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Citation Searching

Citation searching, specifically cited reference searching, refers to finding articles that have cited previously published work (i.e. tracing research forward).

Citation searching can also include looking at the citations within a paper (i.e. the bibliography) to trace research backwards.

Benefits

The number of times a paper is cited in the work of others can be an indication of its usefulness.

Through a cited reference search, you can discover how a known idea or innovation has been confirmed, applied, improved, extended, or corrected.

Citation analysis can also be used to identify emerging areas of research, identify a field's leading researchers and to assess research output.

Drawbacks

The use of citation analysis to assess research output is contentious.

A large number of citations does not necessarily mean the work should be viewed as authoritative. Work can be cited by other authors for a number of different reasons and some of the recognised drawbacks when using citations are:

- **negative citation** - a work is cited to criticise or correct
- **self citation** - an author cites their own work
- **preferential citing** of a brief paper in a prestigious journal than to a "more comprehensive paper" in a speciality journal
- **journal referees' recommendations** to authors, who have submitted work for publication approval, to include reference to the referee's work
- **citation circles** - friends citing friends
- **it is serials dependent** - citation searching/analysis tends to concentrate on output in journals or conference proceedings and researchers in different disciplines vary in how much they communicate through these media.
- **restrictions on article length** imposed by journal editors resulting in an author reducing the number of citations s/he would have originally provided

Likewise, not being cited does not invalidate a work. There are acknowledged reasons for this:

- **work doesn't have to be cited** to have influenced someone else's work
- **delayed recognition** - although work is cited most in the 10 years after its publication some work is not picked up on for a considerable time
- **"obliteration by incorporation" I** - review articles tend to be cited in preference to the individual papers

reviewed and many uncited papers involve supersedure. E.g. Each new laboratory report by established investigators builds on and/or supersedes their own earlier work. It is not unusual to observe that after a decade of research, the entire corpus is superseded by a "review" which is preferentially cited by subsequent investigators

- **"obliteration by incorporation" II** - incorporation into a subject's accepted knowledge such that it can be quoted without the need for citation
- **newly published papers** yet to be cited by others

References for the above can be found at

<http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/resbysub/physcitssearch.shtml#drawbacks>

Which resources to use



In Web of Science (WoS), you should choose the

Things worth knowing:

- The number of times a paper has been subsequently cited by others is referred to as '**Times Cited**'
- This is the number of times the reference has been cited in all years of WoS
- it is advisable to enter a single initial followed by a wildcard, where appropriate, of the first listed author in the **Cited Author** field. That way, you will be sure to retrieve all variations of the author and of the same cited reference
- A search for a cited author will retrieve all cited items where the author is first named, and also where the author is a co-author **IF** the cited work also appears as a full record in the database
- ... before an author's name signifies that the author is not the first author of the cited article
- Search for patent citations by entering the patent number, without country code, in the **Cited Work** box
- **Eliminate self-citations** by combining a cited reference search and an general search for author with a Boolean **NOT**
- The number of references matching your query is given at the top of the first results screen and unless you have specified otherwise, the references are arranged alphabetically by cited work and presented in pages of twenty

Further information about Cited Reference Searching within WoK is available online at

http://wos22.isiknowledge.com/help/hcr_lookup.htm#how_to_crs

Other suggested resources can be found at:

<http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/resbysub/info/databases.shtml#citation>

If you have any queries regarding Library Resources and Services for Informatics, or would like to provide comments or feedback, please contact:

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