
Nightmares in Citation Analysis

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Nightmares in Citation Analysis

Wallace Koehler, Guest Columnist

The following is fabricated to make a point: name and single initial for author identification are inadequate. More to the point, the citations presented here are real but the attributions are not. There are no self-citations.

There are any number of citation formats. Some of these formats provide extensive information about authors, titles, and so on, and many limit that information. Some systems, like those used in physics may not give the article title and severely abbreviate the journal title.¹

Citation analysis is performed for all sorts of purposes: to track in the intellectual development of ideas, to attribute the primary source of ideas, or to stimulate new thinking.² Citations can be used to facilitate information retrieval.³ They might also be used to help familiarize and train neophytes in any given field.⁴

Discussion

We have become aware that citation inflation has ballooned, that

the distribution of citations has become inequitable, and that far too many junior scholars find it necessary to "sing for their supper" through exaggerated citations and other forms of flattery.⁵ Indeed, some have observed that the problem has reached epidemic and indeed pathogenic levels.⁶

Method

In order to test these hypotheses, we undertook the team approach described by Koehler and Lehner.⁷ Unfortunately we discovered a great deal of vacillation among our coworkers, as was predicted by Koehler, Patankar, and Ibele.⁸ It appears that competition for citations raises maturity issues (or rather challenges of immaturity) such as those described by Koehler and Loftin.⁹ To correct for these problems, we employed the Kristof configuration algorithm to increase the overall satisfaction coeffi-

cient.¹⁰ We were therefore able to minimize the carolingian effect.¹¹

Findings

Our analysis resulted in the following findings: citations can be rendered virtually useless if they contain insufficient data, confirming earlier conclusions by Teichmann et al.¹² Insufficient data is simply insufficiently infectious. In fact, inadequate citation data can be eyed as unreasonable or undo the glue of intellectual discourse.¹³ A discussion of issue localization has found its way into the literature, but the issue has yet to be fully resolved. An automated solution may soon be forthcoming.¹⁴

Conclusions

This paper demonstrates several things. One, I may have had a phe-

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nominal career, stemming from the mid-1880s through the present. If so, it would appear that I have published across a myriad of subject areas and have gained some degree of fame in a few of them—which is to say, that by aping my peers, I have sought a revolutionary and perhaps nuclear place in the literature.

Or maybe some citation systems leave a little to be desired. In the end, there are problems created not for those who craft the citations (the shorter better) and those who publish the citations (again, the shorter the better), but rather for those who are cited and those who need to use those citations. ■

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