

## Guide for describing Altmetric data

This guide is a “best practices” document for describing Altmetric’s data in documentation and resulting publications based upon studies of our data. We kindly ask that anyone who includes Altmetric.com data in presentations, LibGuides, videos, or other types of outreach materials take these suggestions under advisement when preparing their materials. We also require that any researcher studying our data adhere to the items in this guide marked with an asterisk (\*) when presenting upon, publishing, or otherwise discussing our data publicly.

This guide is a living document. If commonly agreed upon definitions change within the larger altmetrics and scientometrics communities, we will update this guide to reflect those changes. We are also open to suggestions from you, the research community using our data. Please submit them to [stacy@altmetric.com](mailto:stacy@altmetric.com).

1. **Company name\***: Our company should be referred to as one of the following:
  - a. Altmetric
  - b. Altmetric.comCommon misuses include “Altmetrics” (note the capital “A”) and “Altmetrics.com”.
2. **Altmetric Attention Score\***: Our proprietary, weighted, aggregate indicator is only meant to serve as a proxy for the overall volume and nature of *attention*<sup>1</sup> that research has received online. For that reason, we have changed the indicator’s name to the **Altmetric Attention Score**. Please only use that term when describing the indicator (rather than other common misuses that include “the Altmetric score”, “the altmetric score”, “the Altmetrics score”, and “Altmetric count(s)”.)
3. **Altmetric logo\***: Researchers are not required to use our logo in resulting presentations and publications, but those who choose to use it must use the up-to-date images [provided on our website](#).
4. **Generic descriptions of data\***: As you know, altmetrics data is not synonymous with “data from Altmetric.com.” We are just one provider of altmetrics data (others being PlumX, Impactstory, and Crossref Event Data).
  - a. To avoid confusion, we ask that when describing our data, you do not capitalize the phrase “altmetrics” or use the phrase “altmetric counts”. Unless you are specifically examining Altmetric data related to social media sites, please do not use the phrase “social media metrics” as a substitution for altmetrics in general. (See Point 5.)
  - b. Instead, please refer to data sourced from our company using the phrases “Altmetric.com data,” “Altmetric data,” “[data type] sourced from Altmetric.com,” or something similarly precise.

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<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of how we define “attention”, please see Cassidy Sugimoto’s thoughtful blog post on the topic, “Attention is Not Impact” (2015): <https://hub.wiley.com/community/exchanges/discover/blog/2015/06/23/attention-is-not-impact-and-other-challenges-for-altmetrics>

- c. For descriptions of altmetrics in general, you may wish to use the term “altmetrics” (in a manner similar to how one would use the term “citations” to describe a number or group of cites) or a similarly precise phrase that makes it clear that you are describing metrics that fall under the altmetrics umbrella, but that are not necessarily sourced from Altmetric.com. (I.e. “We can understand the attention paid to research by examining altmetrics sourced from Altmetric.com.”)
5. **Quality vs. impact vs. attention:** Altmetric data and the Altmetric Attention Score are indicators of attention<sup>2</sup> (and in some cases, public engagement), rather than metrics for quality or impact. In rare cases, Altmetric data (in particular, the underlying qualitative data) can serve as indicators of potential downstream impact. Try to avoid characterizing Altmetric data in general as evidence of research quality or measures of impact, unless you are making a distinction for potential impact as surfaced by data types like Faculty of 1000 Prime reviews or citations to research in public policy documents.
6. When describing the nature of Altmetric data, please make it clear that social media is one of several types of data we aggregate (others include mainstream media mentions, peer reviews, and citations to research in policy documents). Altmetrics as a field is in danger of being synonymous with the study of social media alone.

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