Welcome to Day 2 of the international AESIS conference on Impact of Science
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Research Council, South Africa
Plenary Opening: 
Most Prominent Obstacles 
for Improving Societal Impact of Science

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Three obstacles to improving impact

James Wilsdon, RoRI & University of Sheffield

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AESIS Impact of Science, 23 June 2022
The Ivory Tower: the history of a figure of speech and its cultural uses

STEVEN SHAPIN*

Abstract. This is a historical survey of how and why the notion of the Ivory Tower became part of twentieth- and twenty-first-century cultural vocabularies. It very briefly tracks the origins of the tag in antiquity, documents its nineteenth-century resurgence in literary and aesthetic culture, and more carefully assesses the political and intellectual circumstances, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, in which it became a common phrase attached to universities and to features of science and in which it became a way of criticizing practices and institutions deemed to be ‘irrelevant’. The paper concludes by reflecting on the tag’s relationship to pervasive cultural tropes and how its modern history may be used to appreciate better where science and its academic setting now stand in the ancient debate between the active and contemplative lives.

Holy ivory

There never was an Ivory Tower. It was always a figure of speech. There are towers and there is ivory, both quite real; it is their combination in the idea of an Ivory Tower which is both imaginary and consequential. Physical towers had both mundane and symbolic aspects. Affording their inhabitants an overview, towers might be defensible fortified structures. Rising above the normal surface of things, they could also be spaces of

1. Mobility – especially intersectoral
2. Measurement

Rich evidence in REF case studies now published

Publication of submissions made to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 provides rich source of evidence on university research and its wider impact.

157 UK universities made submissions to REF 2021, the UK’s framework for assessing the quality of higher education research. In total, they submitted over 180,000 outputs from research and over 6,000 impact case studies detailing where their research had benefited wider society, across 34 subject-based units of assessment.

This latest publication includes the REF Impact case study database, a searchable tool which will support wide-ranging analysis of the manifold contributions made by UK university research to the economy and society, in the UK and worldwide.

Preliminary analysis of the impact case studies highlights the diversity of areas in which research has made a key difference – from advancements in health and technology, to legislative and political change, societal, economic and cultural benefits, and environmental impact – and their global reach, with UK research making a contribution in every country worldwide. The database offers the potential for ‘deep dives’ into key topics

Next-generation metrics: Responsible metrics and evaluation for open science

As part of UKRI, an expert panel has been invited to lead a review of the role of metrics in research management and assessment.
3. Mechanisms

- full design space for funding mechanisms
- anti-portfolio
- failure audit
- high-variance
- century grants
- funding prize
- extant approaches to funding
- stand. peer review
- lottery
- 7-yr funding
- not based on what sounds good to politicians or journalists (or even scientists), build up an understanding of what actually benefits humanity and science.
Robert-Jan Smits
President, Executive Board, Eindhoven University of Technology, the Netherlands
Kathryn Graham

Executive Director, Alberta Innovates, Canada
MOST PROMINENT OBSTACLES FOR IMPROVING SOCIETAL IMPACT OF SCIENCE

Kathryn Graham, PhD FCAHS
Executive Director, Impact Action Lab
June 23, 2022
The IAL partners with ecosystem players to amplify and activate the economic and societal impact of their Research and Innovation investments.

We are a network of global and local impact experts.

We work with organizations to enhance their capacity by incorporating performance and impact management systems to generate value and benefits to their community.
• **Mindset**: Need to embed an inspiring impact **culture** in organizations and invest for impact

• **Teamset and Toolset**: Lack of aligned Incentives. Low absorptive capacity and capabilities to **implement and scale** for impact

• **Impactset**: A focus on measures rather than **assessing progress** to desired change and underuse of assessment as a **learning tool for improvement**
INTEGRATED SYSTEMS APPROACH
CHALLENGES AND FACILITATORS – LESSONS LEARNED FROM IMPLEMENTATION
MINDSET
START WITH THE END IN MIND & INVEST FOR IMPACT
THEORY OF CHANGE - START WITH DESIRED CHANGE AND THE ‘WHO’

IMPACTS
- Prosperous Economy
- Sustainable Environment
- Healthier Communities
- Enhanced Social Well-Being

OUTCOMES
- Short Term
  - Participation
  - Learning

- Mid to Long Term
  - Reactions

KEY IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

- INVEST FOR IMPACT
- OUTPUTS
- ACTIONS

Indirect Influence

Direct Influence

Direct Control

Continuous ADAPT & IMPROVE
TEAMSET
ENHANCE TALENT – CULTIVATE CAPACITY AND CAPABILITIES

Vision: collaborate globally for excellence in societal impact across all fields of science to address local needs

The International School on Research Impact Assessment

Resources

This section archives key presentations and tools from past editions of the Schools, including sample templates for developing a research impact assessment plan. Please feel free to (re)use, (re)design, and (re)develop the materials to help develop yours and others work in research impact assessment.

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If you would like to find out more about the individual schools or to make contact with research impact assessment professionals in your region, please email the organisers listed at the end of each page.

https://www.theinternationalschoolonria.com/resources.php

PARTNER TO EMPOWER participants impact capacity and skills
ADVANCE impact evidence to inform policy and practice decisions
BUILD collaborative capacity with the community
USE IMPACT ASSESSMENT RESPONSIBLY TO EXPERIMENT, LEARN AND IMPROVE
“There was a widely held perception among Regional Innovation Networks that quantitative reporting unduly emphasizes the quantity, rather than the quality of their work.”
THANK YOU.

Contact: Kathryn.graham@albertainnovates.ca
Fulufhelo Nelwamondo

Chief Executive Officer, National Research Foundation, South Africa
1. Available indicators and metrics are still very weak proxies for impact;
2. Mindset: Need to embed an inspiring impact culture in organizations rather than approaching it too bureaucratically and the need to consider the beneficiaries and end users;
3. The current rewards and recognition system used by universities does not incentivize a high societal impact of science.
C.131 (9.40-11.15)

Panel Discussion

Chaired by Anika Duut van Goor
James Wilsdon
Robert-Jan Smits
Kathryn Graham
Fulufhelo Nelwamondo

Impact of Science
22-24 June, Leiden

AESIS

#IOS22
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