

Academic Books: Are They Cited? – Extended Abstract

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Introduction

One of the major challenges in research evaluation is how to deal with books and book chapters, which are not well covered in the major bibliometric databases, the Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus. WOS launched its Book Citation Index in 2011. The Book Citation Index covers approximately 100,000 books published after 2004, with 10,000 books added each year (Thomson Reuters, 2011). Scopus reported indexing 120,000 books by 2016, adding 10,000 books each year (Baetty, 2016). In terms of numbers, Scopus has higher coverage based on the information we found. Scopus, unlike WOS, includes books in its database, thus no additional subscription is needed to access information on the books covered by it.

The aim of this study is to find out how a subset of the eBooks from Proquest's Ebrary are cited, to study the differences between citations received by books in the Humanities, the Social Sciences and the Sciences and to track the changes in the number of citations in two and a half years.

Methods

For data collection, we used the Proquest Ebrary which in 2015 included more than 70,000 book titles. The books were uploaded to a PlumX dashboard, accessible to the second author. PlumX is an altmetric aggregator, but also reports citations from Scopus. For this study, we included the books that had Scopus citations in 2015 (2,818 books). We retrieved citations in 2018 from Scopus and classified each book to large categories based on the Scopus classification. In 2015 we used the Scopus citation counts reported by PlumX. The categories were:

- Arts & Humanities (AH)
- Social Science (SSCI)
 - Includes the following Scopus categories: social science, psychology, economics and business management
- All others (SCI)
 - Includes the following Scopus categories: all science categories, medicine, health and engineering

The categories were assigned by Scopus, obvious mistakes were corrected by us. Sometimes more than one category was assigned as can be seen in Figure 1.

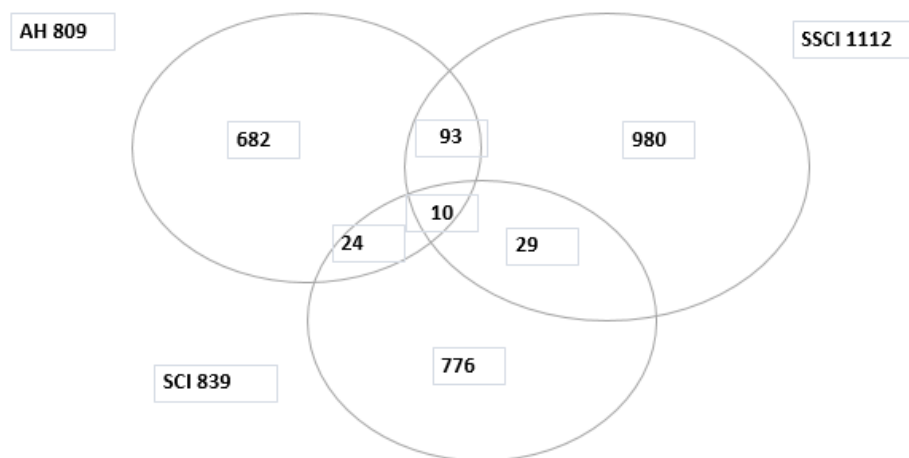


Figure 1. Books by major categories

The data set included books that were published between 1991 and 2015. The largest number of eBooks in the dataset were published in 2012 (417 books) and the smallest in 2015 with 2 books only probably because

these books had not had enough time to gather citations by the time of the initial data collection (end of 2015). Only 61 books were published before 2003. The average number of books published per year between 2003 and 2014 was 198.

Results

We have Scopus citation counts for all the eBooks, both collected in 2015 and in 2018. Table 1 displays the citation counts for per subject categories and Table 2 per year. The 166 books assigned to more than one category are designated as MIX. Both tables show a huge increase in the number of citations between 2015 and 2018. Science publication received the highest number of average citations per publication in both years, even though books are more popular in the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Overall the number of citations increased 2.1 times within two and a half years.

Subject categories	Scopus15	Average per book 2015	Scopus 18	Average per book 2018
AH	17,289	27.2	28,985	45.6
SSCI	20,497	22.8	42,724	47.5
SCI	28,959	38.1	68,797	90.4
MIX	1,647	11.1	4,528	30.6
Total	68,392	28.0	145,034	59.3

Table 1. Scopus citations in 2015 and 2018 by subject categories

Subject categories	Scopus15	Average per book 2015	Scopus 18	Average per book 2018
<2002	3,774	83.9	4,563	101.4
2002	739	46.2	948	59.3
2003	3,577	59.6	4,952	82.5
2004	3,810	35.0	11,486	105.4
2005	5,209	46.5	9,326	83.3
2006	4,320	34.0	21,602	170.1
2007	9,740	64.1	15,269	100.5
2008	4,952	24.8	10,774	53.9
2009	8,026	38.0	15,664	74.2
2010	8,183	33.0	15,770	63.6
2011	7,119	18.9	13,693	36.3
2012	6,638	16.7	13,491	33.9
2013	1,414	6.5	3,841	17.8
2014	883	5.2	3,456	20.2
2015	8	4.0	199	99.5
Total	68,392	28.0	145,034	59.3

Table 2. Scopus citations in 2015 and 2018 per publication year

Conclusion

This is a research in progress with some interesting findings. There are books that receive a high number of citations and are not forgotten (more citations accumulate over the years). We intend to expand this study by adding altmetrics. For edited books, some of the individual chapters are cited even more than the book (here we counted citations to the book as a whole only). In the future we plan to study citations to book chapters, similarly to Bookmetrix (Springer-Nature, 2018) which is now limited only to books published by Springer.

References

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