctoral students belong. During these years, research money attracted at SH has also increased markedly. Whereas the Baltic Sea Foundation remains a principal source of research funding, this situation has also diversified. Finally, presently SH is a högskola. Though, it has the

strategic goal of becoming a university, marking a further and potential stage in its development and transformation, and placing greater importance on research and adequate support for that research. All of this, in a localised setting, has resulted in a changed and changing context within which research support is situated; not only has it become more significant and central over time, but its scope, visibility and meaning has changed also. It was for this reason, precisely, that in 2013, a study into the fledging area of research support was undertaken, and why today, almost ten years later, this new investigation has been deemed necessary.

Södertörns högskola has become a site for inter- and trans-disciplinary research. Indeed, several researchers relayed how an emphasis placed on working between disciplinary frames, between and across the human, natural and social sciences, had been a factor in moving to SH in the first place. As one informant put it: 'Originally, in the 1990s and the early 2000s, I did principally … lab work mostly. But slowly, and when I came to SH, I began to work more interdisciplinarily: working with Political Science and Media departments … So, there has been quite a shift in my research focus' (Interview 5). A shift in focus for which securing a position at SH was a contributing factor.

As remarked by another of the interviewees, a recently appointed senior researcher, 'I was told about a position that had opened up at SH, and I applied for it, both to sustain collaborations [I had] but also to come to a more eclectic and interdisciplinary environment' (Interview 3). The interdisciplinarity of SH has been an explicit part of its profile from the beginning. Scholars who, for example, had at other universities been undertaking, strictly construed, 'natural science' came here and started working with researchers in the social and human sciences (e.g. media and communication studies, political science, sociology, etc), resulting in a complete change in how they approach the research process vis-à-vis the methods, theories, datasets used, etc. As one informant put it, 'it was a wakeup call for me…I was entering the human and social sciences, which meant going on a journey.' (interview 7). After moving to SH and switching direction, working between and across disciplines, there was a sense of having to relearn what it means to do research (interview 7). This quote, not atypical, reveals two important things: (i) that SH as a site of research has been of interest to researchers on point of fact of the opportunities afforded for inter- and trans-disciplinarity (researchers from within the natural sciences reaching out to collaborate with social science and humanities researchers, but also, more recently, with widening interest in the anthroposcene, humanity's impact on climate breakdown and its dereliction of duty towards nonhuman species,

the humanities have turned to natural and environmental scientists for collaboration); (ii) that researchers must adapt their knowledge and research skills when working across and between disciplines. There is thus a cross-fertilisation of expertise and methods that today funders are facilitating and encouraging in their calls for proposals, and that SH, from its inception, has been active in articulating the importance of. How has research support kept up with this founding aspiration? What challenges and possibilities are expressed by researchers themselves in negotiating transdisciplinarity, and how are they themselves equipped to cope with it? It is to the latter of these questions we must turn immediately, since an understanding of research support at SH at the present time will not become sufficiently clear until one accounts for the real and situated researcher.

The modern scholar: the 'who' of Research Support

Research support is relational in nature (Hicks, 2015; Atkinson, 2016; Del Bosque et al., 2017). Before analysis can turn to the *what* of research support, both in its existing and possible forms and contents, an analysis of the 'who', the researcher, partaking in that support, is to be considered. Simplified somewhat research support is dyadic in structure. Positionally, there is the *researcher* in possible need of research support and someone responsible for *administering* that support. Of course, such help is not administered by one person alone, nor by one particular administrative unit. Rather, it pre-supposes a plurality of different relations between the researcher and a variety of support units. Furthermore, this relation is not immune to change, development, complexification. It exists by virtue of its embeddedness within a changing landscape, both locally, at SH, and on account of more global changes affecting higher education provisions and conditions influencing how research is undertaken.

As one of our informants noted, the old image of the professor, sitting alone in his chair, reading extensively, thinking impressively profound thoughts, will not make it in the new research world; it is a thing of the past, if ever in fact it existed at all (Interview 9). The 'intellectual', who amasses exorbitant amounts of knowledge, or the 'specialist' who sticks obstinately within the confines of a narrow field of expertise, struggles to survive in a research landscape which, *inter alia*, values collaborative and societal out-reach work. Today's researcher has to be *adaptable*, *strategic*, *pragmatic*, open to *collaboration*, adept at *networking* and *problem-driven* in approaching the research application writing process and the actual undertaking of funded, or

for that matter unfunded, research. While it is important to bear in mind that there can be no uniform model or archetype surrounding the 'modern scholar' – since the picture changes between disciplines and academic traditions, between generations and researchers at different stages of their academic journeys – it is nonetheless informative to regard these characteristic traits as *tendencies* with respect to what is valued by the academic system as such, e.g. 'research funders' and 'financial' and 'government' institutions, and is what is reproduced by researchers in their lived practice, appearing also in their reflections on their own practice. Grounded in the interview material gathered, we shall take each of the characteristics in turn, in order to get a better sense of the 'who' of the researcher partaking in research support, and in subsequent parts of the analysis, we will draw out the implications with respect to what this may mean for research support as such.

Adaptability: the pragmatic attitude of the Researcher

A central attribute, present in many of the interviews conducted, was the need to be adaptable and pragmatic in their decisions and choices as researchers. Axiologically, this need was reflected upon by researchers with a certain amount of ambivalence (something that applies, for the most part, to all the characteristics that researchers must perform in the present academic system). Nevertheless, researchers' ambivalence does not alter the *de facto* situation that in order to exist as researchers they must be adaptable and pragmatic. Consider once more the reflection of one of the informants quoted in the previous section regarding the old professor in their armchair thinking clever thoughts, and who is 'not for this world'. The interviewee goes on to explain:

> Back in the day when I was doing my PhD, there was this sense that professors were doing whatever they wanted, PhD students could also do what they wanted…but now there are defined research profiles for departments, and you have to focus on specific fields, because…that's where the money is…and this is a problem I see…And first I saw this just as a problem, but now I see it from both sides. When I first came to Södertörn, I thought: does this mean I have to do something with a Baltic Sea angle, will I have to do something for teachers education? But once I started to think what could be interesting from the Baltic Sea Region, it helped me…what about this [interviewee names a specific empirical case]… this is really interesting. *So getting my thoughts together in another way and combining them with the theories and methods I have used before*. Sometimes, not being able to do whatever you want, steers your thoughts into an interesting direction. (Interview 9, emphasis added).

Here there is the recognition that research interests have to be adjusted to external pressures and goals. It is not necessarily the case that a researcher will have the luxury of pursuing what they themselves would wish to pursue (even if they would be best equipped to do so, or gain the greatest amount of satisfaction in doing so). There is rather a demand to adapt what they know, and the theoretical and methods they have used before, to new and not necessarily freely chosen topics (at least if funded research is to be secured): to combine, to articulate, and to make judgements based on expediency becomes the order of the day. Prior to applying to the Baltic Sea Foundation, for example, the connection between their own previous research and area studies was by no means obvious, though with thought, a way of making their previous research and knowledge 'relevant' was found, and has subsequently been a fecund site for further funded research.

Adaptability can take many forms, arising from a variety of different circumstances. A sense of pressure coming from funders and institutions to make researchers produce work directly usable and applicable to public policy and social issues is another driver for a pragmatic and adaptable disposition: to venture into themes and topics that show societal utility, for one researcher, has encouraged 'opportunism' (Interview 2), where researchers must adjust to the 'terms and concepts of the day', in order to stand a better chance of obtaining money. This situation is compounded by the fact that many researchers, without tenure, are solely dependent on getting new research grants in order to survive. As one researcher, who since 2003 has been living from one research grant to the next, moving between European countries as a researcher, explained: 'I'm not tenured, I am from 2003 running purely on the money I raise through grants, with projects, which pay my salary, so I'm very heavily dependent on grants, and I always need to be very experimental in my works, because when you do grants you can't reboil the same soup, you need to push a little bit further that's why I'm now moving in this, the field is changing, it's a lot' (Interview 17). In order to keep up with the pace of change, constant adjustments and adaptations have to be made. One always has to be 'on the move, productive' (Interview 17). This, of course, is a source of ambivalence. On the one hand, discursively researchers draw upon a classically Weberian notion of their work as a vocation, a 'calling' (Weber, 2002, p39). On the other, the constant need to chase the next research grant is a source of anxiety and disillusionment within the profession.

To be adaptable means also changing ongoing research ideas, projects, negotiating contingencies, such as the pandemic, which greatly impacted on researchers' work and necessitated quick decisions and shifts in direction in

order to salvage ideas and research plans. One doctoral researcher, who started in 2020, had to abort their original plan for an ethnographic-observation based investigation, quickly redesigning their proposed study so that it would be principally a text-based discourse analysis. 'Things change', the doctoral student remarks philosophically, 'what you thought would be relevant [when originally applying] is no longer so' (Interview 6). A point raised by many,[7] from all fields of research and from all levels. Doctoral students interviewed could easily relay this, since the pandemic had disproportionately impacted their research aims. Take a doctoral researcher in the humanities (Interview 12), who was dependent on research visits to archives in Norway and Finland during the height of the pandemic, and had some difficulties accessing the material. The researcher was fortunate enough that some of the material could be accessed digitally by using the archives at *Kungliga Bibliotek* (the Royal Library) in Stockholm, but was further at the mercy of unreliable technology (e.g. sometimes OCRs (Optical Character Recognition) were of bad quality, or obtaining access to the special computer lab proved challenging due to oversubscription) as well as the fact that, at the point of gathering and analysing the empirical material, the digital archive of Finnish newspapers only covered a limited period of time, leaving many of the most relevant material for their investigation hard to come by.

The need to adapt, to be pragmatic, cuts across all parts of the research process. From the decisions made with respect to which topics and themes to develop for the purposes of applying for research grants, to adjusting and changing direction the course of the actual research when contingent events and unforeseen obstacles are encountered. It also arises in the transition from the application phase to initiating a project that has been successfully funded. Several interviewees remarked that the text written at the application phase does not often correspond to how the project will be realised. As one post-doctoral researcher describes:

> So these are the first steps… I have an idea. I think the idea *first* as an application, starting writing it, submitting it, reworking the application over time until it is funded. *But after that, the process, I think, starts again.* Because, I cannot just do what I have written in my applications. Even though the problem and the question is still present, when you have money you have to rethink it as *something that will work* (both respect to what you promised them, not only in terms of research outputs (articles, books), but also conferences and

[7] Consider also this reflection from Interview 16: 'The pandemic was difficult. Since a lot of us in Pedagogy are interested in people, and then when you cannot be in schools and schools are closed, you have to rethink.' (Interview 16)

> workshops, organise events etc). To have a workshop, to have a conference: the question then is: who should I invite that somehow works with the question, the problem, in the research project? But probably, not in the way that I write the problem in the application. Because none of those people exist! So things have to be rethought: how should I realise the project, now that I have the time and the resources. I am in that process at the moment. Also, when you are first developing an idea for an application, much of that work is done in one's own free time. Which means that you don't really have the time to go through the secondary literature properly. You end up skim reading it. Which means when you actually receive the money, you have to go to that literature, and read it more thoroughly. Then work out what one's contribution can be. Because, on a second look, after a reading that is less cursory, you realise that the problem you first identified is not necessarily the most interesting or key problem. Yeah, so that's where I am now. Trying to keep the core of the project but finding ways to answer the question that deals with the problem I presented. Then I assume, I hope, that, in two years, I will have discovered new problems, new ideas, that will lead to new projects, when the process starts again.
> (Interview 1)

The researcher has to begin to think in terms of what is *practicable,* and does so once the money has been obtained, that is, when the shift is made from a possible future project (written in haste, under stress, in-between other teaching and administrative responsibilities, and written while cognisant also of framing the project in a way that will give the researcher the best possibility of securing funds) to a real and 'materially secure' project that will extend across three years. The researcher is up against imperfect conditions—time constraints, availability of resources, literature, etc. The fact that there is often a non-correspondence between the proposal and the research project as it is realised obviously has nothing to do with 'deception' or 'insincerity', that is to say, of not delivering on what one promises. Here there are a number of issues to consider. It is not uncommon, for example, for a research to be approved without the full amount being granted:

> What the funding body did was to reduce the funding given to our project. So we had to reduce not only time, but our ambitions. As far as the funding body was concerned, it was as if they wanted us to have the same level of ambition but with reduced time and reduced funds. So that needed to be negotiated. (Interview 8)

Originally, the researchers in question had to remove an international conference planned; though, with extra effort and resourcefulness managed to fund it elsewhere. The further problem is that increasingly project applic-

ations are evaluated *as if* the research had already been conducted, when in actual fact – as a proposal – it is far from being so. In a way the application and the start of the project proper must be kept as two distinct and differentiated (but equally important) parts of the research cycle. While, as the informant quoted at length above makes clear, the central aims and problematic guiding the project often remain the same, before having the opportunity to actualise the project, many unknowns and question-marks still exist. It is as though 'one must begin again' (Interview 1). For this reason, many researchers talked about the help needed during the *transitional* phase between the articulation of a possible research project (the application phase) and the actualisation of research (once funding has been granted). One professor put the case as follows:

> I feel where I need support is ensuring that I have covered all my bases, where I have to identify what other people have said (about the topic) –is there anything that I have missed, is there anything obvious? Especially, non-English research. There is a linguistic unfairness in research, where nothing matters if it is not written in English. And there's this attitude: if you don't write in English then I won't include it in my research! And I don't want to commit that mistake. (Interview 8)

Once funding, and therefore time, has been secured, there is the possibility of returning to issues that could hardly be touched upon in the context of a proposal; an opportunity to extend and explore literature the researcher could not possibly have known to have existed, but which may contribute to opening up new possibilities and lines of enquiry for the project to be initiated. For the issue is that, 'on a second look at previous literature, after a reading that is less cursory, more thorough, deeper, you realise that the problem you first identified is not necessarily the most interesting or key problem. Yeah, so that's where I am now. Trying to keep the core of the project but finding ways to answer the question that deals with the problem I first presented [at the application phase].' (Interview 1)

Stratagems and tactics

As mentioned above the researcher has to operate within an imperfect set of conditions. Time is itself constrained. Constrained especially for those researchers who are seeking research funding, or who have no fully funded research project but end up undertaking research in any case (often in their own spare time, or on top of administrative tasks or teaching commitments).

Time – the fact it is limited, criss-crossed by all manner of tasks – is one reason accounting for the pragmatic disposition of researchers, and the structural need to be adaptable. However, it also opens up for a consideration of a third and further characteristic. The researcher as engaged in both strategies and a *tactical* set of decisions. As one researcher described, 'strategy is what you do, it is what you learn' (Interview 9). By tactics, it is worthwhile noting the way in which Michel de Certeau famously defines the practice: 'a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing"'. Interestingly, in order to 'fit in' research, the researcher must find ways of 'tak[ing] back time', of, as de Certeau describes, 'constantly manipulating events in order to turn them into opportunities.' (de Certeau, 1988, pxix). Here is how one senior researcher describes the situation:

> The teaching load in some of the subjects at SH is huge. So there is no time to get time off. So maybe because I was a manager, I could have myself some slack. Of course, at times there was no way to do any research, since all of my time was taken up with looking after the department. But I would try to find pockets of time where I could focus. (Interview 7)

When it was proposed that it might be likened to 'stealing time', the informant agreed immediately: 'yes, definitely stolen time, that's a good expression for it. I do think that when you are in a management role, what you do is serving others. All the time, you are just taking care of everyone else—their problems, their needs. In a way the stolen time was payment for really hard work.' Seizing opportunities, as and when they arise. They continue:

> Most of the time, every day, I get interrupted by everyone […] What I have tried to do is to have 'research weeks', where I work about 50% on my research during those weeks, Monday to Friday. But people at SH, they are ruthless at appointing me to meetings: you have to go to this meeting. So they take up a lot of my time. I have learnt to be super-efficient. So when I do the work, I do it. So before having our meeting today, I have, for half an hour, been writing on a Chapter I am going to submit to an edited anthology. So for half an hour… I do these kinds of steps: to collect data, write on the introduction, for half an hour. Perhaps, after lunch, I will write for half an hour. That's how I do things. I have to focus. It is the only way I can do it. It is not for everyone … some people are surprised by how I can switch from one task to another. But this is something I have learnt. (Interview 7)

The attempt at finding, taking, seizing time, in order to do (any kind of) research is a recurring motif throughout the interviews. They are, indeed, in

search of lost time. Researchers using their commute to and from work to answer emails, so as to open up the possibility to do some writing while they are at the office, or finding ways to use their lecture time as a way to explore and develop research ideas, were two tactics adopted to 'take back time'. There was expressed by some a sense of loss, not only a loss of time but a loss of a certain way of being an academic. This mainly applied to senior researchers who have experience of a previous structural regime upon which to directly compare (while younger scholars have had to take as fact the new realities and expectations placed on researchers, at least if they are to 'succeed'). One humanities professor articulated the sadness in several key ways, of which one principal cause was time: 'it's sad. It's just sad. The only thing I can see if I see my own habits is that I feel very stressed and that I feel very … that I don't have time, very little time, except for reading what I find important for my teaching or my own research' (Interview 14). A central way in which researchers develop ideas, gain inspiration for future texts, projects even, is by reading around and beyond their immediate research concerns, keeping their ears and eyes open for ideas, empirical material that can jolt their existing thoughts in unexpected ways. There was a time when, for this particular scholar, a little bit of time was habitually set aside after lunch at *Kungliga Biblioteket* (the Royal Library), to peruse the latest issues of magazines and periodicals that would stand in the lobby, to 'keep track' of ongoing debates in several magazines. But this is a practice no longer pursued, in part because the physical site for accessing periodicals has moved from the library lobbies onto the virtual spaces of internet sites, thereby transforming the experience of reading, and paradoxically making it harder simply to browse and be open to the unexpected. But mainly, because of the stress of time. In other ways, this scholar had found tactics to take back little pockets of time lost, by, as mentioned before, using the daily commute to respond to emails, correct student papers. But this has come to the detriment, again, of reading –something that would have been a regular activity, to and from work. Time thus has to be endlessly negotiated, requiring this scholar to be more 'strategic' about how time is 'used' and 'shared' between multiple tasks. One concrete example is how proposing new courses could be used to facilitate embryonic and evolving research ideas: '… doing a course means that I give myself the time to play around looking for things ... it can be quite free and I can just think further, and I read and I think. And for me, this works when I'm standing in the classroom and I have to write lectures together, it's a thought process' (Interview 14). A thought process where teaching and research ideas mutually support one another.

Time is not the only site for tactical and strategic decisions. And while some were reticent about labelling it in those terms, others described how they approached publishing and networking strategically. As can further be seen in the section on Open Access, for most researchers, *where* to publish is a strategic decision.[8] For some researchers this can take the form of an active approach to how they publish and where. It can mean focusing on getting published in the top journals in their particular field. As one researcher put it, "I have cracked the code regarding how to get published" (Interview 7). Alternatively, it can mean avoiding certain actors on the market due to their reputation, as another researcher claimed: "I'm starting to see Elsevier as someone I don't want to associate with any longer" (Interview 17). For others it means diversifying how they publish. One researcher mentioned that during a project they decided to publish a report in one of Södertörns series and said "… I heard among my colleagues that a report is worthless! But that's not true." (Interview 2). The researcher continued:

> There's a lot of high-quality published work, that for one reason or another began life as a report. A report I wrote, which I must say, was not worse than any other article I have ever written. And I've read many other reports that've been very good. … And then another colleague in the project did the same thing. He was inspired. So there was another report by a colleague.
> (Interview 2)

Researchers also explained how they liked to work with smaller journals that cater for narrower topics and research interests. In this connection, two researchers raised the possibility of seeking out journals whose scope have allowed them to target their specific area of interest (Interviews 15 and 17).

In a further example, one well-established professor explained their experiences of editing anthologies, conceding that the whole process could be fraught with issues and quickly become messy. After every difficult experience, they would say to themselves: never again. And yet, invariably, after a while, they would find themselves putting together another edited volume. When asked why, the reply was: 'Well, I see it as a strategic choice… there is something in collaborating with individual contributors, to network, to reinforce, and to build for the future' (Interview 5). To build a network of scholars was the strategic aim.

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[8] See pp 58-66 of this report.

Collaborative work and the networked Researcher

Irrespective of department and institutional affiliation, there is an onus on today's researcher to be 'collaborative', with an ongoing task to establish international networks and cooperative ties. When asked to reflect on how the conditions under which research is conducted has changed over the last decade, one professor remarked that 'personally, for me, the shift has been from a solo researcher to a networked researcher, that is, to a co-researcher, collaborator. So, if you look at my list of applications, for the first 15 years, I was the sole author on the things I wrote, and then finally I start co-authoring. First, it is one co-authored, but then it snowballs. Especially with networks. That is very important to me. Working with people who share the same areas of interest' (Interview 8). This particular interviewer in part attributed the change from an 'individual researcher' to 'collaborative-based' research to a shift in her own perspective surrounding the logic of competition – 'perhaps in the beginning I was worried about competition… and I do not know whether this is typical of younger researchers: you feel as though you need your own territory. You are scared about talking to others about your ideas, because they might take them! I remember feeling like that' (Interview 8). Unsurprising, given the precariousness of the position of junior researchers in academic institutions, and the fact that, from a formative period of their research trajectory, doctoral researchers are steered into thinking about a 'career', they see and hear about the limited tenured positions available, and the need to 'publish or perish'. These dictums, which junior researchers are repeatedly told, may contribute to a latent 'possessiveness' over their ideas, and is based on their own structural vulnerability. Notwithstanding this consideration, the more senior and established the researcher, the greater the emphasis on collaborative research. Whether this is a break with, or an extension of, the logic of competition in research, is a moot point. The encouragement to work collaboratively is something that does not come from researchers exclusively, but structurally, from funding bodies and from higher education institutions, wherein competition exists now at the collective (between competing research teams) and university (between higher education institutions) levels. This, as commented above, cuts across disciplines. While big collaborative projects are traditionally associated with the natural sciences, where empirical data is pooled together from a variety of different researchers, there is a tendency among social sciences and the humanities too, to engage in larger research teams (working across discip-

lines, and at other universities, nationally and internationally). This was a reality indicated by many:

> And the other thing to think about is that they are all collaborative projects. And along my career, I am very used to working collaboratively. During my career I probably only have one single authored publication. I do a lot of co-authored work. But that maybe also connects to my training. I was fortunate enough to be tied to a lab, a group of scholars who were both collaborative and inter-disciplinary. (Interview 3)

> For me, networks are a really big resource. They are very important. They are very important 1) because you need partners, and so on, and secondly because when doing a very specific type of inquiry you might not always have peers in your department, around you who are able to engage in conversations that are important. So sometimes I need to reach out internationally to find people who are interested to talk to you on topics. And also because I'm always looking for new topics. (Interview 17)

> When I network it is difficult to say, but it's often good to have, we can come back to that later … I feel that so very (few) people read things for instance. I think that these personal meetings today are very important. For example, when I went to Bergen, I sort of e-mailed this guy about parasites, it was a way of hooking him up, "So do you want to be part of a network?", because it'll probably flatter him a little bit and then he will remember me, and then he will remember us in Stockholm, and if he wants to do something … he will be in contact with us. So that's a way of working, and I also had a very nice experience there: I was there [in Bergen] through a colleague and she had a colleague in return that was an art historian, who took us around the museum very, very nice … so then I sent her the book, thanking her so very much for showing us the museum and sent her the book… So I say this is how I do when I do network. Often when you try to connect with people on a more personal level and read something that they have written. And try to keep in contact, just do something. For a while, when I was responsible for the higher seminar, I used that as a way of networking, as soon as I meet someone that I thought was interesting I invited them to come and speak at our higher seminar. I think that worked quite well. It was not only networking for me but it was also networking for them and for the department (Interview 14).

> As a researcher, you always have to have your threads out. You must be a networking researcher…. I do like co-writing, and that's what I do now. I hardly ever write alone now. And I think that is how I like best to work… and I know we are all different here…but I like being able to discuss, analyse the material with other people…finding others who are as interested as you in a problem. And I like that way of working very much. I did not know that as a

> PhD researcher, I had not thought about it, but this is something I realised when being a senior researcher. One of the benefits (Interview 9).

'Collaborative' research, alongside cultivating a 'pragmatic' disposition and being both strategic and tactical in one's decisions as an academic, dovetail. Thus, the networking researcher approaches meeting other researchers, attending conferences, inviting academics to discuss their ongoing research within the intimate setting of a departmental higher seminar, as an opportunity for opening up possibilities in a way understood as mutually beneficial. These relations are often transitory, pragmatic, fluid, multiple, and task- and goal- oriented. One researcher explained how, every year when application season comes around, contact will be made with a variety of researchers with the prospect of collaborating on a research proposal together. Hours will be spent working intensely on putting together the application, and yet once the application has been submitted it is often the case that (unless the project is funded) they will not have contact again. There is an obvious ambivalence surrounding this situation. On the one hand, researchers recognise the strength of working collaboratively, of sharing and working together on knowledge production, of gaining encouragement through the mutual support and shared interest of like-minded researchers enthused by the same questions, areas of research, and so on. Not only is it acknowledged to have epistemic strengths, it is existentially a way out of a feeling of solitude that can otherwise define the pursuit of research, especially as a more junior researcher, where, in spite of support mechanisms in place, feelings of being alone, lacking networks, and understanding themselves as subordinate members of the research community at SH, can be difficult challenges.[9] On the other hand, the nature of the collaborations can err on the side of instrumenttality, and a sense, for some, that 'networking' is something that one simply *has to do* in order to survive as an academic: to go to the right conferences, to talk to the right people, keeping up-to-date one's online profiles. There is a whole side to academia of 'having to be seen', 'visible', 'connected', that can feel too much like 'self-promotion' and beneath the dignity of a researcher.

The actual undertaking of collaborative based research itself gives rise to concrete challenges, whether one is Project Leader or a project member. On the side of the Project Leader, a whole set of administrative tasks must be

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[9] This was especially the case during the pandemic. See above. Also, one PhD researcher interviewed described the situation of a doctoral student in the following way: 'One third is writing your thesis, one third is doing your courses and the rest is just understanding your position within this place' (Interview 16)

juggled with, at the same time as one should be getting on with the task of doing research. When a project brings together researchers from different universities, often in different countries, if not continents, it can bring with it added considerations and complications. As one scholar put it: 'coordinating international projects is challenging. It is more of a practical thing: to get people to follow the plan, to do stuff and the plan is seldom achievable' (Interview 5). Coupled with the fact that, in some cases, differences still exist between countries with respect to research ethics and expectations surrounding publications. On the question of the latter, the same researcher commented that, for example, the option of publishing as part of Södertörn Academic Studies, was for some collaborators coming from other countries, was not deemed a serious option; only articles published in high-ranking journals would be sufficient for their own university departments, more sensitive to impact measures and citation scores. Negotiating such contextualised differences in expectations between international collaborators was a constant task.

The problem-driven Researcher

Research has increasingly become 'problem-driven'. By this, what is meant first of all is that the researcher will often initiate a research idea based on a concrete question that derives in some shape or form from an actual problem that society at large faces, or the researcher has somehow to take their point of departure in the actual world or 'concrete reality', demonstrating contemporary relevance. Universities, governments and funding bodies place value on 'social impact', encouraging researchers (especially in the social and natural sciences) to engage in dialogue with interest groups, practitioners and societal stakeholders. Thus research that, in one way or another, can intervene upon the present state of public discourse, that can perhaps be filtered through the prism of public policy or can take a critical stand on problematical phenomena. In any case, it is the problem that drives a research idea, rather than a theory or method. Such problems are situated and contextual in character, and not general in the sense that research seeks not to offer universal 'models' or broad 'theorisations' (Interview 2). Again, this finds an echo in the statements with which this section began, namely the idea that the 'old bookish intellectual' is not for *this* academic reality. Rather to identify a problem grounded in real processes and practices means being attuned to ongoing debates within public discourse and within the academic community, national and international (a fact that itself underwrites the

necessity of being a part of large research networks). This has had a direct impact on funding opportunities for researchers, in that, at least in principle, it has increased the possibilities for applying for money:

> The funding situation has changed a lot during this time. It has diversified, I think. The funders, especially maybe FORMAS, but also some of the strategic funding institutions, such as MISTRA (and some others), have been part of the shift in the funding schemes focusing on communication plans, outreach, collaboration, and with societal actors, and research…interdisciplinarity. These things have been strong in the calls. You also notice, obviously it is hard to understand exactly, because my position and what I do has changed, but from my perspective, the availability of funding options seems to have increased, but also I guess in the fields I am active in. Usually, I find myself almost over… there are too many calls I potentially could address. And the competition for funding has increased. And so the number of applications have increased too. (Interview 5)

Targeted, theme-specific, calls from smaller 'strategic funding institutions', as well as EU based calls, supplement the annual general calls from *Vetenskapsrådet* and *Riksbankens Jubileumsfond*, and, for researchers at SH specifically, *Östersjöstiftelsen*. While, then, formally, there is a higher volume of application calls, the relevance of these calls to particular researchers varies, depending on one's research field. Particular researchers, with certain research profiles, benefit from theme targeted calls, and humanities scholars in particular have to be especially strategic in how they bend their knowledge and specific capacities towards societal issues. A point that returns us to the 'pragmatic', 'strategic' and 'adaptable' characteristics of today's researcher. For, it is the researcher who is adept at adjusting to trends and tendencies in wider public discourse who, rightly or wrongly, secures 'funded' research time.[10]

The problem-driven nature of research does not only touch upon how researchers go about applying for research funds, but, in a second and slightly different sense, it guides how they negotiate and understand the research process as such. This point has special significance for how interested parties should be thinking and doing research support, since while an individual researcher today may be better or less well informed about general information regarding, for example, Open Access, DiVA, publishing support, etc,

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[10] Parenthetically, it is important to underline that much 'unfunded' research is carried out at universities, by researchers who sacrifice much free-time or even are prepared to take unpaid leave to pursue research interests, in addition to any teaching and administrative responsibilities they have. One of the central problems today is that the work of these researchers are not as acknowledged or supported as they should be.

it is *if* and *when* researchers face *specific* problems that they make direct contact with members of the 'research support team'. Here are two excerpts from the interview material that illustrate the point:

> [It is] when new stuff crops up, when they start talking about data management plans…that was challenging for a while. But I got help from your colleagues [at the library], so that was great. Every time there is change, and things develop there are challenges: challenges to improve one's capacities, enhancing resources. I guess the research process is always challenging. (Interview 5)

> And so while I can sometimes solve my own problems, there is often a follow-up problem that occurs, which I have more difficulties solving, and that's when it becomes someone else's issue. The fact is that the problem I encounter is probably ill defined by me, because I am the one who cannot solve it. The issue is that there is not someone who I know I can turn to in order to jump in straightaway. (Interview 4)

Research support is activated when the research process 'breaks down', when established support, which is otherwise taken for granted, 'does not work' or does not fully cover the specific need or demand arising at a given critical moment of the research process. This may sound obvious. But in actual fact, this is far from being so. There are certain issues that are fully integrated into researchers' thinking, and without reflecting on it as 'support', they will go about solving issues. There are other issues for which, as the second excerpt indicates, the researcher lacks the fore-knowledge or previous experiences to even articulate it as a problem that can be easily solved, and are thus in need of very specific help, without knowing to whom and where they can turn, and how to frame the challenges they are facing. Often such experiences are part of the open, contingent, and serendipitous journey along which the research embarks when doing research: issues that cannot be anticipated or prepared for until they happen. As one informant put it, 'it is only when things are not there, do I notice the importance and value of research support' (Interview 8).

In the foregoing sections, an attempt has been made to identify some characteristic traits that today's researcher has to embody and perform if they are to survive in the reconfigured research landscape. Not dissimilar to other professions operating within an increasingly competitive and market-driven system, researchers have to demonstrate adaptability, and be pragmatic and 'strategic' and 'tactically' minded. In order to exist within the research system, there is an onus on them to augment collaborative ties and operate within extensive networks. Finally, a further 'value' encouraged by the system is that the researcher is 'problem-driven'. It is important to stress that these ten-

dencies are reproduced from within the contextualised self-interpretations of researchers themselves, and moreover it cannot be surmised that, in discussing their own work in these terms, they are accepting of this situation and the conditions under which they undertake research. Indeed, each so-called 'characteristic' harbours ambivalence and ambiguity on the side of the researcher. At the same time, there is the acknowledgement that, for good and bad, this is *de facto* the situation they must operate in, at least if they are 'to succeed'. This is the point that is to be underlined at this stage. At the same time, it must equally be acknowledged that a significant number of researchers carry out research without funding (doing so at significant cost, in terms of working conditions and not necessarily getting the support that is available to those engaged in funded projects). These researchers can exist without necessarily performing the characteristic traits that the wider research system 'values', and this is an issue that needs to be given due to consideration, insofar that research support must reach out to them. With all this considered, then, how does the foregoing description of the 'who' affect how research support is to be understood, presently and in the future? It is to these issues we now turn.

What is research support? Negotiating the 'what': general and specific

An understanding of research support had first required an investigation not into the 'what' of its contents, but a prior analysis of the 'who' partaking in this support. This is because research support must first be understood as a *relation* between researcher and administrative support teams. It is contextual, dynamic, changeable, subject to negotiation, rather than a fixed set of impersonal 'services' that are generally available. By getting a sense of how present researchers at SH describe the conditions under which they today do research – the expectations placed upon them, and the experiences upon which they draw – one can better elucidate research support as it is understood and actually used.

Research support is about supporting researchers during the research process. For the researcher, the process is often serendipitous (that is, contingent), open, exploratory, and without any clearly defined beginning and end. During the interviews, as an exercise, researchers were invited to pictorially represent how the research process unfolds for them (see figure 2). They were asked to narrate their drawings, further describing particular facets of the research process that they deemed especially significant (with

respect to challenges and possibilities). This offered an interesting insight that could rectify some potential assumptions about the research process and *mutatis mutandi,* research support. One could be forgiven for assuming that the research process begins with the receiving of money and ending once funding has run out. However, the process is, for researchers, less of a straight line, proceeding from A to B; for some it was more circular or a spiral, for others it was comprised of a series of squiggly lines. And while others were more orderly in separating out distinct parts of the research process, they were not presented as following any systematic sequence. As one PhD student pointedly comments, 'I do not really know where the research process begins and ends', later describing the process as a 'merry-go-round' (Interview 12). A metaphor that both captures the 'never-ending', 'cyclical' and 'continuous' nature of research as well as its open-ending character.

Figure 2. Two examples of how researchers pictorially represented the research process, as they experience it.

Tellingly, researchers (even those who have research funds) would not begin their diagrams and descriptions at the point at which a 'research project' has been granted funds, when, so to say, research 'proper' can begin in earnest. They would instead take the process further back: to the fuzzy, uncertain, and embryonic moment that an idea, thought or problem originally takes root: to the research application phase, and in fact to the preliminary steps even leading to that stage. The fact that interviewees would place emphasis on this formative phase should be taken as an indication of its significance, and as an integral part of the research process – not as simply a 'stepping-stone' or an activity that stands apart from the 'research process'. It is a part that, while not necessarily going 'anywhere' (owing to not receiving funding), for the researcher, it does take them to new and interesting areas for thinking and writing, and can easily yield research outputs (e.g. articles, book chapters,

conferences, symposia) without funding and 'research time' obtained. Many researchers interviewed not only placed emphasis on the *formation* of a research idea at the application stage, but highlighted the stress, workload, and intensity of this period. Given that (i) the start of application season coincides with the start of the spring academic term and (ii) the writing of applications is often considered 'additional work' that has to be carried out in researchers' own time. A question, to be kept open at this stage, is what practicable support can be given to researchers when it comes to the application phase, and during the after-life of a project idea, which unfortunately does not result in a funding grant? Certainly, SH does offer seminars and guidance with respect to writing applications (organised both at the departmental and meta-departmental level), the economy department was also mentioned by many researchers as given invaluable support with respect to ironing out budgetary matters before pending deadlines. But is this sufficient? And what of the library, in particular? In an illuminating exchange with one senior researcher, a previous experience from 2015 was imparted. The researcher recalled that, in order to work towards writing a joint application for a future research project with international collaborators, money had been received to put together some preliminary findings:

> Once I came in [to the library], I think it was when I received money from CBEES to do this exploratory workshop – it was all the way back then – and then I got contacted by the library, and there was a message like: 'we see you have received some money. Would you like to set up a meeting with us and talk about your work and we might be able to help?' I met with [name of a former library staff member], and the two of us sat down together, and then she just started searching for things, and found all this material … and I was kind of blown away. I had not gotten to that point yet, and it seemed really easy for her, and very helpful. But when I got the full application funds from ÖSS, nobody contacted me. And it was Ok. I was fine on my own. But I remember being pleasantly surprised about that initiation of contact. And then when I realised: she knows how to get to a lot of information. (Interview 8)

This is an interesting example of what we will later describe as *proactive* research support – something concrete and specific that, in this case at least, benefitted the researcher, not at the point of acquiring a full 3 year research grant, but a preliminary phase, at a phase prior to applying for a fully funded research project. Happily, this researcher would receive two grants for projects from two major funders two years later.

The research process is built around moments of discovery, serendipity, chance encounters, unforeseen challenges and possibilities. As indicated above, it is a process without end and where the beginnings are themselves obscure and fragile. It should not be any surprise therefore that because the research process is itself fluid, extensive, and fuzzy, then, for researchers, 'research support' would also harbour these features. Indeed, in conversation with members of the academic community, it became clear that 'research support' was itself an elastic term, which spread across a variety of different areas of concern, and involving a manifold of different requests and tasks. When asked directly what research support meant for them, researchers would mention, inter alia: IT support (i.e. getting the right programs on the computer); inter-library loans; budgetary guidance and financial support; Data-security support; Open Access; Outreach support; communications; proofreading; archival assistance, project application support, etc:

> Right, so there is economic support, groups giving support with applications, and research 'calls'. There is the library: literature, publications, data. And for us we have had support from the unit that deals with societal relations. That has been quite valuable. There are a number of different supports. (Interview 4)

> [R]esearch support is basically that my computer is working and that I have access to all my programs. And now that doesn't work in one program, where you need to have a dedicated surface on the computer to save in. And since we use OneDrive here and that creates pathways that don't function within the program and at home, I can use my computers whole hard drive, but here I can only use 'My documents 'and what's on the OneDrive. So, I can't do the analysis and have to use my computer at home. And that is the side effect of having this type of system and wanting to have this type of system. It is easy for those who work with IT, but they maybe haven't investigated the effects in all cases … The clearest support is the funds I've gotten from the institution to help with writing applications, one this spring and one before COVID. It resulted in an application, it was super helpful, it gave it a higher quality… Then, I don't know, I tried last year, I know that they e-mail out these, External Relations e-mail, but I suspect that they are not well used… Then it's the support you get with the full cost calculation. That support is a demand rather than a support…. Something that I really wish for would be if DiVA could draw in references, that would have been really good, not having to put them in yourself. (Interview 4)

Researchers understand research support in a very intuitive and concrete manner, namely as any assistance given to facilitate the research process, in one form another. They do not carry with them a precise and neat concept of

what, and what does not, count as research support. Nor are they necessarily aware of all the possible support services available to them, until, that is, they need specific help on a particular problem. Only when a problem comes to light does the need and significance of obtaining research specific help reveal itself. This returns us to the 'problem-driven' nature of the researcher adumbrated in the previous section – a point we will have reason to return to in subsequent parts of our analysis also.

In spite of the definitional fuzziness that 'research support' has for researchers, in the academic literature on the topic, *a prima facie*, definition is provided: one that separates out general from specific (researcher targeted) support. It is to this issue that we shall turn in the following section, focusing specifically on how research support is understood in the specific context of the library. To what extent does this conceptual clarification assist us, if at all?

General and specific research support

Services offered to researchers span all four teams at the library, from providing literature and inter-library loans to Open Access and publishing services. One way of thinking about these services is in terms of 'general' and 'specific' support, see Figures 3 and 4. General support is typically used more frequently, since this type of support includes, for example, finding literature, a staple practice in any researchers' repertoire. The specific support, on the other hand, is less frequently used. Specific support would include, inter alia, publishing, Open Access support or research data support. In this category support with DiVA, the university scientific repository is also included, but then again, arguments can be made that DiVA is better understood in terms of general support too. General support is often characterised by shorter interactions between researcher and a member of a research support team. Often it can start with a question or request from the researcher (e.g. in the context of the library, an inter-library loan or help with finding an article). The interactions are punctual, isolated and the interaction needs to be no longer than once the book or article is found. Specific support is of a different nature. It requires frequent and ongoing interactions with the researcher. While it is often the researcher who will initiates contact, the nature of specific, 'targeted' support requires the researcher and librarian to engage in a deeper and contextually dependent engagement. If a researcher asks for help with Open Access or how to publish with the committee, or if they are experiencing a particular problem internal to their research, they will, on occasion, reach out to library staff on the question for specific assistance.

As seen in Figure 3 and Figure 4 there are differences in how often researchers use types of support. Unsurprisingly, 'general support' is more utilised than 'specific support'. This is because general support constitutes, so to say, the 'bread and butter' of library services. Specific support, on the other hand, is typically (though by no means exclusively) used once the researcher starts or finishes their projects, and so, to a certain extent, is dependent on where in the project phase the researcher is. Researchers are in some cases less likely to seek help as individuals, but as groups or as representatives of a 'project'. A research project is thus the principal focus, and not the individual. Accordingly, it might be the case that if *the project* needs help with a data management plan, it might be the Project Leader who contacts the library, and who then represents the research group as a whole. This makes things complicated if – and this is an increasingly common reality – a research project spans across more than one higher education institution, not only nationally but internationally also.

Comments from the questionnaire support the existence of variations in the type of research support sought; the kind of actions a researcher takes at the library, and the help they need, is dependent on the current state of their research situation. In several comments regarding question 5, "How often do you use the library?", many researchers discussed how the nature of their work, and the stage they are at with their research, changes their use and need for the library. One comment from the questionnaire described fluctuations in library-use in the following way: "In periods, searching for articles every day when writing articles or preparing for lessons; periodically not so much". While this comment specifically refers to researchers looking for articles and books, it is also relevant to targeted and specific research support, in that it points to how researchers' interactions with research support is in large part 'problem driven'.

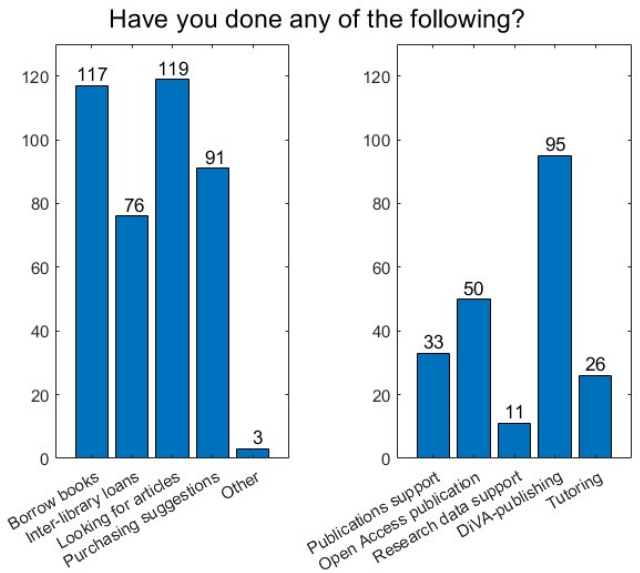

Figure 3: Question 6, "Have you used any of the following services (whether physically or digitally)?". Participants could choose multiple boxes. Here results are divided into general and specific support.

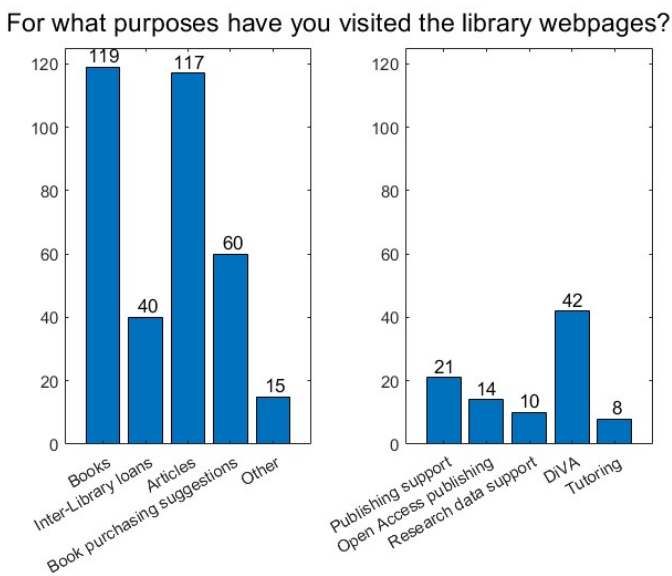

Figure 4: Question 31, "For what purposes have you visited the library webpages?". Participants could choose multiple boxes. Here results are divided into general and specific support.

Reactive, Active and Pro-Active support: A possible taxonomy

The general and specific support offered by the library can also be couched in terms of *reactive*, *active* and *proactive* support. What this shift in terminology does is to make *how* librarians take action, and the nature of those actions with respect to the support they give to researchers, more concordant with the vicissitudes and variations in the research process for actual researchers. As an example, let us look at three different examples: an inter library book request; a request on help with a data management plan, and recurrent issues surrounding poor language editing just before the typesetting of a book, soon to be published.

In the first case, the inter library book request will be sent to a librarian who will look over the request and order the book from another library. Or if the book fits with established research interests and foci at Södertörn, they will turn it into a purchasing suggestion instead, so that the book will be a permanent part of Södertörns own collection. Either way, the librarian is *reacting* to the request from the researcher. And while in the case with a data management plan the researcher also begins with a request from a specific researcher, there is a larger chance for the librarian to be an *active* part of the interaction. The researcher and librarian can exchange information and thoughts, which will hopefully lead to a successful data management plan. In these kinds of interactions, the librarian takes a more active role in the support. In the third example, an emergency problem arises surrounding a badly proofread edited anthology just before it is due to be printed. While it should have been the responsibility of the volume's editors to have taken care of this work, it is now the responsibility of the publishing support team to make the necessary corrections, at very short notice and with limited time. While in the immediate situation, the member of the research support team will have to take up a *reactive* position (i.e. to undertake the unanticipated work at very short notice), a *proactive* solution (i.e. longer term but more sustainable) would be to put in place structures (e.g. better proofreading systems, a more strict and orderly time-frame, etc.) and activities (such as editing courses for prospective volume editors at SH) that may mitigate and limit the necessity for ad hoc and reactive responses in the first place.

While we readily acknowledge that some interactions in the library will always have some degree of reactivity to them, such as when a patron asks for help finding a book on a shelf, nevertheless rethinking the support into active and proactive support could make the library a more integrated part of the university. There are steps that can be taken move from a reactive support

strategy to more active and proactive support, which will be presented in the section entitled 'Recommendations' at the end of the report.

The library and research support

The library at SH offers support to researchers in several different ways, as could be seen earlier, in Figures 3 and 4. This includes, following the terminological distinction introduced in the previous section, general support, in that the library provides books, scientific articles, inter-library loans and new purchases, as well as tutoring, help with registering in the local repository and help with research data questions. One of the larger areas of the library's support for researchers is publication support. This itself can can be subdivided into support with (i) Open Access agreements and (ii) publishing in a Södertörn series. These two areas of support both assist researchers in getting their work published. As will be shown, significantly, these different types have a different demography surrounding the "typical" researcher using these supports. Which is to say, and as will be shown below, those who are more likely to use one type of support are less likely to use the other.

In the following two sections on Open Access and The Publications Committee, we will introduce the two distinct types of publication support and how in particular the library gives support to researchers. We will also exemplify the difference between these two modes of research support. In short, while both modes help with researchers' publications, due to traditions and norms in publishing, there is a difference in how researchers interact with these two support structures. Both these structures are vital in how researchers obtain publication support, but the progression towards publication represents two distinct paths reflecting different expectations and experiences of researchers.

Open Access

Short background

During the last decade, Open Access has become an important factor the researcher has to take into account when planning their work. It is increasingly the case that funders place demands on Open Access,[11] and, indeed, the Swedish government has declared that all tax funded research should be made available by 2026 (Åström, no date, p. 100). At the same time there is another shift in the publishing landscape facilitated by the publishing agreements which are negotiated on the behalf of SH and most other universities, by *Kungliga Biblioteket* (Schimmer, Geschuhn and Vogler, 2015; *Så fungerar Bibsamkonsortiet*, no date). These agreements are a step towards more 'open' scientific output, such that publications become freely available to read for all. This has resulted in a shift in the 'model' adopted by academic journals and periodicals; a move from paying to read (in the form of subscriptions) to supporting a 'pay to publish' scheme– euphemistically stated as 'free to read'. One outcome of this new settlement has been to lower subscription for libraries. While these agreements have made it possible for researchers to publish Open Access articles, often fully covered or at a discounted price, they do not fully cover all publishers or journals, thereby leading to the exclusion of some, smaller and niche periodicals.

Researchers' use of Open Access agreements

Researchers at SH are to a large extent aware that there are Open Access agreements they can use, see Figure 5. 104 (ca 74%) of participating researchers had heard of the existence of such agreements. Of those who are aware, slightly more than half (53 or 51%) have used them. 37 participants were completely unaware of any such agreements. One reason for this difference in knowledge and thus in effect in use, can be traced to expectations from disciplines, and in some respects, to experiences of researchers themselves. This is illustrated in Figures 6. The differences between a PhD-

[11] The largest funder at SH, the Baltic Sea Foundation, encourages Open Access for the publications either directly in the journal or after an embargo period in a repository.

student and a senior member of staff are most likely explained by the fact that PhD-students have, at this point in their academic journey, published less than a senior researcher. What, unfortunately, the questionnaire does not show is how far along in their PhD-studies participants are, and whether they are writing monographs or compilation theses (significant circumstantial factors that would give a more nuanced picture). So, for example, for a PhD-student who has only started their studies the previous autumn, it would be a tough ask to expect them to be aware of the intricacies of Open Access. However, the fact that around 20% of senior researchers had not heard of such agreements, is more concerning, see Figure 6. While perhaps some of the researchers unfamiliar with the agreements are new to the system, we should work harder to reach those that are missing essential information.

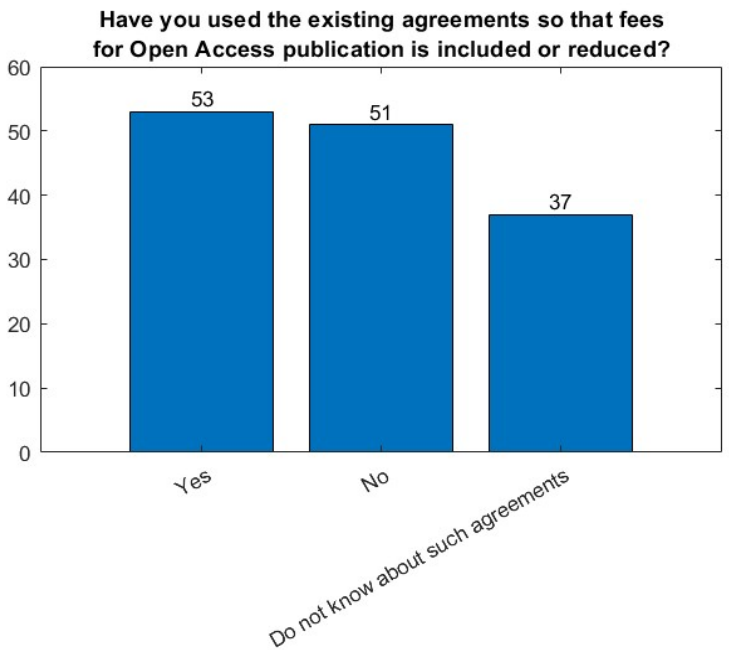

Figure 5: Question 11, "Have you been able to take advantage of existing agreements so that fees for Open Access publication are either fully included or have been reduced?". All participants answered this question and 104 had heard of the agreements, with 53 of them using them. 37 of those who answered the questionnaire were not aware of any agreements at all.

A contributing factor to the differences in use and knowledge about the agreements is the tradition within which different researchers publish as well as their strategies for publishing. In those publishing traditions where articles

and reports are favoured, the knowledge and use of agreements is generally higher, see Figure 7 (ISV and NMT). On the other hand, in publishing traditions where monographs and book chapters[12] are preferred, or where smaller, sometimes national base, independent journals are an important site for research outputs, the use or knowledge of agreements is lower, Figure 7 (IHS and IKL). The first two, ISV and NMT, traditionally publish more in journals, and thus is one principal explanation why they are familiar with agreements and use them more. On the other hand, IHS and IKL tend to publish monographs and book chapters in edited anthologies, as well as in smaller journals not covered in agreements. This helps to explain why, comparatively speaking, there is a smaller use and familiarity with the agreements in these schools.

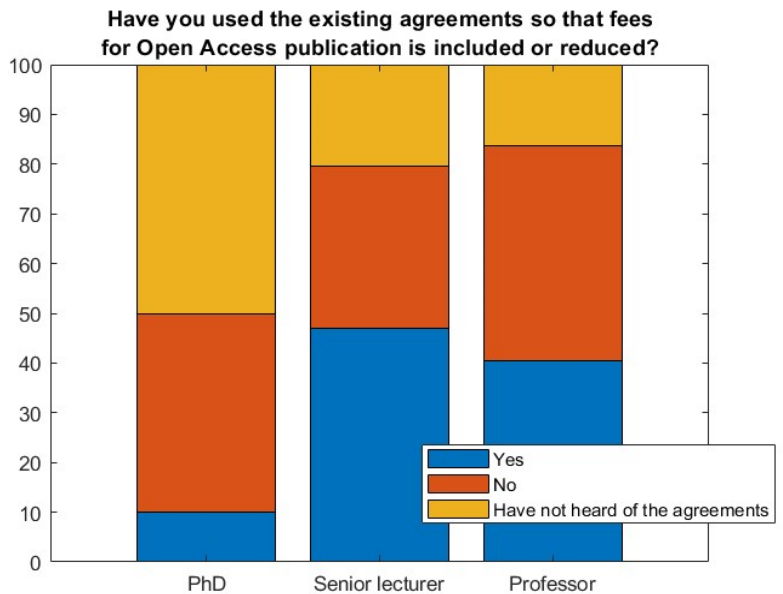

Figure 6: Same as Figure 5 but divided by experience. In %.

[12] While Open Access for monographs are included in the agreements, they are often included at a 10% or 20% discount. Which means that the author(s) will have to cover the rest of the cost some other way. A rough estimate of the cost for a monograph is 150 000 SEK.

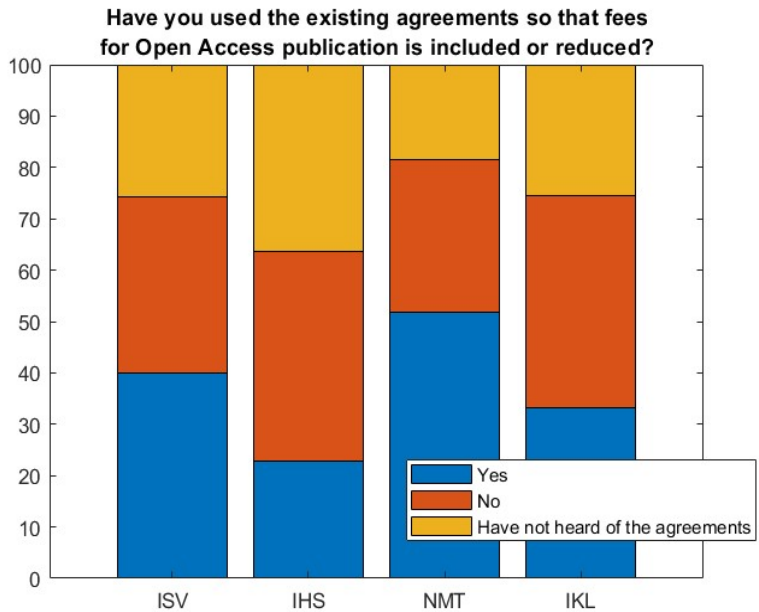

Figure 7: Same as Figure 6 but divided by schools. In %.

Using the Open Access agreements

The overall attitude from researchers on Open Access is positive, and it is interesting to note that generally researchers regard OA as now constituting a lived and established reality; 'a norm' and 'guiding principle' for research and researchers. In the interviews conducted with researchers, it was common to receive the following reflections:

> Yes, I think it should be the norm. But even now, it is still marginal… including book projects. It is a question of principle, and not just practical. For outreach. It should be a norm, I think. This is why funders are encouraging this. It has become a non-issue. A norm. (Interview 5)

> I think you have very good opportunities for me, when I am trying to publish OA. All the time you say: 'we have this!' Even if I try to pay for it, I get an email from the library saying: 'you tried to pay for it but we already have this deal'. So, it is fantastic. I have never had any issues with that. (Interview 7)

> I love Open Access. Who doesn't? – (Interview 15)

In these three quotes the general sentiment towards Open Access among researchers is not only positive, it has become an unquestioned part of their research practice. The information received when publishing Open Access

and how to partake in the agreements from the library is something researchers readily appreciate. This sentiment can also be gleaned in comments from the questionnaire where some highlighted that they were grateful for the existence of the agreements and the support of library staff, which moreover many highlighted as having been excellent. In interviews, the majority of researchers, especially senior ones, also elaborated further on the ease by which agreements could be used today, often implicitly comparing their experiences with previous iterations of OA agreements regime, where operations were less smooth. Again, below are some extracts supporting these claims:

> The library contacted me and informed me of the Open Access alternative for my article, it was super-easy and was very appreciated. Please keep it up! – Comment from the questionnaire
>
> Very good service and regarding this the library staff have been fantastic! – Comment from the questionnaire
>
> Petra: Has your experience with them [OA agreements] been good?
>
> Informant: Yes, it has worked. We tick this box, to say that we are in Sweden, and we have these agreements… and we don't have to pay, and it works! I guess they check them somehow, but we have never had a problem. (Interview 5)
>
> So for me it was really important that this publication and this funding and your list that you have there. And I did find it a bit hard to locate it, but that might be the webpage that's a bit tricky to navigate. … But once I found it then I thought it was really good, very appreciative, mostly that you can e-mail and you get a response, that's also nice. I like that a lot. (Interview 12)

Those researchers who have partaken in the agreements thus see the library and library staff as helpful in negotiating them. There are invariably obstacles for researchers – such as information being difficult to find on the webpage or requested journals not being covered by the agreements, or even the risk that existing agreements are "running out".[13] So, some researchers know that agreements cannot be relied upon all the time or in all subjects. This is another factor with which researchers have to contend: the real possibility that agreements are unavailable at the time of publication or in their subject at all. Overall, most are happy with the support provided by the library and appreciate when they are contacted regarding Open Access publishing.

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[13] Some of the agreements are based on number of articles per year and is "first come, first served", which could lead to an article submitted and accepted late in the year not being covered by the agreement.

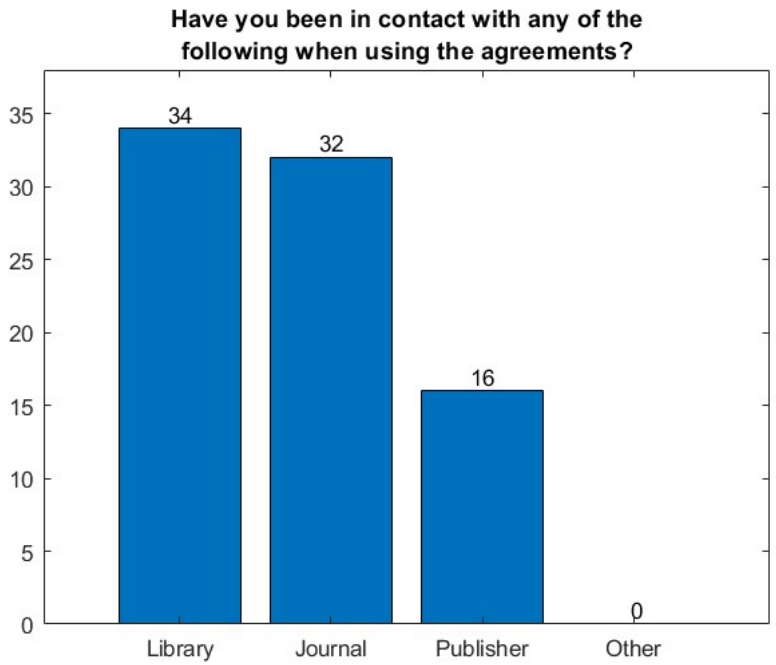

Figure 8: Question 12, "In order to be the beneficiary of agreements covering Open Access publishing costs, have you been in contact with any of the following". Participants could choose multiple boxes.

Problems with Open Access

As could be seen in the previous section a majority of researchers are positive towards Open Access. There are however complexities to the issue, generating concrete and structural problems. Both respondents to the questionnaire and interviewees were alert to these obstacles. Problems with the new OA regime included, among others: the issue of costing, the availability of agreements, ethical concerns regarding the exclusion of researchers from the global south, and low- and middle income higher education institutions, from effectively participating on an equal footing with wealthier institutions. In addition to this the questionnaire brought to light how agreements are impacting the researchers' behaviours in respect to Open Access.

In the questionnaire, questions 13 and 14 focused on the researchers' attitudes towards publishing Open Access, see Figure 9 and Figure 10.[14] While

[14] These questions were inspired by similar questions from a Kungliga bibliotektet survey on Open Access.

these questions were only visible to those that had used the agreements, it can give an interesting insight into how researchers view the shift towards Open Access in scientific publishing. As can be seen in Figure 9, a majority of researchers would not have chosen to publish Open Access were it not for the existence of agreements. Here the comments from the questionnaire make clear that cost is a determining factor in the choices made by researchers, especially for those who undertake unfunded research. Moreover, researchers can no longer rely on funding to cover publication costs, since many funders have removed direct support for publications in their calls. This means that the extent of publishing support goes only so far as the agreements covered in APCs. At the same time, and as many of the comments pointed out, requirements to publish Open Access from funding bodies have increased. As one comment expressed the problem: "An Open Access article can cost 30 000 SEK in APCs and it's not certain that it can be covered be internal funds" (comment from questionnaire).

One researcher reflected on the fact that it was not a simple matter of saying "yes" or "no" to OA. The situation is far more complex. While positive in principle towards Open Access, the problem is that since the research situation for a researcher is always fluctuating, then access to funding and prospects for future funding for OA is itself not constant. The uncertainty of 'how much' research money and time they have, means that there is a lot to be taken into consideration when deciding what publication channel to use. It was further pointed out that so-called 'prestige' is often rewarded in the academic setting, which is at odds with the Open Access ideal. For those who are establishing themselves as academics, or need publications to improve the chances of gaining further grants, a choice might have to be made between an Open Access-publication and a more prestigious one: "I'm in principle very positive towards Open Access (am myself editor for a OA-journal), but I think that individual researchers often are caught in the middle, particularly junior and/or non-funded researchers, who really need to publish in so called prestigious journals" (comment from the questionnaire). On a similar issue, another researcher commented: 'it is strange that it's still so expensive. So, in that regard you could feel that something should be done to make it cheaper, so it's not limited to researchers who have funds. At least if you publish a lot. Where we published it was cheap, it was 3500 [SEK] or something. The expensive journals are 20 000 [SEK]. That is unacceptably expensive, I feel. That's 100 000 for someone who publishes five articles in a year. For what?" (Interview 4) While this could be a situation some researchers find themselves in, it could also be a misunderstanding on how Open Access and the

agreements function. There is a possibility that publishing in a purely Open Access journal will have less prestige. But there is often the possibility of having an article published Open Access in a prestigious journal by paying an APC. Many publishers are shifting to a hybrid model for their journals (a problem in itself), insofar that a researcher can pay for their publication to be Open Access, even if the journal is not a purely Open Access one.

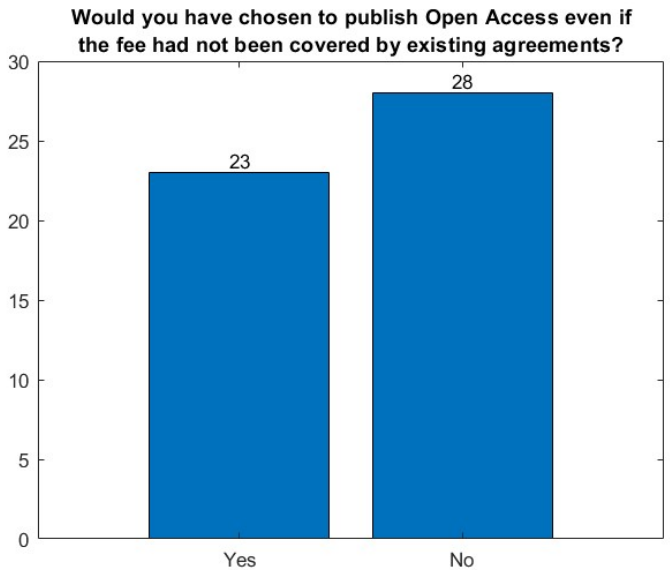

Figure 9: Question 13, ”Would you have chosen to publish Open Access even if the fee had not been covered by existing agreements?”.

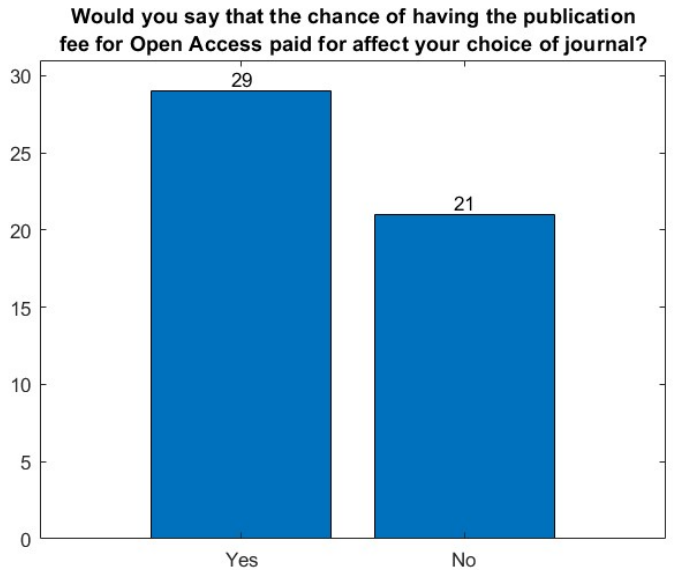

Figure 10: Question 14, "Would you say that the chance of having the publication fee for Open Access paid for affect your choice of journal?".

This part of the report has sought to give an account of the extent of the take-up and views about Open Access by researchers at Södertörn. From this, four points warrant underlining: i) while OA is generally known by researchers (though less by more junior scholars), for the most part OA support is used by researchers in the Natural and Social Sciences, thereby reflecting long-standing disciplinary trends surrounding in what form, how, and where to publish research outputs; ii) OA is generally understood as an integrated part of a researcher's research process (often in their minds already at the research application phase), and thus has become an established fact and a lived reality; iii) while OA is considered by many as a positive development, problematical areas surrounding the exclusion of unfunded researchers and researchers from the global south, are a source of concern for researchers; iv) the OA support provided at SH is welcomed and appreciated.

Publications Committee

Short background

As introduced earlier, within the library, research support can be subdivided. One important facet is what is termed publishing support. Publishing support, as remarked above, can be divided between support given to researchers regarding 'Open Access' and support offered to researchers for the actual publication and production of their research outputs. At SH, a specific organ, the 'Publications Committee', exists in order to facilitate the publication and production of research outputs. Established in 2007, and funded in part by ÖSS, the Publications Committee has an extensive mandate, presently covering the following tasks: 1) to decide which research outputs can be published within SH's main publication series and which are thus eligible for financial support; 2) to ensure that the work published in the university's name is of a high scholarly standard; 3) to inform about scientific publication and to follow developments in this area, nationally and internationally; 4) to serve as a resource for SH's management in matters relating to scientific publication and 5) to report annually on the committee's activities to the vice-chancellor (including a financial report).

The Publications Committee is a decision-making body, comprising of representatives from each of SH's institutions (IKL, NMT, HIS, ISV), a doctoral representative, the head of the Center for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES), and the head of the library. In principle, the mandate is renewed and the composition of the committee is meant to change every four years, although it should be mentioned that it has been more than six years since either the composition of the committee or its mandate was last formalised. This has had the consequence of the Committee having to work under uncertain conditions, without any long-term future guaranteed, and therefore putting it in a state of limbo. While this has not affected day-to-day operations (with the number of titles published as part of Södertörn Academic Series (SAS) increasing year-on-year (see figure 11) and money being administered to researchers in need of support for OA publications, proofreading, printing costs, etc), the more 'pro-active' side of its remit (e.g. organising courses on academic writing, editing, strategic decisions

regarding how to enhance the visibility of the publication series here at SH, and promoting the role that the committee has internally and externally) has not been attended to in a manner done so prior to 2020. Notwithstanding this, some significant developments have taken place. In 2021, SH's main publications series, SAS, was accepted by Norska Listan (Level 1). This is one way in which academic quality is certified, and serves as recognition of the rigorous reviewing policy (double-blind peer review) that all prospective manuscripts have to undergo, alongside a due consultation period between the Publications Committee, the university's research editors and authors. Moreover, in recent years, Södertörn Academic Studies has been fortunate to have in its series some notable volumes, which have, in some cases garnered media attention, and have had an international impact. Particular fields, such as Philosophy, Art History, History of Ideas and History, often decide to publish as part of Södertörn's Academic publishing series, usually as a first choice—resulting thereby in some invaluable edited volumes (gathering together some important international scholars on significant thematics) being published here.

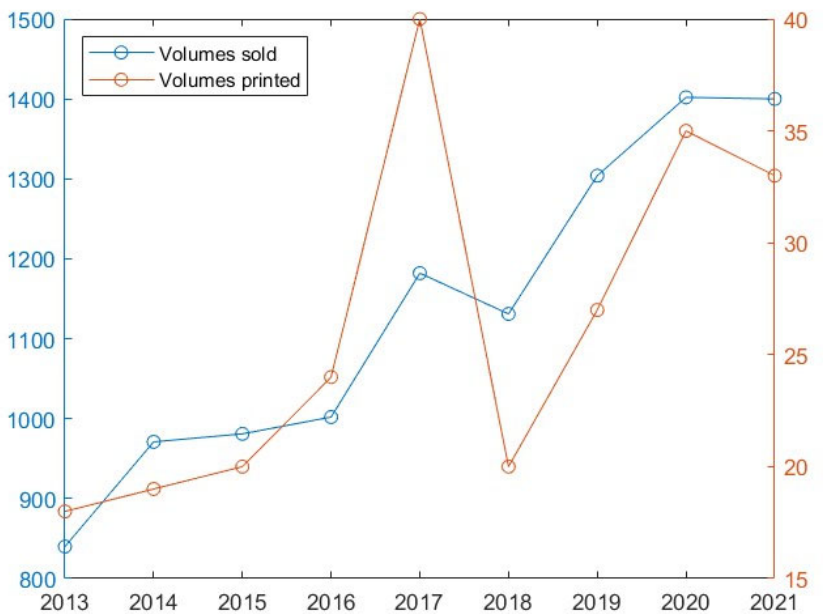

Figure 11: A graph showing the year on year increase of both titles published at SH and annual sales of SH Publications.

In what follows, the researchers' views surrounding the Publications Committee will be analysed.

Used but sometimes forgotten

Given the fact that the Publications Committee, in its present form, has existed since 2007, it is perhaps surprising that 46% of researchers responding to the questionnaire express an unfamiliarity with it and with its function (see figure 12). This headline figure of around half of respondents not knowing about the work of the Committee can, in part, be attributable to the fact that doctoral students (especially those newly enrolled) have less reason to use it. However, at the same time, since the Publications Committee has as one of its sitting members a doctoral student, who sits on the council for Doctoral Students, junior researchers should at least be aware of its existence, and know about its mandate. When one focuses on more senior researchers (senior lecturers and professors), numbers improve somewhat (see figure 13). Although, over half of the senior lecturers here are again unfamiliar with either the committee or its function. It is only among professors where a sizeable majority (87%) are aware of it and the work it does. Significantly, departmental affiliation is a determining parameter, with researchers from the humanities more likely to know about its work, in contrast to the natural and environmental sciences. This is a point we will need to delve deeper into later.

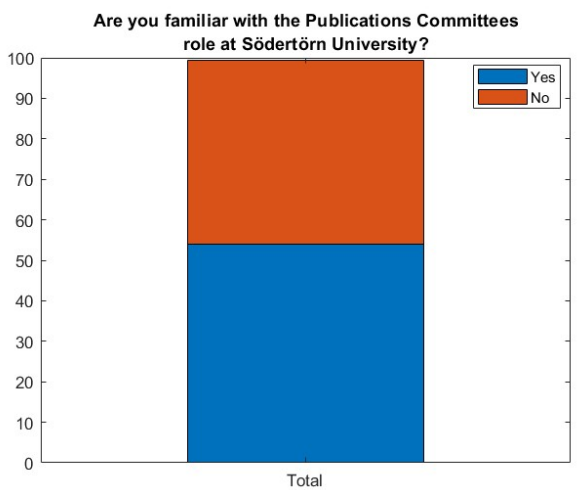

Figure 12: Question 15, "Are you familiar with the Publications Committee's (PC) role at Södertörn University?": 54% responded yes, 46% no.

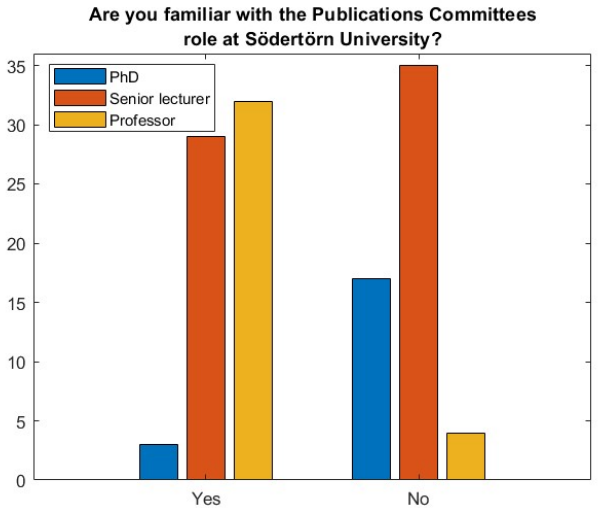

Figure 13: Question 15, "Are you familiar with the Publications Committee's (PC) role at Södertörn University?". Breakdown of data with respect to status of Researcher.

Evidently, the above data indicates an 'informational-deficit', in that a significant proportion of the academic staff do not have basic knowledge about the breadth and depth of the Publications Committee's mandate. One should, however, not make the further inference that an unfamiliarity with the Publications Committee means that there is no need or use for it. On the contrary, when those respondents familiar with the committee were asked the follow up question whether they have ever had contact with the Publications Committee?, a significant proportion (75%) responded yes (see figure 14). The nature of that contact was significantly skewed towards seeking to get a manuscript published at SH (34 of 73 responses) with others either applying for help to offset external publishing costs or approaching the committee in order to get financial assistance for proofreading and language editing.

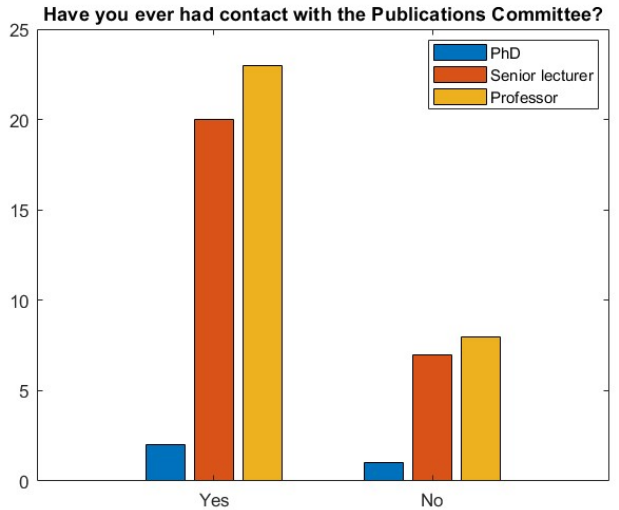

Figure 14: Question 16, "If you are familiar with the Publications Committee, have you ever had contact with the Committee?" Breakdown of data with respect to status of researcher.

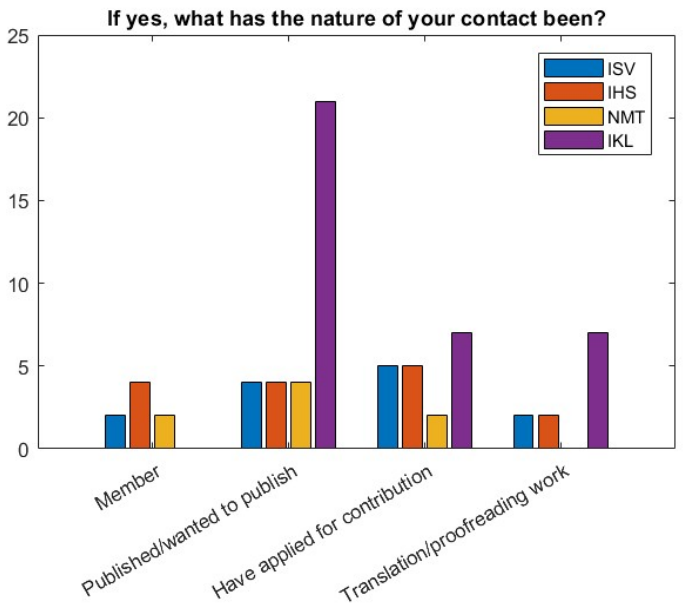

Figure 14: Question 17, "If you have had contact with the Publications Committee (PC), then what has the nature of that contact been?" Breakdown of data with respect to institutional affiliation.

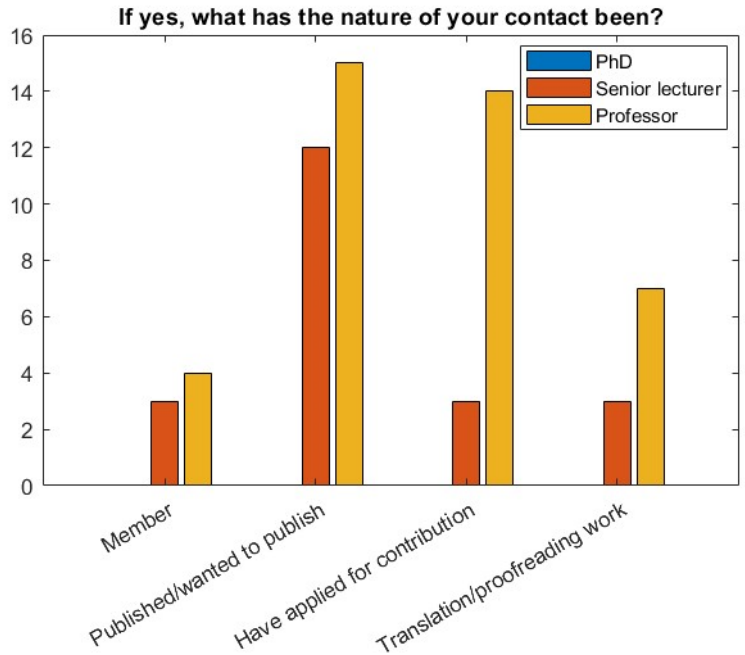

Figure 15: Question 17, "If you have had contact with the Publications Committee (PC), then what has the nature of that contact been?" Breakdown of data with respect to status of researcher.

In analysing further these basic numbers, one can see clearly that the Publications Committee is used significantly more by researchers from humanities departments in comparison to other faculties at SH. This is noticeably the case regarding publication applications as part of the Södertörn Academic Studies series, and other related series. There are clear reasons for this. One reason becomes clear if a direct comparison is made with the take-up of OA agreements by researchers. While in the case of OA, the data from the questionnaire shows that a higher proportion of NMT and ISV take advantage of the agreements, and significantly still that researchers from within these faculties would even consider publishing were not the fees paid, in the case of publishing via SAS (in the form of monographs and edited anthologies), the picture is entirely inverted: a substantially higher percentage of researchers from the humanities and historical sciences use the in-house publishing channels. Traditionally, it has been the case that while natural and social scientists are schooled in writing periodical articles, the monograph or extensive essay in an edited anthology has been the preferred form for the human sciences. And indeed this disparity here between disciplines is borne

out in the study. The publication landscape is changing – in that in recent decades the academic system places greater 'value' in publishing journal articles and Open Access, with impact indices (greatly favouring the academic journal form) being the 'established' (but by no means uncontested) criterion by which research quality is measured. And this situation has affected academics generally, resulting in humanities researchers having to publish more in not just journals but 'high(er) impact' journals. A further implication has been the systemic undervaluing of monographs and edited anthologies (an otherwise integral part of humanities scholarship). Irrespective of the systemic shift toward articles as the 'standardised' format for research outputs, for numerous important reasons, humanities scholars still find the essayistic and monographic form more conducive to their mode of thinking and writing. Thus, in a world ever diminishing with respect to possibilities for presenting research in these forms, the channels and support that SH provides, in preserving and facilitating these publishing possibilities, is especially valued and used by humanities scholars. Södertörn Academic Studies series constitutes a space (scientifically accredited and properly funded and supported) for academics to find forms of expression and editorial autonomy more appropriate for the specificity of their research traditions, traditions that are otherwise being underappreciated and pushed out of the publishing landscape.

Uninformed and/or misinformed?

The data from the questionnaire discloses three significant points: (i) that a substantial percentage of researchers (46%) have no or very little knowledge about the Publications Committee (this is the case not only for PhD students but senior lecturers also); (ii) that among the other half who are aware of its existence, a substantial number have had contact with the committee (thus indicating its utility for researchers), and (iii) that the principal means of contact made has been in the form of submitting manuscripts to the committee in the hope of having them published, often as part of SAS, and that this is pursued significantly more by researchers working within IKL and HIS, in contrast to the Natural and Social Sciences. What though of the views, opinions, and experiences expressed by these researchers about the Publications Committee? What might this add to the statistical data presented above?

In the previous section, it was advanced that a 'informational-deficit' exists with respect to the PC. Clearly, information is not getting to members of the academic community at SH effectively. The Publications Committee has its own dedicated webpages, both on the external website (accessible to

all) and on the internal *medarbetarwebben* (some pages accessible only to employees). It is thus not a simple matter of the unavailability of information (although there is an issue surrounding how often the information is updated), but rather a two-fold problem regarding (i) researchers not necessarily finding the information or knowing that the information exists and (ii) *how* the information is itself presented to researchers. One researcher put the problem succinctly: 'it is not a problem with the information as such but my consumption of that information' (Interview 5). Consumption is related to the 'how' it is presented. On one level this is about how researchers harvest information, and means ensuring that knowledge about PC is arranged in such a way that is more responsive to users, and whenever possible, interactive. A summary of how this particular researcher struggles with retaining and reactivating the general information gathered over the years: 'at the end of the day, I won't remember everything from one year to the next. So, I do need to refamiliarise myself with existing knowledge. And some information can tend to be missing in my mind' (Interview 5). There is so much for the researcher to consider – knowledge that is not directly relevant to the everyday matter of undertaking research lays dormant until whenever or if ever it is needed. One issue is how that information can be reactivated, and what role does 'research support' administrators have in helping researchers to (re)activate and (re)familiarise them of certain areas of knowledge?

The problem of how to ensure that information reaches researchers, and how that information is relayed and presented, is only part of the problem, however. That a substantial minority are unfamiliar with the PC is further complicated by the circulation of bits of misinformation about what the PC does and its purposes, alongside questions surrounding the integrity and quality of publications for which the committee is responsible. For example, in the questionnaire, 8% of respondents were under the misapprehension that Södertörn Academic Studies was exclusively tied to Baltic and Central and Eastern European Studies research, while a further 10% assumed that titles in the series had limited distribution (and thus not internationally available). Most significant of all was that 32% believed the publication series to lack any certified mark of quality (even though SAS is part of Norska Listan (level 1) and adheres to a double-blind peer review process). This point was discussed with those interviewed:

> But we have not seen the publications at SH as a key element of our research outputs. Because, in all honesty, in my field they are not worth anything. They are regarded as second-rate. So not worth going through internal channels…

> And I did not know that it [Södertörn Academic Studies] was on Norska List… maybe that would change my mind. (Interview 5)

> I don't see the point [in publishing through one of SH's publications channels]. I didn't even know it was part of the Norska List … I feel as though … I do not see the point, I don't see it has good outreach. It is almost a way of smothering the research. I'm sorry. I think I underappreciate the Södertörn Series. As I said, I don't think I have a publishing strategy, but it has been not to publish in Södertörn series (laughter). It seems as though it does not go beyond these walls. That's my impression. Had you not have taken it up [in conversation], I would not have thought: oh, that's something. I would be like: ok, change my mind. I would really like to know why I should publish at Södertörn. So, that is something I really would like my mind changed about. A push that SH and the library should do, to show the value in that (Interview 8).

These views were more prevalent among researchers within the natural and social sciences, who not only write journal articles (and thus not so interested in publishing in edited anthologies and monographs), but moreover are 'focused on the top journals now' (Interview 7). While little bits of misinformation are present in their understanding of the publishing channels available at SH via PC, they were open to having their views changed and to consider the possibility of utilising them in the future. What was deemed a present drawback was that the SAS publishing series at SH needed to work on lifting up its own profile, to enhance the presence of its visibility, both at SH and internationally, so that, as one researcher, who once sat as a member of the committee, put it, SH 'can over time become a place where researchers want to publish as their first choice' (Interview 7).

Within the humanities, attitudes towards the Publications Series is somewhat different, and indeed, because of the strength of some of the previous titles published in, for example, the fields of philosophy, History of Ideas, Art History, Practical Knowledge, researchers within these fields are not only happy with the support and possibilities afforded to them for publishing their research outputs, but repeatedly use them. And while it may not be their 'first choice', SAS (and related series) remain a central part of their publication strategy:

> Over the years we have had much contact. I helped to found one of the first series, the subject series, back in 2002 or something like that. To start getting our stuff out. Since then we have published about 30 books and our series is one of the largest subject series, … So, it's a long collaboration we've had…. (Interview 10)

The collaboration, for this professor, had been impressive, with 'generosity and time and effort' shown. A point echoed in other researchers who had direct experience of publishing through one of the SH publishing channels.

The divergent opinions presented above, and the extent to which particular researchers are well informed about the Publications Committee and its publishing channels, are dependent on the schools and departments to which researchers belong. This is a point that has already been established in the data gathered from the questionnaire. What the responses from the interviews underline is that while members of NMT and ISV are less likely to consider publishing through one of the channels at SH, and are more inclined to be misinformed about the remits of both PC and publications series, their views are certainly not fixed, but open to revision and a change in opinion and publishing decisions. However, for this to be achieved, more outreach work and a longer-term strategy has to be developed by PC and others responsible for supporting SAS. There are though limitations with respect to how broad and deep this outreach can be, and how effective it indeed might be. Given limits on available funds per annum for publishing books through SH publishing channels, and also limited personnel supporting publishing, there is an obvious question regarding how many more publications per year the existing system can support. Thus if a concerted effort is to be made to promote the publications series at SH, to encourage researchers from all schools and at all levels to publish with SAS, and other related series, (as it ought), then one implication could well be a substantial increase in workload and greater demands placed on extant services. Presently, 35 out of 38 respondents who have published via one of SH's publishing channels have said that the entire process (from submitting a manuscript for peer review to publication) was either faster than, or was as, expected. These numbers are very good, contributing to a high satisfaction with the publications support process at SH. The risk is that higher demand could affect speed, efficiency, and quality of working conditions for research support workers. A further point is the 'effectiveness' of any 'outreach' strategy. Any strategy to increase awareness of the work that the PC does, and the publishing series over which it presides, must acknowledge that there are structural and disciplinary reasons why certain researchers belonging to particular institutions are less inclined to consider publishing through one of the channels at SH. Where there is an established tradition of publishing research articles for journals is one obvious factor for explaining lower up-take. It could therefore be the case that such outreach work will not necessarily have any impact on who publishes at SH, and what titles are published here. This is not necessarily a problem. It

could be in fact the case that a more targeted strategy of ensuring that researchers belonging to those traditions and disciplines, which have historically used publishing channels at SH continue to do so, and do so in greater numbers and with a greater range of interests and themes. None of these issues are easily resolved. What is the case, though, is that longer-term thinking surrounding this part of research support would be beneficial, and assist in enhancing the profile of SH as an important site for publishing interesting and important research outputs in forms (such as the monograph and edited anthology) that are increasingly marginalised and undervalued by the academic system as such.

Recommendations

In the analysis presented above, we have sought to provide a more thorough understanding of research support based on the lived experiences and reflections from real researchers at SH. As part of this, a deeper understanding of both the research process and the researcher who engages in that process, has been presented. The purpose of this procedure has been to identify existing shortcomings and challenges within the existing research support settlement offered at SH. With this in mind, we will now present a series of recommendations that address specifically the library (please see appendix at the end of this report), as well as proposals addressing research support, more generally. The general recommendations, which have the widest import, shall focus on the following areas: 1) the tension between *reactive* (problem-driven), *active* (co-participatory) and *proactive* (anticipatory) support; 2) information and misinformation surrounding 'research support', including negotiating different expectations and needs regarding publishing (OA and PC); 3) uncoordinated and fragmented research support across the university. All three have been identified in the foregoing analysis.

Steps to make support more proactive

The research process is complex, uncertain and open, composed of serendipitous and contingent events. The outcome is that 'research support' has to maneuver the same complexities in order to be responsive to the requests of the researcher. 'Research support', rather like the research process, is 'problem driven', by necessity. The obvious problem is that 'reactive' modes of support can be stressful, inchoate and, in the longer term, unsustainable (giving rise to higher levels of stress and anxiety) Thus, it is important, whenever possible, to make support more proactive, meaning to put in place structures and preconditions to alleviate some of the negative effects generated by the vicissitudes of the research process, by reaching and engaging more effectively with researchers at SH, and addressing the underlying causes that result in ad hoc solutions to recurring problems. Below are some concrete steps that could be taken in order to improve pro-active support:

- Engage in targeted and specific contact with the schools, the prefects, the directors of studies and the PhD council, when possible about research support.
- Look over current support offered to researchers.
- Formulate a short "menu" with the services provided by the library that can be sent out to both researchers and the schools.

Steps to improve the distribution of information and to eliminate misinformation

While information about research support is widely available, both on the internal and external websites, there are question-marks about whether information is getting to researchers, and moreover whether it is being received in the most effective form. There is an important issue surrounding how researchers consume information, when and what specific information is searched for, which needs attending to. In some cases, it is not only a question of researchers not been informed enough, but that there is also mis-information and confusions circulating about particular facets of the research support settlement at SH. The following recommendations are thus to be considered:

- Put together a 'communication plan' for the library, encompassing both webpages and social media.
- Review and renew the mandate for the Publications Committee, and ensure that longer-term strategic decision-making is made regarding the future of in-house publishing at SH. This should include a plan for outreach and informational work.

Steps to make research support more coordinated and systematic across the university

'Research support' does not begin and end at the doors of the library, and while this report has been written with the library as a central consideration, it is clear from the experiences of researchers themselves that library support is one among many nodes within the research support infrastructure. What is presently lacking is a sense of cohesion and coordination among different units offering support at SH. With this in mind two final and overarching recommendations are advanced below.

- Ensure that the library is an active partner when discussing research support throughout SH.
- Improve collective understanding surrounding help offered to researchers at SH, and relatedly better understand how the various interested parties engaged in Research Support relate to one another.

Appendix

A full list of Recommendations targeted at the Library

So as to make support more pro-active, rather than re-active, with the full acknowledgement that ad-hoc solutions for unexpected problems can never be eliminated, we recommend to:

- Engage in targeted and specific contact with the schools, the prefects, the directors of studies and the PhD council, when possible about support. e.g:
    - Send out information at the start of each term on possible talk or ask if they are interested in having librarians come visit them at their meetings
    - Send out information to the schools on newly purchased books, monthly or bi- monthly. Remind them of this possibility.
- Formulate a short "menu" with the services provided by the library that can be sent out to both researchers and the schools. Depending on the addressee, these will look slightly different, in order to target the specific needs and demands of research traditions. Generally, and in principle, irrespective of differences, such a "menu" will publicise how the library can help the researchers. This targeted information can also be posted on the employee webpage, so that those interested can see what the library offers. This menu does not have to be an extensive description of support provisions, but give a short overview of the extent and scope of the library's support and its direct relevance to particular schools.
- Look over the system for tutoring. Currently the system in place offers one hour at the time. If this system can be overhauled to include other forms of tutoring.
    - Offer sessions of several meeting so that there can be a

continuity between meeting for researcher and librarian. Perhaps there should be a possibility for a researcher to book four meeting with a librarian.
    - Contact researchers once they have received funding for new project and ask them if the library can be of assistance to them. New projects can use the libraries assistance and it was pointed out in one interview that this service might be a very good service for the researchers. In both interviews and questionnaire the researchers also spoke positively about their interaction with tutoring and when they had gotten help in different parts of their projects.
- Review and renew the mandate for the Publications Committee, so that it can make longer-term strategic decision regarding the future of in-house publishing at SH.
    - Ensure that new members of the Publications Committee are appointed, and invite new ideas to revitalise the committee and its work.
    - Target information to specific research areas at SH. Attend departmental and institutional meetings in order to present the work that the Publications Committee does and the publishing possibilities that exist here.
    - Help to setup courses on academic writing and editorial courses.
    - Work on enhancing the profile of SAS, both internally and externally. This means doing more to promote and publicise specific titles published here.
    - Produce an annual review (perhaps in the form of a newsletter) to present the titles published as part of Södertörn publications.

So as to improve the distribution of information and to eliminate misinformation about research support at SH, we recommend to:

- Put together a 'communication plan' for the library, encompassing both webpages and social media.
    - Liaise with other interested and responsible parties in order to systematically maintain and revise the webpages dedicated to

'Research Support'.
    - Ensure that webpages are more interactive and researcher-friendly. *How* the information is presented must be equal to *what* is presented informationally.
    - Improve visibility of research-related activities on Social Media (e.g. publicising new titles published as part of SAS, sharing and promoting media attention garnered by researchers at SH).
- Open Access: to further help researchers get the help they need to navigate the Open Access agreements and understanding what Open Access entails.
    - Focus reaching the groups and schools that would benefit from more awareness on Open Access. While there might not be an agreement or journal/publisher that fits all for all researcher due to publishing traditions, there is good reason to make sure that the information is distributed to all researchers, so if they want to adapt their publishing strategy to fit Open Access in, they could.
    - Ensure that PhD-students are informed. While the library does have some points of contact with the PhD-students, such as a library introduction, it can be good to invite them, via the PhD-council, to a more focused talk on Open Access and publishing every so often. This to ensure that all PhD-students have equal opportunity to receive information.
    - Offer more targeted Open Access seminars or talk for IHS and IKL, the two schools with the least knowledge on the Open Access agreements. While all schools, should get information on Open Access, IHS and IKL have most to gain for learning about Open Access and related agreements.
- Improve how and what information is disseminated about the Publications Committee and publications, and a concerted effort to dispel certain myths about SAS series.
    - Better inform researchers about the inclusion of SAS into Norska List (Level 1), spelling out the benefits of its inclusion.
    - Better inform researchers about international availability of titles published at SH, and public attention that particular titles have garnered.

- Better communicate to researchers the differences between the publishing series at SH, focusing on the function and advantages of each.
- Improve outreach to PhD students and senior lecturers about the existence of the Publications Committee.

So as to make research support more coordinated and systematic across the university, we recommend to:

- Set up a committee on research support that encompasses the entire organisation.

Representatives from all areas involved in research support (including the library)should meet three of four times a year in order to discuss related issues and improve coordination and understanding surrounding help offered to researchers at SH.

- Design a new webpage specifically dedicated to research support with lists of names and bios of those responsible for providing such assistance across the organisation as a whole. A description and explanation of the different types of research support offered, and how they relate to one another should also be described.

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