

## Foreword

### WHITHER JOURNALS AND IMPACT FACTORS?

A search of the *Web of Science* on the term "impact factor" produces over 1,100 papers. The table below demonstrates the recent exponential growth of papers retrieved from 1991 to 2007. Over 60% of these papers were published in the past six years! About 100 were published in *Scientometrics*.

Publication Year	Record Count	%
1991	5	0.4
1992	20	1.7
1993	15	1.3
1994	6	0.5
1995	23	2.0
1996	29	2.6
1997	35	3.1
1998	56	5.0
1999	59	5.2
2000	83	7.4
2001	77	6.8
2002	115	10.2
2003	95	8.4
2004	120	10.6
2005	146	12.9
2006	175	15.5
2007	55	4.9

A smaller number of papers (625) cited my 1972 paper on "Citation analysis as a tool in journal evaluation."<sup>1</sup> Among these are 50 papers published in *Scientometrics* of which 40 are included in this Guidebook. This provides a useful sample of the literature on this subject which only the most diligent scholar could read and evaluate. Indeed, a comprehensive critical review would be the basis of one or more doctoral dissertations.

Until an objective review of this literature occurs, individual editors will choose to rely on those studies which support their subjective opinions of the merits of any type

of quantitative appraisal. Statistics are always fascinating but they can be used or abused to suit one's purposes.

Let me remind the naysayers that the popularity of numerical assessments is related to the earlier negative experiences with the subjective peer review system. From long experience, such evaluations are even more easily manipulated to suit various political agendas.

It is now more than 50 years since I first became fascinated with the potential of citation indexes for information retrieval. A decade later, we were using the *Science Citation Index* to build on the work of early pioneers of journal citation analyses. That the literature on this subject has grown and continues to grow suggests that there will always be "added-value" in making easier the job of using that large literature intelligently. This Guidebook will be a useful starting point. Undoubtedly, it will have to be updated in future decades. Even Nostradamus would not be able to foretell where this topic will be in a few generations. Some question whether journals, as we know them, will continue to exist or whether they will be displaced by open access or other forms of depository publication such as those proposed by J.D. Bernal and others long ago. In that event, "journal evaluation" per se may be no more, but don't hold your breath. Here come research fronts, co-citation clusters, semantic categories, page ranks, and other forms of classification, which is what conventional journals are inherently about.

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## Reference

1. Garfield E. "Citation analysis as a tool in journal evaluation," *Science* 178(4060) p.471-479. 1972.  
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