



## Guest Editorial

### What's in a Tweet?

Creating Social Media Echo Chambers to Inflate 'the Donut'

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A little while ago a colleague told us a story that made us listen: Our university had put a new portal for our Current Research Information System into operation. The new portal displays both the PlumX flower and the Altmetric donut. Our colleague was pondering what that would mean to researcher behaviour and brought up the topic over lunch with a visiting professor. Much to his surprise the professor was very much aware of these researcher performance indicators and told him that she had been optimizing against them for several years. To do that she had simply created a series of fake profiles on all relevant Social Media platforms and whenever publishing anything she would start tweeting and retweeting, posting and sharing with *herself* making her Altmetric scores quite impressive. She furthermore argued that her private Social Media echo chamber appeared to have leaks: Because whenever she started up her echo chamber, the Social Media platforms somehow seemed to detect the intense activities surrounding her new publication and forwarded her postings, making the news of her publication spread faster. We were quite puzzled. So, after publication of an article on Predatory Publishing in this journal (see <https://doi.org/10.18352/lq.10259>) which one

of us co-authored, we sent out an e-mail to our colleagues asking them to like and retweet a tweet containing the DOI of the article. In less than 24 hours the article skyrocketed into the top 5 percent of all research outputs scored by Altmetric of the same age. Even though the retweeting campaign ended 6 months ago our article is still among the top 5 percent, and it appears that it is being cited, quoted and used all over the world. Our work on predatory publishing is an okay, solid-but-scientifically-average piece of work. In our opinion it hardly deserves to be among the top 5 percent of attention attracting research outputs.

We find this fascinating and have therefore decided to study it in more depth, and we hope that the readers of LIBER Quarterly will help us with the experiment, that we are about to describe.

We want to study how to inflate the Altmetric donut using social media. To do that we need a document with a DOI published in a scientific media. This editorial is therefore perfectly suited for our purpose. We cannot use a genuine research article, since that would be unethical.

First, we want to see how simple encouragement of peers, friends and fellows works. We therefore wish to encourage all readers of this guest editorial to make postings of it on all the Social Media platforms you can think of and if you come across other people's postings of it anywhere then please like, love, repost, retweet or do whatever your options are. Over the coming months we will study the effects. This will give us an idea of how friendly tweeting of DOI's spreads and which platforms are the most efficient. In the second stage of our experiment we will use the knowledge we have gained on the efficiency of the various platforms to create a Social Media echo chamber consisting of fake profiles mimicking the patterns we have traced in the first part of the experiment. We will then create a document on e.g. Zenodo or any other platform offering DOI's. The document will inform about our experiment and nothing else. It will have no or very little resemblance to a scientific article. Having created a document with a DOI and a series of fake Social Media profiles we will engage in promoting our new DOI by tweeting, liking, posting, reposting, retweeting and so on among our fake profiles. We will test the hypothesis that we will be unable to contain the activities within the echo chamber for more than a short period of time. During this period, we will monitor the effects of our endeavour on the Altmetric score. If we find that we can maintain the activities inside the echo chamber *and* obtain

a high score on the Altmetric donut for an extended period, we will use this to argue that the Altmetric donut says very little about societal impact of research. However, it may also turn out to be impossible to keep our activities inside the echo chamber. We have reason to believe that some Social Media platforms promote activity generating postings outside their original network. The way in which the tweets on our article about predatory publishing spread indicates that the Social Media platforms themselves are active promoters. If so, we will study the travel route of our DOI on Social Media.

It is our hope that we will be able to present the results of our study at LIBER2020 and afterwards to publish an article on it in this journal. So please help us with the first part of the experiment: Tweet, post, like, repost, retweet and so on and so forth on this editorial and stay tuned for news on how the rest of our experiment will turn out.