

JURY REPORT

SURF Research Support Champions 2025

2025: time to shine a spotlight on the extraordinary dedication of research support professionals. While researchers often receive the most recognition, it is clear that research supporters are indispensable for achieving high-quality scientific results.

Their work, often behind the scenes, forms the crucial link between researchers and research IT, at the intersection of data management, IT, and Open Science. With the SURF Research Support Championship, we honor those who have made exceptional contributions to research support within their institutions.

Candidates for this award are nominated by colleagues, researchers, and managers. The jury selects the winners based on the submitted nominations. First and foremost, we want to emphasize that all nominees are winners: the nominations clearly express their enormous added value. The appreciation shown in the nominations is truly heartwarming.

The variety and quality of the submissions underline the importance of research support and the diversity of required skills. For the jury, composed of professionals from the research field, it was inspiring to see the passion and dedication displayed. Choosing a single winner per category was exceptionally challenging.

In the end, the jury unanimously selected three outstanding winners, each in their own category. To the winners: this award is not only a recognition from SURF but especially from your peers who took the effort to bring your work to light.

Champion in the Universities category:

Raoul Schram

Utrecht University – Research (Software) Engineer

Raoul is a key figure in the development and implementation of high-quality research IT solutions with both national and international impact. He combines deep technical expertise with organizational talent, thereby not only delivering innovative software solutions but also building and supporting strong teams and events related to research support.

An important aspect of Raoul's work is his careful handling of research data. The jury emphasized that he has done significant work to ensure that all data is processed anonymously, which is essential in today's research landscape where data protection and ethics are central. His work results in tangible products and services that directly contribute to the quality and safety of scientific research.

In addition to his technical contributions, Raoul distinguishes himself with a broad skill set. He combines software development with organizational competencies, effectively relieving teams and successfully organizing large events. This rare combination of skills makes him an indispensable link within his institution and beyond.

The jury was impressed by the multitude of examples demonstrating his national impact. His work spans multiple disciplines and influences how research data is collected, managed, and shared across the Netherlands — and potentially internationally.

Some highlights from the nomination forms:

His combination of competencies, initiative and drive makes him an exceptional research support professional.

Multiple researchers across different faculties benefit from Raouls' vision and initiative, contributing significantly to Open Science.

Raoul initiates new projects and has the perseverance to turn them into successes.

The tool he developed can be used by anyone, anywhere in the world. The impact he creates is immense.

Champion in the Universities of Applied Sciences category:

Renate Mattiszik
Hogeschool Saxion – data librarian/data steward

Renate is the driving force behind an impressive project that has enriched her institution and earned national recognition. What began as a one-person initiative has grown into a widely supported and visible program with impact far beyond her own organization.

The jury emphasizes that it is exceptional how Renate built something from the ground up that now serves as an example for the entire sector. Her work reflects enormous dedication, perseverance, and vision. Through her efforts, not only has the quality of research support greatly improved, but she has also inspired others to actively contribute to Open Science, data management, and research innovation.

What makes Renate particularly remarkable is that she achieved this broad impact as an individual. The scale and scope of her work are rare and demonstrate how personal passion and perseverance can bring about structural change. Her visibility inside and outside her university of applied sciences strengthens the position of research support as an essential component of the academic ecosystem.

Some highlights from the nomination forms:

Renate dares to go against the current to bring research into the spotlight and tirelessly emphasizes the importance of good data management.

Renate is the STAR of Saxion Research Services; always helpful and providing excellent and broad support.

Her contribution combines theoretical knowledge with practical application, which is of great value to education.

Renate has a clear eagerness to learn and expand her knowledge, not only within her own institution but also on a national level.

Champion in the UMC's and Research Institutes category:

Ernest Boskovic
UMC Utrecht – electronics engineer

Ernest is the go-to person for researchers and colleagues seeking expertise and support in research and research IT. The jury praises his impressive level of seniority, which is clearly reflected in his work and communication style.

With enormous dedication and expertise, Ernest manages to make complex issues accessible and translate them into practical solutions. His impact extends beyond his immediate field: he also influences broader processes and systems within and outside his institution, contributing to the sustainable strengthening of the research landscape as a whole.

Ernest combines technical expertise with excellent communication skills, making him an exceptionally valuable link. His efforts extend beyond research support alone; he connects people, disciplines, and departments, actively contributing to the further professionalization of research support at all levels.

Some highlights from the nomination forms:

Ernest supports research with much dedication and attention for detail, building devices that directly help researchers achieve insights.

He stands out by supporting researchers technically, designing and realizing devices tailored to specific research needs.

Ernest ensures that technical solutions align with researchers' needs by engaging in discussions, listening carefully and adapting designs.

Samen aanjagen van vernieuwing

The jury:

Magchiel Bijsterbosch – Jury Chairman

Innovation Manager Research at SURF

Anja Smit

Director DANS

Mayukha Bathini

Board Member of the Dutch PhD Network

Anne de Jong

Datasteward Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences – Research Support Champion 2024

Ron Scholten

Datamanager Utrecht University - Research Support Champion 2024

Jelle de Plaa

Senior Software Design Engineer SRON - Research Support Champion 2024