

Building a digital identity to demonstrate impact

Shadrack Katuu

1. Introduction

In today's technologically advanced digital landscape, library and information professionals play a crucial role within their institutions (Borbely and Némethi-Takács, 2023). They are involved in the management of information and knowledge assets across diverse settings, from curating information repositories and overseeing official records to delivering valuable information services (Katuu, 2002; Zareef and Jabeen, 2025). However, they often face challenges related to limited visibility and the difficulty of independently validating their impact, which can impede their ability to effectively showcase their contributions (Feher, 2021). Certain tools and platforms can be used to consolidate one's online presence in a structured and professional manner, thereby establishing a cohesive digital identity. Platforms such as ORCID and ResearchGate offer a framework for presenting one's digital identity. These platforms facilitate the inventorying of professional outputs, such as academic publications and conference presentations, and the consolidation of professional activities, including participation on editorial boards and peer review contributions. Furthermore, they can also illustrate the influence of nonacademic outputs, including those on social media platforms and news websites. Proficiency in leveraging these platforms enables accurate attribution of library and information professionals' work and allows for its quantification using metrics such as the h-index or Altmetrics.

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2. Why digital identity matters?

A digital identity serves as a comprehensive representation of an individual's professional endeavors, skills and contributions (Dreker, 2023). Amongst its benefits is that it enhances visibility through a consistent online presence. Each professional activity augments this unified persona, ensuring continued visibility. Furthermore, the attachment of metrics to this profile demonstrates impact.

The creation of a digital identity may involve requests for minimum identifiable information, potentially including verification via government-issued identification. Various mechanisms facilitate the construction of a digital identity, categorized here for illustrative purposes:

- Platforms for cataloging activities and personal information, such as Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) and ResearchGate.
- Metrics for assessing scholarly or academic impact, including the h-index.
- Platforms for tracking social media impact, such as blog mentions and social media shares, including Dimensions and PlumX for Altmetrics tracking.

These tools and platforms are dynamic, evolving with user interaction (Shea, 2023). Therefore, building a digital identity should be viewed as an ongoing process rather than a one-time task.

3. Practical steps in building a digital identity

The following sections will illustrate the practical steps for constructing a digital identity, aligning with the three categories previously discussed. It is important to note that these steps are intended as a general guide for creating and managing a digital identity, rather than a prescriptive or exhaustive analysis tailored to specific individual cases.

3.1 Creating a profile

The initial step involves creating a comprehensive inventory of one's activities through a detailed profile. Establishing a unique identifier is fundamental before constructing profiles and ORCID and ResearchID are common free options. ORCID is a global, cross-platform identifier, while ResearchID operates within the Web of Science ecosystem. Beyond a unique identifier, a profile with bibliographic information is essential, and tools like ORCID, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Scopus and Web of Science can facilitate this (Zhang, 2023). After establishing accounts on platforms such as ORCID, Google Scholar and ResearchGate, users can integrate bibliographic information regarding their professional work, either through automated processes or manual input. Platforms like Scopus and Web of Science establish digital identities by either linking to profiles such as ORCID or by monitoring individual professional outputs through identifiers like the Digital Object Identifier. However, in contrast to similar platforms, ResearchGate also functions as a repository, enabling users to upload complete content. While this increases public access, it may diminish trust due to the platform's limited oversight regarding the quality of uploaded material (Kirilova and Zoepfl, 2025).

3.2 Tracking scholarly impact

Numerous metrics are used to evaluate scholarly impact, whether at the level of individual information assets or by aggregating the impact of all information assets associated with a digital identity (Downey, 2023). Among these are the field citation ratio and relative citation ratio, though the h-index and citation counts are the most commonly used (Razumova and Kuznetsov, 2019). These metrics are typically accessed via platforms such as Google Scholar, Scopus or Web of Science, which perform the calculations automatically. While Google Scholar enjoys widespread use, its reliance

Table 1
Tools and platforms for building and maintaining a digital identity

Tool	Creating a profile	Automatic ORCID integration	Measures h-index	Counts citations	Monitors Altmetrics score
Google Scholar	Free (Google Scholar citations profile)	No (manual linking possible)	Yes	Yes	No
Dimensions	Free (basic access); paid (advanced analytics via institutional subscription)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PlumX	Paid (institutional subscription via Elsevier)	Yes	No (focuses on article-level metrics)	Yes	Yes
Scopus	Paid (institutional subscription; free author profile creation within platform)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (via PlumX integration)
Web of Science	Paid (institutional subscription; free ResearcherID profile)	Yes (via ResearcherID)	Yes	Yes	No

Source(s): Author's own work

on manual user input for bibliographic information diminishes its reliability. Scopus and Web of Science are generally regarded as more dependable due to their monitoring of self-citation and their capacity to distinguish indexed content.

3.3 Tracking impact using Altmetrics

Altmetrics tools offer a contemporary approach to gauging research impact beyond traditional academic citations, capturing mentions and shares on social media, blogs, news outlets and other public platforms (Hneiny, 2023). While some academic purists may view these metrics cautiously, they are crucial for demonstrating broader community engagement. Platforms like PlumX and Dimensions facilitate Altmetrics tracking, allowing users to create accounts and synchronize them with their ORCID profiles for automated updates on research outputs. These tools monitor research outputs, such as social media mentions of publications, providing longitudinal data on engagement levels that can inform the planning of outreach and dissemination strategies.

Table 1 below provides an overview of many of the tools and platforms outlined in this section, offering basic information on specific aspects to illustrate their utility.

4. Concluding remarks

In an environment where the value of library and information professionals

is frequently undervalued, their proactive engagement is indispensable (Katu, 2024; Zareef and Jabeen, 2025). As the digital landscape expands, it is critical to strategically orient both individual experts and their respective institutions to articulate their sustained value. Within a digital environment defined by a wide array of online engagements, a systematic approach to establishing and sustaining a strong digital identity is essential for ensuring the ongoing societal importance and influence of library and information professionals. This paper serves as a starting point for this effort by investigating the main categories of tools and platforms that can be used to help with this process, and by describing some of their utility.

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Shadrack Katuu can be contacted at: 35920068@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Shadrack Katuu (35920068@mylife.unisa.ac.za) is based at the Chief Albert Luthuli Research Chair – College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.