5th Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries International Conference (QQML 2013), Rome, Italy, June 4-7, 2013: A Report of the Conference

Rutgers University has made this article freely available. Please share how this access benefits you.
Your story matters. [https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/41212/story/]

This work is an ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT (AM)
This is the author's manuscript for a work that has been accepted for publication. Changes resulting from the publishing process, such as copyediting, final layout, and pagination, may not be reflected in this document. The publisher takes permanent responsibility for the work. Content and layout follow publisher's submission requirements.

Citation for this version and the definitive version are shown below.


Terms of Use: Copyright for scholarly resources published in RUcore is retained by the copyright holder. By virtue of its appearance in this open access medium, you are free to use this resource, with proper attribution, in educational and other non-commercial settings. Other uses, such as reproduction or republication, may require the permission of the copyright holder.

Article begins on next page
The 5th Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries International Conference (QQML 2013) was held from June 4-7, 2013 at Sapienza University, Rome, Italy. The conference website and program are available at:

http://www.isast.org/qqml2013.html

Abstracts for every presentation and paper from QQML 2013 may be found online at:

The QQML International Conference offers an extensive program that represents two major methodological trends and two different ways of assessing and measuring quality and results of library initiatives. The presenters at QQML 2013 interpreted this charge very broadly by focusing on aspects of metrics, organizational planning, library management, assessment (especially of information literacy) or evidence-based librarianship, for example. The program felt heavily skewed toward academic libraries but included a few public library-focused talks. Some talks delved into other disciplines related to library and information science- allowing the conference a more multidisciplinary feel even though its focus is most definitely LIS.

QQML 2013 was hosted by La Sapienza University of Rome which was founded in 1303 by Pope Boniface VIII. It holds the distinction of being the first university in Rome as well as the largest university in Europe. The city of Rome was an ideal place for the exchange of ideas at an academic conference and provided a wonderful opportunity for information sharing for the attendees who came from an amazing list of 65 countries. Attendees were able to meet and mix at the conference sessions as well as at the planned social and educational outings held within and outside the city. Attendees also represented libraries from developing nations. QQML is organized under the umbrella of ISAST (International Society for the Advancement of Science and Technology) and is under the direction of the conference co-chair, Anthi Katsirikou of the University of Piraeus Library, Greece (and her committee).

For librarians and LIS graduate students, submitting a paper or abstract for a presentation to QQML offers an accessible publication opportunity as well. Papers for this juried conference are considered for publication in the QQML e-journal (www.qqml.net/index.html), a peer reviewed online open access journal. In part, the journal is described thus: “the scope of the journal is to publish contemporary and quality research, including theoretical research papers and applications. The journal is open and encourages the use of various research methods (quantitative and qualitative methods).” Abstracts for all presentations were also distributed in printed book format at the conference, making it easy to determine the exact content for the vast array of sessions from which to choose (288). For both the novice and experienced presenter, QQML 2013 provided an opportunity to share research results, ideas and work in progress, and to receive feedback from a diverse group of international librarians with similar interests.

The QQML conference is somewhat unusual in that most of the attendees are likely also giving presentations, some based on papers that will be published in the QQML e-journal or other
publications. Presentations are plentiful, many running concurrently with others, and this approach makes it easy for attendees to choose a mix of topics from offerings throughout each day. On the other hand, choosing from the menu of topics each day can be difficult and important talks will be missed. The days are quite crowded with presentations. Posters were presented but not in a prominent location, so they likely did not draw the usual crowd. The conference has a somewhat “grass roots” feel, and attendees may also be asked to pitch in by moderating sessions. Some attendees really enjoyed this kind of opportunity to really participate. Attendees were even provided lunch each day alongside the university’s students, and there was plenty of time to share valuable lunchtime conversation with international colleagues. QQML, now in its 5th year, may be feeling its success, having grown into a quite a major LIS meeting. With the size of the conference growing, the organizers may have to rein in some of the success (in terms of number of presentations) as time goes on in order to ensure a quality experience for presenters and audience members alike. QQML is also unusual in that it does not focus on a vendor/exhibitor component, but instead focuses on the heavy presentation schedule. With this format, the conference remains accessible as far as participation by many librarian speakers and authors and the focus is definitely on learning and sharing. Previous QQML conferences have been held in Chania, Crete Greece, Athens, Greece, and in Limerick, Ireland.

The first plenary session, “Looking out and looking in-the universe of information” was presented by Lynne Marie Rudasill of U. Illinois at Urbana Champaign. Her three topics: interdisciplinarity, problem-solving and big data had a focus on globalization and global studies and on the relationship between globalization and information technology. Friedman’s Democratization was discussed (Democratization of technology, finance and information). Rudasill commented that she prefers the word “revolution” to “democratization.” Interdisciplinarity is also encouraged by globalization. A researcher can take interdisciplinary research and apply it to global issues. A “transdisciplinary” approach is a more all-encompassing term that is useful for research in global issues/affairs. LIS is also an area where librarians can adopt research methodologies from other disciplines. Rudasill uses clickstream data to demonstrate interdisciplinarity.

This session mentioned that the “old players” (author, publisher, librarian, user) now must include new entrants into traditional spaces including (for example) Wikipedia, social media, Google, aggregators, and institutional repositories. The Horizon Report is one valuable source of information, with each annual issue tracking new technology and its impact on higher education. How can librarians have an impact? There are many crises (but many opportunities) and librarians can provide information that can lead to sound decision-making. Of course, “big data” is a topic that is often mentioned, and there is a need to understand how LIS might use the information from transaction logs, for instance. Educators can use big data to understand students. Can those in LIS improve the poor search tools, the lack of organization of the data, and the lack of accessibility found with big data? Rudasill commented that the “good thing about big data is that it’s totally disorganized” which makes it ripe for those willing to organize it and
make it useful. It is important that researchers ask the right questions. Mainly, she reminded the audience that “our research should reflect and ameliorate real world problems.”

Following the plenary, with many individual sessions from which to choose, I chose to attend a series of talks on bibliometrics. Metrics was a big topic at this conference, whether altmetrics, scientometrics, or more traditional impact study treatments. Fredrik Astrom and Joacim Hansson presented “Librarianship and scientometrics: support or surveillance in the research publication process,” an interesting analysis of the support for bibliometric activities at Swedish university libraries. Librarians map collaborative research fields, create performance indicator analyses, do research, work on professional development, and provide support. They teach and provide information on bibliographic evaluation via seminars and courses, and participate on task forces that focus on issues of bibliometrics. Librarians are competent in the use and creation of bibliographic databases and metadata, and bibliometrics has always been part of LIS and associated areas of scholarly communication and publishing. This is an area of LIS that will only grow; one where librarians can fill an important niche in the academy, and where opportunity exists. Taking advantage of new opportunities in areas of bibliometrics provides more visibility for librarians as they work with faculty and other scholars and assist with issues of the publication process. This is especially true in these times where pressure for “ROI (return on investment)” and other types of institutional assessment that are related to promotion and tenure will only grow more prominent.

Other presentations on metrics on the first day of the conference included a bibliometric analysis of a single journal, a bibliometric study of “research collaboration between Stockholm University and other Swedish academic units….to support decisions on library collaboration,” a bibliometric study contributed from Portugal, and a bilateral bibliometric study on “scholarly collaboration among ASEAN countries” The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) country study was interesting in that the discussion included other issues relating to collaboration in this region which encompasses Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Singapore, Indonesia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei.

In an evening session on the first day, there were presentations on “change management” or librarians acting as “change agents” in the university setting. Whether moving open access policies forward in the academy, discussing change management in Swedish libraries, or impacting the strategic development plan of the National Library of Estonia, librarians are taking on challenges in management areas. Astrand and Ahlqvist aptly entitled their presentation “Heart to Change? a study on change management in five Swedish Libraries,” and described the difficulty we experience at times of change. “Heart to Change” is the name of a project that explores planned organizational change from a library perspective.

In a set of presentations under the umbrella of “Information and Knowledge Services,” the first speakers, Laura Armiero and Mary Joan Crowley, in their presentation “In the information flow at two Sapienza libraries,” mentioned Sapienza University’s use of the publishing platform
“lulu.com” as a mechanism to give younger scholars support for publishing. While listening to a presentation by authors Eugene Harvey and Maureen Lindstrom, “The transformation to an information commons model of library service: a decade of student data,” it was very apparent that the audience was listening with rapt attention to the description of this model. It seems that the topics of information literacy seem to be most in demand at conferences these days, drawing the largest audiences. Interest in discussion of information commons, and assessing this model was the focus, but also possibly why people may come to QQML; to hear assessment of trending LIS initiatives. In this case, LibQual was used, and major satisfaction with the information commons model was demonstrated. Another fascinating presentation by Constantia Constantinou, “Delivering library services and information research in support of distance education” was actually a first-hand description of the experience of serving as a librarian on board a ship at sea, with all the problems inherent with time zone changes, such as use of email and other communication channels. This talk reminded all of us that we have many things in common but that all librarians have different challenges to face in their daily work.

Karen E. Fisher’s (University of Washington Information School USA) plenary session entitled “Collaboration-the most wicked enabler to fabulously successful research” was a wide-ranging, thought-provoking talk that reminded audience members that it is vitally important to “work with good people, thank people and to reciprocate.” Fisher’s work focuses on how people create and share information in informal social settings. Fisher described two important studies she has led (with colleagues): The U.S. Impact Study (2010-12) which focused on how people use computers/internet in public libraries, and a complex and broad-based initiative entitled “InfoMe” that studies information seeking behavior of ethnic minority youth. The value and beauty of collaboration was a theme throughout Fisher’s presentation.

Assessment and innovation in information literacy seems to be a big draw at any library conference these days and QQML also had this focus. A set of presentations representing “information literacy across the curriculum: theory” included Rosemary Green’s (Shenandoah University, USA) “Critical Information Literacy: matching theory and inquiry, a topic of her doctoral studies. The term “information illiteracy” was also discussed. Ann Cullen of Simmons College, USA presented the topic “using phenomenology to improve information literacy curricular planning and design” where she charged people to go to a higher dimension with teaching. She discussed the uneven success of information literacy/instruction and the librarian/teaching faculty disconnect. Librarians need to include aspects of information behavior when designing curriculum. Laura Saunders, also from Simmons also stated that “information literacy” is a difficult word. Saunders presented “Library instruction within a discipline context: expectations and adaptations.” Common concerns of departmental faculty relate to searching and evaluating sources, and they worry that students are not critically evaluating information. Disciplinary differences/divergences must be taken into account, and faculty want librarians involved in issues of the evaluation process, such as who wrote, who funded, and who published a particular piece of research. Experts say that for efficacy in instruction, collaboration is key,
that librarians need to spend more time on evaluation, and that assessment needs to be built in. Faculty need to be aware of published information literacy standards, and the ACRL Information Literacy Standards are mentioned in multiple meetings at QQML. In terms of collaboration, an impressive program at the University of Arizona, USA (presented by Veronica Reyes-Escudero) works with students, faculty and the donors of special collections materials to create programs that teach the students about archives while involving the donors themselves in programming, a “win-win” for all involved. This type of collaboration can present important teaching moments while increasing interest of donors in engaging with the library. It is quite brilliant to involve the donors in working with the materials they have donated.

The “research support” series of speakers included Teresa Costa and colleagues from Portugal speaking on the “Impact of the Online Knowledge Library: its use and impact on the production of the Portuguese academic and scientific community (2000-2010)” showing the importance of access to electronic resources for increases in scientific productivity. Portuguese international co-authorship with the USA and Spain shows similarities in numbers. Gregori, Losito and Sirito’s paper on “Knowledge mapping and visualization as a common ground between librarianship and scholarly communication: qualitative and quantitative methods for improving semantic categorization and retrieval” discussed the shift for librarians from a service role to one of working with faculty in order to enhance their (faculty’s) effectiveness. Dianne Steele and Cyrill Walters of University of Cape Town, South Africa presented “Research partners: the establishing of a collaborative partnership between the Research Office and the University Libraries in support of research…” with a focus on the fact that globalization is changing research practices, and that collaboration produces greater quality. There are more citations when collaboration is international versus within the country. Since the Research Office helps shape research identity and reach, libraries must align library goals and strategic plans with the University’s. Research support is important, for instance the institution’s use of bibliometric tools to identify collaborators. An interesting study was presented of the use of SciVal Spotlight (Elsevier) by University of Cape Town of their collaboration with the University of Michigan (USA). The library is doing this kind of research for the Research Office. South Africa rewards researchers for completion of peer reviewed scholarship using the IRMA tool. A team of 8 from the libraries provides research support services to the Research Office. This exciting demonstration of library/Research Office collaboration provided much food for thought about the future of library services.

Chennupati K. Ramaiah and Dey Panna (India) contributed “Evaluation of quality of the satellite-based internet services.” One challenge to this type of research with certain populations is that the profile of respondents is missing some information that can’t be collected from females where restrictions prevent researchers from collecting information on female internet use in certain countries. This is one reason why QQML is so interesting. The focus on research strategies from country to country vary so widely in some part due to societal issues.
One of the few publishers participating in QQML, Moshe Pritsker, the creator of JoVE (Journal of Visualized Experiments) explained how the product contributes to scholarship, talked about continuing enhancements being made, and answered many questions from the audience about the technology and business model involved.

The conference continued the next day following a wonderful side trip to dinner on an Italian farm. The Information Policies in Science series began with Carla Basili (Ceris Institute, Italy) presenting “The European vision on scientific information” which discussed the interconnection between scientific research and information policies and strategies for economic development in the European Union. A reference was made to the “Science Europe Position Statement: Principles on the Transition to Open Access to Research Publications (April 2013) and to the European Commission’s 2011 communication on open data in a knowledge-based economy. There has already been a lot of emphasis on two of the three ongoing aspects (publications and research data), but this talk focused also on a necessary third concentration, that of “research infrastructures.” Research infrastructures are not ICT, but instead “content resources.” The MERIL inventory (Mapping of the European Research Infrastructure Landscape) was described, as well as the Information Policies in Science (IPS) initiative which analyzes information policies using a disciplinary perspective. In a follow up presentation, Basili, with Laitinen and Saarti from Finland continued with “Library and science indicators: towards a new paradigm to assess the library and information services as an input to the academic processes.” Much of this work deals with the overwhelming amount of information that researchers are dealing with, and the role of the academic library and its relationship with the academic community. How does the library interface with research and development (R&D)? There needs to be a change in library statistics gathering from simply measuring resources to instead conducting an analysis of the library’s impact. There is a need to move beyond performance measures and focus on the contributions and the value added by higher education and libraries on a nation’s collective knowledge. Angela Repanovici of Transilvania University of Braslov, Romania presented the “Correlation and regression between proprietary and open access scientometric tools; an exploratory study.” This is the case of Romania where there is heavy focus on journals that are covered in the Web of Science. Other tools such as Scopus, Google Scholar, Harzing’s Publish or Perish, and the use of the h-index were discussed. This study demonstrated once again (via new analyses) the common assertion that “open access increases research impact.”

A series of presentations under the heading “Technology transfer and innovation in library management 1” began with Peter Broadwell of UCLA in “aiSelections: computational techniques for matching faculty research profiles to library acquisitions” discussing how subject librarian and selector roles can be augmented by the use of statistics in order to reduce the random nature of acquisitions. In this pilot study, Broadwell and co-author Timothy Tangherlini, showed how librarians can take a variety of available metrics and statistics (library-generated, faculty profiles, and grant information for example) and use them to better inform acquisitions decision making, thereby making best use of available funding.
Im, Boyd, and Blue (University of Santa Barbara, CA, USA) presented “Evaluation of the need for diversity library residency programs in the United States of America: a quantitative and qualitative approach.” This valuable session focused on the major mission to increase diversity in academic libraries. The study of 30 U.S. programs will inform strategic direction in academic libraries. The presenters shared some of the findings about the experiences of new librarians taking part in the diversity residency programs. Moving to a topic that affects both academic and public library users, Bond, Friel and Lahoz (USA) discussed the topic of “health information literacy (HIL), the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information.” Using the example of lead poisoning in a U.S. city, and the user group of “pre-teens,” the presenters demonstrated how they created a hands-on, fun curriculum to teach students about lead poisoning. This was a great example of librarian/faculty/community collaboration which also included a method for assessing results.

Lisa Norberg of Barnard College, USA discussed the “Understanding Library Impacts(ULI)” protocol in relation to student learning outcomes, followed by Michelle Demeter of Florida State University, USA presenting “Survey says: assessing the social impact of an academic library tutoring program on undergraduate success.” In this case, peer tutoring programs are managed by the library, and these tutors are often junior and senior undergraduates. The program targets the highest drop/fail courses such as biology, chemistry, physics, math, economics and accounting, and works also in partnership with student government in employing 15 tutors. This is important because in some schools, a grade of “A” is required for students to continue on in the pre-med curriculum. With tutoring, traditional library services and programming, students can develop academic skills, learn better time management and study skills, build good study habits and hone research skills. The peer model is a success, and students can come to tutoring with a friend or classmate. The majority of students who use the services are freshmen and sophomores, and the upperclassmen become both academic and social role models. Development of the very important survey they used to gauge success of the programs was discussed.

In a second session on bibliometric research, Peter Shepherd, Director of COUNTER discussed “Usage Factor: a new usage-based metric for measuring journal impact.” Altmetrics, a very popular topic these days (term coined by Priem) is a mainstay at every conference where metrics are front and center. COUNTER calls for usage as a useful filter. Bookmarks, tweets, blog posts, and Facebook activity demonstrate that scholars are moving their publications and other work onto the web, and social media has become an important avenue for impact. Some may not realize that altmetrics covers data sets. There is a trend in “nanopublication.” When it comes to altmetrics, the positives are the all forms of scholarship are covered, it speaks to scholar or author-based impact, and the negative might be that some say the values are easy to manipulate. An advantage of using COUNTER statistics is that COUNTER is moving toward reporting usage at the article level. COUNTER’s Usage Factor (UF) complements data from Web of Science. Librarians also will benefit by seeing metrics for journals outside traditional subject indexes. In terms of Usage Factor, the “overall aim of the project was to explain how online
journal usage statistics might form the basis of a new measure of journal impact and quality. A Code of Practice for Usage Factors is available on the COUNTER website. QQML will undoubtedly be focusing on metrics for some time to come.

The abovementioned presentations are only a very small snapshot of the sessions that were available at QQML2013. Travelling with other librarians to the Vatican Museum, Sistine Chapel, Grottaferrata, Castel Gandolfo, and other Roman destinations offered more time for information sharing and meeting new colleagues from around the world. This year’s successful meeting in Rome concluded with a very appealing invitation to all attendees to reconvene in Istanbul, Turkey on May 27-30, 2014 at Kadir Has University for next year’s QQML International Conference.