# AFAANZ PhD Symposium

# Making Your Research Have Impact

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# Overview

- Universities now focusing on research impact
  - KPIs now include measures of research impact
  - Promotion and tenure criteria at many universities now require applicants to demonstrate the impact of their research
  - Part of university rating / ranking schemes
  - Part of grant applications
- So research impact is not going to go away!

# Importance of Research Impact is Here to Stay

"Ah, those were great days, The Pre-Accountabilty Era."

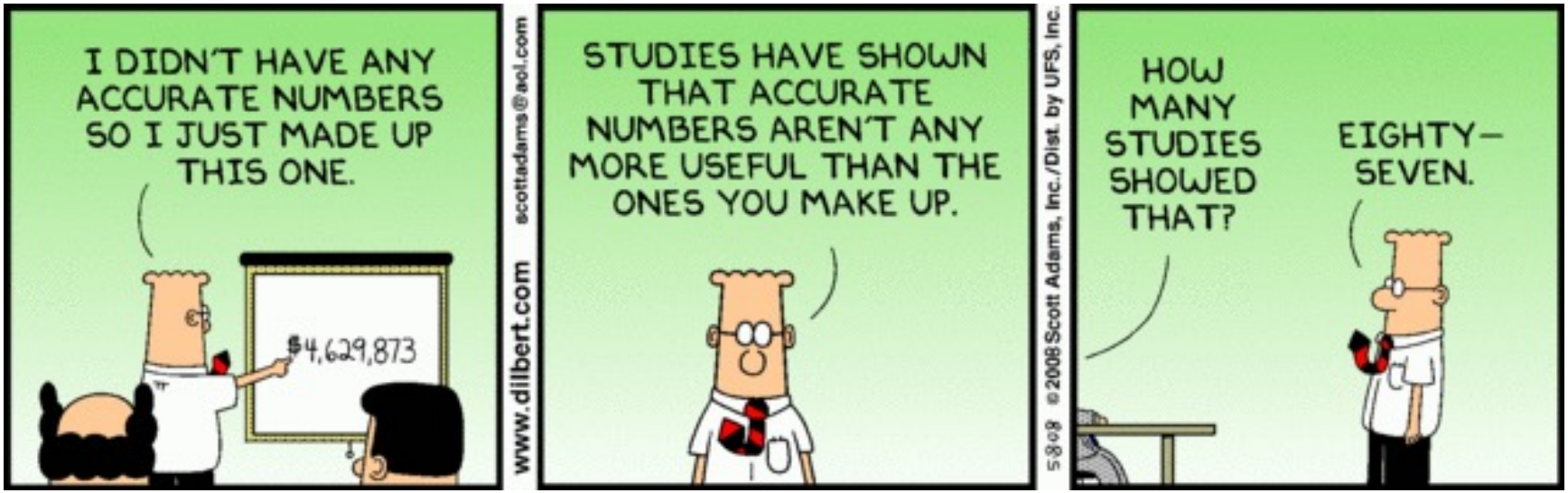
# Types of research impact

- **Academic impact** is the contribution that your research makes to scientific advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, method, theory application
- **Economic and societal impact** is the contribution that your research makes to society and the economy, of benefit to individuals, organisations and nations, e.g., public policy and regulations
- **Educational impact** is the impact of your research on education, e.g., articles and books included in syllabi
- **Public engagement and outreach** is the impact on engagement with the business community, e.g., press coverage, social media and downloads

# Research impact must be demonstrable!

- Not enough just to focus on activities and outputs that promote research impact, such as holding a conference or publishing an article or report
  - you must be able to provide evidence of research impact, e.g., that it has been taken up and used by policymakers, and practitioners, has led to improvements in education, policy, regulations, services or business
- Research must be high quality
  - You need scholarship to have impact
  - you can't have impact without excellence!

# Measuring your impact – quantitative and qualitative approaches



# Measures of research impact

- Often described using quantitative methods (often referred to as bibliometrics)
  - Citation counts
  - Journal impact factors
  - Researcher specific metrics such as the h-index
- impact can also be described qualitatively in terms of
  - Social and cultural applications
  - Measures of esteem

# Measures of research impact

- Altmetrics - data that show a record of where your research is being discussed, shared and mentioned online; see https://www.altmetric.com or https://rmit.libguides.com/altmetrics
  - Online activity, e.g., mentions in blog posts, comments, reviews; social media likes, shares or tweets; and usage such as downloads, views or saves
  - Attributions in non-academic literature, e.g., government or non-government reports, discussion papers or policy documents; news or other media reports
  - Research outputs that are not published academic papers, e.g., datasets, code or software, conference posters, guidelines, websites
  - Can be used to benchmark your performance with other researchers in your field

# Measures of research impact

- Citations can be counted as measures of the usage and impact of the cited work - citation counts for
  - an individual article (how often it was cited);
  - an author (total citations, or average citation count per article);
  - a journal (average citation count for the articles in the journal)
- Major citation databases include
  - Scopus - indexes more than 18,500 peer-reviewed journals across all subject areas
  - Google Scholar – include counts, h-index, G-index and i10-index (you can game these!!!)

# Measuring impact

# Measures of research impact

- **Journal impact factors** often used to measure impact quality of a journal
  - should be used with an understanding of their limitations
    - metrics cannot necessarily be compared across different subject areas
    - different subject areas have different citation rates and behaviour
    - review articles may attract more citations irrespective of their quality
    - good quality articles and journals may go uncited
    - colleagues may cite friends to increase their visibility and people do self-cite
    - quality of an article cannot necessarily be judged by the journal it is published in
- ABDC A*/A journals and FT50 journals

# Measures of research impact

- **Measures of esteem may provide additional evidence of research quality**
  - Conference publications
  - International engagement
  - Influence on industry/government/public policy/community/cultural organisations
  - Implementation of research findings in policy and practice
  - Successful research grant applications
  - Awards and prizes
  - Editorships
  - Research Fellowships
  - Membership of Learned Academy

# Measures of research impact

- **Measures of esteem**
  - **Membership of Statutory Committee and other Professional Bodies**
  - **Postgraduate supervision**
  - **Development of research staff**
  - **Invited lectures, seminars and conference presentations**
  - **Invited books, chapters and other publications**
  - **Media exposure**

# Examples of measures of esteem

- Academic representative on International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board
- Academic representative on technical task force of International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC)
- Chaired International task force that developed auditing standard on greenhouse gases
- Chairing International task force charged with adapting IIRC framework for charities worldwide
- Leading literature reviews of policy issues for PCAOB
- Undertaking research for AASB, AuASB, FRC, ASIC, CPA Australia, etc.

# Attracting attention to your research

- Write a lay summary of your research and introduce it via relevant discussion lists and online forums or publish it in the Conversation, Business Think or other outlets
- Share links to your work via twitter and other social media after presenting at conferences
- Work with the press office at your publisher or institution to announce the publication of your research
- Reach out to key bloggers to make them aware of your work or start your own blog
- Include a link to your work in your email signature, online profiles or CV
- Register for an ORCID ID and populate your profile so that others can easily discover your work
- Make your work available via Open Access wherever possible and share links to your full text outputs on social media.

# Measuring and documenting your research impact

- Google “measuring your research impact”
  - Lots of tips from various sources, e.g.,
    - UWA (http://guides.is.uwa.edu.au/rim)
    - Cornell University (http://guides.library.cornell.edu/impact)
    - Economic and Social Research Council (http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/impact-toolkit/what-how-and-why/what-is-research-impact.aspx)
- Sign up for ORCID ID, ResearcherID with Web of Knowlege, Google Scholar account

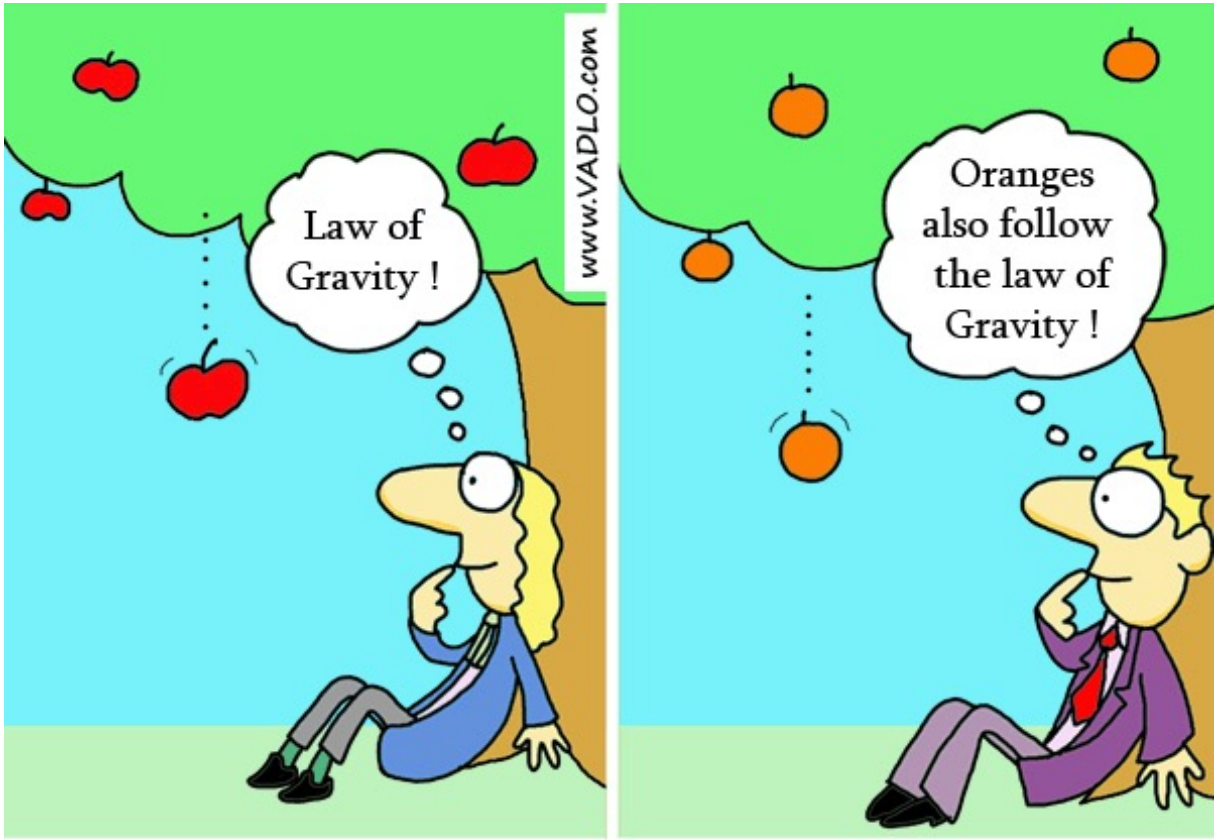
# Planning your research to have impact

- To plan impact effectively you need to (see http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/impact-toolkit/developing-plan/index.aspx):
  - Identify your key stakeholders - e.g., researchers; public sector; business and industry
  - Identify how they will benefit from your research - e.g., improving social welfare/public services; influencing public policy; contributing to operational/organisational change
  - Identify how you will ensure they have the opportunity to benefit - e.g., through organising public events; conferences; interaction with the media

# Planning your research to have impact

- One key aspect is to pursue research that will have a significant impact because of its contribution to the literature, practice, regulation, policy, etc.
- Pursue ideas that will result in excellent research
- Pick an idea that has tension
  - Pick something where the result is not obvious
  - Think about situations where the result in your field is not likely to be the same as in psychology, management, etc. or where the result in country X is likely to be different than existing results
    - You will need to make a strong case as to why the result might not be the same

# High vs Low Impact Papers




High Impact Paper

Low Impact Paper

# What is a great research idea that will have impact?

- A great research idea is one that confronts or contributes to a "grand challenge"
  - "grand challenges" are the big puzzles
    - How do we solve poverty and climate change, cure cancer, etc.?
- An idea that deals with a large unresolved problem that tackles that problem with a bold and innovative way that goes beyond existing explanations
- An idea that allows you to explain how your study solves a piece of a larger puzzle, and in doing so moves the discipline forward with rigor and relevance
- An idea that is novel and interesting - would it change the way that people think about an issue?

# What is a research idea that will have impact?

- An idea that results from knowledge recombination with something new being created by building a bridge between two literatures or disciplines
- An idea that is not perceived as a marginal extension of the existing literature
  - Avoid topics in very mature areas unless you can really come up with something novel
- An idea that is not so narrow that the results cannot be generalised to other settings
  - Narrowness can be the result of the topic itself or the result of a researcher salami slicing rather than going for one big important paper
- An idea that counters a reader's taken-for-granted assumptions

# What is a research idea that will have impact?

- **An idea that makes an important contribution to the literature that also has implications for practice (i.e., the results are actionable) – McGahan (2007)**
  - **Offers counterintuitive insights**
  - **Highlights the effects of new and imported practices**
  - **Show inconsistencies in, and consequences of, practice**
  - **Suggests a specific theory to explain an interesting and current practice or proposed practice**
  - **Identifies an iconic phenomenon that opens new areas of inquiry and practice**

# Contribution is Critical

**Paper needs to make an important contribution to the literature**

- **Must add something important to our understanding of accounting**
- **Lack of incremental contribution is one of the most common reasons for rejecting a paper**
  - **Criticism often applies to studies that replicate an existing paper using a different sample, e.g., same issues using data from a different country**
  - **Criticism often applies where the result is obvious based on previous studies**
  - **Criticism often applies where the twist in the new study is not that different, e.g., examining the effect of one more risk factor on audit fees**

# Topic is Interesting and Important

**Paper is more likely to have impact if the topic is interesting and important**

- **Relates to a pervasive phenomenon**
- **Relates to an emerging trend, e.g., disclosure of non-GAAP earnings or assurance on CSR reports**
- **Relates to a controversial regulatory issue, e.g., disclosure of audit partner's name in the US**
- **Is an economically significant phenomenon**
- **Addresses a fundamental accounting question, e.g., value relevance, credibility of accounting information, effectiveness of controls**

# Topic Extends Previous Research

**Paper is more likely to have impact if it significantly extends previous research**

- **Adds insight by examining an issue from a new perspective or theory**
- **Adds insight by examining an issue in a new setting where the results are likely to be different because of factors such as institutional setting, regulatory environment, culture, etc.**
- **Study reconciles previously mixed results, e.g., effect of audit tenure on audit quality**
- **Study resolves a puzzle in the literature**
- **Results cannot be inferred from previous research**
- **Results are not obvious – there is tension because of competing arguments or theories**

# Study has Important Implications

**Paper is more likely to have impact if it has important implications**

- **Need to address the "so what" or "who cares" questions**
- **Who benefits?**
  - **Regulators**
  - **Auditors**
  - **Financial report users such a investors**
  - **Managers**
  - **Researchers**
- **How do they benefit?**

# Good luck with your research impact!