Alone or together – examples from history research

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Abstract

Individualistic nature of research in the humanities is a common fact, as well as the notion that boundaries in humanities are poorly defined. Using citation analysis we have to take into account differences in citation practices not only between humanities and sciences, but also inside narrower fields of humanities. In the current study we observe differences between publication behaviour of historians and archaeologists, examine some aspects of citation practices in those fields, and show their effect on visibility.

Introduction

When investigating performance in the field of history, we must consider the existence of issues that must be agreed upon. Firstly, the risk that for the sake of performance indicators the fundamental principle of humanities – targeting at local audience – will be sacrificed (Finkenstaedt, 1990). According to Whitley (1984), the humanities serve two audiences – scholarly and public, which are both important for recognition and reputation. The same debate is going on in different countries. "History research has a clear public function and that has to be considered also when allocating funding. Clarity and science are not in this sense in contradiction with each other. We can therefore plainly require that publicly funded research should also have significance for the public at large," stressed a Turku University professor in 2007 (Jokisipilä, 2007). At the same time the question increasingly raised is the central purpose of popular history to wave the flag, strengthen national identity and cement national pride (Research Europe, 2010).

Secondly, the position that the humanities are not measurable by quantitative methods is a subject of very lively discussions. In addition, Helm (2000, 90) emphasises the interpretative nature of humanities. This statement is supported by a Taiwan historian (Mu-hsuan Huang, 2008) who states that humanities rely heavily on intuition and imagination. Humanities researchers also often emphasize the role of research in enlightening the general public (Hicks, 1999; Hicks, 2004; Nederhof, 1991). This is coupled with the finding about the boundaries blur and disciplines' intersection (Stone, 1982) in humanities, plus the reluctance of humanities researchers against indexed databases (Green, 2000; Buchanan, 2005). Because of this the evaluation of scholarly work in humanities is considered to be much more complicated, and besides journal articles, also books, national literature, and non-scholarly literature should be taken into account (Hicks, 2004). There is also the understanding that the growing demand for metrics as an aid in assessing the accomplishments of scientific researchers on different levels (individuals, research groups, departments, universities, countries, etc.) also has an effect on the humanities. „If a historian declares a full and correct analysis of the outbreak of the Hundred Years War when standing alone in the forest and no one hears, he might as well be wholly wrong. One cannot write history for history's sake: history is a dialogue, and the representation of the past requires the participation of an attentive audience, capable of both trust and criticism" (Mortimer, 2008).

Thirdly, using citation analysis we have to take into account differences in citation practices not only between humanities and sciences, but also inside narrower fields of humanities. As Zwaan and Nederhof (1990) pointed out, fields change over time, and publication practices of researchers can change dramatically. For example, in history, human genetics are forcefully entering the field (Must, 2006).

<u>Fourthly</u>, intensification of international scientific cooperation in practically all areas of science is a current phenomenon. Never before in human history have knowledge and information been as accessible as they currently are. Especially in history it has led to the question of how to reconcile the different views. As expressed by a Chinese historian: "In fact, as historical understanding today has become pluralistic, no theoretical structure or conceptual system is superior to others. We must recognize that even those peoples who lived beyond the boundaries of "civilization" have played important roles in world history" (Wu Xiaoqun, 2009).

This means that no individual national or regional perspective should dominate in the study of history. The consensus is not vital for a collaboration's success, sometimes it is just as important to learn to accept that different people will have different interpretations of the same event. (Vesper, 2010) History as the memory of nations shapes their identity and supports future development. It is important in this globalised world to understand better the way in which cultures and identities are formed; the relationship between national and global identities, feelings of belonging, traditions, beliefs and languages.

The possibility of using citation analysis to evaluate humanistic disciplines has been discussed since the creation of the Art and Humanities Citation Index in 1975. It is worth noting that one of the first who drew attention to the shortcomings of the database was the creator himself – Eugene Garfield (Garfield, 1979; Garfield, 1980; Garfield, 1982). The most consistent research in this area has been made by Anton J. Nederhof (Nederhof, 1989; Nederhof, 1991; Nederhof, 1992; Nederhof, 2006). The biggest shortcoming of existing indexes is the absence of information on monographs and archival sources which constitute a significant part of humanities references (Jones, 1972; Hider, 1996; Moed, 2002; Duff, 2004; Moed, 2005). This knowledge has led to various studies which assess humanities monographs (Cullars, 1998; Helm, 2000; Lewison, 2001; Giménez-Toledo, 2009; Kousha, 2009). The emerging trend is the use of the Library Catalogue Analysis in developing suitable indicators for the humanities (White, 2009; Torres-Salinas, 2009; Linmans, 2010).

Considering all limitations of the Reuters Thomson ISI Art and Humanities Citation Index database, several initiatives on national and continental level have been taken. In some respects, surprisingly, US humanities institutions were in the forefront of this process. The Initiative for Humanities and Culture was organized in 1998 because of understanding that the humanities are the only disciplines that lack reliable, comprehensive, and consistently updated statistical data necessary to chart trends and draw conclusions. (Solow, 2002) The results were released in February 2010 and are available at the Humanities Resource Centre Online. (Humanities Indicators)

In 2001, representatives of European Humanities Councils met in Budapest to discuss the problem of the low visibility of much of European humanities research, which was largely caused, it was agreed, by the inadequacy of existing bibliometric databases. The conclusion of the meeting was that it was essential to create the European Humanities Reference Index (ERIH) as a tool which would present the full range of high-quality publishing activities of European humanities researchers. The creation of ERIH had two main goals: to be both a bibliographic and a bibliometric tool, i.e. to facilitate both access to and assessment of humanities research. A further key aim was to raise the threshold standards of editorial practices of journals throughout Europe. The first phase of the project was completed with publishing fourteen so-called 'initial lists' in 2007 and early 2008. (ERIH) Largely thanks to this project hundreds of new titles are added to the WoS Humanities Index.

At the request of the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) a comprehensive study on practices in bibliometric evaluation of research in social sciences and humanities (SSH) was published in August 2004 (Archambault, 2004). At the same time a

project was carried out in Spain with the aim of creating a tool for evaluation of journals in the humanities and social sciences (Giménez-Toledo, 2007).

A significant number of countries have made attempts to create their own national citation index databases (Winclawska, 1996; Webster, 1998; Must, 1999; Su, 2001; Kuang-hua Chen, 2004; Šipka, 2005; Serbian Citation Index; Russian Index for Science Citation). Most of them are among countries where the majority of research output is published in the native language. At the same time several studies have used Thomson Reuters ISI databases in their work. There is a common understanding about the limits of these databases and about the inability to use those databases separately to benchmark the output of countries in the SSH (H'rubel, 2001; Sahiner, 2006; Archambault, 2006; Mu-hsuan Huang, 2008; Yalcin, 2010).

In the current paper we concentrated on the observation of the impact of cooperation on the visibility of research articles.

Data and methods

We used in our study the Reuters Thomson ISI Art and Humanities Citation Index and the Social Sciences Citation Index for the period 1990–2010 (as at 10 October). Searches were made by the publication type "article", and by country field about the following countries: India, Peoples Republic of China, Mexico, Russia, Norway, Canada, Germany, France and the England (The Countries of the UK, 2011). From the data obtained we have singled out articles from the subject areas "history" and "archaeology". In total, 21 929 articles were selected in the history field, and 5935 articles in the archaeology field. Selected publication and citation data were exported to *Reference Manage.*

Results

Just to give an overview about the data from which the future analysis has been derived, we present the output numbers of all nine countries. The question may arise about why these countries have been selected. The main criterion was the attractiveness of the particular country from the point of view of the history and archaeology research.

Table 1. The number of articles by selected countries (WoS as at 10 October 2010)

Country	History	Archaeology
India	194	75
China	177	120
Mexico	486	89
Russia	1,614	113
England	6,572	2,669
Norway	477	80
Canada	3,178	761
Germany	3,082	1,298
France	6,149	730

Comparing these data with the InCites cumulative data of 10 years we can see considerable differences between the two data sets. This is due to data selection criteria. In the current paper we have performed the analysis only on the basis of articles. It turns out that inclusion of other publication types (book reviews, editorials, bibliographies, items about individuals, notes, biographies, meeting abstracts, software, letters, discussions, art exhibits, reprints, news items, chronologies, fiction, corrections, and poetry) obscures the picture, because in most cases they are not meant for further dialogue, and actually should not be included in citation

analysis. Just for testing purposes we derived from WoS the data by publication type "book review". The total number of book reviews in the history field was 42154, and in the archaeology field 1818. In history, 99,16% of reviews were un-cited, in archaeology – 97,2%. At the same time the obtained data showed the importance of monographs in history research – the number of book reviews was nearly two times higher than the number of articles.

The proportion of cited papers

Nederhof (1992), Moed (2005) and Lariviere (2006) have shown that researchers in the humanities do not form a homogeneous category. Table 2 confirms this statement – there is a clear difference between the proportions of cited and un-cited papers in the history and archaeology fields. While Hellqvist declared (2010, 311) that the arts and humanities generally encompass religion, philosophy, art, music, literature, linguistics, and archaeology, and history is often seen as standing on the border between the social sciences and the humanities, the table below (and the following tables) show a different picture. Archaeologists very often apply methods used in sciences. This means that results will be achieved via collaborative work and with a larger number of co-authors. Both of them influence the number of citations.

Table 2. The proportion of cited papers (in %)

Country	History	Archaeology
India	48.66	71.05
China	16.15	69.17
Mexico	22.85	69.51
Russia	10.77	69.37
Norway	28.76	61.84
Canada	72.48	92.84
Germany	35.6	36.91
France	13.12	65.31
England	44.4	67.07

We will bring as an example the most cited archaeology paper, published in 1999 (Galbraith, 1999). This is a paper written in collaboration by scholars from the UK and Australia. By subject area it belongs to archaeology, analytical chemistry, inorganic and nuclear chemistry, and geosciences. It had been cited 227 times by 14 November 2010. 65.2% of citations belong to the period 2007–2010. The subject areas of citing papers in the descending order are the following: geosciences, geography, geochemistry and geophysics, nuclear science, palaeontology, geology, anthropology, archaeology.

In case of history research it is true that although the language used in a publication has nothing to do with research quality, it significantly affects the visibility of research (Ingwersen, 2001). In this table this is evident in case of Russia and France where the largest proportion of papers in history is published in the native language (in both, 89% of papers). The results of the study performed by the CWTS group (van Leeuwen, 2001) indicated that the different linguistic worlds are almost "language-proof", especially between the English and French languages. Spanish and Portuguese speakers often cite literature in English; this is rarely the case for French speakers.

The proportion of collaboration in cited and uncited articles

In their highly cited article Katz and Martin (1997) stated that working together does not automatically result in collaborative publications. At the same time several studies have convincingly shown an association between collaboration and citation (Persson, 2004; Levitt, 2010, Persson, 2010). Taking into account the specificity of the areas (individual working habits of historians, national bias), we still see from Table 3 that the proportion of articles which have been written in co-authorship is significantly higher among cited papers than among un-cited papers.

Table 3. The proportion of collaboration among cited and uncited articles (in %)

Country	History		Archaeology	
	Cited papers	**Uncited papers**	**Cited papers**	**Uncited papers**
India	5.6	5.2	68.5	56.5
China	15.4	10.4	92.8	45.2
Mexico	19.3	6.5	87.3	76
Russia	12	8.1	72.7	50
Norway	6	5.4	56.3	37.9
Canada	13.8	9.6	62.1	39
Germany	7.6	6.4	58.8	25
France	12.8	6	78.3	70.5
UK	9	6.7	57.2	43.2

Average citations per paper – comparison of single- and multi-author papers

As we see from Table 4, co-authorship gives more visibility to the researchers' output. The data vary by country, but the general trend is obvious – articles written in co-authorship are more cited.

In the humanities and social sciences, citations often take years to accrue to articles, because of both the slower pace and the nature of the research, which is often more fragmented than in the sciences. Because of this, THES created the five-year impact factor to identify a ranking of the 20 journals in history with the most influence, according to citations per paper (THES, 2011). The journal with the highest impact is *American Historical Review* (5-year impact is 2.18), but the average impact of the most influential journals in history is 0.6.

In Essential Science Indicators the Average Citation Rates table for year 2000–2010 displays data on the average citation rates of papers within the scientific fields over each of the past 10 years. The archaeology field multi-authored papers' data from Table 4 could be comparable with the Computer Science (3.75), Mathematics (3.48), Social Sciences (4.67), and Engineering (4.76) fields.

Table 4. Average citations per paper – comparison of single- and multi-author papers

Country	History		Archaeology	
Average citations per paper	**Single**	**Multi**	**Single**	**Multi**
India	1.3	1.9	2	3.2
China	0.51	0.78	0.89	3.87
Mexico	0.4	1.79	4.15	4.91
Russia	0.17	0.45	1.97	7.23

Norway	0.55	0.88	2.33	4.11
Canada	2.04	2.47	6.48	7.87
Germany	0.95	1.2	0.71	2.54
France	0.22	0.74	1.75	3.94
England	1.25	2.63	3.43	6.18

Average citations per paper in multi-authored papers – domestic and international co-authorship

Bordons, Gomez, Fernandez, Zulueta, and Mendez (1996) refer to three types of collaboration: local, domestic, and international. In local collaboration, all collaborators work at the same institution. In domestic collaboration, not all collaborators work at the same institution but all collaborators work in the same country. And in international collaboration, not all collaborators work in the same country. In Table 5 we used only two types of collaboration – collaboration in the same country, and international collaboration.

Table 5. Average citations per paper in multi-authored papers – domestic and international co-authorship

Country	History		Archaeology	
	Domestic	**International**	**Domestic**	**International**
India	1.29	3.3	2.3	4.1
China	0.1	1.6	2.4	4.6
Mexico	1.27	2.9	3.5	5.8
Russia	0.12	4.9	7.9	6.8
Norway	0.11	2.6	2.8	4.7
Germany	1.2	1.2	1.8	3.58
France	0.67	1.13	3.7	4.1
England	2.5	2.9	6.5	5.9

As indicated before (Glänzel, 2000; Glänzel, 2001), international collaborative papers are on an average more cited than non-international collaborative papers, but this citation differential varies considerably by country. It concerns also research in history, and especially archaeology. While methods used in archaeology research belong primarily to bordering areas, in case of history research we have to take into account the still existing orientation to domestic public, and individualistic character of their research. At the same time the need to embrace cooperation is acknowledged in different surveys made about history research. Let us refer to the ESF programme "Representations of the Past: The Writing of National Histories in Europe", and the EU FP7 project „Creating Links and Innovative Overviews for a New History Research Agenda for the Citizens of a Growing Europe (CLIOHRES)" where the main suggestion to history researchers from different cultures is to work and publish together. It was said that more international collaboration would help researchers develop a more critical view of their own work. Several suggestions were made also on the national level. For example, the Research Council of Norway commissioned an official evaluation of the quality of historical research carried out by Norway's four main universities and four of the university colleges. It found out that the bulk of Norwegian historical research is what the council terms 'methodological nationalism'. This defines a tendency among Norwegian historians to conceive of, carry out, and disseminate their research projects and findings within the confines of a national framework. Most projects rely upon the nation state as a

frame of reference for the collection of material and analysis, and there is limited dissemination of results to international audiences. This is not a problem specific to Norway, it characterises the history discipline in many other countries (Hagtvedt, 2010).

Conclusions

Despite the fact that history and archaeology are considered to belong to humanities according to the classification system, this is not the case. Research methods, and tools, used in archaeology are very often closer to sciences. History research is an individual and domestic-oriented activity. In many directions it will remain the same. As history research is associated with changes in the society, it is obvious that something will change since the working laboratories of historians – archives and libraries – are opening up globally and their field of work is expanding. The examples given showed that any type of collaboration will increase the visibility of research output.

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