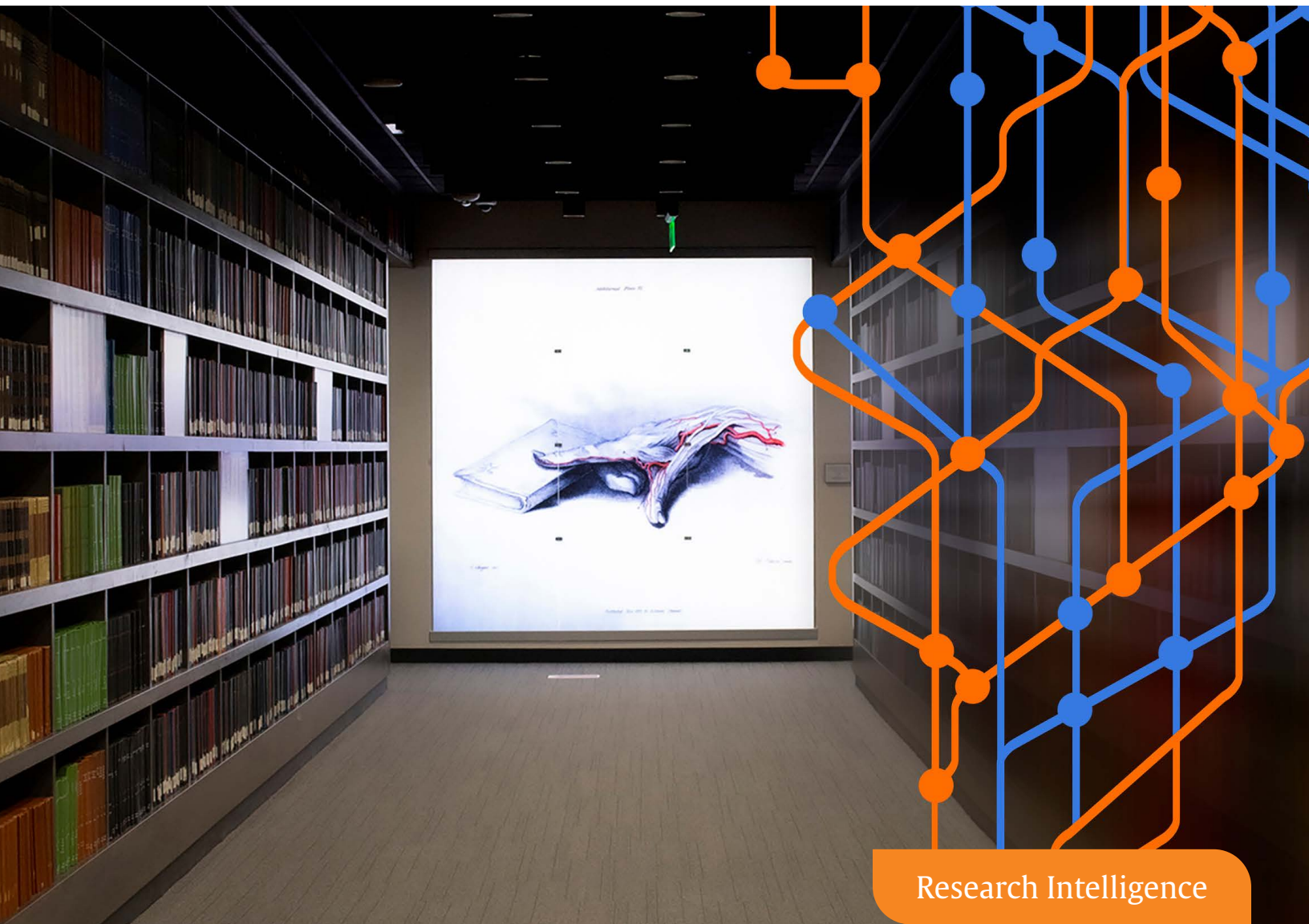# Training new researchers on how to understand and develop their profiles

UNMC's librarians encourage students and researchers to leverage Scopus at every stage of their career

Research Intelligence

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> "Scopus really plays a vital role in helping our researchers, particularly early investigators and people who are getting ready to become early-career postgraduates, better understand the scholarly communications landscape."

—Emily Glenn, Associate Dean, UNMC library

For researchers, the choices they make and the profiles they build are critical steps on their road to success. Importantly, their academic standing also contributes to the reputation of their institution. The Leon S. McGoogan Health Sciences Library at University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) has initiatives in place to support their stakeholders, whatever their age and career stage. But a key strand of their work is educating future postgraduate students and emerging researchers on how Scopus can help them understand and build their profiles.

Background

The mission of the Leon S. McGoogan Health Sciences Library is a compelling one. At its heart lies a drive to *connect the past, inform the present and build the future* — goals that are evident in the activities delivered by Emily Glenn, the library's Associate Dean, and her colleagues in the Education and Research Services team. Together, they serve the information needs of UNMC's extensive student body — UNMC has six colleges, two institutes and a graduate studies program serving more than 4,000 students. They also support a wide array of faculty and staff, as well as Nebraska's licensed health professionals and state residents. In terms of resources, the library team manages an extensive collection of rare books and history of medicine artifacts, anatomical models, and online resources numbering more than 36,000 journal titles and over 71,000 print and electronic books.

For Emily, one of the aspects of her work that most closely chimes with the library's mission, are the education initiatives they deliver for students and early career researchers. In this case study, she explains how Scopus forms the core of those training activities.

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The challenge

For those embarking on a PhD or other postgraduate program, there is a wealth of information to absorb; not only do they need to immerse themselves in their chosen topic, there are also best practices around studying and evaluating sources to learn, as well as decisions to make around next steps. If they continue down the path of academia, that workload often becomes more daunting, with demands ranging from securing funding, collaborators and career progression to developing a publication record and profile that will help them achieve those goals.

The challenges that universities face today are equally pressing. University rankings — several of which rely on Scopus data — are growing in importance, along with collaborations of all types. At the same time, there is a limited pool of students, funding and talented faculty to draw on. Being able to demonstrate the impact and reputation of researchers and their outputs are crucial if they want to remain competitive.

The solution

For Emily, ensuring those starting out on their careers are equipped with the skills to understand and develop their profile is key, and Scopus is one of her go-to resources. "Scopus really plays a vital role in helping our researchers, particularly early investigators and people who are getting ready to become early-career postgraduates, better understand the scholarly communications landscape."

The university's Summer Undergraduate Research Program is a great example of how Emily and her team leverage the data in Scopus. Each year, up to 100 undergraduate students join UNMC's research teams over the summer break to discover first-hand the spectrum of research activities occurring on campus. For the university, it's an early opportunity to discover the talented researchers of the future. For the students, the laboratory experience they gain can prove invaluable when applying to graduate programs at UNMC.

According to Emily, an important part of the students' curriculum is learning about Scopus and other information resources. She explains: "Our hope is that they're going to enter UNMC and we feel it's important to introduce them to the type of tools they will use in a graduate setting."

Discovering the potency of author profiles

One of the key elements of Scopus they explore together are the 17 million+ author profiles. These profiles are automatically generated by Scopus, which uses a powerful algorithm to match authors to their published papers in the database. The resulting author profile page showcases a variety of metrics that are often used for tenure, funding and other research performance-based decisions. These include:

- Publishing history
- Research topics they've contributed to
- Publishing collaborations
- Document and citation counts and trends
- *h*-index
- Recent preprints they've published

> "Scopus author profiles spotlight scholarship connections and community. The details they contain raise awareness of publishing trends and journal sources."
>
> —Emily Glenn

Why talk about author profiles to students and early career researchers?

Emily says: "We want to get them thinking about who they are in this research space. They are a researcher with a reputation. Their Scopus author profile is part of the trail of their professional presence. It's one of the places that colleagues will consult when they are looking for a collaborator."

"We explain to them that they have an opportunity to make that profile shine," says Emily. "One of the ways they can do that is by aiming for reputable titles that are indexed by databases like Scopus. We talk about what it takes to publish a reputable work that appears in places where their fellow scholars can find it, read it and share it. And we talk about the importance of building on the knowledge of others and why they want to be a part of that. Students and researchers walk away understanding that Scopus is a tool that can help them discover and present work that colleagues can access."

> "I tell people that there are a lot of resources that organize professional output, but Scopus is one of the more robust tools. Other universities use Scopus; it's going to be around for a long time."
>
> —Emily Glenn

Using profiles to identify career opportunities

Emily also explains to students the benefits of exploring other people's Scopus profiles. She says: "I jokingly call it professional snooping, but really author profiles are a great way to view people who are experts in their field and identify some of the influencers. For example, a student can look at their own UNMC mentor's profile and track the trajectory of that person's work. Author profiles can help students become aware of the various stages of a research-focused career.

"Importantly, it gets them to touch the database and become familiar with how it works. We also look at connections to the researcher profiles in Research Nebraska, our Pure service."

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The importance of building a sound knowledge base

For Emily and the education and research services team, another important aspect is that the students learn about diversity in the profession — not only in terms of the variety of researchers and career options out there, but the range of works and collaborator relationships that comprise scholarly output. "We want them to know that journal articles aren't standalone publications: there are authoritative resources that can provide structure to this vast body of knowledge that continues to grow."

> "As librarians, we often think all research information should be free. However, research must be organized so that it can support reproducibility. That's really the strength of a resource like Scopus. It's an authoritative source that allows researchers to build on existing knowledge."
>
> —Emily Glenn

Evaluating impact: Scopus' metrics demonstrate value at every career stage

Emily also teaches students how to use citation measures such as Scopus' CiteScore to evaluate the impact of research, authors and potential collaborators. In addition, she walks them through the PlumX metrics available in Scopus, which move beyond citations in research articles to capture other references, including:

- Citations in clinical guidelines and patents
- Usage, such as downloads and views
- Bookmarks, favorites and saves
- Online mentions, e.g., in blog posts, news items or on social media

> "It's really fun to explain that there is this long tail of impact and it's multi-layered. I think the altmetrics offered by Plum Analytics in Scopus help early-career and emerging researchers see that they can be recognized for credit, influence and reach."
>
> —Emily Glenn

But it's not only students and younger researchers that Emily and her team advise on author identity, as she explains: "We find that people at all career levels can benefit from our advice. Perhaps they have recently joined UNMC and didn't receive the same kind of librarian support elsewhere, or perhaps they've been working in another setting with limited access to research resources. Our goal is to give them the grounding they need to be successful with their peers at UNMC, whatever their level."

For Emily and her team, that doesn't just mean making researchers aware of their own author profile, but also equipping them with the skills to pass that knowledge on to the next generation of researchers. "Together we can ensure that everyone starting out on their career understands the benefits of building the right reputation."

How Emily uses Scopus to train students

Among the exercises that Emily asks participants in the summer school to complete are:

- Look up your mentor or another UNMC author. What do their publications tell you about their career history? Have they moved institutions? Can you tell which of their papers are the most influential by citations? Where does your mentor publish?

- Search for papers about your topic, limiting your terms to the title field and last five years. Sort by the highest number of citations. Now, remove the date limit. What is the difference in the number of papers? What do you notice about citation numbers?

- Select one paper that looks relevant to your research question (with at least five citations). Look at the record for this article. How could you get full text of items in this paper's references? Look at the "Cited by" box. How could you use this information?

- Look up a journal. What are the conditions a title must satisfy to be included in Scopus? What does a five-year trend for this journal look like? Is this a good journal for you to publish in? Can you compare this journal to another one you know?

- Look at your list of search results from any search. Let's practice exporting them to your reference management software.

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About the university

The University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) was founded in 1881. Originally the Omaha Medical College, the college became affiliated with the University of Nebraska in 1902. It is Nebraska's only public academic health sciences center, committed to educating the state's future health care workforce.

UNMC comprises six colleges — medicine, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, public health and allied health professions — which work together to provide care and solve societal challenges. For example, it was scientists at UNMC who found that the novel coronavirus COVID-19 spreads through airborne transmission. UNMC also led the first clinical trial in the US on the use of remdesivir to treat patients hospitalized with COVID-19.

Located in a handful of Nebraska's landmark hometowns (Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney, Norfolk and Scottsbluff-Gering), UNMC's divisions across the state are bonded through a shared culture — and in real time, by distance-learning technology.

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Scopus is the largest abstract and citation database and premier source of author profiles in the world, offering high quality data and tools for analyzing the research landscape — so you can advance your research, keep an eye on key and emerging trends, increase research visibility, and discover new collaborators.

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