Beyond the "Cool" factor: the Challenge of Making Altmetrics Indispensable

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http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/151786
Beyond the “Cool!” Factor: The Challenge of Making Alternative Metrics Indispensable

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Altmetrics 6:AM October 9, 2019
The Keeper of Altmetric Explorer, 2015 - 2018-present

Altmetric and Altmetric Explorer for Institutions

What is Altmetric?

Altmetric.com is a tool created by the company Digital Science that searches the web for “mentions” of research outputs, such as journal articles or book chapters, to show how researchers are engaging with scholarly publications online. Mentions can appear in social media, scholarly blogs, news outlets, Wikipedia, citation managers like Mendeley, etc. You may have seen Altmetric donuts, badges, and scores on your own published research or on other research outputs that you have encountered.

The color-coded Altmetric “donut” shows the Altmetric score of attention surrounded by colorful bands. Each stripe of color on the donut represents a different type of engagement. For example, light blue indicates Twitter, red indicates news, and yellow indicates blogs. If you hover over the donut, you’ll see an abbreviated summary of engagement with the work.
The thrill fades fast

...or does it?

Nocturne in Black and Gold, the Falling Rocket, 1875. James Abbott McNeill Whistler, American, 1834-1903
Outreach and Feedback, 2018

- Cross-campus onsite training from Altmetric (February 2018)
- Library outreach & instruction:
  - College of Engineering
  - Enriching Scholarship conference
  - Institute for Health Innovation and Policy
  - Institute for Social Research
  - ICPSR
  - Life Sciences Institute
  - Michigan Publishing
  - National Council on Institutional Diversity, Research Data Services
  - School for Environment And Sustainability
  - Social Sciences Librarians
  - Taubman Health Sciences Library Informationists

“Unfortunately we haven't been able to incorporate its use as I would have liked, but we recently brought in an intern who I hope can help us in building out our community and the use of these resources more!”

“I look forward to spending the remainder of the year further exploring the tool and implementing into our tool chest.”

“I can say there are plans to try to use the badges, perhaps in tandem with some other services, to highlight research pertaining to news content we might produce. Additionally I think we're (or I am) ruminating on how we might use the API itself to pull and display information.”
Through mid January of 2019, there were 1,752 sessions of use w/ Altmetric EFI

- 421 (24% of total sessions) came from anonymous users
- 1,331 (76% of total sessions) came from logged in users.
  - 77% of usage from top 10 users.
  - 23% comprised of 81 additional users
  - ~70% of users logged in fewer than five times

Takeaway: a few power users, along with a number of folks who have been exposed, but not engaged deeply

 NB: this data dates back to the first usage of Altmetric Explorer by anyone with a umich email address, which predates our 2018 pilot of Explorer for Institutions
April 1, 2019 - Present: A New Era in Usage Data

Usage Report for University of Michigan

Explorer users in the selected timeframe

Users: 165
New Users: 55

Top Explorer pages visited

1. www.altmetric.com/explorer/mentions?author= 924 660
2. www.altmetric.com/explorer/saved_searches 321 77
3. www.altmetric.com/explorer/highlights 288 181
4. www.altmetric.com/explorer/outputs 131 94
6. www.altmetric.com/explorer/highlights?author= 80 64
8. www.altmetric.com/explorer/mentions?journal= 56 49
... www.altmetric.com/explorer/institution/people 55 37

Browsers used to access Explorer

- Chrome: 10.2%
- Safari: 11.7%
- Firefox: 25.7%
- Internet Explorer: 35.7%
- Edge: 12.0%
April 1, 2019 - Present: A New Era in Usage Data
Which Altmetric Explorer pages draw the most attention?

From July 1 - September 30, 2019:

- 4 distinct pages visited >100 times:
  - An outlier individual author
  - Saved Search page (!!)
  - All highlights & All outputs (e.g., browsing behavior)
- 25 distinct pages were visited 21-99 times
  - Single author, single journal, single publisher
  - Browse by author/Browse by department
  - One topical keyword search
- 268 distinct pages (~28%) viewed 3-20 times, suggesting weekly or monthly monitoring
- 641 distinct pages (~68%) of pages were viewed only once
- **Observation**: 116 pages viewed 3 times, but NO pages viewed twice!
From July 1 - September 30, 2019:

- Activity dominated by known power users:
  - Annals of Family Medicine
  - Michigan Publishing
  - Institute of Health Policy and Innovation
- The most consistent activity is monitoring activity related to known individuals or research outputs--or custom-built groups
- Variations on the same page arrived at by different means
- Keyword and Field of Research searches nearly all one-offs. Just a few searches repeated.
How can we recognize sustained, regular usage?

Signals of integration into regular workflows(?):

- Consistent behavior over time: the most popular pages viewed are visited steadily over many weeks—not just a few big spikes.
- The “saved searches” page is one of the most frequently visited—people are setting up searches and returning to them.
- Do return visits to a an Altmetric details page suggest an email alert on?
- Six & three were common frequencies—signal of a monthly or bi-weekly check?

What (else) we’d like to know, but can’t tell from this usage report:

- Are people visiting shareable report links?
- Are people incorporating the API into web pages?
- What about embeddable badges—what role do they play?
OK. So what now?

- Analyze the data in more detail to answer some additional questions
- Integrate with data about Altmetric usage that didn’t happen through the Explorer interface
- Identify some of the major actors and reach out to them
- Campaign/ recommendation for continued support

Detroit Industry, North Wall, 1932-33, Diego Rivera (1886-1957)