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Measuring the magnificence of monographs

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*“Assessing our work through numbers
is like asking engineers to assess their
work through dance.”*

Monographs

- Are a critical means of scholarly communication in the AHSS – they are not going away
- Are not systematically covered by commercial citation benchmarking tools
- Are covered by Google, but subject to problems
- More importantly, citations don't mean the same thing in AH as they do in STEM
- So how do we assess their quality?

Alternative indicators

Indicator	Pros	Cons
Who published it?	General agreement on the Big 6 and who to avoid	Long tail of smaller, high quality, niche disciplinary publishers
Book reviews: How many? Where reviewed? What did it say?	Book review indexes exist	Reviews take a long time to appear; lack of reviews doesn't mean poor quality work; in small disciplines bad reviews are rare.
Book sales	Numerical indicators	Sales are limited by print run; affected by size of market
Listed on reading lists	Easily accessible numerical indicator (via Altmetric)	Favours text-books over monographs
Altmetric attention	Easily accessible numerical indicator (via Altmetric)	Altmetric attention doesn't claim to be a quality indicator; more visibility and impact

Characteristics of a usable indicator

- **Normalisable**
 - Can normalise for disciplinary differences (at least)
- **Benchmarkable**
 - Comprehensive data is available at different entity levels (individual, university, discipline, etc) to compare performance
- **Obtainable**
 - Needs to be relatively easy to get hold of and use

None of these apply to monographs yet.

Measuring the magnificence of monographs

- Can only responsibly be done through peer review
- Evidence can be used to tell good stories, but not meaningfully compare quality.



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