



STEM & Health Sciences Faculty and Postdoctoral Researcher Interviews (Spring-Fall 2020)

One of the UW Libraries 2018-23 strategic goals is to [enhance the ability of researchers to measure and communicate the impact of their scholarship](#). Building on data from a 2019 survey, Libraries staff conducted 18 interviews in Spring 2020 to learn more about faculty and postdoctoral researcher needs for understanding and communicating research impact. Results are being used to develop Libraries services and strengthen our contribution to researchers' ability to measure and communicate the impact of their work. This project was undertaken in collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh Libraries as part of the [Association of Research Libraries \(ARL\) Impact Framework Project](#).

Key Resources

Presentation at the Library Assessment Conference: [Assessing library contributions and impact across the research lifecycle: a collaborative approach](#)

Methods

- Libraries staff conducted 18 semi-structured interviews with faculty and postdoctoral researchers at the University of Washington, which were then transcribed and coded for analysis.
- Faculty and postdoctoral researchers were recruited from three groups: those who had participated in a 2017 research impact pilot at the Libraries, those who had received support from liaisons in the form of consultations relating to research impact, and early career faculty and postdoctoral researchers who had not received direct Libraries support in research impact.
- Due to COVID-19, only four interviews were conducted in person and the rest were conducted over the phone or Zoom.
- Interviewees received research impact reports compiled by Libraries staff, which included information about a publication by the interviewee that

included information such as number of citations, field citation ratio, numbers of Tweets and other social media interactions, etc.

Results

While some researchers mentioned getting support from their department in learning how to understand and communicate research impact, there were a number of areas of need for early career researchers. These include:

- Support for increasing the visibility of their research through both traditional and social media, including establishing social media profiles and using social media for research visibility.
- Assistance with finding, using, and integrating the best research impact tools and measures to understand and communicate impact for grants and promotion & tenure.
- Support for incorporating and translating measures into brief snapshots about research impact and developing narratives around impact.

The majority of interviewees found the research impact report useful, but also indicated the importance of going beyond providing counts to offering context for the meaning of metrics. In addition, some interviewees mentioned the importance of developing a shared understanding among researchers in their disciplines about the meaning of impact metrics and appropriate ways to measure different kinds of impact. This appears to be especially critical for demonstrating and evaluating impact in Promotion & Tenure processes and communicating the impact of interdisciplinary, public, and community-engaged research.

Actions & Improvements

This research has been shared with a team of Libraries staff who are now developing services and programming based on the results. The group consists of staff members from the Open Scholarship Commons, a newly launched Libraries space that encourages open, collaborative work. Some examples of these new programs and services include a research guide, research impact challenges tailored to different disciplines, and short instructional videos. Additional outreach to postdoctoral researcher groups has also resulted from this assessment project.