The Missing Link - UK local and national media coverage of research using Altmetrics to explore quality of coverage

Andy Tattersall - University of Sheffield
@Andy_Tattersall

Dr Chris Carroll - University of Sheffield

Image CC BY 2.0 Jon S - https://bit.ly/3mzMdPq
Purpose of the research

● To identify how much of the University of Sheffield’s research is cited in the local and national media

● Discover how many in that sample properly acknowledge the authors, institution, funder and journal

● Create a checklist to encourage better quality reporting of the research
New research must be better reported, the future of society depends on it
Why this should matter to researchers, research institutions, funders, publishers and especially the public

- Areas of national and regional media do not know enough about the nuances of published research - especially Open Access, journals, DOIs, ORCiD, statistics, study designs, peer review, results and conclusions

- Certain areas of the media do not care about clear and accurate reporting as it conflicts with their own bias and agenda. Their priority is selling newspapers

- There is a common problem of yellow journalism and churnalism, especially in regional media reporting - links to consumer items rather than the research
Why this should matter to researchers, research institutions, funders, publishers and especially the public:

- Research and University media teams may not always share all of the important information - Open Access link, academic contact, funder name, journal link
- Academics are not in control with media interviews - they are often thrust into the limelight with little notice
- Altmetrics cannot pick up links that do not exist
WHY DO THE MEDIA NEED TO LINK TO OUR RESEARCH

IMPACT
Coverage of research may lead to impact

REF
This impact can form part of impact case studies and contribute to the REF.

FACTUAL ACCURACY
Interested parties - charities, funders, citizen scientists, patient groups, members of the public can read the research for themselves

DIDGERIDOO PLAYING AS ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT FOR OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNOEA SYNDROME: RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL – IG NOBLE PEACE PRIZE
HTTPS://WWW.BMJ.COM/CONTENT/352/7538/266?REF=DRIVERLAYER.COM
## The Life Cycle of a Story

- Shared via a press release from research organisation, media team, journal
- Picked up by a news agency - newspaper
- Republished on syndication and partner sites
- Picked up and re-blogged on science and special interest blogs
- Shared across social media
- If the first action is missing links and citations, the rest will too

---

Methodology

- Data on University of Sheffield research taken from Almetric.com for UK national and local media
  - All UK media (national, local, specialist) - 8970
  - UK National media - 844 (after filtering to remove non-URL outputs, bad links, duplicates and media coverage that fell out of scope) 271
  - UK media (national and local) with URLs - 5529 - All non traditional media sources were then manually removed
  - Regional media - 489 (after filtering to remove non-URL outputs, bad links, duplicates and media coverage that fell out of scope) 298
Methodology

- Remaining sample checked for Open Access compliance using the Unpaywall journal checker
- Both national and local media results manually checked for mentions and more notably links relating to the:
  - The University of Sheffield/Sheffield author
  - The journal or publisher
  - A non Sheffield-based academic collaborator/organisation linked directly to the research
  - The funder
  - The research paper
  - Whether the link to the paper links to a Open Access version
### Results - Regional Media (n=298)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author cited</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield author cited</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organisation cited (involved directly in the research)</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal cited</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funder cited</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to paper</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bad links 191
Opinion pieces 30
## Results - National Media (n=271)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author cited</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield author cited</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organisation cited (involved directly in the research)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal cited</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funder cited</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to paper</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bad links 20
Limitations

Only The Guardian, Metro and Financial Times contained links within the Altmetric data (The Metro were all re-posts from The Conversation)

Other national news sites did not include links due to licence between Altmetric.com and third-party news provider

Many Guardian news articles are actually blogs/essays, so link to the research but not overtly cite it
Conclusion

Creation of a checklist to be used in research communications that include

Link to research paper - preferably Open Access version
  - Link to primary or corresponding academic’s webpage
  - Link to funder
  - Link to institution
  - Journalist name or source added to all stories
  - Full journal paper citation if applicable
Conclusion

● Altmetric data to retain permanent links of media interest through third party media sources to improve evidence and longevity of research impact

● Librarians, media teams and journalists to work closer together to ensure better quality news reporting using thorough and proper linkage and citation

● Improving the quality of research story outputs by national news agencies on their news wire, which are picked up and covered by syndicated local news websites

● All of this is especially important given the current political and public landscape