

Using Alternative Metrics to Tell Your Science Story

Alternative Metrics

Perhaps you've heard of alternative metrics. Perhaps you haven't. But one thing is certain—alternative metrics are generating buzz in the scientific community, and that buzz seems to be getting louder. Commonly called altmetrics, alternative metrics are a relatively new and rapidly-growing set of metrics intended to analyze scholarly output online. Traditional bibliometrics have long played a role in promotion and tenure, and include benchmarks such as h-index, impact factor, and citation counts. Altmetrics track your research on the social web through media coverage, citations in policy documents, Twitter mentions, and many other outlets. Additionally, altmetrics track more than journal articles, and can also gather data on books, datasets, posters, videos, and more.

Why Use Alternative Metrics?

The world of scholarly publishing is slow, and it can take 2-3 years for a paper to accrue citations. Likewise, the h-index is a time-dependent metric that can negatively affect early-career researchers and researchers in fields that don't cite prolifically. A big advantage of alternative metrics is that they are updated in real-time—you don't have to wait 2 years to see the dissemination of your work. Rather, you can see how other researchers, policy makers, and the public are engaging with your work today. Alternative metrics measure attention and are potential indicators for impact; they can complement traditional bibliometrics in your dossier and help tell your science story in a compelling way.

Finding Alternative Metrics

There are a few tools you can use to track your alternative metrics:

Altmetric Bookmarklet: This free tool from Altmetric.com allows you to view altmetrics at the click of the button. Easy to install and use, this is a low-investment tool that is a nice introduction to alternative metrics.

Impact Story: Anyone with an ORCID identifier can freely create an Impact Story profile. Geared toward individuals, Impact Story serves as a dashboard to compile altmetrics from all over the web and contextualizes the metrics in creative ways.

PlumX via Scopus: Scopus is a citation database licensed by Galter Library that you can access via the library's website. Recently, Scopus integrated PlumX Metrics into their interface. Now, when you search for a document, you can easily view altmetrics alongside traditional bibliometrics.

Publisher Websites: Many publishers such as SpringerNature and Wiley, are now incorporating altmetrics into their websites. The data usually come from Altmetric or PlumX Metrics.

Telling Your Story with Alternative Metrics

You can incorporate alternative metrics into your science story in a variety of ways. If you're looking for a visual representation of altmetrics for your website or blog, consider embedding a colorful badge from one of the aforementioned altmetric tools.



Or, you can use altmetrics directly in your narrative. You can highlight both qualitative and quantitative altmetric information in the Media Coverage section of your CV, the Critical Reference Form of your dossier, or in an NIH biosketch. Below are a few examples:

- This paper was featured in over 80 news outlets worldwide including NPR, *The New York Times*, and BBC News.
 - This paper was tweeted over 100 times in more than 15 countries, including by a women's health center in South Africa that disseminates information to our target population.
 - This paper is in the 99th percentile of all *JAMA* papers tracked by Altmetric.com.
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Learn More

The Metrics and Impact Core housed in Galter Health Sciences Library can help you communicate your work using traditional bibliometrics and alternative metrics. Librarians can present to your department or meet for one-on-one consultations. Please contact Patty Smith to learn more about using these metrics to tell your science story.

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