

# Two steps forward, one step back: promises and risks for bibliometrics in the humanities

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# International context

- multitude of bibliometric indicators
- multitude of data sources – major ones are either commercial, and licensed (WoS, Scopus) or opaque (GS)
- bibliometrics as scientific research vs. evaluative bibliometrics
- rising demand for scientometric expertise: need for data + indicators + a meaningful interpretation
  - whose responsibility is it?
- *Leiden manifesto* (in making) – about responsibility for developing valid and useful metrics and research assessment methodologies → establishing standards

# Situation in Croatia

5 years ago - no one asked about citation-related information in humanities.

Today:

- project applications (state or institutional)
- promotions/hiring (State regulations on promotions in science)
- journal subsidies
- institution assessment (for funds allocation)
- accreditation of university programs and studies
- awards

all are taking bibliometric data into account

# Problems with metrics-based assessment in the humanities (in Croatia)

Several groups of problems (general and local)

- Related to communication and publishing practices in humanities
- Limitations of citation data sources and tools
- Problems related to small scientific communities and non-english language publications
- Choice of appropriate indicators and methods
- Responsibility for application

# Generally identified problems with humanities (Nederhof, Hammerfelt...):

- mixed audience: international and national scholarly, public audience; local orientation
- different publication habits and channels (importance of monographs and edited books, preference of single-authored publications, language, etc.)
- lower values of collaboration, interdisciplinarity and internationality
- intellectual organization of research in the humanities
- disciplinary differences in referencing practices and citation patterns
- it takes longer time for a publication to get cited (lengthier citation windows should be used)
- heterogeneous nature of research in the humanities (archaeology, linguistics ≠ literary studies)

# Problems in using existing data sources for citation analysis

- Low coverage of humanities journals
- Non-source items (cited reference search) → no authority structure (problems with common surnames)
- multi-authored works attributed to first author only in WoS
- GS citing items: url and content duplicates, non-scientific content (theses, lecture handouts, syllabi, presentation abstracts, project proposals), citations to books attributed to authors of introductions or translators
- in documents indexed by GS, where GS does not have access to full text, cited references are not recorded (for instance ERIC database, CROSB national bibliography...)
- BKCI - on-going project with significant limitations: a bias towards English language publications (96% of its books) and publishers from UK or USA (75%), great concentration of publishers (Springer, Palgrave and Routledge alone account for 50% of the total databases)
- time-consuming human filtering

# Metric-based assessment in Croatia

- Over-reliance on bibliometric data (perceived as objective, easily implemented and reliable, as opposed to peer review)
- Not enough experts (bibliometric researchers and professionals)
- Lack of information infrastructure
- Choice of indicators and methods – erroneous and not related to purposes and goals of evaluation process, with insufficient instructions
  - “The key principle is that the unit of assessment, the research dimension to be assessed, and the purposes of the assessment jointly determine the type of indicators to be used. ” (Moed & Halevi, 2014)
- Coverage in A&I databases as a popular indicator (getting in or being dropped out)
- Changes in evaluation criteria → changing publishing behavior (“it is wise to change an assessment method radically every 5 to 10 years” Moed & Halevi, 2014)

# Current trends and developments

## Altmetrics

- adoption of social media varies across fields (Rowlands et al. 2011)
- “Four promises” of altmetric research (Wouters & Costas 2012, Hammerfelt 2014):
  - **the diversity of dissemination channels analysed**
  - the speed of acquiring/retrieving data
  - the openness of method
  - **the ability to measure impact beyond the ‘scholarly realm’** (social impact!)
- same old problems: importance of non-journal publications, reliance on print, limited coverage of non-english language publications

## Downloads

- COUNTER
- aggregation?



# Current trends and developments (cont.)

- Citation analysis – expanded to non-source materials and using lifetime citation data (Linmans)
- ERIH PLUS (European Reference Index for the Humanities) - Norwegian Social Science Data Services
- Ranking book publishers (quality or prestige?)
  - Surveys
  - Reviews
  - Sales
  - Citation data! - total citation count or mean citation per book (Zuccalla et al. 2014)
- *Libcitations* (library holdings, not library loans) – WorldCat
  - strongly correlated with citation rates

“slow bibliometrics: thinking before counting”

Yves Gingras