Research support on a budget

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Session outcomes

After attending this session delegates will be able to:

- Understand how to use three freely-available research support tools
- Respond to questions from researchers about which tools are available and how they can be used
- Feel more confident offering research support services in their institution

The term “research support” covers a range of different services and resources that libraries can provide. In this presentation I’ll be discussing tools which provide assistance in three areas:

- Researcher profiles
- Bibliometrics
- Altmetrics

Researcher profiles are important because they allow a researchers’ work to be easily discovered. An online profile can provide an overview of their career and research interests, and often functions as an online CV, with all the researchers’ projects, grants, and research outputs available in the one place.

Bibliometrics is important to researchers because they want to know how often their work is being cited by other researchers. The metrics that are of most interest are usually a “cited by” count (for research outputs) and h-index (for individuals). The “cited by” count simply tallies up how many times a particular work has been cited by other works. The h-index is a metric which attempts to measure the impact of a researcher’s work in their field e.g. an h-index of 7 means that the researcher has written at least 7 papers which have each been cited 7 times.

Altmetrics (a portmanteau of “alternative” and “metrics”) measure the attention that a research output receives. This attention could consist of tweets on Twitter, mentions by news outlets, or downloads to referencing tools. Altmetrics can be used to show the impact that a researchers’ work is having outside of academia. Being able to demonstrate this external impact is becoming increasingly important to researchers who are seeking promotion or applying for grant funding.

There are many tools, platforms, and databases which can be used to assist researchers set up a profile, or calculate traditional or alternative metrics for their publications. However, the cost of subscribing to them can be quite expensive, so I will be describing three free tools which library staff can use to provide research support on a budget. The tools are Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.com), ORCID (https://www.orcid.org), and Dimensions (https://dimensions.ai).

Google Scholar is useful for researcher profiles and bibliometrics. Researchers set up their own profile, and newly published works are automatically added by Google. The bibliometric data which is available is “Cited by” counts for each work, and the h-index of the author.

ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor IDentifier) is a free tool for managing researcher profiles. It provides a persistent identifier for an individual (think of it as an ISBN or DOI for a person). A
researcher’s ORCID can be linked to their research outputs and grant. ORCID has been designed to be the “one-stop shop” for researchers to create a profile due to its interoperability with other systems.

Dimensions is a relatively new product which provides altmetrics for research outputs. The platform is not designed for setting up profiles but only for searching, either for a work or an author. If a work has an Altmetrics score, it will be displayed on the record, and you can click on it for further information.