

Measuring the social impact of community informatics research: the mission impossible?

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Abstract: As a growing interest to policy makers, funding bodies, research and/or academic institutes, and researchers, how to measure the social impact of research accurately and wisely has been a much-debated issue taken place at different levels varying from scholarly dialogues to national policy-making discussions. The discussion on measuring research impact is not new and many approaches and indicators are proposed. Peer-review and bibliometric indicators are popular tools used by many to assess research, including national research evaluation schemes such as the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) and the UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). However, such approaches and indicators often focus on the assessment of academic impact or quality of research, and fail to measure the social impact of research. The stake of demonstrating the social impact of research is even higher for fields with a legacy of community-oriented multidisciplinary research, like community informatics. The objective of this paper is to identify the current discourse of social impact measurement and develop an appropriate model to measure the social impact of community informatics research. A systematic literature search approach is taken to identify and review relevant literature through the adoption of PRISMA evidence reporting model. Based on the analysis, a conceptual model is proposed to measure the social impact of community informatics research.