

2019-10-20

Research Impact & the Library

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Plan for Research Impact Workshop
Wayne State University Libraries
October 2, 2019

[Slide 1]

Greeting (1-2 min)

Good morning! I want to say thank you to Joshua, Cheryl, and Jon for inviting me here today. I'm so pleased to be here, and I'm looking forward to speaking with you all about some of the trends I see happening in research universities with regard to research impact, and to speak about the opportunities for libraries to engage in this new space. In particular, I'll be reflecting on the Research Impact Challenge that we held in our library early in 2019, and considering the opportunities that it presented for outreach, community building, and expansive, creative thinking around this topic.

[Slide 2]

What's a research impact librarian? (~7 min)

Before jumping in, I want to share a little bit about my professional background, because it really informs the way I approach the topic of research impact. This is typically how I describe my role:

I empower scholars to create the conditions under which they can establish:

- a strong public identity,
- a coherent account of their contributions to the scholarly enterprise,
- and a persuasive body of evidence for the impact of their work within the academy,
- ...and for the public.

The shorter version: I help scholars present themselves and their work to the world.

Along with other librarians and informationists from across the U-M Library, I represent the U-M Library in research impact initiatives on campus.

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Brief professional background and summary of my role

I've been a librarian at the University of Michigan for almost exactly ten years--the 10th anniversary of my first day as an assistant librarian is next month!--though I've always had rather non-traditional roles. For the first 8 years, I worked in a variety of roles in our library's Publishing division--that's how I got to know Joshua, Cheryl, and others, through our participation in the Library Publishing Coalition. I started out working on digital publishing workflows--essentially, converting journal articles from Word to XML for publication online. I worked closely with and learned a great deal from journal editors making a concerted effort to thrive in a digital-first, open access environment. From there I took some detours through various digital scholarship projects, led our journal publishing program, and ultimately created a new exploratory role reporting to the Director of the University of Michigan Press. In that position

I was the point person for Michigan Publishing's pilot projects and experiments, with a particular focus on better understanding who is using open access journals and books, and why. This focus on the need to measure, interpret, and communicate about the reach and usage of digital, open access scholarship led directly into my transition, in January 2018 into the new role of Research impact librarian. Over the last 18 months I've been building relationships on our campus and developing the scope of this new role. I think about my contribution to the library in three ways:

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- **Coordinating people:** other librarians, as well as faculty and staff, with a stake in research impact. Transparency, sharing expertise, building on existing relationships. In my case, several other librarians in our health sciences library, in our engineering library, and in our core e-resources team were already actively engaged in some of this work. For me, it was vital to build trusting relationships, learn from and honor their expertise, while creating new opportunities for success by bringing us all together. This has extended, of course, beyond our library to our Office of Research and other units on campus.
- **Coordinating systems.** I represent the library (and our constituents, faculty and student researchers) as systems for counting and measuring research (i.e., publications & grants) are implemented across campus. In these conversations, my priority is to ask questions about Who--and what work--is included? What is missed? Are we asking the right questions and acting responsibly?
- **And finally, the icing on the cake: I get to engage in outreach, education, and instruction of my own, working directly with faculty and students.** I've never been a liaison librarian, and I've never had an active role in providing reference services. Working with faculty and students has always been a highlight of my job, but over the years it's rarely been a primary focus. I now have the opportunity to partner with my subject specialist colleagues to develop instruction and other materials targeted for specific audiences to introduce the topics of research impact and online scholarly presence. And this brings us to the case study I want to talk about today: our Research Impact Challenge

I share this with you, because to me, it's really important to establish right up front that the perspective that I bring to research impact--the issues I find to be most important--emerge directly out of my background in open access and digital scholarship in the humanities and social sciences.

People often think about research impact quite narrowly, focusing exclusively on as bibliometrics based on journal article citation rates in journal articles, and on assessing external funding captured. My approach tends to be a very holistic one. I am particularly interested in asking questions about research impact that can be reasonably considered in all disciplines, and especially in thinking about how we understand, measure, and communicate research impact in the humanities and the arts, for monographs, and for digital and other "non-traditional"

forms of scholarship--in other words, in the disciplines and modes of scholarship that are often entirely invisible to the citation indexes typically used to calculate research impact measures.

With all this in mind, I'd like to take a moment to invite all of you to think for a bit about how research impact issues show up in your own work. It's not very typical, yet, for an academic library to have a person whose whole job is working on research impact issues--at the vast majority of libraries this is something that many folks have some small stake in, and that we might not think about until the question is forced upon us--like when a tenure application is due in an hour. But if we think broadly and creatively, I think we can all anticipate ways that our work intersects with these questions.

So, I'm going to ask you all to join me in a pair and share activity. I'm going to pose a few questions to the group, and for each, I'll ask you to take two or three minute to brainstorm with a colleague. Then we'll share a couple of answers with the full group.

- Pair & Share questions/discussion (~10-15 min). Goal is for audience to generate ideas of how particular facets of research impact stuff intersects with their work--not irrelevant or just something other people do over there. Will adjust questions used depending on time
 - What are the key milestones where students, faculty, or other researchers in your areas are under pressure to communicate the value of their work? How do they do this now, and is that working for them? Do you see expectations or practices changing?
 - In your discipline(s), how are norms established for prestige, quality, reach, or impact of scholarship? What forms of work are left out of the conversation? What effect does that have on researchers and their work?
 - What audiences and stakeholders are scholars in your discipline trying to reach with their work? What does it mean to them to successfully "reach" an audience?
 - What questions and concerns do you hear from patrons about presenting their scholarly identity/their work online?
 - What concerns (or hopes!) do *you* have about the way we talk about and engage with the topic of research impact?
- Our research impact challenge (~25 min)
 - Plan
 - Execute
 - Assess
 - Iterate
- Questions from the room