

Libraries can embrace the use of altmetrics as a means to strengthen the functionality of institutional repositories.

by Blog Admin

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With the expansion of digital scholarship, alternative metrics have emerged as a useful way to measure the impact of scholarly outputs beyond traditional citation counts. LSE Research Online has recently added an altmetrics tool to display the ways in which LSE research is being used in this broader social landscape. [Lucy Ayre](#) provides further background on why this addition is beneficial for the Library and the wider scholarly community.

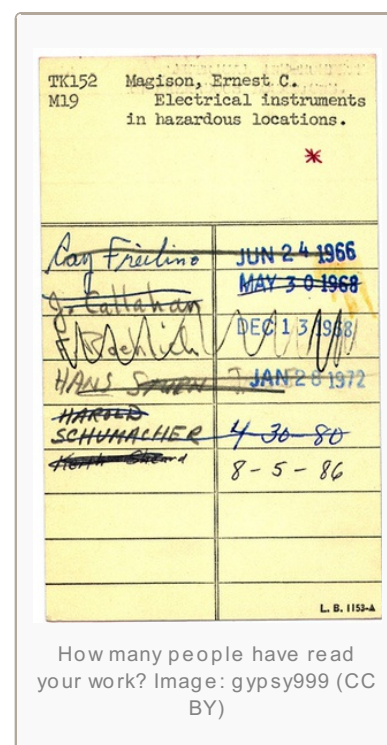


A recent LSE Audible Impact interview offered an insightful answer to the question, 'how can political scientists make their work more accessible to policy makers and the public?' The answer – '[Dress it up in Math](#)' using simple presentations of an argument to make complex research easily digestible. A similar principle can be applied to explain bibliometrics. The use of citation data has quickly become part of research practice and quality assessment, for example – bibliometric data can be used in tenure meetings, academic recruitment decisions and to accompany expert review during the current Research Excellence Framework (REF). Libraries have been responding to this development by providing support for researchers using tools such as [ISI Web of Science](#) and [Scopus](#), which track this citation data and include the functionality to run a citation analysis and calculate scores, such as the H-Index. Libraries subscribe to these services, which can give an indicator of how a piece of research has had an impact on the scholarly landscape.

It has been argued that these tools measure a mere fraction of the modern scholarly landscape – what if the journal you published in is not ISI listed? Alternative tools, such as Anne-Wil Harzing's [Publish or Perish](#), have been developed to retrieve metrics from a wider pool of databases, using Google Scholar and Microsoft Academic Search. Despite these developments, one of the most difficult aspects of measuring impact outside of traditional databases is the complex way in which research affects political and social change over time. Going beyond the figures now for a second, it has been argued [here](#) and [here](#) that using alternative metrics are the key to filling this time gap.

Alternative metrics – more commonly known as altmetrics – is a way to measure the impact of scholarly output by charting its social media mentions such as as blog posts and bookmarks in online reference managers. With the expansion of digital scholarship, altmetrics have also been described as [tomorrow's filters](#) as they provide an alternative to the traditional ways of filtering what is relevant, and what is circulating now amongst one's respected peers. But how are altmetrics measured? It's one thing to have your research quoted in a newspaper article, but how can you track that newspaper article citation, and the 60 online comments listed underneath it, or the Twitter conversation sparked as a result of your research blog post? Tools such as [Altmetric](#) and [Impact Story](#) use open algorithms to track, collate and interpret these altmetrics. The interpretations of data are significant, as this is what looks beyond counting traditional bibliometrics and emphasizes semantic content.

Altmetrics clearly have a close relationship with the Open Access movement – so another way to encourage their use would be to add your work to your Institutional Repository. Libraries are specialists when it comes to increasing access to research. Institutional Repositories, such as LSE Research Online provide Open Access to full text research and



maximise search engine optimisation (SEO) by adding high quality metadata. As a result policy makers and the public interested in your research from outside of the academic landscape, can easily access and download it online.

We already collect statistics for publications downloaded from LSE Research Online, which can provide useful data alongside traditional citation counts. More recently we have added an altmetrics tool to measure the ways in which LSE research is being used in this broader social landscape. The Altmetric badge, which is displayed on every item in LSE Research Online with a digital object identifier (DOI), displays a [score of attention](#) and other accompanying metrics to help researchers track online attention surrounding their work.

[Limitations of altmetrics](#) are not being discounted, and have been perceived as a more popular, or “sexy” metric over traditional research metrics. To this I would argue that research is as “sexy” as you make it. The researcher’s world has been opened up inextricably as digital scholarship progresses, with the rise of academic blogging, research profile services such as [Google Scholar Citations](#), and the development of established institutional and subject repositories such as [Social Science Research Network](#) increasing links between peers worldwide with shared interests in all research subjects. From a researcher’s perspective altmetrics provide an alternative measurement of impact alongside download and citation counts. From the academic library perspective, this tool helps to develop the value of functionalities offered by institutional repositories by having its most talked about institutional research available for legal and free download. Also useful, for both researcher and the library, is the assurance that these conversations surrounding the research can be authoritatively traced back to the author and their original piece of work.

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