



Research Information and Strategic Decision Making

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Abstract

Research management is popularly described as being like herding cats. Researchers themselves show no instinctive desire to be managed, rather the opposite, and the process of managing creativity is notoriously problematic. However, decisions that directly impact on research have to be made at many levels, from the multi-national all the way down to the personal. The process by which such decisions are made is, however loosely interpreted, management.

Some decisions are of a narrowly technical nature where the researchers' own expertise is sufficient. Other decisions take place on a wider horizon and often involve people not directly concerned with the research itself. Among such decisions are those concerning the allocation of resources, the future direction and coordination of research efforts, and the evaluation of research outcomes. As the competition for research resources intensifies, the quality of such decisions takes on even greater importance. Rational decision making requires that the decision should be made in the light of timely, relevant, and accurate information, yet it is often difficult to find such information efficiently and use it effectively.

This paper will explore some of the key situations in which decisions affecting research are made and how research information systems could be deployed to support the making of those decisions. The examples to be considered include mapping research capabilities from a variety of perspectives as a basis for investment-type decisions; portfolio analysis as a basis for managing research collaborations and other relationships; and the need for less intensive methods of research evaluation.

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