

## Nine ways to increase the citation of your research

In this day and age of funding, university rankings, knowledge transfer and impact it is not simply enough to publish research, it also needs to be used. To be cited by other researchers. To be put into practice by researchers as well as those beyond the research field.

So, here are some tips on how you might increase the awareness of your published works, and hence increase their citation and knowledge transfer.

### 1. Choose a title wisely

There is increasing evidence that longer titles get more citations<sup>1,2</sup>! This goes against blogging evidence where shorter titles are considered better. It is also against some journal policy (perhaps it is time to re-think where you publish). Other factors contributing to title include use of colons and semi-colons (increased citations); as well as use of country names (decreased citations). Ultimately it is about giving the potential citer (reader at that point) a good idea of why they should access the abstract, and then the full text of your article.

### 2. Make it accessible

By far and away the most impactful thing you can do to increase citation of your work is to make it accessible. And accessibility can be taken in many different contexts. For example it can mean syndication in multiple locations through various promotional means— making your work more likely to be stumbled upon<sup>3</sup>. It can mean publishing it in specifically open access journals<sup>4</sup> – taking away the financial barrier of download and/or reading your research. It can be placing the file in a university repository – similar to the open access journal model, but perhaps leveraging your university's website ranking relative to that of the journal. It can mean using accessible principles – such as making the text and images more friendly to screen readers and thus easier for visually impaired people to read the article.

### 3. Write about your work

Building on making it accessible, writing blogs helps distil the work for potential readers expert and non, inside and outside research<sup>5,6&7</sup>. Blogs also add another touch-point, making it easier to find and index on google. Make sure you take into account your intended audience – my advice would be to assume a non-expert audience. Also make sure you include a direct link to your article – wherever it might be stored online. Links make finding things easier – from a click-to-get point of view, as well as an indexation point of view.

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<sup>1</sup> The impact of article titles on citation hits: An analysis of general and specialist medical journals, JRSO Open, <https://doi.org/10.1258/shorts.2009.100020>

<sup>2</sup> Are shorter article titles more attractive for citations? Cross-sectional study of 22 scientific journals, Crotation Medical Journal, doi 10.3325/cmj.2010.51.165

<sup>3</sup> Impact, Do's and Don'ts of re-publishing content on Medium or LinkedIn, <https://www.impactbnd.com/blog/dos-donts-of-re-publishing-content-on-medium-or-linkedin>, accessed, 27 May 2019

<sup>4</sup> Open access publishing, article downloads, and citations: randomised controlled trial BMJ 2008; 337 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.a568> (Published 31 July 2008)

<sup>5</sup> Who, exactly, are science blogs reaching?, American Scientist, <https://www.americanscientist.org/blog/macroscope/who-reads-science-blogs>, accessed 28 May 2019

<sup>6</sup> Why science blogging still matter, Nature, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-01414-6>, accessed 28 May 2019

<sup>7</sup> Reach and impact of science-community blogs in ecology (new paper!), scientist sees squirrel, <https://scientistseesquirrel.wordpress.com/2017/10/04/reach-and-impact-of-science-community-blogs-in-ecology-new-paper/>, accessed 28 May 2019

Don't forget that in some cases a letter to the editor might be an appropriate way to write and promote your work. Not to mention getting an additional publication.

Finally, make sure you include a picture. Using something from the article itself is good, so are action shots of the research taking place, so is a screen shot or photograph of the article frontpage.

#### 4. Talk about your work

Seems obvious and it is. Where possible talk about your work to scientific and non-scientific audiences. Make sure you target the message appropriately. However, the bit often overlooked, but a huge part of success in this approach is to always provide a way for your audience to get access to your work. At the very least suggest a term they could use in a web-search engine that provides your latest research on the front page. Ideally, also include the full reference details (i.e. as you would like to be cited if the work was used). If you want to make it really easy, use [DOIs](#) or [QR codes](#) (saves typing and you can get them for free; and yes they work with iPhones). Also include a picture that the person looking for your work might expect to see. It will make visually locating your article easier. Examples include the journal cover page, the first page of your article as well as figures from the publication.

If you cannot talk about your work at an organised event (e.g. conference), then organise a speaking opportunity for yourself. The easiest is to video yourself talking about your work and then post it to YouTube or other social media. Remember to take into account your intended audience and how people like to *consume* social media (videos usually less than five minutes and often with subtitles).

#### 5. Send hard copies out

If the journal you publish in provides written copies of your article, send them out! There's no point leaving them in your drawer *just in case*. Send them to people who might be interested or to people who you think should read your work. I'm sure you have a strong idea of who these people are – but if not read tip 7.

#### 6. Be the same author

This has happened to me – I am a different author on some of my publications. That is, in some cases I am Richard D Huysmans and in others just Richard Huysmans. Then there is my book. Which is Dr Richard Huysmans. Where possible, try to avoid this. Instead, have one name that you use consistently across all publications. Use of a middle initial (if you have one) makes it easier to identify your publications. Maintaining an ORCID can help in this process if/when your work is published using something other than your preferred name and/or if you change your name.

Regardless of how you get there, it is important that all of your publications are linked. It will make it easier to find your entire catalogue of work, not just the publication you are talking about now, or referencing in a blog or video.

#### 7. Engage the authors you reference

As an author, I am always excited to read and see how others have used the work I have published. I am also surprised how few people let the authors they reference know that they used their work. Do it! If anyone will be interested in using and further citing your work, it is the people whose work you built on. Give them the best chance to reference you. So, for each item in your reference list, send an email or other communication to the relevant author; e.g. lead or corresponding author. Let the person know about your work, and how you used their work. Don't forget to include a copy of, or at least a link to, your publication, along with a request to share your work if they like it.

And while we are on the topic of reference lists, make it a long one. Studies have shown that research articles with long reference lists have more citations themselves. And this is not skewed by literature reviews<sup>8</sup>.

## 8. Share your work on social media

I've tangentially touched on this in relation to writing about your work. And social media is perhaps a microblog. Well certainly twitter is. Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn all allow much longer form posts, that I'd call blogs. Regardless, sharing your articles on social media increases their citation rates<sup>9</sup>. And there are increasingly strong links between unique tweets and future citations<sup>10</sup>. Note that publishing in journals with their own twitter account is associated with more tweets per article and more citations per article<sup>11</sup>.

## 9. Repeat!

Doing one tweet, or one blog or one video is great. So is contacting one author from your reference list. But it is much better to do several. Write a few blogs, covering different aspects of the work, and spread their release out over several weeks, days or months. Share that content on several social media sites in long and short form. Tweet, re-tweet and tweet again. Record several videos. Communicate with authors from all of the work you reference – tag them in social media or blog posts; thank them by name in your video. It is all well and good to say *you'll let the work stand on its own two feet*", but if no one can read it or find it that will be impossible. So share it!

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<sup>8</sup> An easy way to boost a paper's citations, Nature News, <https://www.nature.com/news/2010/100813/full/news.2010.406.html>, accessed 28 May 2019

<sup>9</sup> To be on not to be in twitter, and its relationship with the tweeting and citation of research papers, Scientometrics, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11192-016-2113-0>, accessed 28 May 2019

<sup>10</sup> Can tweets predict citations? Metrics of social impact based on twitter and correlation with traditional metrics of scientific impact

<sup>11</sup> The presence of academic journals on twitter and its relationship with dissemination (tweets) and research impact (citations), Aslib Journal of Information Management, <https://doi.org/10.1108/AJIM-02-2017-0055>, accessed 28 May 2019