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# Research Evaluation, Metrics and KPI's in the Humanities

## The situation in Ireland and its European context

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# Background

## *Research Evaluation, Metrics and Open Access in the Humanities*

Workshop in TCD, September 2008

jointly organised by

*Coimbra Group Task Force Culture, Arts and Humanities*

*HSIS – Humanities Serving Irish Society Consortium*





## KPIs in the Humanities

1. The case for and against
2. The big issues
3. The Irish situation
4. The European context
5. A way forward?





# 1. The case against?

*“[The Humanities] relate to the development of individuals as independent and creative thinkers, the promotion of active citizenship and support for ethical values. They relate to the protection and enhancement of vital tenets of our history and culture, to the search for social justice nationally and globally, to the questioning of authority, to the deepening of our understanding of ourselves and the world around us and the enrichment of our lives [...]. **The intrinsic worth of higher learning for its own sake both to the individual and to wide society is plain.**”*

Minister for Education and Science  
Mary Hanafin TD, October 2006



# 1. The case against?

- Utilitarian arguments go against the grain of the Humanities: KPIs alien to academia
- The idea that you can objectify and quantify quality and impact of Humanities research goes against its very nature
- Metrics are contentious in any discipline, but particularly in the Humanities: alien and inappropriate measurement tools (from the Sciences) are being imposed on us
- Suspicion how data might be used
- The Humanities community has only to loose by engaging with the debate





# 1. The case for?

- Tax-payers and funding agencies have a right to accountability, transparency and ‘value for money’
- Reliable evaluation of quality and impact of research crucial for informing future strategy of individuals, institutions, agencies, communities, countries
- Research assessment influences research behaviour
- In an increasingly complex and competitive environment, all stakeholders (academics, students, employers, funding bodies), need to know where the best and most influential work is done





# 1. The case for

*International and national context:*

Lisbon Strategy: Europe to become the

*“most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth and better jobs and greater social cohesion”*

SSTI: *“Deliver a sustainable, world-class research system across the spectrum of humanities, physical and social sciences”*





# 1. The case for?

- Measurement is happening anyway
- By staying out of the discussion we will leave it to others (politicians, bureaucrats, scientists) who do not understand the specifics of our work
- Participating in the debate, leading it is our best chance to control or at least influence the process
- Specific Humanities metrics might provide parity of esteem with Sciences
- Reliable data can provide strong arguments for future strategy and future investment



## 2. The big issues: general

### *High degree of consensus emerging:*

- Humanities research performance *“lends itself poorly to crude and simplified models and indicators”* (Academy of Finland 2007)
- While credible quantitative methods (citation index analysis) might emerge in the medium to long term, peer review is indispensable and has to have a central place
- Quantitative and qualitative methods need to complement each other: Research assessment should be ‘metrics informed’ but not ‘metrics driven’
- ‘Cluster models’ that include specific esteem and impact factors and need to be developed
- Wider impact on culture and society (beyond academia) is enormous, but long-term and almost impossible to quantify. How can we capture it? Open Access strategies provide exciting prospects for increased accessibility, dissemination, impact and measurability



## 3. The Irish Situation

1

- 2006: Royal Irish Academy Report:  
*Advancing Humanities and Social Science  
Research in Ireland*
- 2007: HEA/IRCHSS: FAHSS: Foresight  
Exercise in the Arts, Humanities and Social  
Sciences

ToR: *“Identify effective metrics of research  
output (both quantity and quality) which are  
consistent with national and international  
trends”*





# 3. The Irish Situation

## 2

## Humanities Serving Irish Society Consortium Metrics Group

PRTL1 4 funded "partnership of equals  
committed to developing an inter-institutional  
research infrastructure for the humanities"





IUA, SIF I project: *Strategic Planning & Decision Support Project*: development of KPIs for the University sector

- Not research specific, covering all aspects of university activities
- Within the research KPIs no Humanities specifics considered
- Mazars report December 2008





## 3. The Irish Situation

### 4

- Initial list of 32 research indicators
- Purely quantitative
- 12 relating to funding
- Proposed list of five indicators:
  - Ph.D. awards
  - Publications (peer reviewed journals, ‘highly regarded’ publishers)
  - Citations in journals
  - Research funding
  - International Research Honours





## 4. European context 1

HERA Feasibility Study January 2008

### The Evaluation and Benchmarking of Humanities Research in Europe

*“Examines the feasibility of establishing a common approach to evaluating the outputs and outcomes of humanities research in Europe, including the possibility of robust benchmarks for cross-national comparison”*

*“At the current time, the accepted methods developed for the use of bibliometrics in evaluation of research performance in the natural sciences cannot be applied with confidence to the field of the humanities”*



# European context

## 2

### HERA study:

- Compares ex-post research evaluation systems: Germany, Netherlands, Finland, Poland, Australia, Belgium, Slovenia, UK
- Undertakes careful analysis of problems with bibliometrics
- Considers ‘the wider picture’ and recommends “holistic approach” with a combination of elements to measure quality and impact





# HERA: Country evaluation

- What is measured in which country?
  - Operating income: G, NL
  - Staff numbers: G, NL, P
  - Research income: G, P, Aus
  - Internationalisation of research: G, PL, F, Slo
  - Numbers of monographs/articles: NL, F, P, Aus, Slo
  - Publi. In leading international journals: G, Slo
  - Citations: NL, B
  - Significant conferences: P
  - Ph.D. completion rates: NL, F, P, Aus





# HERA: citation KPI's

Difficulties with quantitative KPIs, and citation index analysis (as used in the Sciences):

- Poor coverage of Humanities research by SCI
- Monographs dominant publication form in Humanities, but not included
- Impact slower and more long-term in the Humanities, citation window substantially different
- Perverse incentives
- Seminal or radical works need time for breakthrough
- Generally accepted works set paradigms and then might no longer be acknowledged





# HERA: citation KPI's

- Disadvantage for Non-English publications/  
countries / disciplines: *Irish*
- Important disciplines have a regional or  
national orientation: *Law*
- Seminal work addresses a non-specialist  
audience or the general public: *History*
- Interdisciplinarity is hard to capture
- Distinctive characteristics of discipline
- Distinctive characteristics of academic culture



# HERA: Recommendations

- Combination (clusters) of elements for research evaluation: not only outputs, but also esteem indicators, impact
- Sensitivity towards distinctive characteristics of disciplines
- Most appropriate level for comparison is at discipline level (nationally and internationally)
- Peer-review resource intensive, but indispensable: Beware of review fatigue
- Develop esteem factors:





# HERA: Recommendations

- Develop quantifiable KPIs:
  - Research outputs (weighted publication channels)
  - Spend on research infrastructure
  - Peer-reviewed research income
  - PhD completions
- Include esteem factors:
  - Keynote speeches and invited lectures
  - Membership of editorial boards of journals/series,
  - Membership of assessment boards, review bodies
  - Membership of international bodies
  - Participation in international networks
  - Organization of conferences
  - Awards and prizes
  - Student feedbacks (teacher-scholar ideal)





# HERA: Recommendations

- Make KPIs a tool for self-evaluation, feedback and forward planning:
  - Mission as starting point of evaluation
  - Include stakeholder analysis
- Try to measure wider social, cultural and economic impact:
  - Include stakeholder analysis
  - Performances and exhibitions
  - Presence in media
  - Involvement in policy making
  - Advisory roles for government, business





## Hope for the development of more comprehensive metrics with Open Access

- Self-archiving of (peer-reviewed) publications in institutional digital repositories
- Immediate availability increases access, dissemination, impact
- Significantly reduce impact times and citation cycles
- Online availability increases print sales
- Direct link between OA and rankings
- Universities and funders should mandate/incentivize Green OA
- Developments of web tools for measuring hits, downloads
- Increase scholarly exchange over the web: feedback, comments



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# Open ACCESS Ireland 2

## *Irish examples*

- TARA: Trinity Access Research Archive
  - Linked to RSS: CV with profile and publications
  - Export of research profile to Expertise Ireland portal
- IREL-Open: National Research portal
  - HEA-SFI funded, IUA managed, EI hosted
  - Harvested from university repositories
  - Includes all disciplines
  - Harvests data for citation analysis





## Development of Cyber-infrastructure

- Investment in CI for humanities strategic priority
- Develop public and institutional policies that foster openness and access
- Promote cooperation between public and private sector (commercial data analysts, publishers)
- Encourage digital scholarship
- Develop and maintain open standards and robust tools
- Create extensive and reusable digital collections

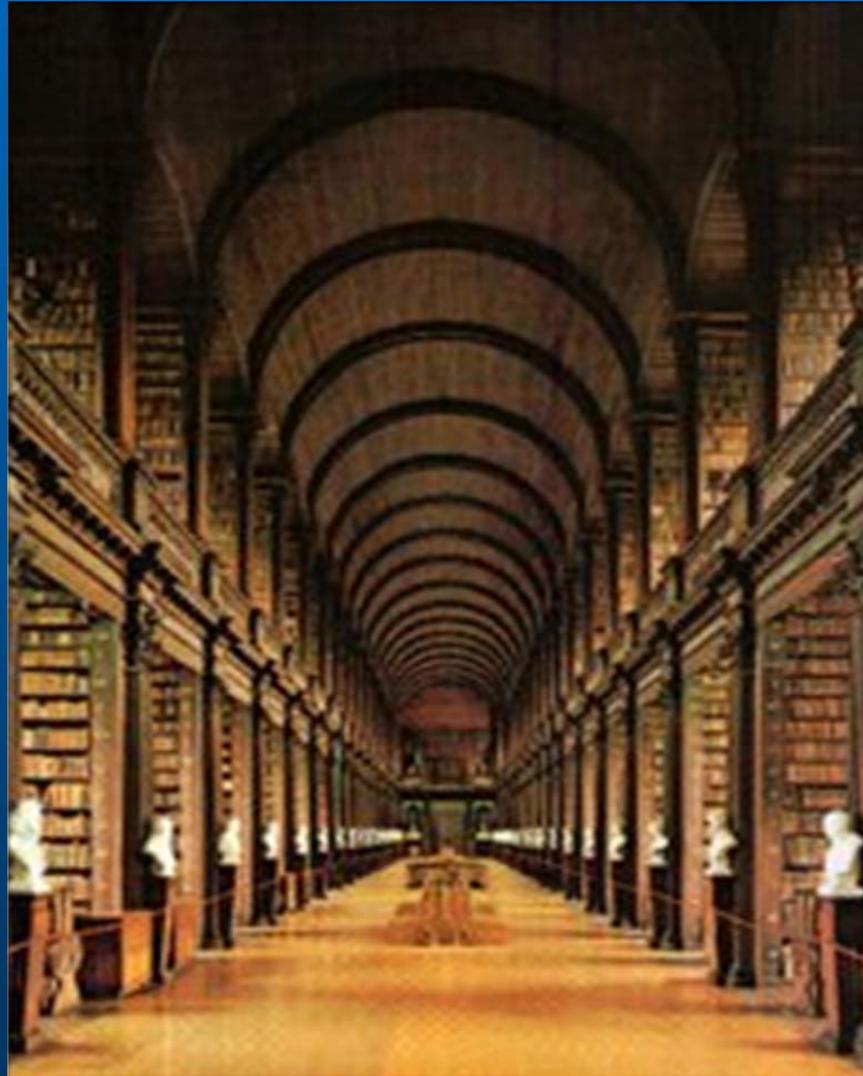




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# OPEN ACCESS

***Load up and be counted!***

*Niamh Brennan*

***Thank you!***

