Toward a Gentle, Generalizable Framework for Scholarly Impact Conversations

Welzenbach, Rebecca

http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/151787
Toward a Gentle, Generalizable Framework for Scholarly Impact Conversations

Rebecca Welzenbach
Research Impact Librarian
University of Michigan Library
Altmetrics 6:AM October 10, 2019
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.

Along with other librarians and informationists from across the University of Michigan Library, I coordinate the library's role in research impact initiatives on campus.

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

Metrics are meaningless!

Many known measures are available!

Nobody knows how to measure this!
Metrics are everything!

Many known measures are available!

Nobody knows how to measure this!

The Machine
Metrics are everything!

Many known measures are available!

They might say:
- How can our journal increase its JIF next year?
- Are we using fractional or non-fractional counting?
- 20% of my publications have an Altmetric score of at least 237, putting them in the top 2% of all research in this field.

Key assumption: Research impact metrics communicate something meaningful about my work and should be monitored closely. An increase in the numbers means that I’m doing better work!

The Machine

Nobody knows how to measure this!

Metrics are meaningless!
Metrics are everything!

Metrics are meaningless!

Many known measures are available!

They might say:
- How can our journal increase its JIF next year?
- Are we using fractional or non-fractional counting?
- 20% of my publications have an Altmetric score of at least 237, putting them in the top 2% of all research in this field.

Key assumption: Research impact metrics communicate something meaningful about my work and should be monitored closely. An increase in the numbers means that I'm doing better work!

The Cynic

The Machine

Nobody knows how to measure this!

Metrics are everything!

Metrics are meaningless!
The Cynic

They might say:

- Everyone knows the JIF is flawed, but we can’t get away from it.
- I’ll just use my Google Scholar h-index, because it’s higher.

Key assumption: Metrics are flawed, but I can’t do anything about that. Playing “the game” is the best way to ensure that I get to carry on with the work that matters to me.

The Machine

They might say:

- How can our journal increase its JIF next year?
- Are we using fractional or non-fractional counting?
- 20% of my publications have an Altmetric score of at least 237, putting them in the top 2% of all research in this field.

Key assumption: Research impact metrics communicate something meaningful about my work and should be monitored closely. An increase in the numbers means that I’m doing better work!
The Cynic  |  Many known measures are available!

They might say:
- Everyone knows the JIF is flawed, but we can’t get away from it.
- I’ll just use my Google Scholar h-index, because it’s higher.

Key assumption: Metrics are flawed, but I can’t do anything about that. Playing “the game” is the best way to ensure that I get to carry on with the work that matters to me.

Metric are meaningless!

---

The Machine

They might say:
- How can our journal increase its JIF next year?
- Are we using fractional or non-fractional counting?
- 20% of my publications have an Altmetric score of at least 237, putting them in the top 2% of all research in this field.

Key assumption: Research impact metrics communicate something meaningful about my work and should be monitored closely. An increase in the numbers means that I’m doing better work!

Metrics are everything!

---

The Resistance

Nobody knows how to measure this!
**The Cynic**

They might say:
- Everyone knows the JIF is flawed, but we can’t get away from it.
- I’ll just use my Google Scholar h-index, because it’s higher.

Key assumption: Metrics are flawed, but I can’t do anything about that. Playing “the game” is the best way to ensure that I get to carry on with the work that matters to me.

**The Resistance**

They might say:
- My work can’t be quantified!
- I only write books. The JIF is irrelevant to me.
- We must push back on the rampant, neo-liberal culture of assessment.

Key assumption: You don’t actually understand my work, you just want me to conform to a system that doesn’t serve me.

**The Machine**

They might say:
- How can our journal increase its JIF next year?
- Are we using fractional or non-fractional counting?
- 20% of my publications have an Altmetric score of at least 237, putting them in the top 2% of all research in this field.

Key assumption: Research impact metrics communicate something meaningful about my work and should be monitored closely. An increase in the numbers means that I’m doing better work!
The Cynic

They might say:
- Everyone knows the JIF is flawed, but we can’t get away from it.
- I’ll just use my Google Scholar h-index, because it’s higher.

Key assumption: Metrics are flawed, but I can’t do anything about that. Playing “the game” is the best way to ensure that I get to carry on with the work that matters to me.

The Machine

They might say:
- How can our journal increase its JIF next year?
- Are we using fractional or non-fractional counting?
- 20% of my publications have an Altmetric score of at least 237, putting them in the top 2% of all research in this field.

Key assumption: Research impact metrics communicate something meaningful about my work and should be monitored closely. An increase in the numbers means that I’m doing better work!

The Resistance

They might say:
- My work can’t be quantified!
- I only write books. The JIF is irrelevant to me.
- We must push back on the rampant, neo-liberal culture of assessment.

Key assumption: You don’t actually understand my work, you just want me to conform to a system that doesn’t serve me.

The Gatherer

Nobody knows how to measure this!
The Cynic

- Everyone knows the JIF is flawed, but we can’t get away from it.
- I’ll just use my Google Scholar h-index, because it’s higher.

Key assumption: Metrics are flawed, but I can’t do anything about that. Playing “the game” is the best way to ensure that I get to carry on with the work that matters to me.

The Machine

- How can our journal increase its JIF next year?
- Are we using fractional or non-fractional counting?
- 20% of my publications have an Altmetric score of at least 237, putting them in the top 2% of all research in this field.

Key assumption: Research impact metrics communicate something meaningful about my work and should be monitored closely. An increase in the numbers means that I’m doing better work!

The Resistance

- My work can’t be quantified!
- I only write books. The JIF is irrelevant to me.
- We must push back on the rampant, neo-liberal culture of assessment.

Key assumption: You don’t actually understand my work, you just want me to conform to a system that doesn’t serve me.

The Gatherer

- First tell me all the things we can count, and then I’ll pick and choose which ones I want.
- Actually I’ll just include all of them.
- I’m not sure this actually shows impact. Is there some new, other metric that everyone is using for this?

Key assumption: I haven’t found a clear, quantifiable way to demonstrate our research impact, so I must be missing something. Let’s keep digging and add more!
The Gatherer

The Nut Gatherers (1882),
William-Adolphe Bouguereau
(1825-1905)
1. Tell me about your work.
   ○ Why is it important to you?
   ○ What does success look like to you?

2. You’re here for a reason--probably, you have to make a case for your work.
   ○ Who is evaluating you?
   ○ What are the stakes?
   ○ What is your desired outcome?

3. What kind of work is valued in this scenario?
   ○ Can we specify outputs that serve as evidence that you have done this work?

4. What criteria will be used to determine whether the work is good?
   ○ Are these criteria implicit or explicit?
   ○ Are there written guidelines or rubric
   ○ Have you made any commitments or promises (such as in a grant proposal)?
   ○ For each relevant research output, can we identify indicators or measures to demonstrate that it meets or exceeds the criteria?
Metrics are everything!

Many known measures are available!

The Cynic

The Machine

Metrics are meaningless!

From overwhelmed to strategic!

The Resistance

The Gatherer

Nobody knows how to measure this!
Metrics are everything!

Many known measures are available!

Nobody knows how to measure this!

From overwhelmed to strategic!

From defensive to empowered!
Metrics are everything!

Many known measures are available!

The Cynic

From passive to active!

Metrics are meaningless!

The Resistance

From defensive to empowered!

The Machine

From overwhelmed to strategic!

Nobody knows how to measure this!

The Gatherer
Metrics are everything!

Many known measures are available!

The Cynic

From passive to active!

The Machine

From comfort to... panic.

From overwhelmed to strategic!

The Gatherer

From defensive to empowered!

The Resistance

Nobody knows how to measure this!
Metrics are everything!

The Cynic

Many known measures are available!

The Machine

From passive to active!

From comfort to... panic.

The Gatherer

From defensive to empowered!

From overwhelmed to strategic!

The Resistance

Nobody knows how to measure this!
OK. So what? Go nuts!

- Does this framing resonate with you?
- Does the template for the conversation seem usable? Broadly applicable?
- What other feedback do you have?

Thank you, and safe travels!