

## **Research Incentive Fund Report**

### **“So Why Are You Here?”: Attending the LIBER 2022 Conference in Odense, Denmark, via an InULA Research Support Grant**

ANNA MARIE JOHNSON  
Librarian, Head, Scholars' Commons  
Interim Head, Teaching & Learning Department  
Herman B Wells Library  
Indiana University, Bloomington

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

---

As I encountered librarians from all over Europe at [the 2022 LIBER Conference](#), I often was asked “So, why are you here?” The question was not hostile at all—simply curious. Alyssa Denneler, Amy Minix, and I were three out of the eight or so Americans present at this European Research Library conference hosted at the [University of Southern Denmark \(home to the largest and very controversial collection of human brains which I unfortunately was not aware of at the time!\)](#). [LIBER](#) (Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche or the Association of European Research Libraries) is the European equivalent to the Association of College and Research Libraries, but their conference was much smaller and more intimate.

The presentations that I attended were from librarians from many different countries including the UK, France, Netherlands, Croatia, and Qatar. The topics were heavily geared toward open access, open science, and other forms of open scholarship, but institutional research culture, academic libraries as research partners, collaboration with a career center, librarians actually evaluating scholarly research, and alternatives to the traditional impact factor for evaluating research and research productivity were also discussed. Many librarians I spoke with seemed surprised that Americans would make the trip overseas to join them at this conference, but they were curious about developments in American research libraries.

The presentation Alyssa, Amy, and I gave was entitled “Faking It Until We Make It: Libraries Supporting Researchers in Systematic and Scoping Reviews.” We discussed the initial steps IU Bloomington has taken to begin support for systematic and scoping reviews and how, even though we lacked training and experience, we had been working diligently to acquire both. This was a topic of broad interest, and we presented to a full room of librarians, many with questions for us. Through the questions, we discovered that European librarians do not often have faculty status, which sometimes impedes their ability to be seen as research experts.

It was incredibly refreshing to hear from European research librarians, but it was also reassuring. One presentation noted that in interviews with PhD students, the librarians learned that “students didn’t understand how libraries could help them,” for example. It was clear we face similar challenges, and while North America seems to be a bit further ahead in some ways (our open access movement was often mentioned), we can certainly learn a lot from our European colleagues as well.

I would be remiss if I did not note that the very delightful city of Odense, which is the birthplace of [Hans Christian Anderson](#) was a wonderful place to visit. It was a very walkable city with pretty parks and delightful restaurants with outdoor seating. Although we went in July, the evenings were cool, and blankets were often offered to us at dinner by the servers! In addition, the University of Southern Denmark, although much of it was [Brutalist in style](#), had these delightful plant walls:



*Green walls in academic buildings at the University of Southern Denmark.*