



# **Altmetric for Books: Informing commissioning and data-driven decisions**

Rebecca Welzenbach & Elizabeth Demers  
Michigan Publishing | University of Michigan Libraries



## Who we are:



Rebecca Welzenbach  
Research Impact Librarian  
University of Michigan Library



Elizabeth Demers  
Senior Acquiring Editor for Political and Social Science  
University of Michigan Press

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:

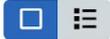
- Meaningful attention takes a long time to communicate
- Books take a long time to acquire and publish
- Insufficient differentiation among books? The most salient variable in terms of how much engagement they have, and which other books have comparable, is when they were published.

 <p>1 Book, December 2018</p>	 <p>1 Book, December 2018</p>	 <p>1 Smarties Book, December 2018</p>
 <p>1 MOOCs Book, December 2018</p>	 <p>1 Victorian Bestseller Book, December 2018</p>	 <p>1 Anatomy of a Civil War Book, October 2018</p>
 <p>38 Promissory Notes Book, September 2018</p>	 <p>3 Robert Hayden in Verse Book, August 2018</p>	 <p>1 Politics Over Process Book, April 2018</p>
 <p>6 The Birth of the Archive Book, February 2018</p>	 <p>19 Forging the World Book, January 2018</p>	 <p>157 Gendered Vulnerability Book, December 2017</p>
 <p>108 Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain Book, December 2017</p>	 <p>97 Sites of Translation Book, December 2017</p>	 <p>75 Appified Book, December 2017</p>
 <p>64 The Rise of the African Novel Book, December 2017</p>	 <p>61 Gaming the Stage Book in <b>figshare</b>, December 2017</p>	 <p>56 Stamping American Memory Book, December 2017</p>
 <p>55 Autistic Disturbances Book, December 2017</p>	 <p>53 A World of Fiction Book, December 2017</p>	 <p>50 The Sound of Listening Book, December 2017</p>
 <p>48 The Politics of Millennials Book, December 2017</p>	 <p>42 The Committee Book, December 2017</p>	 <p>36 Textures of Mourning Book, December 2017</p>



## 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!

Sort by: **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**

Book, December 2003

■ 38 syllabi mentions



## 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.



Showing **4,154 research outputs** from the results of your search query. Of those, **4,154** have been mentioned.



Sort by:  ▾



Science Denial Across the Political Divide

Article in **Social Psychological and Personality Science**, September 2017



Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization

Article in **Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America**, August 2018



Does Media Coverage Drive Public Support for...  
Does Public Support for...

Article in **British Journal of Political Science**



The Partisan Brain: An Identity-Based Model of Political Belief

Article in **Trends in Cognitive Sciences**, February 2018



The Jackie (and Jill) Robinson Effect: Why Do Congresswomen Outperform...

Article in **American Journal of Political Science**, April 2011



The effect of partisanship and political ideology on close family ties

Article in **Science**, May 2018



Gendered Citation Patterns across Political Science and Social Science...

Article in **Political Analysis**, July 2018



Gender Bias in Student Evaluations

Article in **PS, Political Science & Politics**, March 2018



The science of being 'nice': how politeness is linked from compassion

News story in **The Conversation**, August 2018



Explaining the Trump Vote: The Effect of Racist Resentment and Anti-Immigrant...

Article in **PS, Political Science & Politics**, April 2018



Neutralizing the Effect of Political Worldviews by Communicating Scientific...

Article in **Science Communication**, May 2018



Bias in Perceptions of Public Opinion among Political Elites

Article in **American Political Science Review**



## Learning from [Altmetric for University Presses - results from a joint pilot](#)

- 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.