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Are You Being Evaluated? Need for New Approaches in Evaluation Practices

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Abstract

This session for interaction and engagement is organized by members of the EU funded ACUMEN project that aimed at understanding the ways in which researchers are evaluated by their peers and by institutions, and at assessing how the science system can be improved and enhanced (see <http://research-acumen.eu/>). Among the topics to be emphasized are: 1) the role of bibliometric indicators in evaluations and 2) possible enhancements in the way researchers present themselves in evaluation situations by extending the information provided in standard CVs, and providing a narrative for these which in turn helps the evaluators to reach decision based on richer evidence. To make our model more concrete, we will present evaluation scenarios and personas at different stages of their career. The scenarios and personas will motivate the audience to become involved, and a significant part of the event will be dedicated to discussion and interaction.

Keywords: evaluation, enhanced CV, narrative, bibliometric indicators, altmetric indicators

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1 Background and purpose

We are members of the EU funded ACUMEN project (2010-2014) that aimed at understanding the ways in which researchers are evaluated by their peers and by institutions, and at assessing how the science system can be improved and enhanced (see <http://research-acumen.eu/>). In the evaluation processes there are two sides: evaluators and evaluands (Dahler-Larsen, 2011). Researchers and academics in their careers often experience both roles. Moments of evaluation in science encompass staff recruitments for job applications, assessments procedures for gaining resources and grants or being promoted, reviewing publications and thesis. CVs with information on education, previous work places, grants, publications and presentations are one standard instrument for career development. Increasingly, bibliometric indicators are used in evaluation. ACUMEN reviewed the evaluation processes in science and its consequences for individual careers as a whole. Our main goal was to reflect how the individual researcher can be empowered in those externally driven events.

In this event we summarize the insights of all the ACUMEN members (<http://research-acumen.eu/partners>) and engage the audience using means of active participation such as brainstorming and role games. Among the topics we want to emphasize are: 1) the role of bibliometric indicators in evaluations and 2) possible enhancements in the way researchers present themselves in evaluation situations

by extending the information provided in standard CVs, and providing a narrative for these which in turn helps the evaluators to reach decision based on richer evidence.

Concerning the first topic, we observe that evaluations are often based on the number of publications, the publication venues and the citations these publications received. Quite often, actual citation counts are replaced by the impact factor (Garfield, 1994) of the journal in which the article is published. Journal impact factor is also used as a proxy for the reputation of journals. Currently there is a serious ongoing debate regarding the use of the impact factor in these ways (DORA, 2012; Wouters, 2013). Another measure frequently used in evaluations of individuals is the h-index (Hirsch, 2005). The h-index has limitations as well (Bornmann & Daniel, 2007), and is highly dependent on the data source being used (Bar-Ilan, 2008). Special problems arise in the assessment of humanities and social science researchers where often journal publications are not the norm, and citation counts are usually low and the coverage of the citation databases is low (Hicks, 2004; Moed, 2005). At the same time, there are additional ways to assess the impact of research that are not based on citation counts, for example considering downloads (Kurtz & Bollen, 2010) or impact assessed based on visibility on social media, scientific and general, as measured for example by ImpactStory (impactstory.org) or Altmetric (altmetric.com) (for the altmetric manifesto, see Priem et al., 2010). ImpactStory measures the social impact of diverse “publications”, e.g. datasets, slideshare presentations and software. For a recent testimony of the success of altmetrics (alternative metrics), see (Kwok, 2013). In addition to measuring social impact and usage of scientific outputs, researchers have other skills that they rarely have an opportunity to present, for example emphasizing specifying scientific or technological expertise, public engagement, managerial and collaborative capabilities, which may be relevant to the specific evaluation event.

2 Intended audience

The intended audience of the proposed event is academics at all stages of their career with experiences in evaluation situations. Students planning for an academic career are also welcome. To raise awareness of the actual debates, practices and developed guidelines for practices is one goal of this event. In addition the future generation of information scientists will be also subject and object in evaluative practices, as any other researcher, and so we believe they will profit from attending the event in a very direct practical way.

3 Proposed activities

Our aim is to present thoughts on the subject and to engage the audience in a lively discussion. To make our model more concrete, we will present evaluation scenarios and personas at different stages of their career. The scenarios and personas will motivate the audience to become involved, and a significant part of the event will be dedicated to discussion and interaction.

Outcomes of the event will be reported on the ACUMEN website. The link to the report will be sent to the event participants.

4 Relevance to the Conference/Significance to the Field

As evaluations often involve “impact” measurements, the information science community with its experience in bibliometrics is especially well-suited to provide ideas and feedback for our project. For us, “impact” does not only include research impact (usually measured in terms of citations or h-indexes), but also societal impact, which can be measured in a variety of ways including knowledge transfer, patents or visibility on the Web and on social media. The findings of the ACUMEN project are of particular interest to information scientists and the iSchool curricula.

Both we and the audience will benefit from the event: we will receive feedback on our model, and the participants will get new ideas on how to better present themselves in forthcoming

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