

The publishing characteristics of non-source items in social sciences

Pei-Shan Chi

chi@forschungsinfo.de

Institute for Research Information and Quality Assurance (iFQ), Godesberger Allee 90, 53175 Bonn (Germany)

Introduction

The publishing characteristics of social sciences compared to natural science mainly include: social scientists publish in different types of literature, they spend more time to produce books than journal articles, they focus on local audiences and local material, and publications in edited volumes and monographs tend to be important for both output and impact. Besides, the literatures are so fragmented that it is more difficult to be covered comprehensively in a single international database. (Hicks, 1999; Nederhof, 2006)

As for the main literatures of social sciences, Hicks (2004) summarized four types of social science literature: international journal articles, books, national literatures, and non-scholarly literatures. Using international journal articles, which are SSCI indexed and the currency of evaluation around the world, to communicate research results to the international audience is an important part of scholarly work. However, the percentage of journal articles differs in different disciplines.

Besides journal articles, books can have a very high impact. In general, books are taken about 1.5 years longer to be written than journal articles (Burnhill & Tubby-Hille, 1994). Hicks (1999) pointed out the additional time taken to produce a book should allow it to become more intellectual and thus raise its impact.

National literature, representing knowledge developed in a local context, is another main literature in social sciences since both producers and consumers of social science are nationally oriented (Hicks, 1999; Hicks, 2004). Whereas scientists

communicate mostly to other scientists, humanities scholars and social scientists have the responsibility to disseminate knowledge as well to the general public via non-scholarly literature.

Unfortunately, non-scholarly literature, being also national literature, is less well indexed, and does not earn citations or respect in this area as an output of scholarly work (Hicks, 2004, p. 489).

The current comprehensive citation databases which provide users the citing and cited information of a specific publication are Web of Science (WOS), Scopus, and Google Scholar. Those publications not indexed by these databases are called “non-source items” in this poster.

The international orientation and high visibility threshold of WOS cause the loss of a lot of important social science literatures which published in local language or in a local-oriented journal. Scopus has a better coverage in foreign language. Norris and Oppenheim (2007) found 1,994 (43.4%) titles matching the coverage of WOS and 2,324 (50.6%) titles matching the coverage of Scopus, comparing 4,594 journals extracted from the Higher Education & Research Opportunities (HERO) website which holds the records for 2001 Research Assessment Exercise to citation databases.

Therefore, Nederhof (2006) suggested that not only rely on ISI source serials, but one also needs to include: non-ISI source serials, monographs, contributions to edited volumes, formal reports, publications. Besides, Norris and Oppenheim (2007) provided their ideal suggestion to indicate that any database which is in social science would

incorporate to a greater degree the scholarly output found in monographs, reports, articles, and articles appearing in non-English language.

Method

This poster attempts to investigate the publishing characteristics of non-source items in social sciences, especially with regard to political science, for being a relative empirical field and accurate to define the corresponding departments. The full five-year (2003-2007) publication list of two top ranking German universities, Department of Political Science at Mannheim University and Institute of Political Science at University of Tübingen, are chosen as research samples. This poster will provide an outline to solve the current bibliometric problems in social sciences and present first results, including:

- publishing characteristics of non-source items in social sciences
- the change caused by inclusion of non-source items
- an appropriate coverage of bibliometric databases in social sciences based on the impact of inclusion of non-source items

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