

#### About ETH Zurich

- <https://www.ethz.ch/en.html>
- ETH Zurich regularly features in international rankings as one of the best universities in the world and the leading university in continental Europe.

#### People

**Dr. Joachim Schnabl**

Science Communication Officer,  
Information Center, D-CHAB

**Dr. Oliver Renn**

Head of Science Communication,  
Chemistry | Biology | Pharmacy  
Information Center, D-CHAB

#### Goals

- Digest, distill and communicate the impact of D-CHAB research to a broader audience

#### Approach

- Use Altmetric Explorer for Institutions to pinpoint attention and discussion around the research outputs of D-CHAB

#### Results

- Found D-CHAB research papers on the toxicity of Bisphenol A had been referenced in key policy documents such as scientific opinions on food safety from the European Food Safety Authority
- Over 6,000 mentions of D-CHAB research to date
- 648 references in the mainstream media, and almost 100 from Wikipedia



Joachim Schnabl



Oliver Renn

## Capturing and communicating the broader impact of chemistry research

Science Communication is important for ETH Zurich as it strives to move beyond the measurement of traditional academic excellence through publication in journals to communicating the research output to the public in a social, health and economic contexts. More specifically, in 2015, the Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences (D-CHAB) established a new function in 2015 called "Scientific Communication" as it felt a strong need to determine and articulate the broader impact of the research being conducted in the department.

Science Communication Officer Dr. Joachim Schnabl describes what led to the establishment of the new unit: "As research is conducted mainly with taxpayers money we feel responsible to show the public what our researchers achieved - and Altmetric is a tool that helps us analyzing the communication work."

The new unit's objective is to foster the translation and communication of its research output into the scientific community and the public. This new unit, in addition to Public Relations, is responsible for all science-related communication and outreach activities. This includes also the responsibility for the new D-CHAB website, launched in August 2015.

#### Making science more readable

Joachim has a background in bioinorganic chemistry looking at bonding of metal complexes to RNA. For the last 12 months, he has been working in science communication in D-CHAB. Joachim tracks breakthrough results that need to be communicated to the general public or a broader scientific audience - this involves reading, digesting and reformulating the findings of papers into a more generally readable format that can be promoted to a more mainstream audience. The output which Joachim produces is similar to what you would find in the Science section of broadsheet newspapers.

#### Moving beyond Impact Factor and citations

Joachim sees Altmetric Explorer for Institutions as a means to get away from just using citation and the journal Impact Factor as sole measurements of scientific impact, and an opportunity to look at those papers from D-CHAB that will attract broader attention and discussion. "The traditional metric of citations is just a number of times an article is referenced by other academics. There is no measure of quality or impact. The time lags are also challenge so it difficult to see trending topics." He continues "With Altmetric Explorer for Institutions, you can see how research is being discussed and how is it being used immediately. You can see if someone wrote a Wikipedia article using a research article from D-CHAB or if that paper was cited in a policy document."

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### Relevant and high-profile sources

For Joachim, the most important sources for D-CHAB to track references to their research from are public policy documents, followed by what he describes as the “serious” media sources, for example, The New York Times, and then the scientific networks such as Mendeley and Faculty of 1000, and lastly, Wikipedia.

Joachim also admits that there is still no mandate to track these sources. “Altmetric is still quite new and some professors are really open to this new approach.” Joachim has done training with faculty members in the form of 10 minute presentations that are done over lunch. There are two or three policy documents that Joachim highlights which have cited toxicity studies from D-CHAB. Joachim gives the example of how an article from D-CHAB entitled Bisphenol A: How the Most Relevant Exposure Sources Contribute to Total Consumer Exposure was referenced in a scientific opinion document on the risks to public health related to the presence of bisphenol A (BPA) in foodstuffs: Part I – Exposure assessment, published by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/scientific\\_output/files/main\\_documents/3978part1.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/scientific_output/files/main_documents/3978part1.pdf). Joachim comments on the uncovering of this policy document: “We would not even have thought about looking for these citations in policy documents before (they subscribed to Altmetric Explorer for Institutions), it would be almost impossible to find this type of attention previously unless we mined the sources in question manually.”

### Innovative and intuitive technology

Joachim and his supervisor Dr Oliver Renn were also really impressed by the first Altmetric demonstration given by Product Sales Manager Ben McLeish and Founder Euan Adie. He comments “We like the idea and the innovation behind Altmetric and the usability of the tool is excellent. The interface is extremely intuitive and as someone who understands programming, I know how difficult it is to do what Altmetric has done with the presentation of the data. This should not be underestimated.”

To learn more about Altmetric Explorer for Institutions visit [www.altmetric.com](http://www.altmetric.com)