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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Michigan Publishing | University of Michigan Libraries
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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publication Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>MOOCs</td>
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<td>December 2018</td>
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<td>Promissory Notes</td>
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<td>The Birth of the Archive</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>
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<td>Sites of Translation</td>
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<td>Gaming the Stage</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>Forging the World</td>
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<td>Gendered Vulnerability</td>
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<td>Appified</td>
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<td>Stamping American Memory</td>
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<td>The Sound of Listening</td>
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<td>Textures of Mourning</td>
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What seems to be working:

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!
Exploring data for books from the full Altmetric database published by Michigan Publishing

- The Aeneid
  - Book, December 1994
  - 1,327 syllabi mentions

- Secret history
  - Book, December 1960
  - 178 syllabi mentions

- Bad Boys
  - Book, December 1999
  - 67 syllabi mentions

- Paradigms and Sand Castles
  - Book, December 2002
  - 52 syllabi mentions

- Of Two Minds
  - Book, December 1995
  - 49 syllabi mentions

- Increasing returns and path dependence in the economy
  - Book, December 1993

- Simulacra and Simulation
  - Book, December 1993
  - 288 syllabi mentions

- The power of images in the Age of Augustus
  - Book, December 1987
  - 153 syllabi mentions

- Academic writing for graduate students: essential tasks and skills
  - Book, December 2003
  - 55 syllabi mentions

- Space in performance: making meaning in the theatre
  - Book, December 1998
  - 51 syllabi mentions

- Galileo, science, and the church
  - Book, December 1970
  - 48 syllabi mentions

- The feminist spectator as critic
  - Book, December 1990
  - 38 syllabi mentions

- The life of Charlemagne
  - Book, December 1959
  - 212 syllabi mentions

- Information and legislative organization
  - Book, December 1991
  - 104 syllabi mentions

- Manifestoes of Surrealism
  - Book, December 1968
  - 55 syllabi mentions

- The puzzle of judicial behavior
  - Book, December 1996
  - 50 syllabi mentions

- Analyzing performance: theater, dance, and film
  - Book, December 2002
  - 41 syllabi mentions

- Public opinion and American foreign policy
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.
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<td><em>Social Psychological and Personality Science</em>, September 2017</td>
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<td>Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization</td>
<td><em>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America</em>, August 2018</td>
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<td>The Partisan Brain: An Identity-Based Model of Political Belief</td>
<td><em>Trends in Cognitive Sciences</em>, February 2018</td>
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<td>The Jackie (and Jill) Robinson Effect: Why Do Congresswomen Outperform...</td>
<td><em>American Journal of Political Science</em>, April 2011</td>
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<td>Gendered Citation Patterns across Political Science and Social Science...</td>
<td><em>Political Analysis</em>, July 2018</td>
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<td>Gender Bias in Student Evaluations</td>
<td><em>PS, Political Science &amp; Politics</em>, March 2018</td>
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<td>Explaining the Trump Vote: The Effect of Racist Resentment and Anti-Immigrant...</td>
<td><em>PS, Political Science &amp; Politics</em>, April 2018</td>
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<td>Neutralizing the Effect of Political Worldviews by Communicating Scientific...</td>
<td><em>Science Communication</em>, May 2018</td>
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<td>Does Public Support for...</td>
<td><em>Science</em>, May 2018</td>
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<td>The effect of partisanship and political ideology on family ties</td>
<td><em>Science</em>, May 2018</td>
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<td>The science of being 'nice': how politics can make us feel more</td>
<td><em>The Conversation</em>, August 2018</td>
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<td>Bias in Perceptions of Public Opinion: The Case of Political...</td>
<td><em>American Political Science Review</em>, May 2018</td>
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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.