



Citation Analysis of Student Dissertations and Faculty Publications in Reading and Educational Leadership at Oakland University



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ABSTRACT

This study examines bibliographies of student dissertations and faculty publications in the fields of reading and educational leadership to determine the types of items that were cited during preweb (1983–1990), emergent (1991–1998), and post-web (1999–2014) time periods. Cited items were examined for the following characteristics: format such as books, journal articles, technical reports, etc.; citation age; and scholarliness of journal articles as determined by impact factor. Seventy-five student dissertations as well as 63 faculty articles written between 1983 and 2014 were inspected, resulting in a total of 11,082 cited items. Results indicate that over all time periods students cited a diverse set of materials including journal articles, monographs, technical reports, and dissertations while faculty cited primarily journal articles and monographs. Moreover, students lean toward citing journals with a lower impact factor than faculty who generally cited journals with a medium or high impact factor. Additionally, the average citation age found in students' bibliographies was 12.4 years while the average citation age for faculty publications was 9.6 years. Cited items exhibited a continuously longer citation age from pre-web, through emergent, to post-web years.

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The ubiquitous nature of the internet, Google, and Amazon makes it difficult to imagine life without them. Students and faculty have instant access to research, facts, rumors, and falsehoods as they gather background readings and other materials relevant to their research. Library users no longer need to make an appointment with a librarian to conduct online literature reviews nor do they need to contact experts to retrieve books and materials not found at the university library. Instead, users browse Google and Amazon to identify needed material and gain instant access to full-text. While some students and faculty still do contact information specialists to understand the intricacies of library databases, develop effective search strategies, capture the difference between descriptor and keyword searching, or to access full-text material, many rely on the ever-present free search tools that are available on the web. How has this overwhelming presence of easily accessible information affected the nature of items that faculty and students cite in their research publications?

Citation analysis is one way to determine materials researchers have used as they prepare their scholarly publications. The act of citing a study permanently connects the author's research with the cited item thereby producing a bond between the two items; however, one must be careful in drawing conclusions until the reasons are known as to why a scholar cites a particular source (Smith, 1981). Nonetheless, the

scholar has in some way acknowledged the usefulness of these resources, and that in and of itself shows use (Smith, 1981).

CURRENT STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine the differences of cited references found in students' dissertations and faculty publications during pre-web, emergent, and post-web time periods. The population is composed of students and faculty in the departments of reading and educational leadership within the School of Education and Human Services at Oakland University. Therefore, the independent variable is the population status of the researcher (faculty or graduate student) and the dependent variables are the format (book, journal article, conference paper, etc.), age, and scholarliness of the item being cited.

The following questions are being addressed:

1. What types of items are cited by Ph.D. students and faculty?
2. Have citation patterns changed from the pre-web, to emergent, to post-web time periods?
3. Do Ph.D. students and faculty cite journals of equal scholarliness?
4. Do Ph.D. students and faculty cite items that have a similar citation age?

Faculty are seen from two different viewpoints for the purposes of this study. First, their publications will be examined in order to analyze materials that are cited within the bibliographies of their articles.

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Second, faculty take on the role of advisors by being members of dissertation committees as well as being mentors to students within their departments. Even faculty members who are not members of dissertation committees can be influential in what the student reads and cites. Faculty can be highly influential by identifying key theories, relevant readings, and significant journal titles they feel are important for their students' research whether in the classroom, office, hallway, or through departmental communications and meetings.

One issue that will not be addressed in this study is library ownership of cited items. Holdings have changed excessively over the course of this study that it would be impossible to determine whether a specific item was available at a specific time. Within the time period studied, library holdings have increased exponentially because of the availability of competitive e-journal packages, consortial subscriptions, and, most importantly, increased commitment from the university administration to support collections and access.

Oakland University, founded in 1957, is a public university located in Rochester, Michigan with the Carnegie classification of Doctoral/Research University. Enrollment reached 20,000 students during Fall 2013 – of those approximately 3500 are graduate students. The School of Education and Human Services enrolls about 2600 students; 1200 undergraduate and 1400 graduate students. The School's Ph.D. in Reading and Language Arts is one of the oldest doctorate granting programs on campus. Additional Ph.D. programs were added in 1998 with majors including Counseling, Early Childhood Education, and Educational Leadership.

Oakland University students and faculty relied on print indexes and abstracts as well as online mediated searching until September 1987 when the ERIC database became available for user searching through a standalone CD-ROM. This was soon followed by the availability of PsycLit on CD-ROM, and within a few more years campus-wide access to a few select databases was available via the CD-ROM local area network (LAN). Eventually, the number of databases available via remote access increased dramatically so that library users could perform their own literature searches. At the same time, librarian mediated searches at the Oakland University library peaked during the fiscal year 1986/1987 but exhibited a sharp decline during the next four years. Also, the words "internet access", "JSTOR", and "Project MUSE" first appeared in the library's 1998/1999 electronic resources annual report. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, pre-web is defined as the time period including the publication years 1983–1990, emergent is identified with the years 1991–1998, while the post-web time period spans 1999–2014.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A closer look at citation analysis bears merit. As mentioned before, citation analysis can be a useful tool as long as one recognizes the difference between the act of citing an item and the author's motivation for citing an item. The motivational aspect has been addressed by numerous authors, and others recognize its complexity (Brooks, 1985; Harwood, 2009). Nicolaisen (2007) suggests that one should be cautious, "Attempts to explain citation behavior should thus refrain from psychologizing the act of citing and instead recognize it as embedded within the sociocultural conventions of collectives" (p. 633). Additionally, Bornmann and Daniel (2008) believe that "authors have differing views as to the necessity for citations in their documents; and do not cite all works that have influenced their own work" (p. 69).

Another frequent issue in the citation literature is the heavy citing frequency of a core set of journal titles within a field. Stevens (1953) coined the phrase *title dispersion* to describe this concept, and it "may be defined as the degree to which the useful literature of a given subject area is scattered through a number of different books and journals" (p. 12). If many different journal titles are cited, then title dispersion is high. If relatively few materials are constantly cited, then the title dispersion is low. Stevens (1953) theorized that there would be low title

dispersion for science fields but high title dispersion in the social sciences. Kuruppu and Moore (2008) partially confirmed this belief by discovering low title dispersion upon examining dissertations in the fields of agriculture and biology.

Tobias (1975) described a similar phenomenon upon examining cited references from freshmen composition papers in various disciplines. She found that a handful of periodicals accounted for a large amount of cited journal titles: 60% of the items cited derived from 8.3% of the journal titles; 80% of the items came from 20% of the journal titles, and 90% of the items were found in 50% of the journal titles. Commonly known as the 80/20 rule, this pattern was originally identified by Truswell (1969) and is currently abundant throughout the citation analysis literature as well (Feyereisen & Spoiden, 2009; Sylvia & Leshner, 1995; Waugh & Ruppel, 2004).

What is important about citation analysis is not only what is cited but who does the citing. Faculty are seasoned researchers and are theoretically more familiar with the literature in their areas, therefore, they are more likely to cite those items that they deem more worthy. Undergraduates, on the other hand, are getting to know the literature in a field and are influenced to cite items their professors expect provided that clear guidelines are present (Davis, 2003). As students progress from undergraduate to graduate status, it is expected that the "types of sources students select should reflect their growing sophistication and ability to think critically in their chosen discipline" (Carlson, 2006, p. 15).

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF CITATION ANALYSIS

Citation analysis provides a unique perspective on the use of scholarly literature. "Empirically, one of the best ways to measure past use of an academic library is through citation analysis of student research papers" (Sylvia & Leshner, 1995, p. 314). Furthermore, the unobtrusive method of gathering information for a citation analysis provides a reliable method of gathering data without delving into the motivational aspects of selecting a citation (Kuruppu & Moore, 2008).

However, there are drawbacks to citation analysis including formal influences not being cited (deception or forgetfulness), biased citing (citing the secondary source instead of the primary source), informal influences not being cited (conversations, communications), self-citing, positive or negative citations, and clerical errors (MacRoberts & MacRoberts, 1989). Also, the motivation factor comes into play as pointed out by many (Kushkowski, Parsons, & Wiese, 2003; Nicolaisen, 2007). One of the main disadvantages of examining student citation behavior is "that students tend to use what is found easily in local libraries" (Sylvia & Leshner, 1995, p. 314). Indeed, on a similar note Haycock (2004) exclaimed that a "weak collection could lead to inadequate study of the literature for a dissertation" (p. 103).

CITATION ANALYSIS OF DISSERTATIONS

Numerous studies have used citation analysis of dissertations to study citation behavior. Smith (2003) undertook a citation analysis of dissertations from the University of Georgia published between 1991 and 2001 covering many disciplines. Overall, periodicals were cited more than monographs in 1991 (54% to 37%) and 2001 (48% to 38%), however, variations existed depending on the discipline. Science researchers cited periodicals far more frequently than monographs in 1991 (79% to 14%) and 2001 (64% to 18%), and this trend was also found in the social sciences in 1991 (60% to 36%) and 2001 (60% to 32%). However, the opposite was true in the arts and humanities in which monographs were cited more frequently in 1991 (75 to 20%) and 2001 (71% to 19%). Within the field of education, periodicals were cited a bit more frequently than monographs in 1991 (45% to 37%) and 2001 (49% to 37%). Kuruppu and Moore (2008) also discovered that journals were more frequently cited than monographs upon examining 154 dissertations in nine fields of biological and agricultural sciences at Iowa State University.

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