Earlier this week I blogged about how Open Access broadens out readership beyond academia and recommended investigating Altmetrics, which offer a really useful insight into the conversations that take place online between audiences. Today's post delves a little deeper into a possible link between Open Access, Altmetrics and citation count.

The correlation of Open Access publication and an increased citation rate has been well-established, from +36% (Biology) to +600% (Agricultural Sciences). It's been interesting since then to observe how the Open Access landscape has evolved to include Altmetrics into the citation equation.

Studies have found a short-term spike in the attention received by articles that have been Tweeted by the journal publisher, others have linked Altmetrics attention to a citation count higher in Open Access (OA) articles than in Non-Open Access (NOA) articles. However, the causality in these cases is unclear: Do OA papers generate more citations because they are subject to societal discussion, or is the societal discussion a result of the research having a high academic impact? It's worth remembering that an attention spike isn't always followed-up by citations and the time it takes to build up citations differs heavily by discipline. Overall, published evidence implies that there is a general media advantage with OA, but we mustn't
forget the reality of the science bubble, i.e. the intrinsic nature of some papers overshadowing others in the land of media and social media. Papers associated with sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll (perhaps not the rock 'n' roll), are often high amongst the Altmetric.com most Top 100 papers.

Someone reading our posts this week may be thinking, 'I know Open Access is good but how do I know I'm increasing my overall research impact?'

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Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

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The answer is that the impact field is unpredictable and there won't ever be a single, water-tight way to increase your overall research impact, but to get the maximum career benefit from this changing landscape of academic publishing consider the following advice:

1. Create an online research profile to make your list of publications easily accessible. ORCiD and Google Scholar Citations are my two top recommendations currently.
2. Co-author articles and write reviews, as these tend to be nice ways to reach audiences and accrue citations.
3. Utilize OA publishing channels where possible or, when publishing OA isn't an option, self-archive your manuscript using Green Open Access.
4. Make sure that multiple channels are used to disseminate information about your research - some journals offer very good services to support authors.
5. Discuss and share your work on social media, linking out to the DOI number wherever possible.