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Library Services for Research Visibility and Impact: Strengthening professional capacity and advancing institutional impact across the research ecosystem in South African HEIs

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Library Services for Research Visibility and Impact

Strengthening professional capacity and advancing institutional impact across the research ecosystem in South African HEIs

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

PRE-LIASA CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

October 05, 2026

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Presentation Overview

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Objectives and Scope: The South African RVI Framework

Establishing a robust framework to strengthen professional capacity and institutional impact across the South African research ecosystem, supporting researchers from postgraduate stages (Master's and Doctoral) to established career levels within the institutional context.

Strategic Roadmap: The Five Core Pillars

Core Pillars	Key Functions & Objectives
1. Service Integration	Library services for enhancing research visibility and impact across the entire research lifecycle.
2. Empowerment Tools	Strategies enabling librarians to amplify scholarly output accessibility and measurable impact.
3. Open Science & Metrics	Frameworks for ORCID, Scopus, and Altmetrics to boost global presence and African research influence.
4. Collaboration Model	Synergy among Faculty, Research Offices, Research Librarians, and Scholarly Communication Specialists.
5. Community of Practice	Building an RVI professional network within South African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

** The RLI Framework aims to solidify these pillars by October 2026, driving measurable growth in Wits' institutional rankings.*

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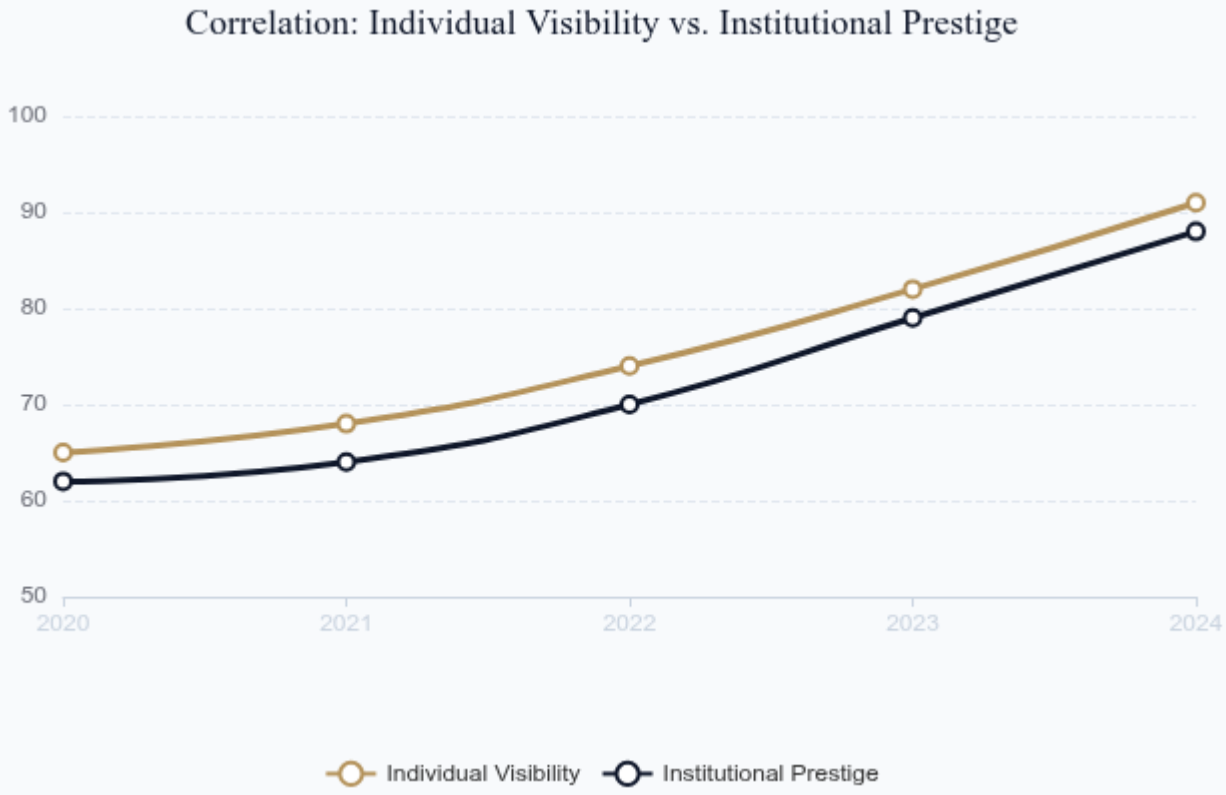
Understanding Research Visibility and Impact

The Virtuous Cycle

In the modern academic landscape, Research Visibility and Impact (RVI) have evolved from simple citation metrics into core dimensions of institutional competitiveness. Individual achievements, amplified through scholarly communication, translate into institutional prestige capital.

Institutional Significance

Visibility drives global rankings and resource acquisition. Clarivate's analysis indicates RVI is a primary driver for 2026 library transformations, requiring service systems that support the full research lifecycle and accelerate global accessibility.



Data reflects the correlation between individual research visibility and institutional prestige index (2020-2024).

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The Research Ecosystem and Stakeholders

Identifying Key Players in the Research Lifecycle at Wits

Surveying the research ecosystem of South African HEIs reveals distinct support needs. **Librarians & RVI Specialists act as a central hub**, collaborating with administrative staff to provide tailored visibility services for researchers throughout their lifecycle.

Stakeholder Category	Core Research Stage & Needs	Library Support Role
Postgraduate & Postdoc	Knowledge exploration; focus on ORCID and WIRED Space repository submissions.	Foundation building.
Early Career (ECRs)	Enhancing academic reputation; Scopus/WoS author identification.	Metric-driven impact strategies.
Established Researchers	Global benchmarking; FWCI metrics and Open Science frameworks.	Strategic benchmarking support.

Wits Campus & Library Architecture

> *The collaboration between the Institutional Research Offices and Librarians effectively amplifies South African research in the global knowledge ecosystem.*

Professional Capacity Building for Librarians

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> *Research librarians are undergoing a fundamental paradigm shift, transitioning from traditional collection management toward high-level research visibility and impact (RVI) consultancy. This evolution demands a strategic pivot in professional capacity, moving beyond resource curation to actively championing the accessibility and measurable influence of institutional scholarly outputs.*

Capability Dimension	Traditional Role Focus	RVI Advocacy Role (Future State)
Primary Mission	Collection & Resource Management	**Impact Advocacy & Visibility Consultancy**
Key Skill Sets	Cataloging & Information Literacy	Metrics Analysis, ORCID/Scopus Optimization, Open Science Frameworks
Engagement Model	Reactive (Support on Demand)	Proactive (Strategic Research Partner)
Success Metric	Circulation & Collection Size	FWCI, Global Rankings & Research Presence

TECHNICAL MASTERY

Mastering bibliometrics, digital identity management (ORCID/Scopus), and institutional repository optimization.

OPEN SCIENCE

Navigating frameworks for accessibility, open data, and institutional scholarly output amplification.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Positioning librarians as indispensable partners throughout the entire research lifecycle.

Core Library Services for RVI Needed

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Modern research libraries have transitioned from passive repositories to active partners in the research lifecycle, providing specialized technical support to bridge the gap between scholarly production and global discovery.

Service Category	Core Functions & Strategic Value
Publishing Support	Manuscript formatting and submission guidance to align with high-impact journal requirements. Specialized support tailored for Wits researchers.
Legal & Ethics	Expert guidance on copyright management and intellectual property to protect Wits researcher rights and institutional assets.
Discovery Logic	Metadata optimization (ORCID/Scopus IDs) to maximize search engine indexing and amplify the university's global research presence.



STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE

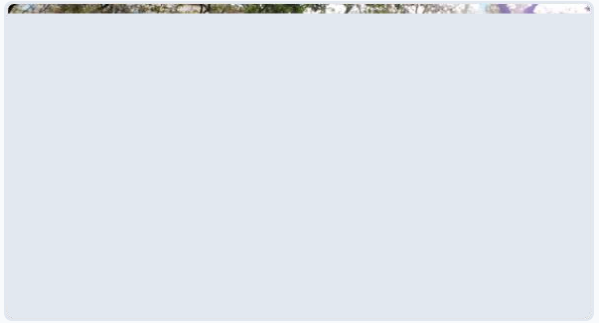
Historical Papers Research Archive: Integrating heritage with modern scholarly discovery.

HE libraries ensure institutional outputs are technically optimised for maximum visibility and measurable impact.

Strategies for Enhancing Scholarly Visibility

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Proactive engagement transforms static research into dynamic global influence by bridging the gap between traditional publishing and multi-channel dissemination.



VISIBILITY CHANNEL	ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY	KEY IMPACT AREA
Academic Social Media	Leveraging platforms like ResearchGate, Twitter, and LinkedIn for real-time promotion	Altmetric attention & peer networking
Public & News Media	Translating complex findings for mainstream press and public discourse	Societal relevance & policy influence
Industry Partnerships	Aligning research outputs with commercial R&D and professional networks	Technology transfer & funding growth
Institutional Tools	Optimizing ORCID and repository metadata for global discoverability	Search engine ranking & citation counts

By shifting from passive archiving to active promotion across these four pillars, researchers can amplify their institutional presence and ensure their work resonates within the global knowledge ecosystem.

Empowering Librarians with RVI Tools

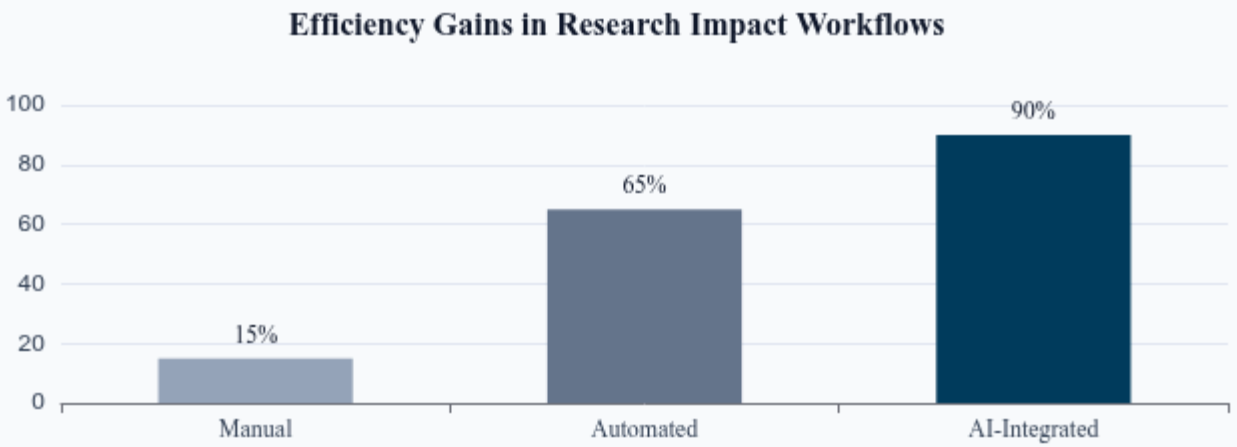
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Digital toolkits and AI-driven workflows are transforming the librarian's role from passive curators to active strategic partners in visibility management.

Workflow Transformation Analysis

Integrating AI-powered software solutions into scholarly communication allows librarians to automate complex reporting and real-time impact tracking. By leveraging digital toolkits, librarians can seamlessly bridge the gap between institutional repositories and global discovery layers.

This systematic approach empowers professional capacity by utilising AI to refine digital presence and amplify institutional visibility in competitive knowledge markets, ensuring research outputs are measurable across the ecosystem.

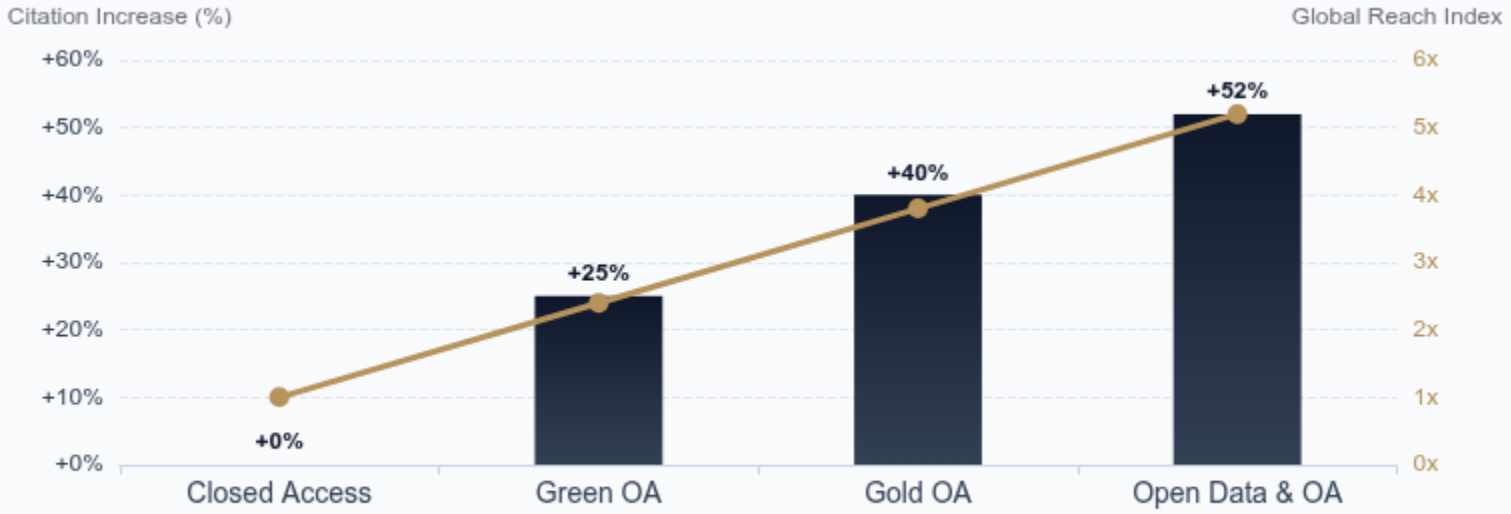


Open Science Frameworks and Principles

The Strategic Transition to Open Scholarship

The global research ecosystem is undergoing a fundamental shift toward open scholarship, driven by the collective mission to enhance visibility and accessibility. By adopting open science frameworks, institutions move beyond traditional publishing barriers, fostering a transparent environment.

Impact of Open Access on Scholarly Visibility



> *Note: The integration of open data mandates and ethical sharing protocols significantly compounds the "citation advantage," ensuring research outputs achieve maximum measurable impact within the South African HEI landscape and beyond.*

Digital Research Profiling Systems

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Managing professional identity online

The integrity of the global research ecosystem relies on precise digital identity management, where ORCID serves as the foundational "digital fingerprint" to eliminate author name ambiguity and ensure every scholarly contribution is correctly attributed to the individual and their institution.

By integrating these persistent identifiers with optimized Google Scholar profiles, researchers can actively curate their public academic persona, track real-time citation metrics, and significantly enhance the discoverability of their outputs across the scholarly web.

Wits Library Architecture & Research Environment

Profiling Tool	Core Function for RVI	Impact on Institutional Visibility
ORCID	Unique persistent identifier; resolves name disambiguation	Ensures accurate data harvesting for institutional repositories
Google Scholar	Public citation tracking and h-index visualization	Increases organic search discoverability of African research
Scopus/WoS ID	Verified linkage to high-impact indexing databases	Directly influences international university rankings and benchmarking

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Institutional and Global Author IDs

Platform-Specific Identification & Synchronization

Web of Science ResearcherID and Scopus Author ID serve as critical, platform-specific anchors that resolve author name ambiguity across global citation databases. By synchronizing these unique identifiers, researchers ensure their scholarly outputs are accurately attributed and aggregated. This interoperability creates a seamless link between institutional repositories and global discovery layers, significantly enhancing research visibility.

ID System	Primary Platform	Key Function
ResearcherID	Web of Science	Tracks global citation impact
Scopus Author ID	Elsevier / Scopus	Automates h-index tracking
Institutional ID	Wits Repository	Links local output to global profiles



Supporting research visibility through institutional infrastructure.



Connecting Wits historical records to global discovery.

The Role of Institutional Repositories

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Institutional Repositories as Engines for Visibility

Institutional repositories serve as the digital backbone for research visibility by ensuring long-term preservation and global accessibility of scholarly outputs. Through high-quality metadata harvesting, these platforms significantly increase the discoverability of institutional research in global search engines and harvesting services. By facilitating "Green" Open Access through self-archiving policies, repositories empower researchers to bypass paywalls, amplifying the reach and citation potential of their work across the global knowledge ecosystem.

Wits Historical Papers Research Archive

Repository Impact Factor	Description	Contribution to RVI
Accessibility	Transitioning content to "Green" Open Access	Increases download rates and global readership
Discoverability	Metadata optimization and indexing	Ensures presence in Google Scholar and Scopus
Sustainability	Permanent digital preservation	Secures long-term institutional knowledge capital

Quantitative Research Metrics

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Metric Type	Key Significance	Strategic Limitations
Citation Analysis	Measures the direct influence and reach of scholarly work within the academic community.	High citation counts do not always equate to quality; citations take time to accumulate.
h-index	Quantifies both productivity (number of papers) and impact (citations per paper) in a single indicator.	Heavily biased toward established researchers; ignores field-specific citation patterns and career stage.
Field-Weighted Metrics	Normalizes impact across different disciplines to allow for fair benchmarking.	Can be complex for individual researchers to track without specialized library tools.

> ***Key Insight:*** While traditional metrics like the h-index provide a snapshot of research visibility, they must be contextualized within specific disciplinary norms and career stages to ensure a fair assessment of institutional impact.

Advanced Bibliometric Indicators: Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI)

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Field-Normalized Benchmarking

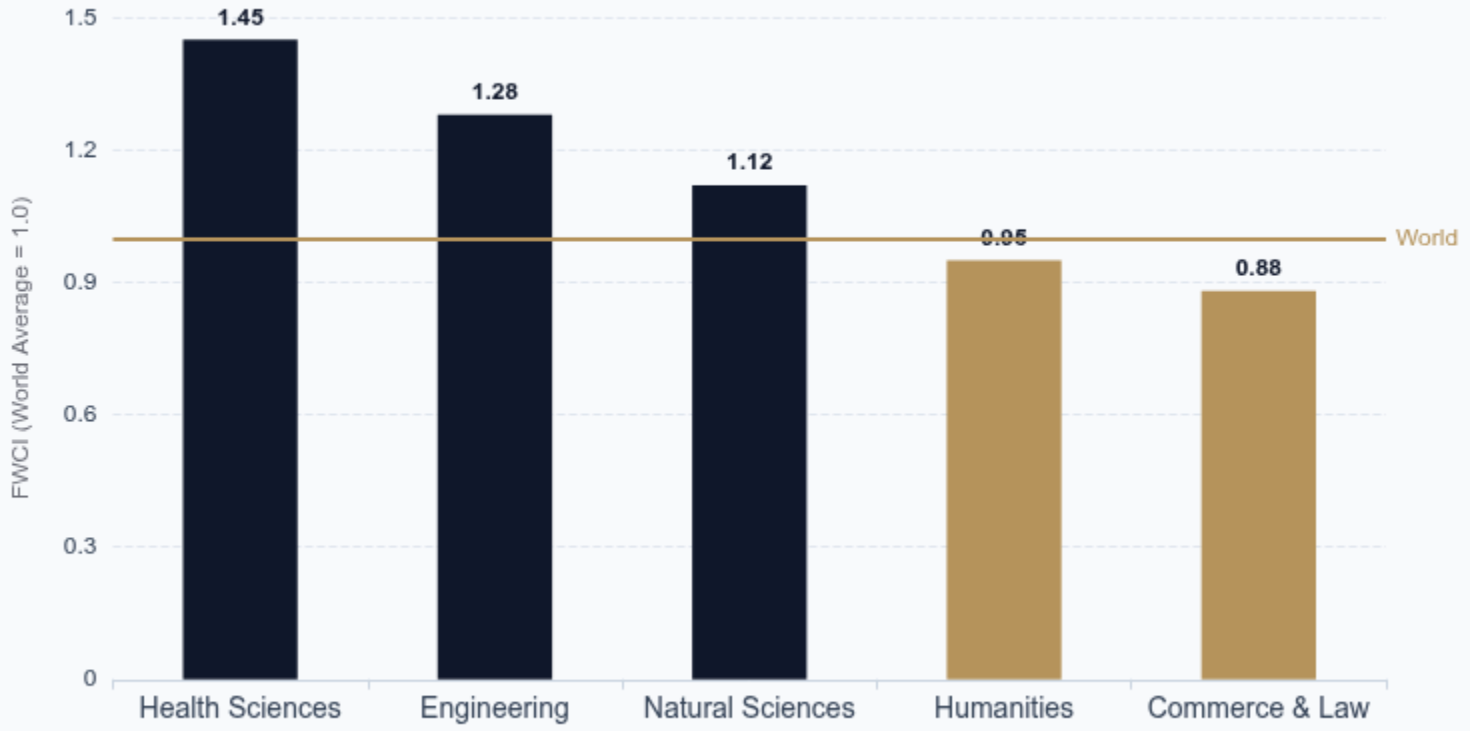
FWCI normalises citation impact by comparing a paper's citations to the global average for the same field, publication type, and year, correcting for disciplinary variations.

Interpreting FWCI

An FWCI > 1.00 indicates impact above global average. It provides a fair quantitative basis for cross-departmental evaluation and international benchmarking.

"Enables data-driven decision-making for resource allocation and disciplinary development."

Institutional Research Impact Benchmarking by Faculty (FWCI)



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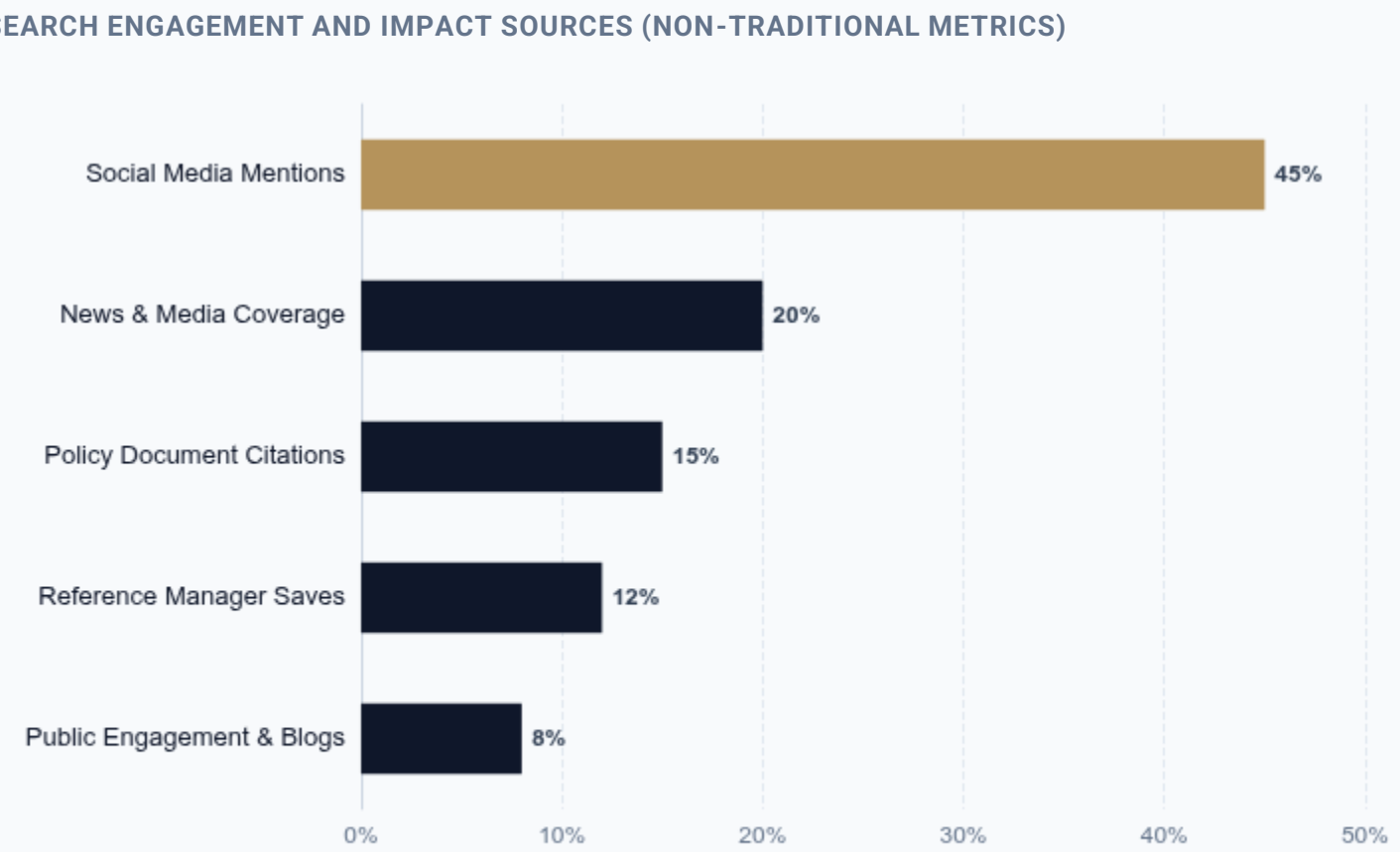
The Rise of Altmetrics: Tracking Research Impact Beyond the Ivory Tower

Core Insights

Altmetrics provide a critical supplement to traditional citation analysis by capturing the breadth of research dissemination and social impact in the global digital ecosystem. It tracks non-traditional metrics such as social media mentions, news coverage, policy citations, and public engagement in real-time.

Chart Analysis

The data reflects the distribution of non-traditional academic impact. Social media dissemination (45%) and policy citations (15%) are key drivers in enhancing the presence of African and global research, enabling real-time monitoring of scholarly outputs in policy-making and public discourse.



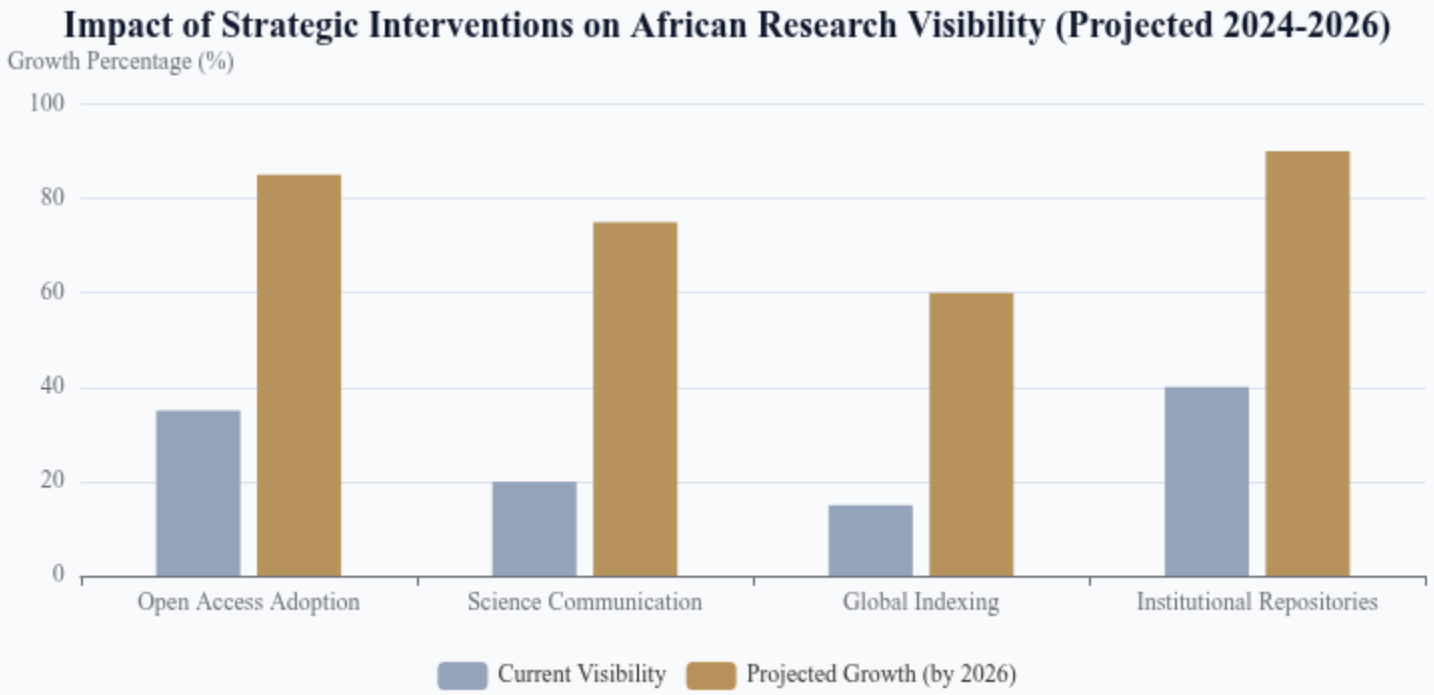
Amplifying African Research Presence

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Strategic Pathway

From Breaking Barriers to Building Global Influence

African higher education institutions are overcoming long-term marginalization through **strategic science communication** and **library transformation**. By strengthening Open Access mechanisms and local repositories, African research is shifting from "passive participation" to "proactive leadership."



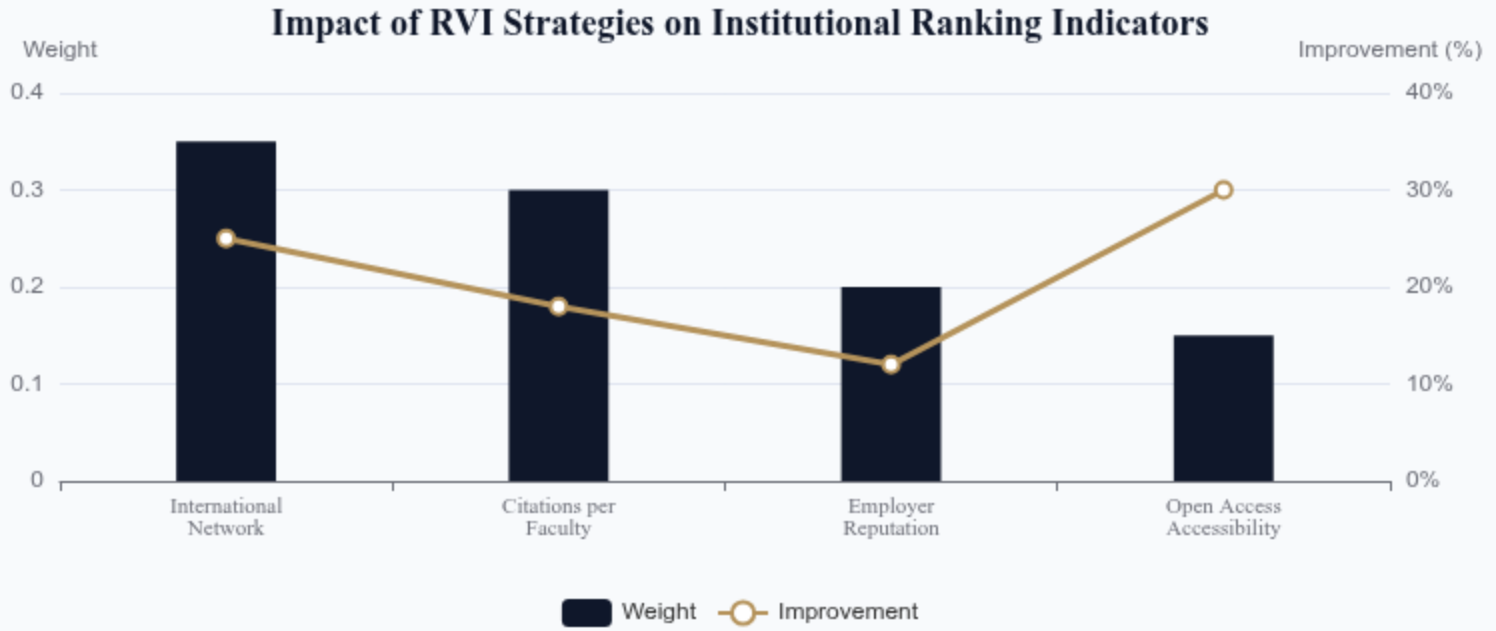
Targeting research visibility via institutional libraries is projected to **double global engagement** by 2026, effectively dismantling scholarly communication barriers.

Benchmarking and Ranking Strategies

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Institutional Excellence

In the process of institutional internationalization, Research Visibility (RVI) is the core driving force for global rankings. By aligning RVI goals with institutional strategy, universities establish scientific evaluation systems.



Targeted Impact

Setting pragmatic impact metrics for researchers at different career stages allows institutions to steadily enhance their competitive position within the global knowledge ecosystem.

"Data indicates that targeted visibility benchmarking significantly improves international research networks and citation efficiency."

** Improvement reflects the projected percentage increase in score efficiency through targeted RVI benchmarking (Projected 2026).*

Faculty and Research Office Collaboration: Building a Cohesive Support Model

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Integrated Research Support Ecosystem (2026 Target Model)

Roleplayer	Core Function & Workflow Integration	Strategic Contribution
Scholarly Communication Specialists	Managing repository deposits and OA compliance	Increasing visibility of institutional outputs
Research Librarians	Bibliometric reporting and researcher profiling	Strengthening faculty benchmarking and impact
Research Office	Grant management and strategic intelligence	Aligning research outputs with institutional KPIs
Faculty / PIs	Content creation and expert validation	Advancing continental research presence

Key Integration Path: By synchronizing Library bibliometric intelligence with Research Office administrative workflows, Wits can move beyond siloed support to a unified "Research Impact and Intelligence" team, ensuring maximum global and African visibility.

Repository Managers and Technical Staff

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The Technical Backbone of Research Visibility

Repository staff link scholarly content with global discoverability. By fostering collaboration between librarians and IT, institutions create dynamic ecosystems where data flows seamlessly. This synergy ensures research integrity and global indexing via major discovery engines.

2026 Strategic Priority: Trust and Interoperability

Strategic Pillar	Focus Area	Impact Metric
System Interoperability	Standardizing authorization & metadata protocols	Enhanced discovery speed
Infrastructure Trust	Privacy-first secure data exchange	Higher researcher participation
Technical Integration	API connectivity (ORCID, CRIS)	Reduced reporting burden

> *Success relies on trust and technical excellence. Interoperability ensures research systems are interconnected nodes that amplify global scholarly presence.*

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RVI Community of Practice in South Africa

Designing a sustainable professional network for enhanced research visibility

Strategic Network Framework



Implementation Strategy

By October 2026, this initiative will bridge South African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through a structured professional network.

The framework focuses on transforming individual institutional efforts into a unified continental force, leveraging collective intelligence to solve localized research challenges and amplify scholarly presence in the global knowledge ecosystem.

Knowledge Sharing
Cross-institutional exchange of RVI best practices.

Problem Solving
Addressing localized South African research challenges.

Implementing a CoP in Higher Education

Framework for Research Visibility and Impact (RVI) Integration

To transition from conceptual support to institutional impact, the Community of Practice (CoP) operates through a structured lifecycle that integrates governance with measurable outcomes. By aligning Library services with Federal higher education policy mandates, institutions can foster a collaborative ecosystem between Research Offices and Scholarly Communication specialists.

CoP Maturity and Impact Metrics (Projected Phase 1 - 2027)

Implementation Phase	Focus Area	Success Metric	Target Participation
Establishment	Governance & Charters	100% Stakeholder Alignment	15+ Core Members
Active Engagement	Skill-sharing & RVI Tools	40% Increase in ORCID/Scopus Adoption	150+ Researchers
Policy Integration	Institutional Benchmarking	Federal Policy Compliance	5+ Faculty Partners

> *The roadmap prioritizes a membership structure that spans the research ecosystem—from repository managers to established scholars—ensuring that visibility strategies are embedded into the academic culture to drive institutional rankings and global presence at Wits.*

Future Trends in Research Impact

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Evolving Landscape

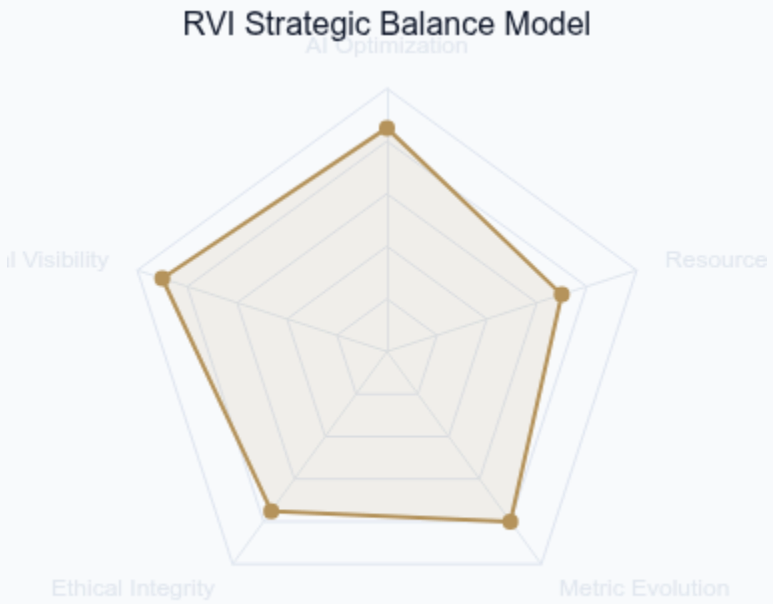
Research discoverability is undergoing a **paradigm shift**. As AI integration deepens, the focus shifts towards balancing institutional visibility with the ethical sustainability of Research Visibility and Impact (RVI) services.

AI-Enhanced Discoverability

Utilizing generative tools to optimize metadata and academic search, increasing exposure within the global knowledge ecosystem.

Sustainability Challenges

Prioritizing ethical risks and dynamic evaluation metrics to build long-term RVI support systems resilient to technological iterations.





> *Strategic Alignment: Integrating AI-driven reach with ethical metrics ensures the long-term sustainability of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa and the global south.*

Conclusion and Strategic Roadmap

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STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE TOWARDS OCTOBER 2026

PHASE	STRATEGIC MILESTONES	EXPECTED IMPACT
Immediate Actions	Integrate ORCID/Scopus identifiers; Initiate library leadership transformation mechanisms.	Eliminate researcher identity ambiguity; Build the RVI community foundation.
Capacity Building	Deploy collaborative models between Scholarly Communication and Research Offices.	Strengthen links between Institutional Repositories (IR) and the global knowledge ecosystem.
Strategic Realization	Implement benchmark assessment systems based on Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI).	Significantly enhance international rankings and global ecosystem influence for Wits and South African HEIs.

Vision Statement

"By building a tripartite collaborative ecosystem of 'Library-Research Office-Faculty', research support shifts from resource provision to proactive value creation, achieving a comprehensive leap in visibility, accessibility, and social impact of institutional research outputs."

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"Strengthening the African research ecosystem is not just about measuring impact, but about amplifying the voices that shape our global knowledge."

ADVANCING INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT & RESEARCH VISIBILITY

Thank You

OCTOBER 05, 2026

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Global Knowledge Ecosystems