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Maximising Research Impact and Visibility Through Digital Scholarship and Open Platforms

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Maximising Research Impact and Visibility Through Digital Scholarship and Open Platforms

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C O N T E N T S

01 PART Why Research Visibility Matters

02 PART From Publication to Impact

03 PART Digital Scholarship Ecosystem at Wits

04 PART Open Science and Citation Gains

05 PART Social Media, Altmetrics, and Scholarly Communication

06 PART Building a Strong Digital Identity

07 PART Research Metrics: Beyond Citations and H-Index

08 PART Altmetrics and Responsible Use



PART 01

Why Research Visibility Matters

The Digital Transformation of Knowledge

Impact on Research Ecosystem

Digital and social media have fundamentally changed how knowledge circulates and who can access it. Visibility now directly influences citations, collaboration opportunities, funding prospects, and career advancement for researchers.



Wits Institutional Context

The University of the Witwatersrand can leverage current publication numbers, citation metrics, institutional rankings, and SDG recognitions to demonstrate its growing impact and visibility in the global research landscape.







PART 02

From Publication to Impact

Beyond Traditional Publication

01

The Extended Research Lifecycle

The research process does not conclude with publication; online dissemination and the establishment of a robust digital identity are critical for achieving real-world impact and influence.

02

Democratizing Access

Open platforms and institutional repositories democratise access to knowledge, significantly shortening the time from discovery to practical application and policy influence. Wits Libraries play a pivotal role in enabling discovery, preservation, and reuse of scholarly outputs.



PART 03

Digital Scholarship Ecosystem at Wits

Institutional Infrastructure

01

Core Services and Platforms

The ecosystem includes the institutional repository, open access journals, and research data services, all customised to support Wits researchers. Key researcher identifiers include ORCID, institutional profiles, and CRIS systems.

02

Support for Open Science

Comprehensive support is provided for open science practices, copyright management, and licensing, ensuring researchers can navigate the open scholarship landscape effectively.



PART 04

Open Science and Citation Gains

The Citation Advantage

InCites

SciVal

ELSEVIER



01 Evidence from Research

Open access, open data, and open code are consistently associated with increased citations and greater media attention. Numerous studies confirm an "open citation advantage" across various academic disciplines.

02 Early Visibility through repositories

Institutional repositories allow researchers to achieve earlier visibility and enable the reuse of their work, accelerating the dissemination and application of new findings.



PART 05

Social Media, Altmetrics, and Scholarly Communication

Expanding the Metrics Landscape

01

New Forms of Dissemination

Social media platforms increase visibility and enable new forms of dissemination and networking, extending the reach of scholarly work beyond traditional academic circles.

02

Capturing Broader Engagement

Altmetrics capture attention in news, policy discussions, blogs, and Twitter/X, providing a more comprehensive view of impact beyond traditional citation counts. Tools like Altmetric, PlumX, and Mendeley readership offer valuable insights.



PART 06

Building a Strong Digital Identity

Key Platforms for Researchers

01

Essential Digital Profiles

Researchers should establish and maintain profiles on key platforms, including ORCID, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia, Scopus Author ID, ResearcherID, and Mendeley, etc… to ensure consistent online presence.

02

Training and Improvement Targets

Training academics to create and maintain these profiles significantly improves online visibility. For Wits, it is valuable to show the percentage of researchers with ORCID and repository deposits, along with improvement targets.



PART 07

Research Metrics: Beyond Citations and H-Index

Traditional and Evolving Metrics



Core Traditional Metrics

Traditional metrics include citation counts, journal impact factor, and the h-index, which are increasingly used for individual evaluation, rankings, and funding decisions.



Contextualising Metrics

There is a need to contextualise metrics within disciplinary norms and incorporate qualitative assessment, as researchers often have mixed feelings about their use in evaluation.



PART 08

Altmetrics and Responsible Use

Methodological Considerations

Limitations and Uneven Application

Altmetrics reflect online engagement but can be methodologically limited and unevenly distributed across different academic fields, requiring careful interpretation.

Embedding in Communication Systems

Metrics are embedded in wider communication systems and can shift focus towards individual performance. Emphasizing principles like DORA and responsible metrics is crucial for Wits research-related policies.





PART 09

SDGs as a Framework for Research Impact

Structuring Real-World Impact

Increasing Use in Evaluation

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are increasingly used to frame and evaluate the real-world impact of research, with proposals to use SDG targets as a structured impact framework for institutions.

Growth and Uneven Distribution

SDG-related research has grown rapidly but remains uneven across different goals and topics, presenting both opportunities and challenges for institutions like Wits.



PART 10

SDG-Linked Research and Impact

Global Patterns and Wits Positioning

Standard Markdown Table

Focus area	Global pattern / opportunity	How Wits could position metrics	Citations
SDG 3: Health & wellbeing	Most research-intensive, large bibliometric footprint	Highlight Wits HS publications, citations	3610
SDG 4 & 16: Education, justice	Lower “research-friendliness” and intensity	Show Wits niche strengths and collaborations	312
Cross-cutting SDG impact	SDGs used as framework for real-world impact evaluation	Map Wits outputs to SDGs in WiredSpace repository	91518
Capacity & equity	Need for skills, infrastructure, equitable access in OS and SDG work	Wits support programmes, African partnerships	2010



PART 11

Wits Research Metrics & SDG Impact

Institutional Visuals and Data

Trend Analysis

Insert institution-specific visuals showing trends in publications, citations, and field-weighted impact over the last 5–10 years to demonstrate growth and performance.

SDG Mapping and Collaboration

Show the share of outputs mapped to each SDG through THE Impact Rankings or internal mapping, and illustrate collaboration networks with African, Global South, and global partners.



PART 12

African Context and Wits Experience

Strategic Research Management



Health Sciences Success Story

Wits Health Sciences strategically managed research to double publications and increase citations significantly over the period 2008–2016, demonstrating effective capacity building.



Lessons for Scaling

Structured support through training, mentorship, and systems shortened time to graduation and strengthened capacity. These lessons can be scaled across the university and aligned with SDGs.



PART 13

Practical Strategies for Researchers

Actionable Steps for Visibility



Publishing and Depositing

Publish open access or deposit accepted manuscripts in the institutional repository to ensure broad accessibility and compliance with funder mandates.



Digital Identity Management

Register ORCID and maintain a consistent author identity across all platforms to enhance discoverability and recognition.



Data and Code Sharing

Share datasets and code where possible, using DOIs and clear licenses to promote reuse and transparency.



Ethical Social Media Engagement

Engage ethically with social media to highlight new work and its societal relevance, extending the reach and impact of research.



PART 14

Risks, Equity, and Critical Perspectives

Potential Pitfalls and Considerations

01

Over-Reliance on Metrics

Over-reliance on metrics can coerce behaviour and narrow definitions of "impact," potentially undermining the quality and diversity of research.

02

Equity in Open Science

Open science benefits can bypass researchers without connectivity, skills, or infrastructure, highlighting the need for equitable access and support.

03

Wits Libraries' Advocacy Role

Wits Libraries play a crucial role in capacity building, advocating for fair assessment, and supporting under-resourced scholars to ensure inclusive participation.



PART 15

Role of Wits Libraries

Comprehensive Support Services

Infrastructure Provision

Provide essential infrastructure including the repository, OA publishing support, and data services to enable researchers to maximize their impact.

Training and Capacity Building

Offer training on digital identity, metrics literacy, SDG mapping, and open science skills to empower researchers with the necessary tools and knowledge.

Advisory and Compliance Support

Provide advisory services on responsible metrics, journal selection, and compliance with funder mandates to guide researchers effectively.



PART 16

Key Takeaways

Core Messages for Maximising Impact



Central Role of Open Scholarship

Open scholarship and digital platforms are central to maximising visibility and achieving real-world impact, forming the foundation of modern research dissemination.

ORCID
Connecting Research and Researchers



SDGs as a Powerful Lens

SDGs provide a powerful lens for demonstrating societal contribution and aligning research with global priorities, enhancing the relevance and impact of scholarly work.

South African SDG Hub



Institutional and Researcher Collaboration

Coordinated institutional support combined with researcher engagement can significantly raise Wits' profile and SDG impact, creating a virtuous cycle of visibility and influence.

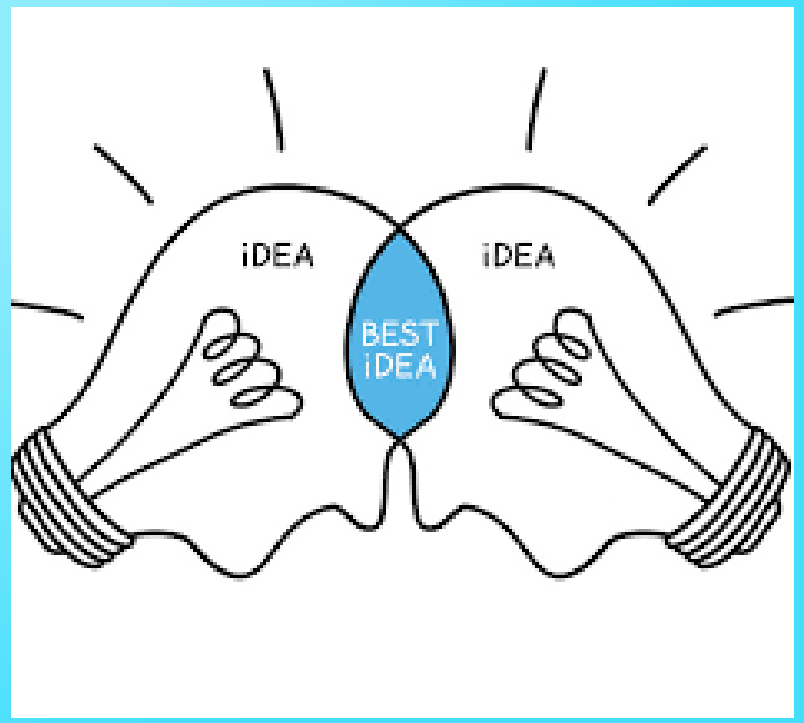




PART 17

Discussion / Q&A

Collaborative Enhancement



Questions for Dialogue

How can African researchers and the Library collaborate to enhance digital scholarship and SDGs impact?

What additional metrics or stories of impact should surface at our HEIs to further demonstrate institutional or individual researcher contributions to the global knowledge economy?

Thank you

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WITS UNIVERSITY

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