

A New 'ERA' for Research

by Rachael Bahl

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A new ERA?



- What is it?
- What does it mean for libraries, librarians and our academics?
- How can we help?
(How can we be 'catalysts for change'?)

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Research funding



- Australia currently has a dual funding system:
 - Nationally competitive grants (ARC, NH&MRC)
 - Infrastructure (block) grants to Universities, currently linked to competitive project income
- Government investment in research is around \$8.9 billion
- ARC represents 8% of this (CSIRO is 9%)
- Universities receive 21%

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Performance based research funding



- First introduced in UK in 1986
- Now in 13 countries
 - *In this era of fiscal austerity, government funding of scholarly research has become a pressing issue for most countries. While in the past universities and research institutions could rely on a continuous, steady flow of financial support, today governments increasingly tie funding to metrics. Therefore, the performance of tertiary education institutions has turned into a metric-enhancing competition ... the development and use of Performance-Based Research Funding Systems (PRFS) has become a prominent topic of discussion among academics and government officials alike... (Sacha Boucherie, Research Trends Newsletter May 2011)*

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PBRF in Australia



- Australian scheme – ‘Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Initiative’
 - Administered by the Australian Research Council (ARC)

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Why ERA for Australia?



- Best to get the ARC to explain...
- **ARC Presentation, 11 October 2010:**
Australian Research Council and its Role in
Advancing Australian Research and Innovation
- *Presented by Liz Visher and Chris Marshall* -
http://www.arc.gov.au/pdf/P_ARC_11Oct10_1up.pdf
– Slides 18 & 19

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How does it work?



- Again ... best to get the ARC to explain...
(though we'll skim some of the technical bits)
- **ARC Presentation, 11 October 2010:**
Australian Research Council and its Role in
Advancing Australian Research and Innovation
- *Presented by Liz Visher and Chris Marshall* -
http://www.arc.gov.au/pdf/P_ARC_11Oct10_1up.pdf
– Slides 25-32

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FoR Codes for Religion

220400	RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS
220401	Christian Studies (incl. Biblical Studies and Church History)
220402	Comparative Religious Studies
220403	Islamic Studies
220404	Jewish Studies
220405	Religion and Society
220406	Studies in Eastern Religious Traditions
220407	Studies in Religious Traditions (excl. Eastern, Jewish, Christian and Islamic Traditions)
220499	Religion and Religious Studies not elsewhere classified



Ranked Journals List

- One of the most controversial aspects of the ERA process
- For 2010: 20,712 journals ranked
- Parameters for inclusion:
 - Scholarly
 - Publishes original research
 - Peer reviewed or equivalent
 - Has ISSN
 - Active during review period



Ranked journals list (2)



- Rankings A*, A, B, C
- Range of concerns
 - Journal articles increasingly uncoupled from the journal as a whole; ranking ‘journals’ does not reflect this
 - Accuracy of bibliometrics
 - Barriers to new journals
 - Changes submission behaviour

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Ranked journals list (3)



- Changes to submission behaviour concerns prompted this blog post from Wiley Blackwell in May this year:
 - Wiley-Blackwell has been in contact with the Australian Research Council throughout the ERA process. We have lodged a formal submission about our concerns over the unintended impact of the journal rankings on the researcher community, particularly in relation to submission behavior. Our concern is that B- and C-ranked journals will see a decline in high-quality submissions from Australian authors, which would particularly impact Australian journals that are primarily engaged with domestic concerns and that act as a link between the academy and practitioner and policy communities. Australian universities, societies, editors, and publishers now wait with keen interest to hear how the feedback will be received and what changes, if any, will be made to the 2012 journal rankings list and the evaluation process. - <http://blogs.wiley.com/publishingnews/2011/05/11/the-excellence-for-research-in-australia-era-initiative/>

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Changes to ERA for 2012...



- Ranks will not be used
 - *“There is clear and consistent advice that the rankings were being deployed inappropriately within some quarters of the sector in ways that could produce harmful outcomes...”* Kim Carr media statement 30 May 2011
- ARC will still produce journal and conference lists –will not include rankings but will include FoR codes for citation analysis purposes
- ARC analysis suggested a refined indicator would produce improved results while removing negative consequences

Source: ARC presentation to ANZAM Workshop 29 June 2011,
http://www.arc.gov.au/pdf/2011_presentations/anzam_29062011.pdf

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What does all this mean for us?



- Increase in research support services in Academic libraries
- Increase in queries regarding citation analysis, journal impact factors and other metrics (as per Mark’s presentation) – despite religion/theology being subject to peer review not citation analysis

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What does all this mean for us? (2)



- A watching brief:
 - Uncertainty about new ‘journal quality profile’
 - Opportunity to influence this process?
- Estimate that only 20% of Australian ANZTLA libraries impacted directly by ERA process, BUT... questions surrounding theological research are of concern to us all.

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Other thoughts ...



- Collection development...
 - Should I make sure I subscribe to all the A* journals?
- Should ARI index only titles that appear on the ARC list?
- “One would hope that there would be a major research evaluation covering ... the impact of ERA on Australian universities and scholarship” – Colin Steele, ANU ERA seminar 18/10/2010.

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Resources



- ERA website
 - <http://www.arc.gov.au/era/>
- ARC Presentations
 - http://www.arc.gov.au/media/arc_presentations.htm
 - **11 October 2010:** Australian Research Council and its Role in Advancing Australian Research and Innovation - Australian National University - [PDF 1-up](#) (1.33MB) - [PDF 6-up](#) (579KB)
Presented by Liz Visher and Chris Marshall

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Resources



- Research Trends newsletter (from Scopus)
 - <http://www.researchtrends.com/>
- Diana Hicks. 2011. "Performance-based university research funding systems" The Selected Works of Diana Hicks
 - http://works.bepress.com/diana_hicks/27

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Practical steps...



- Back to Mark to look at Institutional repositories....

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