Exploring 'Impact': New approaches for alternative scholarship metrics in Africa

Open Access Week, 23 October 2012
University of Cape Town

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Scholarly Communication in Africa Programme
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SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION IN AFRICA PROGRAMME

Defining Scholarly Communication in the Internet Era (Thorin, 2003)

- Conducting research, developing ideas and informal communications.
- Preparing, shaping and communicating what will become formal research outputs.
- Disseminating formal outputs.
- Managing personal careers, and research teams and programmes.
- Communicating scholarly ideas to broader communities.

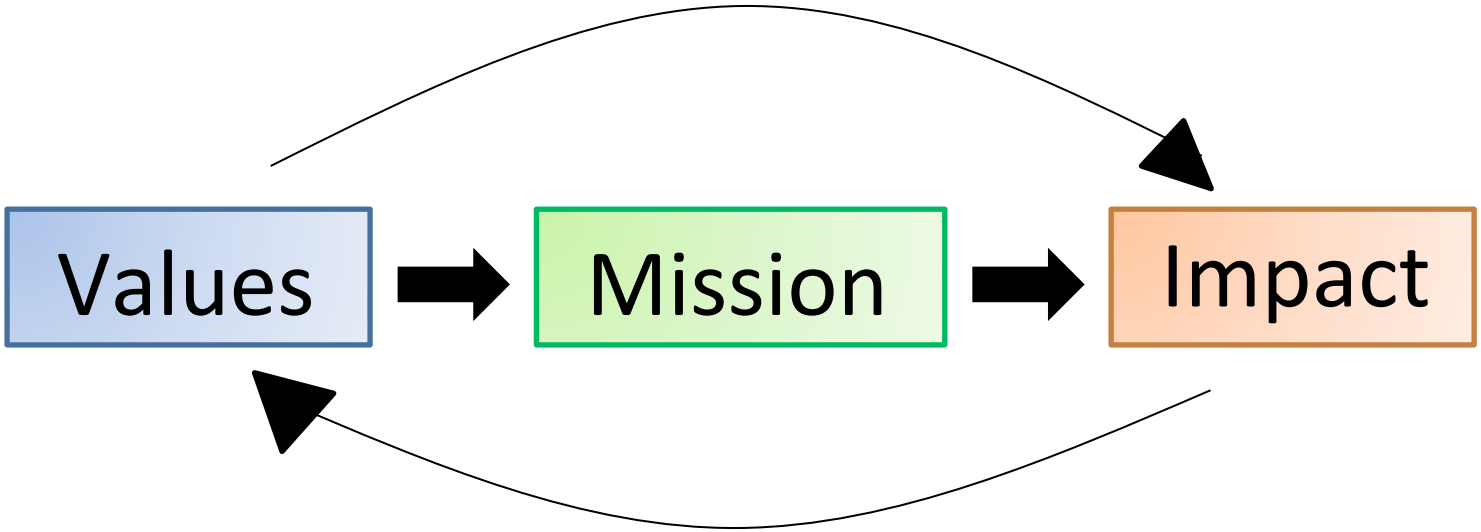
THE WORLD HAS CHANGED RADICALLY

(AND SO HAS SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION)

What does this mean for how we think about the impact of our research, and how we reward it?

> Given the current challenges in African higher education, what does impact assessment mean in our context?

Impact is relative



"Just as scientists would not accept the findings in a scientific paper without seeing the primary data, so should they not rely on Thomson Scientific's impact factor, which is based on hidden data." (Rossner, Van Epps & Hill 2007)

"Our results indicate that the notion of scientific impact is a multi-dimensional construct that cannot be adequately measured by any single indicator, although some measures are more suitable than others." (Bollen et al. 2009)

Impact does not equal worth (Herb 2010)

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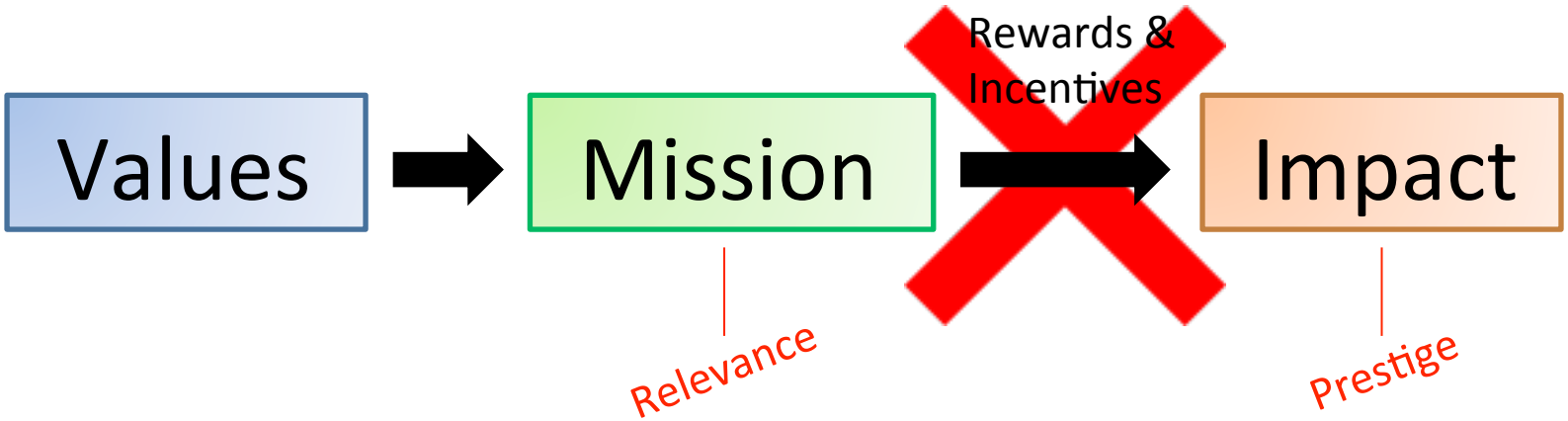
Impact is part of and needs to be supported by composite elements of the system it assesses



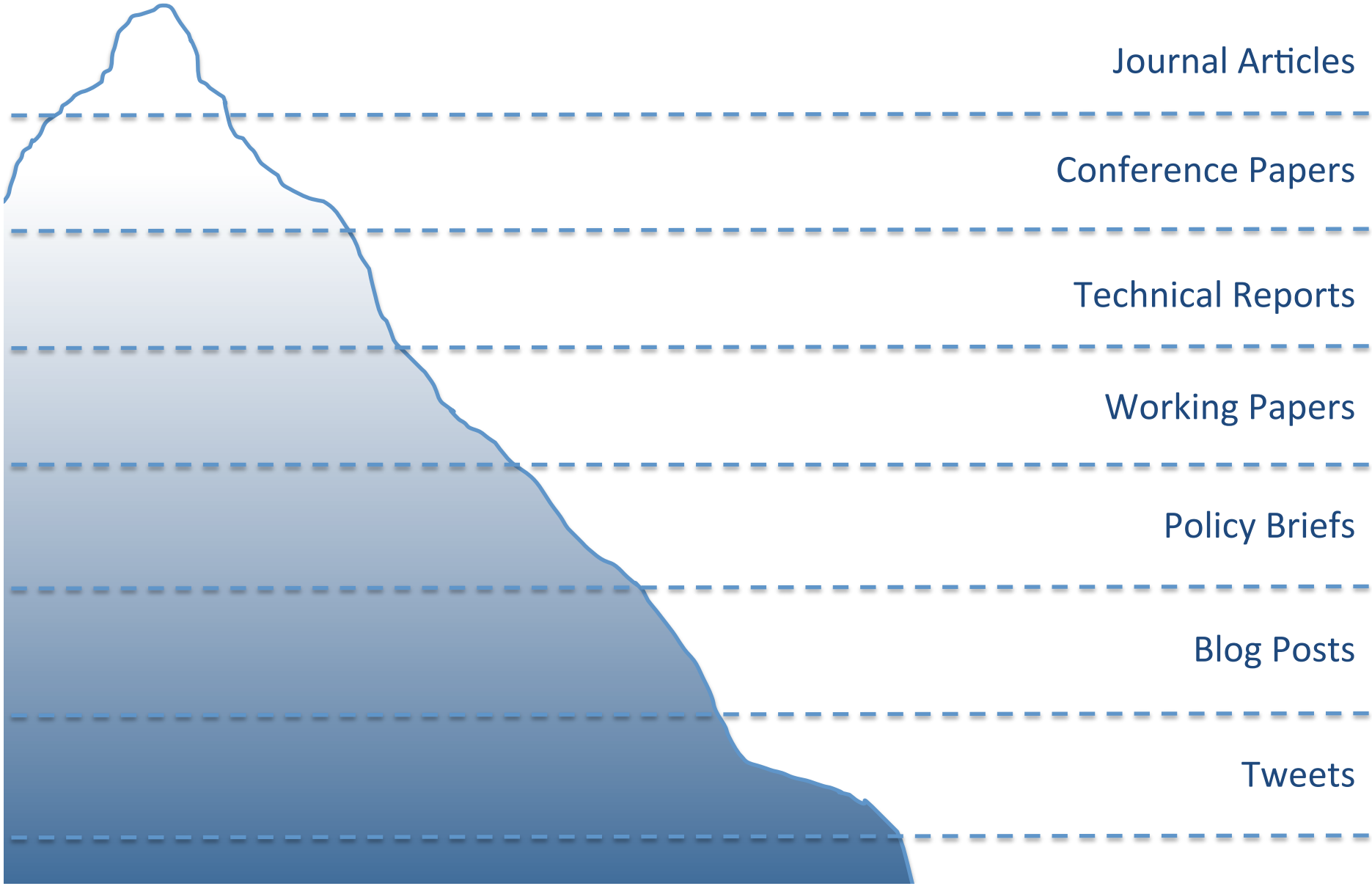
"… the impacts of projects/programmes cannot be understood separate from an understanding of the capacity of users to absord and utilise findings; and any assessment of research use amongst user communities has to pay attention to the availability (or otherwise) of usable research findings."

(Davies, Nutley & Walter 2005)

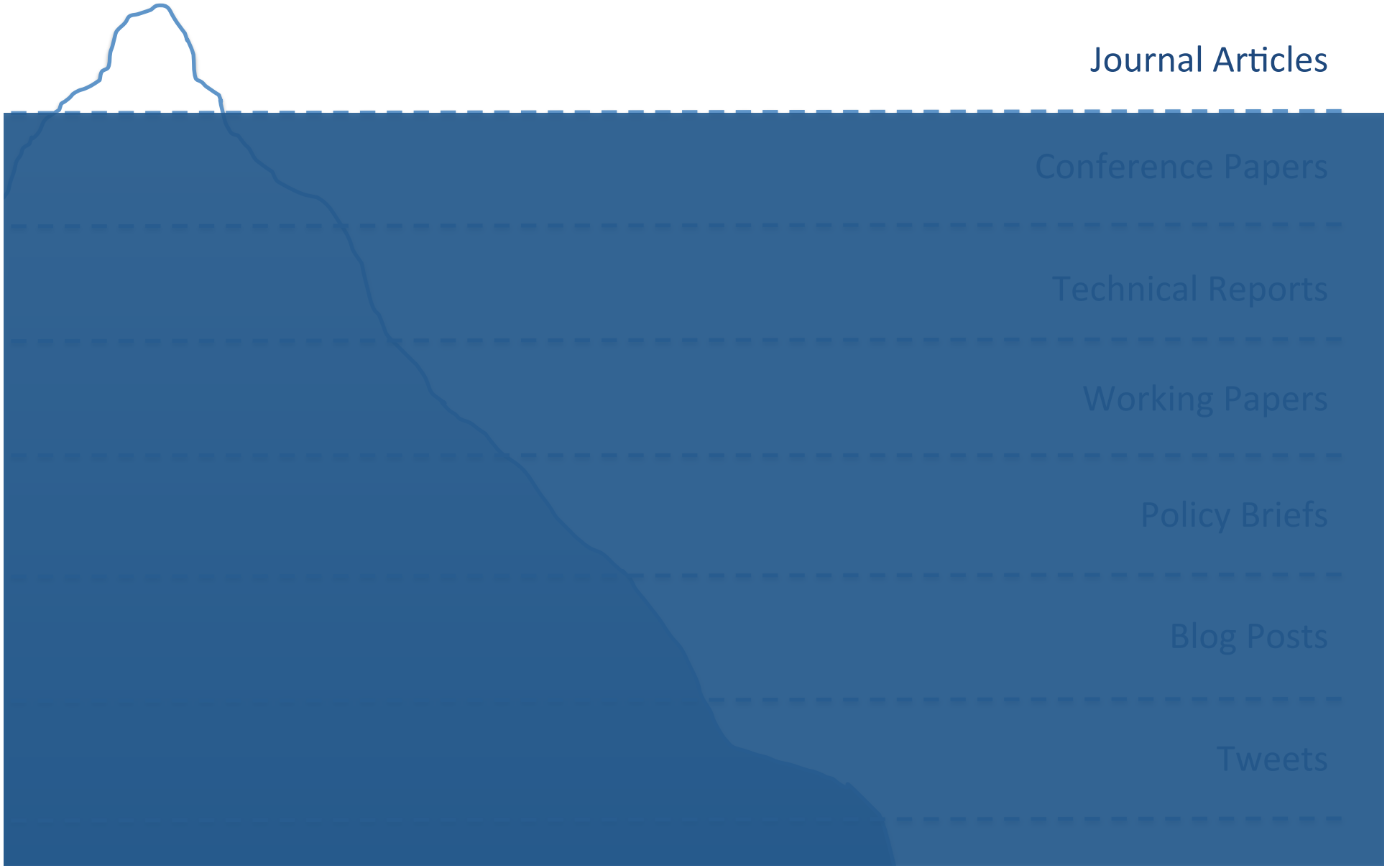
Let's think about research impact in an African context

p.s. What counts as 'research'?

We see a mountain of research content/output



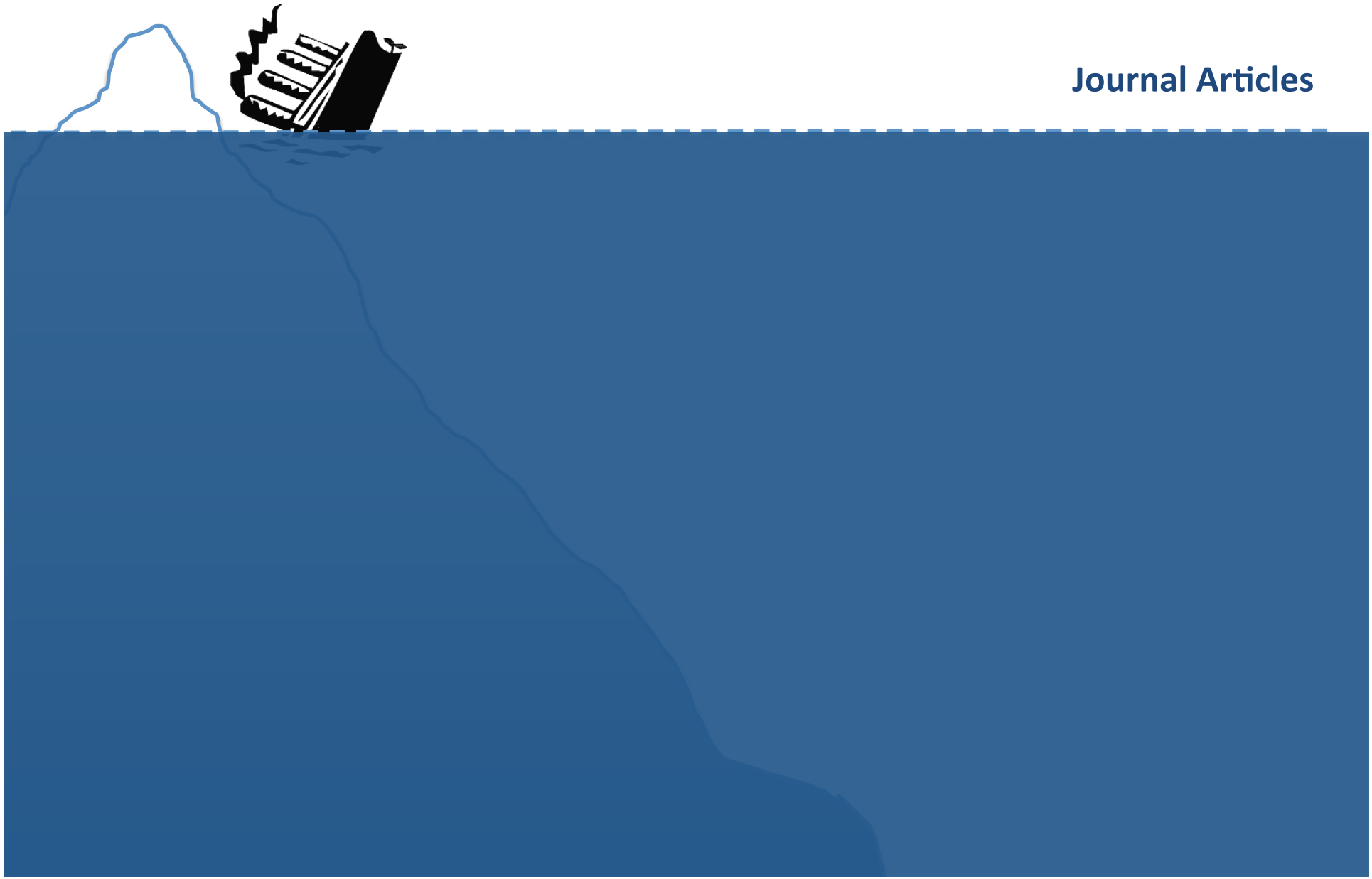
Which we treat like an iceberg



And only reward in the prestige sphere

Journal Articles

How does this serve the need for relevance?



And what other options are there?

http://altmetrics.org/manifesto/

altmetrics

Bibliometrics mined impact on the first scholarly Web.

altmetrics mines impact on the next one.

(Priem 2012)

Tracking traditional citation of new forms of scholarship

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How do you cite Twitter?

Because posts from online social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, are not yet often fodder for scholarly research, specific reference examples aren't included in the *Publication Manual*. However, some examples can be found in the Social Media section of the APA Style Blog.

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... And new forms of citing traditional scholarship

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Why Most Published Research Findings Are False

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John P. A. Ioannidis

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Summary

There is increasing concern that most current published research findings are false. The probability that a research claim is true may depend on study power and bias, the number of other studies on the same question, and, importantly, the ratio of true to no relationships among the relationships probed in each scientific field. In this framework, a research finding is less likely to be true when the

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Dyslexic day: correction

The band in the 2nd (Lyc) lane of the IL-8 panel in figure 1B has straight, vertical ends. The stippling inside the bands in the in the 1st, 2nd and 4th lanes of the IL-8 panel is the same. Does this have biological significance?

No competing interests declared.

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New spaces/networks to track content across

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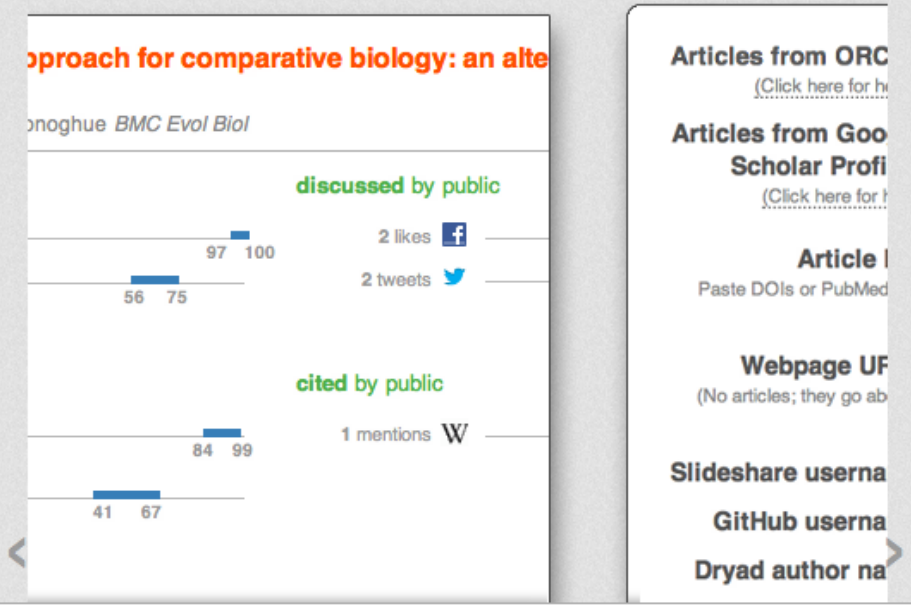

We track impact across the Web:

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What are the drivers for understanding the spread, use and influence of research findings?

- Political imperatives to move beyond ideological assertion to pragmatic considersations of 'evidence' and 'what works'.
- Need for research advocates, funding bodies, research providers and others to make the case for resources.
- Greater demand for **rigour** in the prioritisation of research efforts. (Davies et al. 2005)
- Demonstration of return on investment to funders and government/ taxpayers > **accountability**.

What kinds of impact could (should) we expect from research? (Davies et al. 2005)

- Knowledge production (e.g. peer-reviewed papers)
- Research capacity building (postgraduate training and career development)
- Policy or product development (incl. input into official guidelines or protocols)
- Sector benefits (impacts on scientific client groups)
- Societal benefits (**economic > health > productivity**)

Research evidence is the antidote to sloppy thinking of sofa government

We need to put more research in the hands of decision makers if public policy is to improve, says **David Willetts**

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Firm evidence, not sloppy thinking, should be the backbone of social policy, says Willetts. Photograph: D. Hurst/Alamy

The UK produces an enormous amount of world-class research – one recent study found more than 400 specialist areas of research at which we excel. There is strength in breadth as well as strength in depth.

A couple of years ago, I wrote a book about intergenerational fairness called The Pinch: how the babyboomers took their children's future and why they should give it back. My argument that younger people face unprecedented challenges was built upon a wealth of research from the UK and abroad, in areas like game theory, neurology and demography.

Posted by
David Willetts
Monday 22 October 2012
11.02 BST
Guardian Professional

Article history

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