Research Impact on a Friday Morning

Welzenbach, Rebecca

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What’s a research impact librarian?

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

- A strong public identity
- An account of their contributions to the scholarly enterprise
- A persuasive body of evidence for the impact of their work

Find me in my office in Hatcher 260A, or email me at rwelzenb@umich.edu
For today:

- What does research impact mean for you & for your work?
- Charting a path for yourself
- What resources and support are available to learn more?
What does “research impact” mean to you?
What terms, words, associations, or emotions does “research impact” bring up?
No single definition!

“The measurement of research impact is a contested research and political agenda that poses a complex academic question.”

No single definition!

- Only 23% of articles explicitly defined ‘research impact’
- 76% of those definitions came from external agencies (e.g., funding bodies)
No single definition!

Four types of research impact definitions:

- as “the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy” (the Research Councils United Kingdom)
- as “an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia” (the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Research Excellence Framework)
- as measurable influences in the form of quantifiable data such as citation frequency (bibliometric definitions)
- as the influences of research results on the knowledge and actions of researchers and policymakers (use-based definitions).

Four domains that underpinned the research impact concepts reviewed:

- contribution (the areas of research influence; e.g. economy, policies)
- avenues of impact (processes by which research could have impact; e.g. effects on knowledge, attitudes)
- change (synonyms used to describe “effects” or “benefits”)
- levels of impact (e.g. national, international).

When do you think about “research impact”? 
Not something that happens to you, but a story you create.
SCOPE

A process for evaluating responsibly.

(Himanen and Gadd, December 2019)
SCOPE: Start with what you value

- Before you can decide how to measure, you must decide what you care to know.
- Why is your work important? What difference does it make, and how would you know you’d succeeded?
- What steps can you take to ensure you capture the relevant evidence?
- Do not start from whatever data is most readily available.
- Do not start from what others value and want to measure—or, if you have no choice, at least don’t stop there!
SCOPE: Start with what you value

Example: the Becker Model for Assessing the Impact of Research:

- Advancement of Knowledge
- Clinical Implementation
- Community Benefit
- Legislation & Policy
- Economic Benefit
SCOPE: Start with what you value

Example: HuMetricsHSS:

- Equity
- Openness
- Collegiality
- Quality
- Community
SCOPE: Context considerations

- What entity are you measuring? (researcher, article, institution, department, country?)
- What is the purpose of the measurement? (to persuade, inform, compare, show off, etc.)
- What is the metric serving as a proxy for?
SCOPE: Context Considerations

That depends who's asking.
SCOPE: Context considerations

- Who is evaluating you?
- What types of work are valued? (i.e., what do they want you to do?)
- What outputs are appropriate evidence of success in accomplishing this type of work? (i.e., can you show that you did the work?)
- What are the criteria by which these outputs are evaluated? (i.e., how will they decide whether your work was good?)
- What measures or indicators are appropriate to demonstrate how well the outputs meet or exceed the criteria? (i.e., can you show that you did this work at or above the level expected?)
SCOPE: Options for measuring

- Quantitative vs. Qualitative?
- Traditional vs. “Alternative” metrics
- How many indicators?
- Resources:
  - The Metrics Toolkit
  - Snowball Metrics
  - Elsevier LibraryConnect Quick Reference Cards for Research Impact Metrics
  - How to use Altmetrics to showcase engagement for Tenure & Promotion
SCOPE: Options for measuring
SCOPE: Options for measuring

SCOPE: Probe deeply

- Who does this discriminate against?
- How might this be gamed?
- What might the unintended consequences be?
- Does the cost of measuring outweigh the benefit?
- Does measuring research make the research any better?
SCOPE: Evaluate your evaluation

- Consistent with best practices for responsible use of metrics?
- Does this still serve the purpose?
- Have additional options emerged?
- Is this working? How could it work better?
That seems like a lot to think about on a Friday morning.
I agree. Let’s digest and talk more later.

Rebecca Welzenbach
(rwelzenb@umich.edu)

Taubman Health Sciences Library
Research Impact Core
(THLImpactCore@umich.edu)

Find me in my office in Hatcher 260A, or email me at rwelzenb@umich.edu
Additional resources

Research Guides:

- Research Impact Assessment (Health Sciences)
- Research Impact Challenge Guide

Programming:

- Workshops during Enriching Scholarship (May 4-7)
- Consultations and instruction upon request!
Thanks! And see you in the library.