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# EDITORRESOURCES

Supporting Taylor & Francis journal editors

# Developing high impact content



## INTRODUCTION

What is research impact? Why does it matter? And how can you ensure your journal is publishing research which really makes a difference? In this introduction to research impact and content development, we'll take you through everything you need to know. Let's get started...

# Contents

# What is research impact?

'Impact' has been a buzzword within academia for years. It first moved into the spotlight when the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) introduced the official Impact Agenda in REF2014. Since then, various definitions of research impact have developed within the industry.

According to HEFCE, research impact is:

*“an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia.”*

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) define impact slightly differently:

*“the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy ... [which] can involve academic impact, economic and societal impact.”*

UKRI goes on to break down definitions of research impact further:

Academic impact is: *“the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to scientific advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, method, theory and application.”*

Economic and societal impact is: *“the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy, of benefit to individuals, organisations and nations.”*

To put it simply, **impact is the difference that academic research makes to the wider world.**

# Why is research impact important?

Research impact is important for many reasons. For one, you need to show the impact of your research to secure funding and develop your career.

Impactful academic research has the potential to improve the world we live in. It can enrich our culture, improve our health, develop our laws, inform our policies, invent new technology, and boost our quality of life.

You can [find out more about research impact on the UKRI website](#), including information about the 'Pathways to Impact' scheme. Or, keep reading for a more in-depth guide to measuring and developing high-impact content in your journal.

# How to publish more high impact research

Now we've covered what research impact is and why it matters, let's move on to how you can develop your journal so that it publishes more high-impact content.

## RESEARCH A DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The foundation of developing your journal is a well-researched, strategic development plan. Your plan should be informed by detailed data analysis. Start this process by reaching out to your Managing Editor at Taylor & Francis for support with gathering and analyzing data.

Alongside our in-house reporting, Taylor & Francis can access several additional data sources, including:

- [Clarivate Analytics](#)
- [Wizdom.ai](#)
- [Dimensions](#)
- [Altmetric](#)
- [Scopus](#)

Consider a wide range of metrics, from Impact Factor to altmetrics, for a holistic view of how your journal is performing. Once you've assessed its current standing, look to the future. What is the journal missing? Where do you want the journal to go? What are your key priorities for the next five years?

You might find it helpful to shape your research and analysis around a few key questions.

### **1** Identifying hot topics: what are people talking about?

There are a range of methods you could use to identify trending themes:

- Look at usage data for your own journal to identify the top articles
- Analyze the highly-cited articles across your own title and your key competitors

- Browse the contents pages of new books and journal issues in your subject area for common themes
- Think about topical issues in the news, and how these might affect your field
- Engage with the conversations your community is having on social media
- Use the Dimensions database to analyze funding information in different areas:
  - Who is getting funding?
  - How much funding is available?
  - Which topics are getting funding?
  - What type of grants are being allocated?

## 2 Identifying leading authors: who are people reading?

Identify the leading authors in your field to build up a picture of the research landscape. Bear in mind that original, ground-breaking research can often come from relative unknowns. So, while it's important to identify the authors you can rely on for a steady flow of citations, don't discount lower-profile authors.

Building author loyalty to the journal is an important part of creating long-term success. You could even run an author survey to identify opportunities for improvement.

## 3 Identifying key institutions: where is the best research happening?

Identifying the leading research bodies in a subject field builds on the key authors research. Gaining the trust and loyalty of an institution can be very beneficial to a journal, securing a steady flow of quality articles likely to cite well.

Write to authors at the institution. Tell them about the benefits of publishing in the journal and encourage them to submit. An effective way to get institutions involved in the journal is to invite its members to be guest editors. Or they could write an invited piece or participate in a Special Issue. Before reaching out to targets, it's better to discuss them with the editorial board first.

## 4 Identifying regional patterns: where are the opportunities?

Looking at the regional patterns in submissions, acceptances, citations and readership can show opportunities for journal development and increase diversity within the journal. Are there areas particularly high or low in submissions? Is this down to particular institutions or sales deals? Are there funding opportunities? Does the journal have much of a profile in the region? What can you do to promote it there?

The key institutions you identified above can help inform decisions here. There may be particular A&I services in the region that guide journal selection. Investigate their selection processes and see what you can do to promote your journal.

## WRITE A DEVELOPMENT PLAN

When you've addressed the above points, it's time to start writing a development plan. You can work with your Managing Editor at Taylor & Francis to gather and analyze data, and to produce a written development plan.

You should structure your development plan around a few core objectives. All of these objectives should be SMART:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**elevant
- **T**ime-bound

Following the SMART method, break each objective down into actionable steps. Start by identifying who needs to be involved (whether that's your Editorial Board, your Managing Editor at Taylor & Francis, or other members of the editorial office). Then you can set specific deadlines and targets to work towards.

## PUT YOUR DEVELOPMENT PLAN INTO PRACTICE

It can be easy to focus your energy on researching and writing your development plan. But it's essential that, once it's ready, you put your plan into practice.

By writing a plan structured around SMART objectives, the steps you need to take will be clear. Whether it's [refreshing your Aims & Scope](#), [publishing a special issue](#) with a high-profile guest editor, or setting up a [social media presence for your journal](#), it's time to get started.

Reach out to your Editorial Board or Managing Editor at Taylor & Francis for support if you need it. And don't forget to explore the [Peer Support Zone](#) here on Editor Resources for tips and advice from the editor community.

# How to boost the real-world impact of your journal

Developing your journal so that it publishes more high-impact content is only one step. You can also put in place tactics and strategies to boost the existing impact of your journal.

Research can only make real-world impact if the world knows it exists. You need to raise the profile of your journal and find ways of [reaching the relevant practitioners](#) and policy makers your journal speaks to.

## Raising the profile of your journal

One method of raising the profile of your journal is to **work with the media** to feature your research in the news. Taylor & Francis has a dedicated Press & Media Team who work to bring the most ground-breaking and newsworthy research to the public with [effective press campaigns](#).

You can nominate articles from your journal which you feel would be suitable for news coverage with our [press nomination form](#). Just remember that journalists aren't interested in a story which has already broken. Make sure you flag articles pre-publication if you think they could be a candidate for press coverage. Use our [handy guide to identifying newsworthy research](#) if you're not sure if an article is right for a press campaign.

It can be intimidating if you've never worked with the media before, but remember [journalists are human too!](#)

Another effective tool for raising the profile of your journal is to **develop an online presence** beyond the journal homepage. Doing so lets you engage directly with your research community. It's also becoming more common for journals to have their own social media accounts. For more information on how to build an online community for your journal, [download our free guide for journal editors now](#).

As an editor, you can set your journal up with social media accounts and work with Taylor & Francis' Press & Media Team. But don't forget to encourage your authors to take their research impact into their own hands. If your authors are proactive and engaged with raising the profile of their research, it makes your job much easier.



# How to measure research impact

Evidence of research impact can take many different forms, which makes it hard to measure. It can be especially difficult to distinguish between academic impact and real-world impact. Examples of evidence could be mentions on social media or citations in policy documents. It can be useful to think about impact using the image of a ripple, with research at the center. As time passes, the ripples of impact around your research become bigger.



Sometimes, we can see evidence of research impact very quickly after publication. It may only take a matter of days for an important article to garner social media mentions.

However, more meaningful evidence of research impact can take years to surface. For example, citations in other academic outputs or policy documents, the development of new products or services, or changes to laws and processes all take time.

There are many different tools and metrics to help you track, measure and assess the research impact of your journal. But, because research impact can take so many forms, it's easy to get lost when it comes to measuring your success.

You can find out more about the different metrics available in our article on [Understanding Research Metrics](#). Or keep reading here for a brief run-down of the metrics most related to research impact.

## Citations, syllabi and Altmetric

Citations are a well-established, traditional measure of academic impact. They clearly show the influence one piece of research has on other work in the same field. Citations join the dots between different publications and help to establish the contribution research has made to the subject area.

Evidence of academic impact also includes use of the research in teaching. This includes listing the research on syllabi and reading lists, or referencing it in seminars and lectures.

Measuring this type of impact is difficult. Unlike academic citations, the connection between a piece of research and its influence in the classroom is not always clear. That said, there are some tools which can help. For example, the [Open Syllabus Project](#) tracks research included on syllabi around the world.

When it comes to measuring non-academic research impact, we recommend using [Altmetric](#). Here's how Altmetric can help you track and measure evidence of research impact:

### **Raising awareness**

Altmetric tracks the different ways people are talking about your research online. If a piece of research receives attention on social media, this is evidence that people are talking about it. Of course, just because people are talking about your research doesn't mean they're being complimentary.

Use Altmetric to see exactly what's being said, and don't be afraid to get involved in the conversation if they're misinterpreting your research. From social media conversations, to mentions in the news, you can see it all in your Altmetric donut.

### **Non-academic citations**

If you're interested in non-academic citations, Altmetric is the answer. Citations are one of the clearest forms of evidence for research impact, whether academic or real-world. A piece of research cited in a policy document or a legal ruling shows that the research findings have significantly contributed to real-world decisions and affects official recommendations, laws, guidelines or regulations.

The Altmetric donut now pulls in online data for citations of your research in a range of documents, including policy papers, patents, and legal rulings. Interestingly, early Mendeley citations (included in the Altmetric donut) can be a sign that scholarly citations will follow.

# Case studies

So we've looked at the theory behind content development for research impact, but let's move on to take a look at some real case studies from our journal editors.

## Developing new content formats

Marcus Grant, Editor-in-Chief of *Cities & Health*, has experimented with new content formats designed to boost research impact and appeal to practitioners. [Read his case study](#) to find out how the 'City Know-how' article format is designed to target this audience and facilitate real-world changes in the city planning industry.

## Using events for content development

David Shirley, Associate Editor of *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, uses events for practitioners as a way to develop content for his journal. [Read his case study](#) for his tips on how events can be used to generate high-quality articles from practitioners who may not think of themselves as 'authors'.