

Responsible Metrics

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Over the past few months the significance of accurate and methodical counting and reporting has never been more important. When counting is used to measure and evaluate the quality of something, it is imperative that it be done correctly. Using metrics to evaluate scholarship helps to tell the story of the outputs that we offer to the world. Whether the metrics you are using are traditional bibliometrics, e.g. how often your work has been cited, or alternative metrics, e.g. the number of mentions of your articles on social media, they need to be used in a responsible manner.

The idea of using metrics responsibly has been discussed widely in academic circles, resulting in at least three prominent statements on the topic. The Declaration on Research Assessment ([DORA](#)), developed in 2012, aims to raise awareness of the responsible use of metrics, assist in the development of new policies with regard to hiring and promotion, and help to improve equity in academia. To date over 2000 organizations and more than 16000 individuals have signed the DORA declaration in support of the 18 recommendations that it outlines. [The Metric Tide](#), a framework finalized in 2015, includes 20 recommendations outlining the successful and responsible use of metrics. In this report, the history of research metrics use are traced in the UK and across the globe, and five dimensions of responsible metrics are defined: robustness, humility, transparency, diversity, and reflexivity. Finally, [The Leiden Manifesto](#) outlines ten principles on the importance of using metrics in a responsible fashion. Named after the conference where the ideas were formalized, this 2015 document published in *Nature* encourages a combination of both quantitative and qualitative evaluation of research for proper assessment.

There are commonalities in the message of the three statements: choose the correct metric for what you are trying to measure, understand that there are limitations to every metric, and be explicit and transparent in evaluation that involves the use of metrics. Not only have organizations signed on pledging to follow one of the three statements noted above, many have written their own responsible metrics statement. These types of individual [statements](#) can be tailored to and promoted within the organization. Recently, there has even been [discussion](#) about funding institutions requiring organizations to have a responsible metrics statement in place before receipt of funding. The importance of responsible metrics is gaining traction at several levels.

Bibliometrics experts recommend that institutions stay ahead of the curve and embrace responsible metrics. Make a [responsible metrics statement](#) a reality in your department, institute, or center. Of course, there are known [challenges](#) surrounding metrics and institutional rankings and [problems](#) with regard to the reliance on some indicators over others. Fortunately, we have tools available to help in the selection and understanding of indicators. For instance, the [Metrics Toolkit](#) is a free resource where you can learn about 28 different indicators and how those indicators can be used.

The [Metrics and Impact Core](#) at the Galter Health Sciences Library and Learning Center is committed to using metrics responsibly and strives to keep abreast of changes in the metrics landscape. We can help identify metrics that can assist you in telling your research story. [Contact us](#) to learn more about our services and the use of responsible metrics today.