

# WHAT ALTMETRICS CAN DO FOR YOU

**A**s librarians we are surrounded by a bewildering welter of information that we can offer to researchers. But selecting the most appropriate information has become much easier with the development of altmetrics, as CATHERINE WILLIAMS explains.

Researchers are overwhelmed by the choice of literature available to them and the volume of research they are expected to produce. Determining where to publish, who to work with, and how to attract new funding are becoming increasingly pertinent, and yet researchers have insufficient time to consider such matters.

There are many tools that can play a role in developing efficient workflows to make researchers' lives easier, but altmetrics stand out among them. Altmetrics, more than any other single solution, can help researchers to shape the future of their careers by building their professional reputation, showcasing their achievements and identifying the most suitable new collaborators and content.

Altmetrics – a collected record of the online engagement surrounding individual research items (not just journal articles) – are a transparent and immediate way of getting feedback on your work and that of others in your field.

Understanding where your work is attracting attention can be key to understanding how to more effectively get it noticed and to assess which journals or repositories might provide the best platform to do so. Identifying where it has been referenced by policy makers or on Wikipedia can help you demonstrate to peers, management and funders how your work is having an impact beyond the academy.

## WHO IS USING ALTMETRICS AND HOW ARE THEY USING THEM?

Hundreds of institutions are already using altmetrics.

In Australia, institutions such as Macquarie University and the University of South Australia, among many others, have been quick to adopt altmetrics tools that provide a seamless flow of information from their current research information systems.

A number of examples are already emerging: altmetric data has, for example, been embedded into internal reporting and publication lists that are reviewed



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regularly as part of one-to-ones with line managers. The addition of this data provides the opportunity to discuss activity relating to recently published items. The citation data that was previously provided alone did not offer any indicator of this engagement, and often was only available for much older items.

In another initiative, altmetrics were used to help identify emerging scholars in a broad range of fields to feature in promotional videos, showcasing the diversity and expertise of their institutions.

## WHAT ROLE CAN THE LIBRARY PLAY?

Librarians have an important role to play in helping scholars with altmetrics. Resources such as libguides, workshops and outreach sessions can contribute to demonstrating how the data can be most usefully applied.

Altmetric, a data science company that provides altmetrics data, also runs an active ambassador program, which provides recruits with materials and training decks that can be repurposed for specific audiences within institutions. Ambassadors have the opportunity to share ideas and promote the work they have been doing so that others can benefit from their experience.

## WHERE NEXT?

Altmetrics are still relatively new. Although their adoption, among publishers in particular, has been very rapid, there is still much development to be done regarding how these data are displayed, analysed and reported. By playing an active role from this early stage, librarians have an opportunity to help shape the field in the future – and to better engage with and support researchers while doing so. 🌟

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