WHO AM I?
WHO AM I?

• A chemistry PhD...
  ...working in a cultural studies research centre
• A data scientist...
  ...who works on critical theory, philosophy and communications
• A full professor...
  ...who has spent more time out of academia than in it, and doesn’t have “tenure”
• A researcher...
  ...whose most highly cited work is a blog post
Someone who studies and advocates change in research evaluation processes internationally, but tries to avoid being involved in them in practice...
WHEN AM I?

• PhD, Chemistry, Australian National University, 1999

• Lecturer in Combinatorial Chemistry, Southampton University, 2001 – 2007

• Senior Scientist, STFC ISIS Neutron Facility, 2005 – 2012

• Director of Advocacy, PLOS, 2012 – 2015

• Professor of Research Communications, Curtin University, 2015 -
THE CHALLENGE
CHANGING LANDSCAPES AND EXPECTATIONS
Our vision: To advance practical and robust approaches to research assessment globally.

INCREASING CRITICISM OF TRADITIONAL RESEARCH EVALUATION

LEIDEN MANIFESTO FOR RESEARCH METRICS

10 principles to guide research evaluation with 25 translations, a video and a blog

Research evaluation has become routine and often relies on metrics. But it is increasingly driven by data and not by expert judgement. As a result, the procedures that were designed to increase the quality of research are now threatening to damage the scientific system. To support researchers and managers, five experts led by Diana Hicks, professor in the School of Public Policy at Georgia Institute of Technology, and Paul Wouters, director of CWTS at Leiden University, have proposed 10 principles for the measurement of research performance: the Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics published as a comment in Nature.

“In decision-making, the Academy will also take into account the many different career paths of researchers, the impact of research and the promotion of open access”

Riitta Maijala - Vice President for Research at the Academy of Finland
WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

• The policy perspective on open/responsible/reproducible research

• Broader impact and engagement agendas

• A shift in societal expectations of researchers and research organisations

• A need to address historical exclusion and bias
THE PROBLEM

SCALING, DIVERSIFYING AND COLLECTIVE ACTION
None of this helps when you need to figure out what you need to do to get that job, a grant, or that promotion...
FIVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

A University of TALENTS

Under the Unified HKUST-Complementary Campus umbrella, we are prepared to extend our global reservoir of minds and abilities by looking beyond conventional academic disciplines and being open to the recruitment and nurturing of more diverse areas of strength among students, faculty, and staff.

An Exemplar of BEST-IN-CLASS Standards, Practices, and Operations

With sustainability development as the key to present and future, our goal is to deliver the best possible campus environment, and business processes and systems to support our world-class education, research, and diverse University community for the long term.

An International LEADER in Education and Research

By balancing disciplinary and cross-disciplinary activities, and ongoing development of our educational thinking, our two complimentary campuses will serve as dual knowledge hubs, creating a distinct synergy and model for the future.

A Champion of DIVERSITY

Our goal is to embrace and value differences, to learn from each other, and to foster a reverence of diversity that promotes inclusiveness, collegiality, and respect.

Incorporating INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP in Our Spirit

Our fast-changing world requires ever faster implementation of new concepts and technologies, and we must be equipped to solve real-world challenges through the transfer of knowledge into positive, sustainable change. We will strive for such a spirit to become a recognized core component, internally and externally, of our knowledge transfer endeavors and social impact.
Research Activities

- Research
- Education
- Economic
- Cultural
- Health
- Environment
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WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

• An order of magnitude increase in those involved in research and higher education

• The increase in resources has not kept up, the number of positions has not kept up

• More people, for relatively fewer positions, co-incident with a concern for fairness and objectivity in appointments and resourcing...

• ...ironically leads to “objective” metricized approaches which increase exclusion and bias
A COLLECTIVE ACTION PROBLEM

• The old coordinating “institution” (a shared understanding of what metrics mean) is being broken down, with efforts to replace it

• The replacement needs to support a greater diversity of research practices, topics and approaches to communication, but it still needs to be usable

• The replacement will explicitly note the tension between applicability (or appropriateness) and the comparability (or generalizability) of a given indicator of research performance.
COLLECTIVE ACTION PROBLEMS ARE ADDRESSED THROUGH CULTURE

• The old approach was a culture of evaluation which assumes prestige is close enough to quality. It created homogeneity and STEM-ification of all disciplines.

• Culture is made up of the stories we tell, the actions we make and the communities to come together to share those stories.

• The future culture of research evaluation will be built locally within specific contexts by the stories people tell about what research matters.
CULTURE CHANGE WILL COME FROM YOU NOT FROM “US”

• Senior colleagues have told our story, and are unlikely to change it. Our experiences are based in the past, and in a world which no longer exists.

• The weaving of new stories about who we are, what qualities of work matter, and how we understand the qualities of research will come, not from some “next generation” or “those with power” but early career researchers making their way now.

• Experience has value, but always think about its context and relevance to you in the decisions you are making and the stories that you want to tell.
THE PRACTICAL AND PRAGMATIC

• You are looking for a “sweet spot” where useful indicators recognize what you value about your work, and where those indicators can be credible (this will depend on discipline and geography). Link these to local policies, be prepared to defend their relevance.

• Think about institutions – the more prestigious, the more conservative and competitive they will be, and more focused on “traditional” metrics.

• Seek out the experience of both older but also younger researchers, particularly those who are taking a different path. Social media can be helpful here.
WHERE WILL YOU BE IN FIVE YEARS?

NAVIGATING THE SHIFTING LANDSCAPE OF RESEARCH EVALUATION
@COKIproject - @CameronNeylon

http://openknowledge.community

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- View the public dashboards