



A Bibliometric Analysis of the Scholarly Publications of Librarians at the University of Mississippi, 2008–2013



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ABSTRACT

This article uses bibliometric tools to analyze the peer-reviewed publications of tenure and tenure track librarians at the University of Mississippi from 2008 to 2013. The purpose of this article is to gain a better understanding of the role of academic librarians including the role that tenure plays in librarian publications and the usage of the collection by librarians for research. Analysis found that 59% of librarians publishing peer-reviewed literature were tenure track and 81% of sources cited from all librarians' peer-reviewed publications were held by the University of Mississippi's J.D. Williams library.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic librarians provide educational and research support services to a broad constituency with diverse needs. A body of literature has been developed in librarianship that analyzes those needs in order to provide the desired services and collections. Librarians use such research in order to provide solutions as to how libraries can continue to accommodate more people and study space, while maintaining their collections. Bibliometric tools offer a way to analyze this data; however, those tools have gone largely unused in the area of librarian interests and publishing behaviors.

This exploratory study will look at the resources, tools and topics librarians in a single institution use to gain a better understanding of the interests and publishing behaviors of academic librarians. As librarians are the most familiar with library collections, analyzing their usage should give insights as to what resources are being used and possibly suggestions for those that could be removed. At the same time, the role of tenure in librarian publications should be considered in order to determine if librarians publish only until tenure is awarded or if they continue to publish and use the collection afterwards.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the scholarly peer-reviewed research published by librarians at the University of Mississippi using bibliometric tools to determine research productivity, types of sources cited, and how many of the cited sources are available through their library.

This study is limited to the scholarly peer-reviewed publications of librarians at the University of Mississippi published between 2008 and 2013. This study does not include book reviews or other publications that have not undergone a peer-review process.

For this study it is assumed that all scholarly publications have been reported by librarians accurately on their University of Mississippi Faculty Activity Report, that all citations on those scholarly publications are cited correctly, and include all sources used in the publications. It is also assumed that librarians with the title of Associate Professor or Professor are tenured and librarians with the title Assistant Professor are on tenure track, but have not yet received tenure. Librarians at the University of Mississippi are considered full time faculty and as such are eligible for tenure, a process that takes place over a five year period at the end of which librarians receive an agreement of perpetual employment provided they have shown satisfactory job performance in the areas of librarianship, research, and service.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1 *How many librarians have published scholarly literature between the years of 2008 and 2013?*
- RQ2 *What percentage of those are tenured or on tenure track?*
- RQ3 *In which journals are librarians publishing?*
- RQ4 *On what topics are the scholarly literature published by librarians in this study?*
- RQ5 *What types of resources are they citing? Books, e-books, articles, Web sites?*
- RQ6 *How many (and what percentage) of cited resources are held by their institution?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

A search of scholarly literature could not locate a previous bibliometric study of the scholarly publications of librarians from a single institution. Bibliometric studies of university faculty and studies of similar methodology are used in lieu of a similar study.

BIBLIOMETRIC STUDIES

Wilson (2012) submits a list of applications for bibliometric research in “Research Methods: Bibliometrics.” Those applications include “Improving the bibliographic control of a literature,” “Identifying a core literature, especially journals,” and “Describing patterns of book use by patrons, and developing and evaluating library collections” (Wilson, 2012, p. 122). Wilson addresses the benefit of bibliometric tools to evaluate and develop library collections. Burrell, Hahn, & Antonisse’s study uses several of the applications listed by Wilson. Burrell, Hahn, & Antonisse (2005) conclude that during the years of their study, 2001–2003, authors’ citations were interdisciplinary including a wide range of different scientific fields, journal articles were cited the most with books coming in second, the majority of literature cited was over 15 years old, and coauthorship was high in neuroscience publications.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Pancheshnikov’s (2007) study of a faculty publication and student theses for collection development uses found that faculty use more sources and are therefore seen as a more comprehensive and reliable source for use in collection development analysis. Pancheshnikov compiled citations for both groups by number of citations, material type, percentage of citations to journal articles, percentage of citations to monographs, and age of monographs. While Pancheshnikov’s study showed that faculty sources are seen as more reliable, Knievel and Kellsey’s (2005) study concluded that citation patterns varied significantly among the faculty of eight different fields within a single humanities department. The study did show that monographs represented the majority of all citations consistently throughout the humanities (Knievel & Kellsey, 2005).

As with Knievel and Kellsey (2005), monographs were found to be the most cited materials in Kayongo and Helm’s (2009) study of anthropology faculty publications. Monographs were found to be cited at 47% with journals second at 45% (Kayongo & Helm, 2009); 72% of faculty citations were held by their library; and 41.78% of the cited materials were a minimum of 10 years old. Enger’s (2009) study attempted to discern whether collection development decisions based on studies such as those previously mentioned would provide measurable differences in circulation statistics from items selected through traditional methods of collection development such as book reviews and patron requests. Enger found no discernable difference between the different methods.

PUBLISHING BY TENURED AND TENURE TRACK FACULTY

Doty’s (2013) study, which surveyed faculty to determine what type of publications they were most likely to publish in, used 15 faculty members, five of which were tenure track assistant professors, four were tenured associate professors, and six were tenured full professors. Only one of the assistant professors had published in an open access journal and 12 were not interested in publishing in open access journals at all (Doty, 2013). One tenured professor was “likely to seriously consider” publishing in an open access journal and reputation of a journal was given by 12 of the 15 as a reason for choosing their last place of publication (Doty, 2013, p. 5). Doty highlights the importance that is placed on not only publishing, but the venue in which one is publishing. Sugimoto et al. (2014) surmised that universities expect librarians to

conduct scholarly research due to the amount of tenure track librarian positions that exist and the publishing requirements those positions entail. Brown (2013) states that citation analyses are increasingly suggested as appropriate and helpful when included in tenure and promotion portfolios or dossiers for faculty as they show the importance or impact that a faculty member’s research has on their field. Librarians are increasingly tasked with helping faculty members with this type of research and have created many guides to assist faculty who are performing citation analyses (Brown). Doty and Brown highlight the importance of peer-reviewed publications in the tenure process for faculty.

SIMILAR METHODOLOGIES

Choinski’s (2007) study compiled pharmacy faculty research articles published in journals over a 3 year period. Journal titles, age of cited materials, format of cited materials, publisher information, and journal subject were collected. Dewland’s (2011) study analyzed the citations of business faculty in the fields of management, marketing, management information systems, and finance. Similar to Choinski, Dewland organized faculty citations by age, publication, publisher, and Library of Congress Classification. Only 22% of all faculty citations were found by Dewland to be non-journal citations.

Hendrix’s (2008) study gathered a total of articles published at each medical school, calculated a total number of citations to article citations and the average number of citations per article. Hendrix was further able to calculate the average number of articles per faculty member, average number of citations per faculty member, and other data. The author concluded that a school ranking or just one statistic is not a true representation of the institution’s research output and that librarians should use other methodologies with bibliometric tools in order to form an accurate picture of an institution’s research output and impact. Hendrix’s findings are important to the scope of bibliometric analysis as the studies of Choinski (2007) and Dewland (2011) highlight. These studies show that a vast amount of information must be analyzed in order to determine research output.

Wilson’s (2012) applications for a bibliometric study are used in Pancheshnikov (2007), Kayongo and Helm (2009), Knievel and Kellsey (2005), and Enger’s (2009) studies which further help to illustrate the benefit of bibliometric tools. This study takes into account the findings of those studies. The separate studies of Doty (2013) and Brown (2013) promote the importance of peer-reviewed publications in the tenure process for faculty. This study is similarly interested in the peer-reviewed publications of tenure and tenure track faculty publications. The methodology used in this study is comparable to that of Choinski (2007), Dewland (2011), and Hendrix (2008) as all compile citations from a set of pre-determined sources and organize the data obtained from those sources into categories such as publication year, material type, and library holdings.

METHODOLOGY

In order to be as comprehensive as possible, the Internet Archive’s Way Back Machine was used to capture a list of librarians and their titles for each year from 2008 to 2013 from the University of Mississippi’s J.D. Williams Library Web site. The scholarly peer-reviewed publications from those librarians were collected from their 2008–2013 Faculty Activity Reports (FAR) via the online MyOlemiss system. This information is available to employees of the University of Mississippi, but not open to outside access. For this reason, permission for the use of this material was requested from the Dean of the Libraries at the University of Mississippi and granted. At this point, publications were sorted by author in order to determine how many librarians had published scholarly articles in the last five years. A copy of all scholarly publications was retrieved from online databases, print journals, or inter-library loan.

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