Altmetric for Books: Informing commissioning and data-driven decisions

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Altmetric for Books: Informing commissioning and data-driven decisions

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Who we are:

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The prompt: Focus on how Altmetric data for books can be used by editorial teams to make data-driven decisions.
How editors track engagement with monographs:

- Sales
- Awards
- Reviews
- Course adoptions
- Usage data: Google Analytics, data from aggregator platforms such as Project Muse, JSTOR, EBSCO, etc.
- ....Altmetric data?
How editors track emerging topics & scholars

- CONFERENCES
- Keeping up with new literature in the field
- Meetings, conversations, word-of-mouth
- Workshops
- Series editors (or journal editors, if applicable)
- Establishing and building on reputation of press & list
What can Altmetric data contribute to acquisitions work?
What's not really working (for us) (right now):

Tracking Altmetric engagement data for any given recently published title and using that data to inform strategy about what to acquire in the future.
Why not?

TIME is the most meaningful factor in all of this:

- Meaningful attention takes a long time to communicate
- Books take a long time to acquire and publish
- Insufficient differentiation among books? The most salient variable in terms of how much engagement they have, and which other books have comparable, is when they were published.
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Author/Details</th>
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<td>MOOCs</td>
<td>Book, December 2018</td>
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<td>Promissory Notes</td>
<td>Book, September 2018</td>
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<td>The Birth of the Archive</td>
<td>Book, February 2018</td>
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<td>Women’s Bookscape in Early Modern Britain</td>
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<td>The Rise of the African Novel</td>
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<td>The Politics of Millennials</td>
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<td>Victorian Bestseller</td>
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<td>Robert Hayden in Verse</td>
<td>Book, August 2018</td>
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<td>Sites of Translation</td>
<td>Book, December 2017</td>
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<td>Gaming the Stage</td>
<td>Book in figshare, December 2017</td>
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<td>A World of Fiction</td>
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<td>The Committee</td>
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<td>Anatomy of a Civil War</td>
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<td>Gendered Vulnerability</td>
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<td>Applied</td>
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Identifying timelessness. Altmetric data gives us valuable insights into how deep backlist titles continue to have an active, engaged life on the web. Especially interesting to our editors: representation on syllabi!
What we haven't tried -- yet!

Looking beyond Altmetric data on our own books--making use of the Altmetric Explorer to, well, explore what is getting attention in our disciplinary areas of strength.
Altmetrics can help book publishers find interest in backlist titles, which can inform promotional strategies.

Not all altmetrics are equally valuable to university presses. The most valuable data are: monographs mentioned in syllabi, citations in public policy documents and social media discussions.

Journals are well-positioned to take advantage of altmetrics as journals have faster publication times, when compared to monographs, and journal platforms are designed in a way that makes it relatively easy to track altmetrics.

Last, but definitely not least: Good metadata is critical, and in the final section of the paper we are proposing some best practices for sharing metadata in a press website.
Conclusions

- **Monographs are still slow.** Even though Altmetric data can accumulate more quickly than citations, meaningful data accumulates too slowly, and books take too long to publish, for engagement with any given title to inform the next strategic acquisitions decision.

- **Altmetric data can signal timelessness/endurance.** Altmetric data, amazingly, tells us a lot about ongoing use of and engagement with deep backlist titles that perhaps we ought to pay some attention to!

- **There’s value to be mined well beyond data about the books you publish.** We could be doing more with Altmetric Explorer to supplement what acquisitions editors already do to track emerging trends and scholars. But we haven’t really tried this yet.