

Planning effective institutional outreach for 2018: An altmetrics case study: Q & A

I see twitter, facebook and wikipedia... do you also track LinkedIn?

A: Unfortunately some sources we used to track, specifically Pinterest, LinkedIn and Sina Weibo, have become inaccessible to attention tracking since we first launched. In the case of Weibo, Chinese data have become inaccessible outside of the State. In the case of LinkedIn and Pinterest, we have historical attention data up to 2015, after which both platforms deprecated their search API, which limited us from being able to query their platform for the presence of links to research.

Is altmetric investigating improvements through the use of machine learning in its processes/protocols?

A: Altmetric uses data mining algorithms to recognise citations in news and policy, where commonly a link to research, or an identifier may not be present. As an example, Altmetric automatically picked [up this item in 2016](#), which, while lacking any formal citation to any research piece, contains the phrase “*Published online on 19 April 2016 in the journal Nature*” and later mentioning the name “*Shee-Mei Lok*”, Altmetric’s algorithms recognized a potential journal name, then searched for a date and then used these data along with the potential author name to match this coverage [to this item](#).

This process works for news and policy, whereas for the remainder of our sources, the link tracking alone is enough for us to pick up every mention of research.

How do you resolve “fake news” that may corrupt or provide misleading info relating to legitimate refs?

A: Due to the fact that we follow a curated list of news sources (which we update and add to all the time), we don’t pick up attention to research from news sites which are masquerading as real ones. This is one of the benefits of Altmetric’ focus on legitimate news sources to begin with.

Could researchers be influenced by Altmetrics in the type of work they focus on? E.g. a researcher could choose to work on a topic that she thinks will do well on Twitter/news sites over another topic because she knows that her Altmetric score will be looked at by funders/employers in future. Or could being influenced (partly) by public opinion be a good thing for publicly funded researchers?

A: It is unlikely that a researcher will pivot their research career based on the kinds of metrics we track.