

e-Research at the University of Cape Town: the role of strategic partnerships and leadership readiness

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines how the strategic partnership between the Research Office, Libraries and ICTS is a critical, and in many ways unique, function in advancing an enterprise-wide response to the changing researcher needs in the e-Research environment. The paper considers the challenge of building new functionality across multiple service points, as opposed to the traditional service silo approach, in an enterprise-wide organization structure able to support a user-centric approach.

As part of the journey towards a robust strategic partnership, leadership readiness within each of the distinct functions of Research Office, Libraries and ICTS was critical to the successful establishment of the e-Research Centre at UCT. The forging of the partnership depended on the willingness of the leadership to shift from a traditional service-centric (function based) to a user-centric approach at institutional level that has capability to integrate multiple service support at relevant points around the research life-cycle.

The paper deals not only with some key achievements of the strategic partnership and leadership in a uni-wide e-Research Centre but it also highlights where it can hurt across implementation, turf contestation and in finding the synergies to shape joint and separate roles and functions across distributed services to meet researcher needs. The use of the RACI chart methodology chart is explained and how it is shaping progressive leadership in integrating the previously distinct functions of the Research Office, Libraries and ICTS in a new combination of functions that support the e-Research Centre at UCT.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gwenda Thomas is Executive Director: Libraries which includes responsibility for the Library and Information Studies Centre (LISC) at the University of Cape Town. Prior to this position, she was the Director of Library Services at Rhodes University (2006-2011). As University Librarian, she actively participates in a number of national initiatives:

- Member of the Committee for Scholarly Communication in South Africa (CSPISA) within the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) (2008+)
- External member of the University of Pretoria Library Services Advisory Committee (2009+)
- Director of the Board and Treasurer of the national licensing consortium SANLIC 2004+
- Member of the Advisory Board for the Master's in IT Programme (CCNY funded project coordinated by UP Department of Information Science) (2011+)

At the international level, she was the elected representative for the EMEA (Europe, Middle East & Africa) region at the OCLC Global Council (2008-2011) and Chair: EMEA Regional Council (July 2010-June 2011). Since 1987, she has published more than twenty papers in a variety of international and South African journals and conference proceedings as well as chapters contributed to books and review series.

Izak (Sakkie) Janse van Rensburg is the Executive Director of Information and Communication Technology services at the University of Cape Town. He holds an MBA from the University of the Free State and has more than 25 years' experience in the ICT sector and has a strong track record of developing and aligning ICT strategies in the higher-education sector. His time at UCT has been marked by remarkable improvements in ICTS' services – including significant advancements in research and scientific computing support, and the adoption of the international roaming Internet service [eduroam](http://edu.uct.ac.za/edu.uct.ac.za). With a special interest in research, he is

the founder and national co-ordinator of the [Association of South African University Directors of Information Technology](#) (ASAUDIT) e-Research special interest group. He chaired the group from 2009 to 2011, and is now an Exco member. He is a founding member and site director of the [SAGrid](#) Joint Research Unit, and is also a Director for the Tertiary Education and Research Network of South Africa (TENET). Additionally, he is a founding member and Director of the [ASAUDIT Leadership Institute](#) launched in 2012.

Marilet Sienaert is Executive Director, Research at the University of Cape Town, and heads the Research Office, the Postgraduate Directorate (which includes the Postgraduate Centre & Funding Office) as well as the Office of Research Integrity. Prior to this position, from 1977 to 2000, she worked through the academic ranks from graduate assistant to full professor at the universities of Pretoria, Natal (Durban) and Durban-Westville. Her research track record (numerous accredited journal articles, conference papers and two monographs) mostly dates back to her earlier career as an academic but she is now an active member of the South African Research & Innovation Management Association (SARIMA); the International Organisation for Research Management Societies (INORMS) and serves as panel member on the Council for Higher Education's national quality assurance audits of universities and on reference groups of the National Research Foundation. She is the nominated UCT representative on projects driven by the independent Centre for Higher Education and Training namely Strengthening Knowledge Production in Universities and The Relationship between Higher Education and Economic Development in Africa. She contributes to the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) ongoing benchmarking programmes on good practice in research management and as consultant to their Development of Research Uptake in Sub-Saharan Africa (DRUSSA) project. She is appointed by the Department of Higher Education & Training as member of the National Research Development Grant panel.

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For each author, please include a short bio of 150-200 words. This information can extend onto a third page if needed. The information about the topic should take up no more than two pages.