

# Impact Round-Up 24th May: GitHub for science, research in the national interest, and myths of ‘big data’

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2014/05/24/impact-round-up-24th-may/](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2014/05/24/impact-round-up-24th-may/)

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Managing Editor [Sierra Williams](#) presents a round-up of popular stories from around the web on higher education, academic impact, and trends in scholarly communication.

This week *Science* have launched a special section, [The science of inequality](#), which brings together a range of social science perspectives and short videos on “the origins, impact, and future of inequality around the world”. All features are currently not paywalled and are free to read and watch. Notable standout is the article “[Undemocracy](#)”: [inequalities in science](#) which presents a substantial look into the unequal distribution of resources, research outcomes, and rewards in academia.

[Improving GitHub for science](#) by Arfon Smith at GitHub provides an update on how the code-sharing website GitHub is looking to provide better tools and services for researchers:

*Sharing your work is good, but collaborating while also getting required academic credit is even better. Over the past couple of months we’ve been working with the [Mozilla Science Lab](#) and data archivers, [Figshare](#) and [Zenodo](#), to make it possible to get a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) for any GitHub repository archive.*

[Beyond Copyright and Technology: What Open Access Can Tell Us about Precarity, Authority, Innovation, and Automation in the University Today](#) by Christopher Kelty

*There is a tendency in anthropology—and in the humanities generally—to suggest that open access is a problem of the sciences and engineering, and that we are somehow victims of this juggernaut on the other side of our campuses. Aside from being a form of resentment, this claim fails to recognize that the financial problem is the same across the disciplines—the larger humanities disciplines (history, literature) are going to have more power than the smaller ones (classics, women’s studies)—and the same is true in the sciences. Making common cause with folks in the sciences and engineering is far more effective for everyone than manning some culture-war barricade that is irrelevant to the larger dynamics of the economy of publishing, research funding, and university revenues generally. [\[read more\]](#)*



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[Is Social Science Research in the National Interest?](#) – U.S. House Representative Lamar Smith (R-Texas), Peter McPherson and Hunter Rawlings discuss the proposed FIRST Act currently being debated by the the science committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. As it currently stands the FIRST Act would significantly cut research for social sciences and economics and certify to Congress that each taxpayer-funded grant it issues is in the national interest.

[What does a critical data studies look like, and why do we care? Seven points for a critical approach to 'big data'](#) – by Craig Dalton and Jim Thatcher:

*'Big data,' as a technology, is never a neutral tool. It always shapes and is shaped by a contested cultural landscape in both creation and interpretation. Whether in critique or celebration, an instrumental examination of 'big data' will necessarily miss its underlying epistemological effects. The myths of 'big data' are myths that suffuse modern society, seeping into ideas of the quantified self and smart cities. As the fullness of human experience in the world is reduced to a sequence of bytes, we should not limit our concern to how much better those bytes function vis-à-vis their counterparts. Rather, we must ask what it means to be quantified in such a manner, what possible experiences have been opened and which have been closed off? How is 'big data' as a form of technology enabling and constraining our culture and our lives? [\[read more\]](#)*

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