

Let's start at the very beginning: How to breed and nurture the practitioner-researcher. The potential of a relationship between researchers and practitioners is obvious: researchers have a mandate to research and the skills and experience to do it, and practitioners have access to the kind of data researchers can readily analyse and discuss. But such a synergy is often not recognised or exploited in the LIS sector. There are many reasons why LIS practitioners may not research themselves: lack of a mandate to do so, no work time allocated for it, no perceived reason to do it, lack of support from employers or understanding of peers.

There are also some good reasons for practitioners to overcome or ignore the problems and involve themselves with research anyway: the availability of real-life data and possible projects, the understanding that research can support better practice, a potential audience of other practitioners who may be able to replicate the research for their own benefit, an expanded information base for a better informed profession as a whole. Academics who partner with practitioners can help overcome some of the problems and realise some of the benefits for the latter, while improving their own research output and fostering industry links and understanding.

Research relationships can occur both organically, through serendipitous meet ups and spontaneous conversations, or more deliberately when the researcher and practitioner negotiate a research partnership and a common understanding of a research problem. The latter occurrence can begin in the classroom, in the relationship between LIS students and academics, and continue fruitfully between new practitioners and their former lecturers. The benefits of this particular relationship are more than just the output from research collaboration but can include bridging the gap between teaching, learning and research, and the professional socialisation of new professionals.

In this paper examples will be presented to demonstrate how the academic mandates to teach, research, publish and demonstrate academic citizenship can be achieved in one continuum: beginning with teaching a research project course so that students know how to research; followed by selecting for mentoring students who have produced high-quality research papers, with the aim of transforming the paper for possible publication, either individually or as a collaborating author with the academic; and concurrently modelling a mutually supportive relationship so that students learn to be good scholarly citizens in the academy and good professional and organisational citizens as practitioners. Win, win, win.