Altmetrics cheat sheet

Here's a quick and dirty guide to types of quantitative and qualitative altmetrics data and tools you can use to understand how your collections are being used.

For a more in-depth look at these data's application to digital special collections, check out this white paper: Konkiel, Stacy; Dalmau, Michelle; Scherer, David (2015): "Altmetrics and analytics for digital special collections and institutional repositories." https://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.1392140.v1

Quantitative altmetrics

Quantitative altmetrics do not measure exactly *how* digital library items are used, but instead they are indicative of *overall volume* of interest in digital library content.

- **Shares** on social media signal the circulation of content across a potentially vast network of people.
- Saves, Favorites, and Bookmarks can capture interest in a given item, and in some cases the intent to use items in future teaching.
- Adaptations relate to the creation of derivative works: new research or creative works based on existing digital library images, data, research, software, etc. Accurately tracking adaptation is difficult to do, even in systems that provide mechanisms for doing so (i.e. forking in GitHub).

Qualitative altmetrics

Qualitative data are invaluable in their ability to convey intent, especially when used alongside quantitative data.

- Mentions can be as informal as a "shout-out" or as formal as a citation, though in either case the mention may not be constructed in easily traceable ways (i.e., citing a canonical URL or persistent identifier). In venues like Twitter and Wikipedia, where mentions are more easily tracked and aggregated, this data can be easily harvested to better understand context: what is being said about a particular item? And who is involved in the discussion? Mentions can be appear on the Web in many forms: course syllabi, blog posts, policy documents, and news articles (just to name a few).
- Reviews or comments provide another avenue for determining value. The volume of comments often does not matter as much as the nature of the comments. In addition, a commenter's identity can sometimes be equally important when analyzing comment content.

ACRL 2017 :: March 24, 2017 :: Baltimore, MD :: #dlanalytics :: doi: 10.6084/m9.figshare.4765852

Sources for finding altmetrics

Altmetric Explorer for Institutions

- Metrics reported: Shares, saves/favorites, adaptations, mentions, and some other quantitative and qualitative data sourced from the social web¹.
- Altmetric collects data from across the web related to any scholarly outputs, including
 any content in a subscriber's digital special collection (no persistent identifier necessary)
 which can be displayed in embeddable badges on item records.
- Altmetric provides qualitative data behind the numbers they report. For example, in addition to seeing that items in your digital library have been mentioned 17 times on Wikipedia, you can also see exactly what has been written about them.

Altmetrics data via social media APIs

- It is also technically possible for digital libraries to connect with individual social media platforms' APIs to search for mentions of their content. In theory, one could monitor social media sites for mentions of relevant URLs.
- The main drawback to this option is the developer time required to build customized solutions for each digital library. It could possibly result in much duplicated effort.
- Another possible drawback are the limitations placed on search APIs by platforms themselves; for example, researchers have pointed out² that Twitter's search API is typically restricted to fetching data from only the previous week, and the API's rate limits restrict the retrieval of large amounts of data at once.

Qualitative data via Google Alerts and Mention

- Track when your content has been shared on the web by setting a Google Alert or Mention alert for your:
 - o digital library's name
 - digital library's base URL (http://collection1.libraries.psu.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/amc/id/314/),
 - your repository's Handle or DOI shoulder (http://hdl.handle.net/2022/9564; http://dx.doi.org/10.5061/dryad.pp67h), or
 - special URLs created for collections (http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/vwwp/welcome.do)
- For important collections, you might also want to set alerts for titles or names (i.e. for Penn State's "Advertising Trade Cards from the Alice Marshall Women's History Collection," they might also set alerts for "Advertising Trade Cards" and "Alice Marshall").
- Google Alerts is free to use; Mention is a subscription service.

¹ https://www.altmetric.com/about-our-data/our-sources/

² http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2014/12/30/a-political-economy-of-twitter-data/