

An Examination of the Value of Bibliometric Research: Past Achievement and Future Prospects

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Information science, like many other disciplines, encompasses a variety of specialties that have at times attracted intense activity and later fallen out of favor. Bibliometrics, the quantitative analysis of written communication, is such an area. Although work in the field began much earlier, it was not until the widespread availability of computers (particularly with the creation of computer readable citation indexes) that serious work could be accomplished in a feasible manner.

After an initial period of popularity, however, the field of bibliometrics appears to have fallen out of fashion. This study is an examination of the change in popularity that the various topics investigated in bibliometric research have taken, as well as speculation on current and future prospects.

The historical aspect of the study investigates the field of bibliometrics over the last thirty years, analyzing its impact on the discipline of information science and the practice of the science in general. In particular, the research examines the number of articles published on bibliometric topics over time, their impact on disciplines other than library and information science, and the proportion of published research in library and information science devoted to the topic.

In probing current trends and future prospects, the study solicits the views of major figures in bibliometrics on the following questions:

- 1) Has the field fallen out of fashion, and if so, why?
- 2) What contributions has bibliometric research made to the field of information science. Are the benefits of such research still useful?
- 3) Is bibliometric research still a valuable tool, and if so, for what purposes?
- 4) What directions must bibliometric research take if it is to continue to contribute improving the transfer of information.
- 5) What are the future prospects for the field.

Analysis of the answers to these questions should provide insights into the applicability of bibliometric research, as well as provide direction for those working in the field.