

Reassessing the validity of research assessments

A social experiment (2010)

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1. Introduction

The literature concerned with bibliometry and scientometry has been concerned with the question of how the actual output and impact of scholars can be ascertained. Whereas a situation in which scholars were mainly judged of subjective criteria was deemed undesirable, scientometry has developed new strategies based on objective criteria such as the number of published articles in ISI-rated journals, the number of citations to an author in ISI-rated journals, the number of citations on Google scholar, The H-index, Crown-index etc. Recently our faculty has introduced personal metis – a tracking system for mapping one's output, which has to be maintained by the researchers themselves. Because personal metis is connected to repub, researchers can keep their output up to date and upload the papers so as to make them widely available through the internet. On the one hand, it is nice that researchers themselves have the autonomy to be responsible for their research output, but on the other hand it makes you wonder about the checks on this system – For instance, are all publications which the researcher says they are A-rated papers (top-quality internationally peer-reviewed papers) counted as such, or are there checks and balances so as to prevent employees to submit even the most obscure papers as top-quality papers.

2. The growing importance of H-index like indicators

As briefly mentioned above, the H-index is growing in importance as a tool for research assessment. The H-index is a fairly simple index which combines the extent to which an author has published papers and the extent to which these papers are cited. For example – an H-index of 1 means that an author has published one article which is cited once. An H-index of 10 means that an author has published 10 articles, and that each of these articles was cited at least 10 times each. So the author was cited at least a hundred times.

There is a serious drawback to the use of the H-index: it completely relies on the availability of the papers on Google Scholar. Unfortunately, this means that it relies on the researchers abilities to get their stuff published on internet pages which are mapped by Google Scholar. The aforementioned repub database offers a good possibility for uploading one's papers, and making them findable through Google Scholar. Potentially, authors could adjust their H-index by uploading a paper which only purpose is to cite the

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author's own work. If this non-existent paper is not shunt from repub, then the authors h-index can be raised considerably.

3. Research aim

The current article has two aims. The first is check whether the content of self-reported output is being checked. The second is to find out whether the H-index can really be altered by authors themselves. With this article I hence would like to experimentally study whether I can get this article uploaded into personal metis as an A-rated publication, and whether in the next research assessment (January 2011) this publication is indeed counted as such. For this purpose I'll submit it as a paper published in *Transylvanian Journal of Obscure Sociology* 4(1): 112-116. Furthermore, once uploaded into repub, the paper may potentially raise my H-index artificially.

4. Raising my H-index

In order for my H-index to be raised, I need to refer to my published works. So here we go (Achterberg and Houtman, 2003a, b; Achterberg *et al.*, 2003; Achterberg, 2004a, b, 2005, 2006a, b, c; Achterberg and Houtman, 2006; Van der Waal and Achterberg, 2006; Achterberg, 2007; Van der Waal *et al.*, 2007a, b, c; Achterberg, 2008; Achterberg and Houtman, 2008; Achterberg and Snel, 2008; De Koster *et al.*, 2008a, b; Dekker and Achterberg, 2008; Houtman *et al.*, 2008a; Houtman *et al.*, 2008b; Achterberg and Houtman, 2009; Achterberg *et al.*, 2009a, b; Achterberg and Yerkes, 2009; Houtman and Achterberg, 2009; Houtman *et al.*, 2009; Van der Veen *et al.*, 2009).

5. Concluding

It remains to be seen whether this paper's goals are achieved. The fact that you are reading this at this moment means that I succeeded in uploading the paper into the metis and repub databases. It will probably have risen my H-index considerably. Check for yourself by downloading the newest publish or perish software from www.harzing.com. This means that the system can be manipulated considerably without much effort (it took me approximately 20 minutes to write this paper). Whether or not I succeed in getting this paper to be recognized as an A-rated paper remains to be seen. If you want to keep track – just send me an e-mail and I'll inform you about the status in March 2011.

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