The Sherlock Librarian
Investigating the Workplace

Claire Sewell
Research Support Skills Coordinator
Office of Scholarly Communication
Topics covered

• Why do workplace research?
• Evidence based practice
• Overcoming barriers
• Skills involved in the research process
• Pros and cons
• Building a research plan
What do we mean by workplace research?

Workplace research =

to see a problem in the workplace and investigate ways to solve it
Why do research?

- Solving a problem
- Proving your case to stakeholders
- Career advancement
- Help others learn from what you have done
Evidence based practice

1. Problem
2. Gather evidence
3. Critical appraisal
4. Apply to problem
5. Evaluate
Barriers to doing research

- Finding time
- Lack of resources
- Lack of support
- Political barriers
- Personal barriers
• Intended outcome can help you form your research question(s)
• Do you want to change a process? Inform people about something? Prove a hypothesis?

CAUTION: Don’t let the outcome you want influence your research
• Time management
• Ability to take criticism
• Communication skills
• Negotiation
• Neutrality
• Insider knowledge
• Higher level of access
• Established level of trust
• Can make a contribution to organisational change

• Impact on objectivity
• Colleagues may not see you as a researcher
• Risk of finding out negative information
• Responsibility for change
Create your research plan in 7 steps
• Have you noticed something at work?
• Could you improve on a process?
• Think you have a better way to do something?
• Do you want something to change?
• Are your proving a hypothesis?
• Are you making the case for more resources?
• How can you frame your problem into a question you can answer?
• Be practical!
• One piece of research = many questions
✓ What do I want to achieve with this research?
✓ Will it hold my interest for the length of the project?
✓ Will the findings be useful to my organisation or the wider library community?
✓ Have I made any assumptions that need to be checked?
✓ Is it doable?
• Choose the right method for your research
• Think about what is manageable
• Consider any issues which might make things difficult
• Dealing with people often means dealing with sensitive data
• How will you keep participants and data safe?
• Is there an ethical review process at your workplace?
• Be realistic
• Plan for the unexpected
• Do any external factors influence your timescales?
• How will you communicate with key stakeholders?
• Is it appropriate to share the results with a wider audience?
• Formal or informal?
• Professional development
• Swap your plan with your neighbour
• Is there anything missing from the plan?
• What would you do differently?
Questions?
Combine efforts with a colleague
Don’t be afraid to talk about what hasn’t worked
Think about scale – what is achievable?
Be open about what you are doing

Have fun!
Good luck!