~1,500 words

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Hi, everyone!

As you've heard, I am Rebecca Welzenbach, and I am the U-M Library's research impact librarian (I'm also the liaison to the U-M School of Information). I'm going to pivot (ha! ha!) a little bit to talk about the concept of research impact and how it connects to today's topic of finding funding to support your research.

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First:
What even is research impact? Let's pause for a minute to reflect on this. If you would, share some ideas in the chat--terms, concepts, etc. that you associate with the idea of research impact.

Read out---

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Yes--so, it may not be a surprise for you to learn that there is no single agreed upon definition of research impact. This is, of course, a common phenomenon in the academic space, where a term or concept carries different meanings or conventions in different spaces. Nothing new

here--just a reminder that when we encounter this idea of research impact, we always need to go a bit further to define how it's being used and be sure we're all talking about the same thing.

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In 2017, this study in Health Science Policy and Systems conducted a systematic review to find and analyze definitions of research impact. Ultimately, they found 108 definitions in 83 papers. Interestingly, only 23% of the articles included in the study explicitly defined what they meant by research impact and, in 76% of those cases where it was defined, the definition came from an external entity--often, a funding body. So--important point here--as we're seeking funding for our research, it's often the very funding agency itself that may be defining what kind of impact is expected or sought. And, it kind of makes sense, then, that a publications coming out of a grant funded project would point back to the impact indicated by that grant.

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The researchers behind this study identified 4 ways of conceptualizing research impact:

- Change -- that is, some measurable difference between before and after

- Avenues -- specificity about the mechanism of the change -- processes, knowledge, awareness, etc.
- Areas where the contribution matters -- policy, environment, society, culture, health
- And levels at which the contribution takes place -- locally, regionally, nationally, globally, etc.

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My goal with all of you today is to help you think about these concepts as building blocks that help you develop a plan for understanding and talking about the impact of your research--transforming the assessment of research impact from something that happens to you, to a story you create.

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So, in terms of today's topic, finding funding and resources--what does research impact have to do with it? There are three areas I'd like to touch one. First, finding the right funder or funding opportunity, second, pitching your work to the funder, and third, reporting out on your work after successfully obtaining a grant.

OK, so: first of all--by thinking about the intended impact of your research from the get-go, you will be better positioned to identify appropriate funders and opportunities for which you're likely to be a strong

candidate. Most of the time, the description of a grant will tell you exactly what sort of difference the funder is hoping to make with that money. I have some examples here from the National Endowment for the HUmanities Office of the Digital Humanties: to make outstanding humanities books available to a wide audience -- so in this case, how could your book be more effective if it had the global reach and accessibility of an open access e book? What difference would that make to readers?

Here's another example from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Higher LEarning program area--they want to support EXPERIMENTING with online or blended learning int he humanities--so the impact they have in mind is to create space to invent and test something new--not to expand, sustain, or scale something that already exists.

Knowing and being able to describe the type of difference your work will make, and the funding would make on your work, will help you find those opportunities where you're most likely to be a strong candidate.

OK--on to research impact and pitching, or proposing, your work. Here, again, I'll repeat some of the key points Ben mentioned earlier, but also expand on them a bit. Always: read the guidelines, check out examples of successful projects, and seek feedback from the program

officer--often there may be a deadline for submitting an early draft for feedback.

It's likely that as part of your proposal narrative you may be asked for a statement of impact. Here is one way of thinking this through, in order to get from the big picture to a more concrete way of talking about impact in a way that is likely to land well:

Start with who is evaluating you--again, this is about getting the right funder and the right funding opportunity.

Next: What type of impact do they want to see? Again--this is likely to appear in the grant description. Think of those concepts from our map earlier on: INnovation, awareness, new procedure, a broader audience, community, etc.

Now: What outputs will demonstrate that your project had this impact? How will you know? Events, exhibits, publications, changes in behavior? Community attitudes?

What are the criteria by which these will be measured? Number, proportion, time, duration….?

And ultimately: what metrics or indicators will show that you meet or exceed the criteria--in other words: what data,

or evidence, will you need to show that you've met or exceeded the criteria?

Test a hypothesis - advance scientific knowledge - publication - accepted in a particular journal/downloaded or cited a certain number of times/

And finally--let's presume you got your grant and carried out the work -- now what? The grant itself becomes a part of the story of your impact as a researcher and a scholar. How will you include it? Be sure you have it recorded on your CV, with details like date, funder, timeframe, and your role. Think ahead about those grant outputs, like data sets, publications, exhibits, etc.--how will you connect all of these so that folks can understand the relsionthip among them, and the trajectory of your work?

A tool like ORCID, which is an identifier to help disambiguate researchers and associate the correct work with the correct person can help with this process--we don't have time to go into ORCID today but I have resources available to help you through it, or I'd be glad to meet with you about it separately.

Finally--I wanted to add a few additional relevant resources you might want to explore--feel free to check

out these links on your own, or if we have time during the Q&A I’d be happy to show them.

And, thank you, and we look forward to your questions and conversation.