Metrics for Humanities and Social Sciences

Panel Presenters
Spike Gildea, Lynn Stephen, Scott DeLancey, Leah Middlebrook, Lanie Millar, Volya Kapatsinski
The Foundations of Metrics

- Definitions of Success
- Counting the elements that can be counted
- Counting the same elements for comparators

Interesting Ted Talk: Cathy O’Neill, statistician

[https://www.ted.com/talks/cathy_o_neil_the_era_of_blind_faith_in_big_data_must_end#t-786703](https://www.ted.com/talks/cathy_o_neil_the_era_of_blind_faith_in_big_data_must_end#t-786703)
Some Dangers of Metrics

● Definitions of Success are often operationalized by others
  ○ Do they reflect our values?
  ○ What about things that are not easily counted?
  ○ What about things that our comparators do not count?
● Are the data accurate?
  ○ Academic Analytics data have not been
Some Dangers of Metrics

- Feedback Loops: “Gaming the System”
  - What behaviors lead to higher scores?
  - Do those behaviors actually mean “better performance”?
  - Can we design metrics that encourage behaviors we value?

- What about comparators — how can we compare ourselves
  - If we make our metrics accurate, but theirs are not
  - If we change the metrics, i.e. count different things?
Feedback Loops based on Academic Analytics

Encouraged Behaviors

- Publish articles in high impact (domestic, English language) journals
- Publish in refereed conference proceedings
- Publish books
- Win grant funding
- Win awards
Feedback Loops based on Academic Analytics

Discouraged Behaviors

- Avoid publishing book chapters
- Avoid specialized regional journals, regional presses,
- Avoid non-English publications
- Diminish (or stop) “unproductive” behaviors — service, etc.
Our purpose

- Add our voice to the definitions of success
  - Identify research outcomes we want to encourage
  - Ultimately, should align with our P&T, Merit Increase, and/or Course Release policies

- Figure out:
  - Ways to evaluate these outcomes
  - Ways to collect and collate data — this is on us!
  - Ways to get comparator data — a real problem, but perhaps not ours?

- Give us faculty a real voice in this process!
Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

The Journal Impact Factor, as calculated by Thomson Reuters, was originally created as a tool to help librarians identify journals to purchase, not as a measure of the scientific quality of research in an article

https://sfdora.org/read/
Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

The Journal Impact Factor, as calculated by Thomson Reuters*, was originally created as a tool to help librarians identify journals to purchase, not as a measure of the scientific quality of research in an article.

It is critical to understand that the Journal Impact Factor has a number of well-documented deficiencies as a tool for research assessment.
Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

A) citation distributions within journals are highly skewed

B) the properties of the Journal Impact Factor are field-specific: it is a composite of multiple, highly diverse article types, including primary research papers and reviews

C) Journal Impact Factors can be manipulated (or “gamed”) by editorial policy

D) data used to calculate the Journal Impact Factors are neither transparent nor openly available to the public
Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

https://sfdora.org/read/
The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics

https://www.nature.com/news/bibliometrics-the-leiden-manifesto-for-research-metrics-1.17351
“These data corroborate previous hypotheses: using journal rank as an assessment tool is bad scientific practice. Moreover, the data lead us to argue that any journal rank (not only the currently-favored Impact Factor) would have this negative impact.”

Simply, individual scientists must resist the trend of making bibliometrics a central plank in their decision-making processes. And we must make this public, perhaps by stating in job adverts that papers will be judged by scientific merit and not by journal impact factor.

Reinhard Werner, https://www.nature.com/news/the-focus-on-bibliometrics-makes-papers-less-useful-1.16706

[The JIF has “two problems,” says Lucas Carey, a cell biologist at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, Spain, who was not involved with the study. One is that “it is meaningless as a predictive measure,” he says, meaning that publishing a paper in a high-impact journal does not necessarily mean that it is more likely to be cited. The other problem, he says, is that “the way in which [the JIF] is calculated is opaque.”

Research-related areas for Humanists and Social Scientists

These are areas that are implicit in the citations of many STEM fields, but often remain outside humanities and social science citations:

- External support that makes our research possible
- Graduate student publications
- Graduate student/postdoctoral mentoring
- Collaborations (even when they don’t result in co-authorship)
A quick word on process

- We can collect our own data
- The hard part may already be done — defining success
  - We all do this for P&T
  - Most of us do this for merit increases
  - Some of us do this for Course Releases
- Process:
  - Ask faculty to convert CVs to metrics categories
  - Provide Excel templates
  - Faculty oversight — someone verifies and processes the numbers
  - Administrators deal with aggregated data
Your thoughts?