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Citation Analysis, *Journal of Folklore Research* (1983—2010)

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## Citation Analysis, *Journal of Folklore Research* (1983–2010)

ABSTRACT: This bibliometric study analyzes citations in and of the 588 articles published in the *Journal of Folklore Research* between 1983 and 2010 and indexed in the ISI Web of Science (WOS). Data suggests that *JFR* is a healthy and vibrant contributor to the field of folklore research, with an increasing variety of contributors and increasing prominence outside the field.

### Impact of the *Journal of Folklore Research* on the Field

Journal impact analysis is one way for a journal to gauge its contribution to a field using quantitative measures. Although it is not possible to definitively capture all variables associated with a journal's impact, using a variety of tools we can create a reasonable approximation of its role and standing in the scholarly community. Previous studies have pointed to the validity of single measurements such as impact factor (Archambault and Lariviere 2009), co-citation (Small 1974), bibliographic coupling (Kessler 1963), and many others. Newer research has suggested that these measurements should be combined in order to produce a more accurate portrait of scholarly communication (Boyack and Klavans 2010; Yan and Ding 2012). The following report summarizes the impact of the *Journal of Folklore Research* based on impact factor, co-citation patterns, and bibliographic coupling and publication statistics, as determined by the data available in the Web of Science citation database.

Since 1983 *JFR* has consistently published 20–21 articles per year. Of the 588 articles published in *JFR* between 1983 and 2010, 225 have been cited at least once, and during this period the journal accumulated an

average of 26.8 citations per year, with each individual article cited on average 1.3 times. In comparison, the *Journal of American Folklore* (*JAF*) averaged 78.03 citations annually in the period from 1983–2010, more than *JFR*. But since *JAF* published 2,442 articles during this period, *JAF*'s average per-article citation rate is lower than that of *JFR*—just .99 citations for each article in the *Journal of American Folklore*, compared to 1.3 for articles in the *Journal of Folklore Research*.

Another metric given considerable weight in citation studies is impact factor, which is the number of times a journal has been cited divided by the number of articles published in that journal over a two-year period. Although some aspects of this measure have been criticized (Archambault and Lariviere 2009; Nisonger 2004), it is still considered a valuable tool in a journal's bibliometric analysis. *JAF*'s impact factor is .0319, while *JFR*'s impact factor measures at .0448.

Relying on impact factor alone is not sufficient to situate *JFR* in the field. Another approach is to measure repeated references to a work over time using a strategy called burst detection, revealing abnormal aggregates in a data stream over time (Zhu and Shasha, 2003). If a single article has a disproportionately high citation count during a given time period relative to other works cited in the same period, that article is said to be "highly bursting." I found 23 articles among all articles citing *JFR* that show an unusually high number of citations. Only eight of these highly cited articles were cited by other *JFR* articles; *JAF* citations account for five more, and the citations of the ten remaining articles are evenly distributed among ten other journals in the folklore field (*Journal of American Folklore*, *Folklore Fellows Communications*, *Fabula*, and other journals indexed in the ISI Folklore category). These results confirm that *JFR* is a leading influential journal in the field; they also suggest that *JFR* has disproportionate strength in the field given its smaller size in comparison to *JAF*.

The *Journal of Folklore Research* has also increased the diversity of its impact in the field over time. Between 1983 and 1993, 81 percent of all citations of the journal came from journals within the folklore field. The articles citing *JFR* in this time period came from thirteen subject categories other than *folklore* in ISI.<sup>1</sup> Compare this statistic with the timeframe 2005–2010, when the articles citing *JFR* were spread across thirty-five subject areas besides folklore and the folklore category dropped to just 62 percent of the total citations. Although this change can be explained in part by the fact that ISI has increased

its indexing attention in other fields, this modification in indexing methodology does not discount the finding that the journal has a growing impact outside of the immediate field of study. In general, the continuing development of citation practices is leading to ever more interdisciplinary scholarly practices that some have described as a movement toward a global brain (Börner et al. 2005); *JFR*'s growing interdisciplinary influence is part of this larger picture. The final measurement of *JFR*'s impact is its bibliographic coupling with other highly cited journals. Bibliographic coupling measures the citations common to two separate papers. For example, if A and B both cite C, A and B are said to be coupled, indicating that the two works treat the same subject matter (Kessler 1963).

Figure 1 shows the intercommunication of the most highly cited journals in the citation data collected from WOS. The title labels are weighted to emphasize which books and journals are cited most frequently across the *ISI Arts and Humanities Index*. *JFR* comes in third in the number of unique sources citing it, behind *JAF* and *FF Communications*. The prominence of *JAF* is probably due to the higher volume of articles that it publishes. [Ed. Note: the high incidence of citations to *FF Communications* is undoubtedly due to the importance of Antti Aarne's *Type Index* (Aarne and Thompson 1928, 1961), one of the single most-cited works in folklore.]

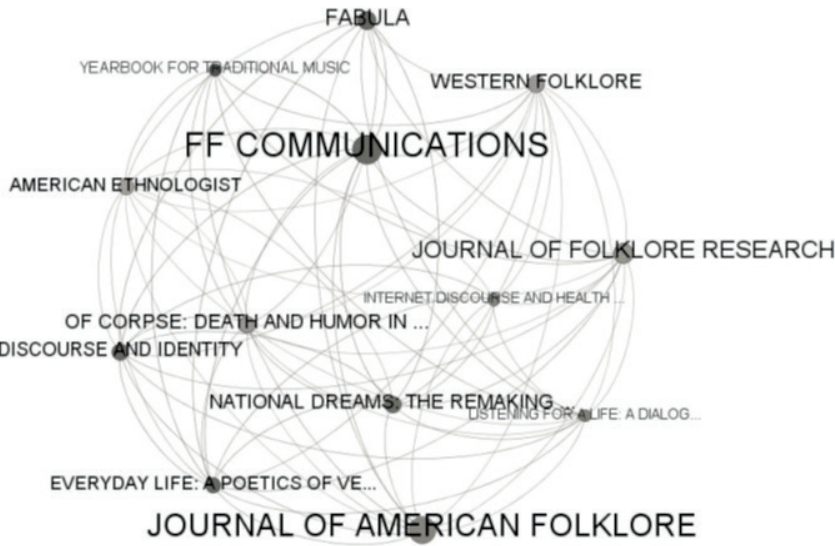


FIGURE 1  
Most highly cited journals in dataset, labels weighted to indicate citation counts

2005–2010

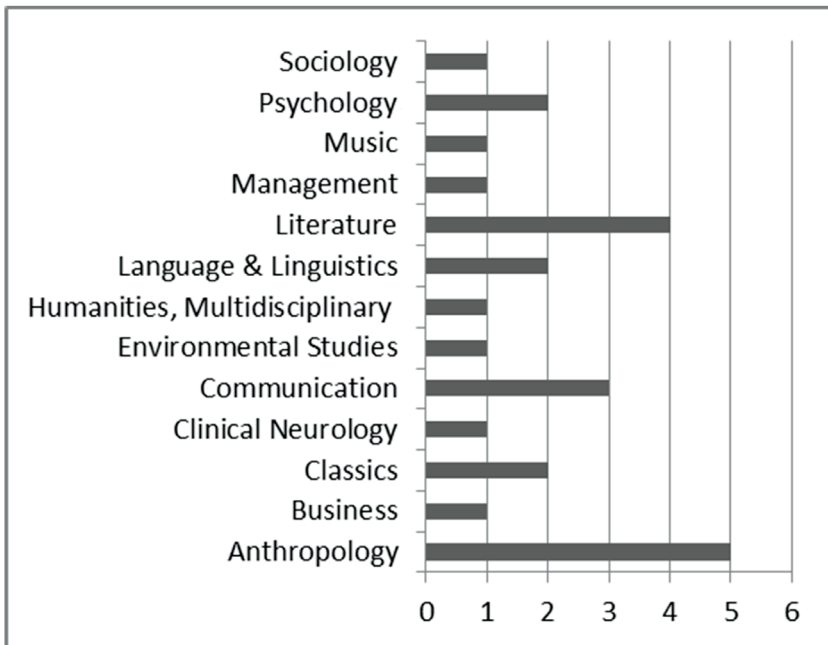


FIGURE 2  
Articles citing *Journal of Folklore Research* articles by category (folklore category excluded)

### *JFR*'s Internal Scholarly Communication Practices

While journal editors have little to no control over where and how a journal is cited, they do have some influence over the communication practices of the authors published, and they may shape the provenance of manuscript submissions.

The five journals most consistently referenced by authors published in *JFR* are the same five that are most commonly cited across the entire field of folklore research. For *JFR* articles, 33.67 percent of all references made are shared between five journals: *Journal of American Folklore* (14.29 percent), *Journal of Folklore Research* (8.84 percent), *Western Folklore* (6.46 percent), *FF Communications* (2.04 percent), and *Fabula* (2.04 percent).

Authors seeking publication in a particular source often cite articles from that source, but these authors are not necessarily cited widely outside of that source (Cronin 1984). The coupling of highly cited authors can serve as a measurement of their significance but

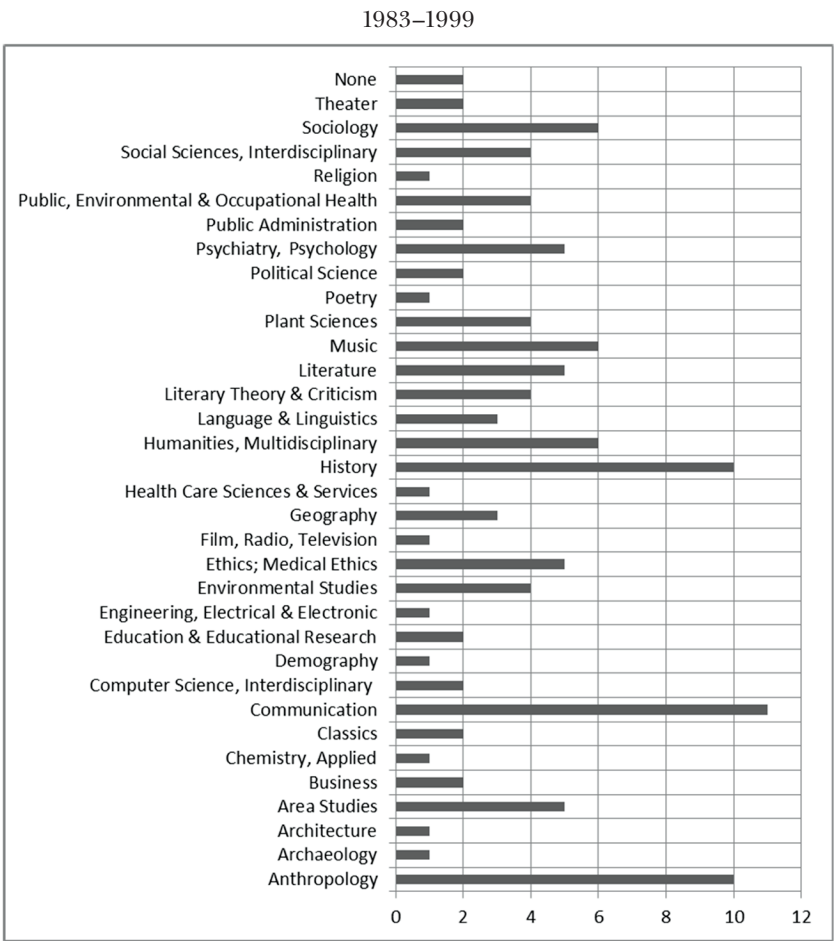


FIGURE 2 (cont.)

does not necessarily indicate proximity of research topics (Zhao and Strotmann 2008). Keeping this in mind, it is useful to consider the bibliographic coupling among the highly cited authors published in the journal.

Figure 2 shows the bibliographic coupling of the most-cited *JFR* authors. Authors are linked in bibliographic coupling when their works are cited by a mutual third work. We see that highly cited authors published in *JFR* are often cited in conjunction with other highly cited *JFR* authors. Figure 2 shows that, on average, materials citing publications in *JFR* are cited with 3.6 other authors ( $n = \text{total number of connections} / \text{total population}$ ) published in the journal. This indicates the strong impact of materials published in the journal

across the folklore subject category. It is not necessarily the case that two authors would have highly cited works from the same journal, or that those works would be mentioned simultaneously by a third source (Rafols and Meyer 2010). That they do in this case is a strong example of the importance of the articles published in *JFR* among a wide community of folklore scholars. The increased diversity in subject areas citing the journal, mentioned above, is supported by data in WOS showing that *JFR* has been drawing submissions from authors from an increasingly diverse range of institutions and countries. From 1983 to 2010, 64.97 percent of the authors published in the journal were affiliated with institutions in the United States, and 19.56 percent of those were affiliated with Indiana University at the time of publication. For articles published between 2000 and 2010, however, only 53.56 percent of authors were based in the United States, and only 8.81 percent were affiliated with Indiana University. *JFR* author affiliations have not remained static—only Indiana University and The Ohio State University have consistently remained in the top ten since the journal's inception. Regarding nationality, the majority of articles from non-US institutions published in the journal are from authors based in Western Europe. Both sets of statistics indicate that *JFR* is far from being an “in-house” journal. [Ed. Note: In 2003, during the editorship of Mary Ellen Brown, the subtitle “An International Journal of Folklore and Ethnomusicology” was added to the *JFR* masthead in order to underscore the journal's global focus and to encourage more submissions from international scholars.]

## Conclusions

This brief analysis has been designed to show readers the most significant statistics related to the publication practices and scholarly communication trends of the *Journal of Folklore Research* during the last thirty years. Using ISI data, I have attempted to gauge the impact of the journal in the field of folklore research and across the wider web of scholarship. On the basis of this analysis I venture a few observations that may be useful as the journal moves forward.

Currently, the *Journal of Folklore Research* is one of the most prominent journals in the field of folklore research. The bibliographic coupling data, impact factor measurements, citations per item, and burst detection analysis all suggest that *JFR*'s strength is concentrated

among journal publications in the folklore field. This strength begins to dissipate outside of the field in comparison with publications like *FF Communications* and *JAF*. In other words, *JFR* is well known and well cited within the field, but less well known than *JAF* and *FFC* outside of it.

The journal has diversified over the last decade both in what it publishes and in its impact, as measured by the disciplines that cite it. In plainer terms, the *Journal of Folklore Research* is characterized by quality over quantity. While it produces fewer articles than other journals in the field, *JFR* displays strong rates across many statistically significant measurements, and trends for the future are positive. This bibliometric data suggests that *JFR* is a healthy and vibrant contributor to the field of folklore research, with an increasing prominence outside of the field.

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## Notes

1. *Folklore* is a subject category within the Arts and Humanities Index. A single work may potentially have multiple subject categories. Articles listed in other subject categories were not necessarily listed in folklore as well.

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