REVIEW OF ARTICLES: “Expansion of the field of informetrics: Origins and consequences”

Information Processing & Management: Special Issue on Infometrics
Volume 41, Issue 6, Pages 1311-1316
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The article starts by defining the term ‘‘informetrics’’ as the broad term comprising all-metrics studies related to information science, including bibliometrics (bibliographies, libraries, etc..), scientometrics (science policy, citation analysis, research evaluation, etc..), and webometrics (metrics of the web, the Internet or other social networks). It continues talking about the history of the field ‘‘informetrics’’ (not the name) started already in the first half of the twentieth century e.g. by the works of Lotka, Bradford and Zipf. The term bibliometrics was coined in Pritchard (1969) and the term scientometrics was coined in Nalimov and Mulc’enko (1969). That the field of informetrics has grown in the twentieth century is evident but this growth has become more and more clear the last decades. Lipetz (1999) describes an exponential growth of JASIST (Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology) in terms of number of papers and in terms of number of authors registered.

Authors are also responsible for a multidisciplinary growth of the field of informetrics, hereby also indicating the influence of informetrics to other scientific disciplines. In general one can say that the creation of the ‘‘information society’’ is responsible for the growth of the field of informetrics. Therefore we can say that the field of informetrics nowadays comprises the field of webmetrics, netmetrics, and cybermetrics. This way the extension of information science to networks and the information society in general has the consequence that more and more data is gathered in an automatic way. This implies that data can be gathered in a much faster way than it used to be but also that the accuracy is dropping. This is caused because extraction from data sets is not normally done with clear definitions of the topics due to lack of standards, therefore one is not completely sure of what one gets.

It is very important to mention that the fact that most articles are nowadays appearing in electronic journals and/or repositories gives the new possibilities of measuring the use of articles not only by citations or web citations but also by measuring their number of downloads. Downloads can be considered as electronic versions of reading or photocopying of a paper article.

Apart from JASIST and Scientometrics, the present journal Information Processing and Management (IPM) is the only journal that regularly publishes papers devoted to informetrics studies. The authors talk about the importance of the publication of articles in the field and define quality papers as papers that present good mathematical (probabilistic) models and explanations of informetric regularities (in the broad sense). Quality papers are also those in which interesting and important data is gathered and presented. Based on these criteria, the article presents different papers from different authors that talk about subjects in the field of informetrics.

In comparison with the previous situation, illustrated in the article “An Introduction to Informetrics”, the introduction of Information Technologies (IT) in the field of informetrics is the main difference that can be seen between these two articles. In 1995 the IT hadn’t already had such an impact on the field. Nowadays informetrics is a much broader concept, as explained above.