



ISSI NEWSLETTER

QUARTERLY e-NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR SCIENTOMETRICS AND INFORMETRICS
ISSN 1998-5460

#79 / SPECIAL ISSUE 03
MARCH 2026

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EDITORIAL

“ALL GOOD THINGS COME IN THREES ...”

At present, events of paramount importance in our Society's life have taken place and are approaching again. As long as we do not have found a more contemporary format of sharing relevant information with the community, we resurrect the old-fashioned but time-proven way of communication by editing another special issue of the ISSI Newsletter. Now it is high time that we con-



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ISSI e-Newsletter (ISSN 1998-5460) is published by ISSI (<http://www.issi-society.org>).
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Building of the Yerevan State University (venue of ISSI2025) by night. (Photo courtesy of © Zsuzsanna Glänzel.)

tinue this practice before relevant information becomes obsolete.

The first and most important issue to report concerns one of the cornerstones in the Society life, the biennial *International Conferences on Scientometrics & Informetrics*. The 20th conference in this series took place in Yerevan (Armenia) in late June 2025. The organisers of the conference represented by Shushanik Sargsyan, Head of the Center for Scientific Information Analysis and Monitoring (CSIAM) at the Institute for Informatics and Automation Problems of the Republic of Armenia present a brief report on this event. To throw a bridge, we also include an announcement of the subsequent ISSI conference to be held in Taiwan next year. The conference will be hosted by the National Taiwan University (NTU) in Taipei. The announcement is provided by Szu-chia Lo, who is one of the local organisers of the event.

Conference related material is supplemented by two pieces reflecting burning issues and ongoing debates in our community. In the first one, *Stefanie Hausteijn* (University of Ottawa, Canada) and *Vincent Larivière* (École de bibliothéconomie et des sciences de l'information, Université de Montréal, Canada) call for action to stop the Drain of Scientific Publishing, the second paper by *Giovanni Abramo* (Universitas Mercatorum, Italy) and *Ciriaco Andrea D'Angelo* (University of Rome "Tor Vergata", Italy) contribute to the dispute on the use of qualitative vs. quantitative methods in evaluative contexts from an new perspective: the mitigation of gender bias in research assessment.

To conclude, we would like to express our thanks to all contributors to this special issue and to the readers of the e-zine for their interest and devotion.

20TH CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF SCIENTOMETRICS AND INFORMETRICS

YEREVAN, 23–27 JUNE 2025



SHUSHANIK SARGSYAN

Center for Scientific Information Analysis and Monitoring (CSIAM),
Institute for Informatics and Automation Problems of the Republic of Armenia

For the first time in its history, the International Society for Scientometrics and Informetrics (ISSI) brought its biennial conference to the South Caucasus. From 23 to 26 June 2025, Yerevan welcomed scholars, research managers, policymakers, and information professionals from around the world to the 20th ISSI Conference. Organized by the Center for Scientific Information Analysis and Monitoring (CSIAM) of the Institute for Informatics and Automation Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia and hosted by Yerevan

State University, the event highlighted Armenia's role as a meeting point between Europe and Asia and gave the international community an opportunity to experience the region's growing scientific landscape.

The atmosphere throughout the week was dynamic and collegial. With contributions from 38 countries, ISSI 2025 confirmed its reputation as one of the largest and most influential gatherings in the field. A total of 93 full papers, 52 research-in-progress papers, 44 posters, nine doctoral forum presentations, and two workshops were

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ISSI Secretary/Treasurer Wolfgang Glänzel and Chair of the Organizing Committee Shushanik Sargsyan



ISSI2025 Opening Ceremony

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ISSI2025 Opening Ceremony

presented, complemented by two special tracks: FRAME, focusing on responsible metrics, and ORI, dedicated to open research infrastructures. This wide range of participation reflected both the methodo-

logical diversity and the global reach of scientometric research today.

The conference opened on Monday with the Doctoral Forum, which once again highlighted ISSI's commitment to

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Mike Thelwall, ISSI 2025 keynote speaker

supporting young scholars. Presentations explored issues such as citation manipulation, lexical anomalies, institutional prestige, and gender disparities in scholarly publishing, sparking rich discussion with senior experts. Workshops followed, among them the joint AI + Informetrics and EEKE 2025 workshop and a tutorial on the OpenAIRE Graph on Google BigQuery. These sessions illustrated the growing influence of artificial intelligence and large-scale infrastructures in the field. A festive welcome reception at Yerevan State University rounded off the day, setting the tone for a week of lively exchanges.

The official inauguration on Tuesday underscored the symbolic importance of hosting the Society’s 20th conference in Armenia. Plenary keynotes provided stimulating perspectives: Gunnar Sivertsen, Research Professor Emeritus at NIFU in Oslo, reflected on interdisciplinarity, collaboration, societal impact, and internationalism,

building on his influential work with the Norwegian Model and other key indicators. Mike Thelwall, Professor of Data Science at the University of Sheffield, explored the disruptive potential of large language models in research evaluation, sparking debate on how artificial intelligence may reshape traditional indicators.

Across the following days, parallel sessions covered the full breadth of the field: advanced informetric methods, science policy and evaluation, mapping and visualization, micro- and nano-scientometrics, technology and innovation studies, open science, publishing practices, and the ethics and integrity of research. Poster sessions added further opportunities for informal dialogue, and the dedicated tracks provided space for focused discussion on responsible metrics and infrastructures. All full papers were reviewed in advance, assigned DOIs, and published online before the conference. The proceedings will



Photo courtesy of © IIAP RA

ISSI2025 Lunch Time

be submitted for indexation in Scopus and Web of Science, with selected contributions invited for publication in leading journals such as *Scientometrics* and *Journal of Scientometric Research*.

As in every ISSI meeting, excellence was celebrated. The conference featured the presentation of the Derek J. de Solla Price Award, the Eugene Garfield Doctoral Dissertation Scholarship, the ISSI Paper of the Year, the ISSI Student Travel Award, and the Springer Awards, honoring both established contributions and the promise of a new generation of researchers.

Beyond the scientific sessions, the social and cultural program left a strong impression. Delegates enjoyed a gala dinner in Yerevan and excursions to landmarks such as Garni, Geghard, Khor Virap, Noravank, Lake Sevan, Etchmiadzin and Dilijan, experiencing the warmth of Armenian hospitality and the richness of its cultural heritage. These

moments of shared discovery deepened collegial ties and gave participants memories that reached beyond the academic program.

Organizing such a large-scale international conference was not without challenges. Regulatory constraints, online payment barriers, and some venue limitations created obstacles, yet the Organizing Committee's dedication and flexibility ensured a smooth and professional event. The lessons learned will provide valuable guidance for future conferences.

ISSI 2025 in Yerevan will be remembered as a milestone in the Society's history. It successfully combined academic excellence with international diversity and regional inclusion, broadening participation and strengthening community ties. Delegates praised the event as both scientifically enriching and culturally unforgettable — a true landmark gathering at the crossroads of Europe and Asia.

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ISSI2025 Group Photo

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ISSI2025 Parallel Sessions

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ISSI2025 Parallel Sessions

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ISSI2025 Poster Session

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ISSI2025 Awarding Ceremony of the Derek de Solla Price Medal: L. Zhang, G. Sivertsen (awardee) & W. Glänzel

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Gunnar Sivertsen, ISSI 2025 keynote speaker

Photo courtesy of © IIAP RA



ISSI 2025 Gala Dinner

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ISSI2025 Coffee Break

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ISSI President Giovanni Abramo, Chair of the Organizing Committee of ISSI 2025 Shushanik Sargsyan, and Gunnar Sivertsen, awardee of the Derek de Solla Price Medal, during ISSI 2025.

Photo courtesy of © IIAP RA



Members of the ISSI 2025 Organizing Committee

21ST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SCIENTOMETRICS & INFORMETRICS (ISSI 2027)

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT BY

SZU-CHIA LO

Dept Library and Information Science, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan



NTU University Campus (© National Taiwan University)



Department of Library and Information Science
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ISSI 2027 will be held in Taipei, Taiwan, June 28 to July 2, 2027. The local organizing team is a joint effort of Center for Science and Technology Informetrics (CSTI), Department of Library and Information Science (LIS), and University Library of National Taiwan University to host the conference. Taiwan is a hub for innovation and technological development in the Asia-Pacific region. With its strong presence in industries such as semiconductor manufacturing, electronics, and information technology, Taiwan provides an un-



University Library Building
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paralleled opportunity to bring together academics and professionals from around the globe in a location that celebrates technological progress and cultural richness in equal measure.

NTU's campus offers a scenic blend of nature and architecture, with historic landmarks reflecting Taiwan's academic legacy—an ideal setting for a conference on science and innovation.

Attendees can enjoy diverse on-campus dining and easy access to Taipei's vibrant culture, from night markets to iconic sights like Taipei 101.

THE DRAIN OF SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING: A CALL TO ACTION



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Over the past decade, our community has produced a substantial body of research documenting the economic concentration of academic publishing, the rise of article processing charges (APC), and the growing reliance on proprietary data infrastructures for research evaluation. In a recent preprint with colleagues from Europe, Africa, North and South America (Beigel et al., 2025), we bring together these strands of evidence under a single conceptual framework, which we call The Drain of Scientific Publishing.

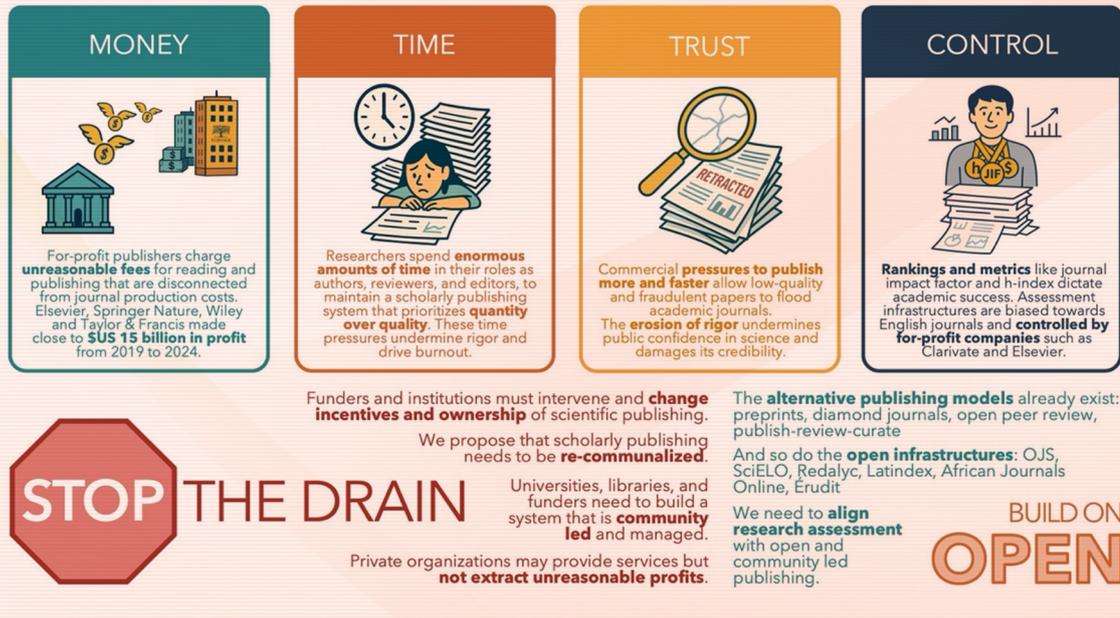
The idea of the drain is simple but far-reaching: commercial companies drain money, time, trust, and control from the research system.

The financial drain is well known to the academic community worldwide, and to librarians in particular. Subscription fees, bundled “Big Deals,” rapidly rising APCs and, more recently, Read and Publish Agreements continue to divert public research funds into the hands of what we, more than a decade ago, identified as the oligopoly of academic publishers (Larivière, Mongeon & Haustein, 2015). These fees for academic journals increasingly affect not only libraries, but also researchers and funders, especially as open access (OA) mandates are implemented through APC-based models.

Less visible, but felt by editors, reviewers and authors alike, is the time drain.

THE DRAIN OF SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING

doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2511.04820



The Drain of Scientific Publishing infographic (CC-BY: Haustein (2025). The Drain of Scientific Publishing Infographic. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17594290>)

Researchers spend vast amounts of unpaid labor submitting manuscripts, responding to reviewers, formatting papers for different journal platforms, reviewing for free, and navigating increasingly complex compliance requirements. Editorial boards and peer reviewers, many of them members of scientific societies such as the ISSI, contribute essential expertise while publishers label and sell those as “value added”.

The trust drain refers to the growing gap between what the scholarly community expects from academic publishing (i.e., gatekeeping, quality control, integrity, stewardship of the scholarly record) and what commercial incentives increasingly deliver. From paper mills and questionable editorial practices to the integration of opaque and biased AI tools into editorial workflows, publishers increasingly position themselves as guardians of research integrity, filtering out so-called “AI slop”. Yet recent cases include published papers that even begin with verbatim large-language-model (LLM) responses or contain non-

sensical AI-generated images that clearly escaped meaningful review. As publishers focus on publishing more and faster, such failures further undermine confidence in the rigor and standards of the academic publishing system.

Finally, the drain of control is of particular relevance to bibliometrics and research evaluation. Our field has largely been built on commercially-owned databases, analytics platforms, and indicators. Control over scholarly outputs, metadata, indicators, and infrastructures has become increasingly concentrated in proprietary systems that are deeply embedded in evaluation practices. This limits transparency, reproducibility, methodological scrutiny, and collective governance.

Rather than framing the problem as a failure of OA publishing per se, The Drain highlights how commercialization has shaped academic publishing and research assessment. Crucially, we also describe a way forward to stop the drain. Community-led, non-profit, and open infrastruc-

tures, such as diamond OA journals and open bibliographic databases, already exist and demonstrate viable alternatives. To reduce extraction and restore collective control, funders and institutions must actively support these infrastructures, realign incentives and research assessment practices, to reclaim ownership and restore collective control over the systems that organize and evaluate scholarly knowledge.

In this context, the Barcelona Declaration on Open Research Information (Barcelona Declaration, n.d.) offers a particularly relevant response for the ISSI community. By calling for a move away from closed, proprietary research information systems toward open, transparent, and community-governed infrastructures, the Declaration directly addresses the control dimension of the drain. For bibliometricians and scholars and administrators active in research evaluation, engaging with and supporting such initiatives is not only a policy choice, but a methodological and epistemic one.

We hope our framework and call to action to stop the drain resonate with ISSI members. Ultimately, addressing the drain is not only a matter of reducing costs, but

of reclaiming control over the knowledge infrastructures on which our field depends, and rethinking how value, labor, and governance are distributed in the scholarly communication system.

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PEER REVIEW vs. BIBLIOMETRICS: WHICH BETTER MITIGATES SEX BIAS IN RESEARCH EVALUATION?



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We compare peer review and bibliometric indicators to assess which method is more effective in mitigating sex bias in research evaluation. Using data from Italy's first national assessment (VTR 2001–2003) across eight STEM areas, we contrast panel scores with normalized citation-based classifications computed over multiple citation windows (1, 2, 3, and 16 years). Ordered logit models show that both methods exhibit sex disparities; however, peer review systematically penalizes women more than biblio-

metrics (e.g., female first-author $OR \approx 0.885$ vs near parity in short-window metrics). Although a longer citation window reveals a modest "Matthew effect" that widens gaps over time (Merton, 1968), even at 16 years, the bibliometric disparity remains smaller than the peer-review gap. Policy implications favor field- and year-normalized bibliometrics as the backbone for large-scale STEM assessment, with targeted peer review where metrics are weak (Abramo, 2024; Ioannidis & Maniadis, 2023).

BACKGROUND

Sexism in academia persists, affecting various aspects of academia, including hiring and promotion, grant success, workload distribution, and climate (Ceci & Williams, 2011; Helmer et al., 2017; OECD, 2024). Conscious and unconscious biases shape both peer judgments and citation behaviors (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Glick & Fiske, 2001). Because national assessment panels typically see author names (high sex observability) and operate with limited reputational risk to reviewers, biased scoring can more readily manifest in peer review. By contrast, discriminatory citation practices impose costs (such as effortful sex disambiguation and co-author pushback), which dampen the explicit bias in bibliometric outcomes. This incentives-and-observability perspective predicts larger sex gaps in peer review than in citations (Leslie et al., 2015; van den Brink & Benschop, 2014).

DATA AND METHODS

We analyze 7,276 WoS-indexed journal articles submitted to eight VTR panels (Mathematics & Computer Science; Physics; Chemistry; Earth Sciences; Biology; Agricultural & Veterinary Sciences; Civil Engineering; Industrial & Information Engineering). Each item has one peer-review score, E, G, A, L mapped to 1, 0.8, 0.6, 0.2, and up to four bibliometric “scholarly impact” classes derived from a validated combination of early citations and journal impact factor, normalized by year and subject category; thresholds mirror the four VTR classes and are computed at 1-, 2-, 3-, and 16-year windows (Abramo, D’Angelo, & Felici, 2019). We link sex to authors through large-scale name disambiguation and conservative assignment rules, then estimate 20 ordered logit models across four authorship codings (female first author; at least one female; majority female; exclusively female), controlling for team

size (log), international co-authorship, and area dummies (Fox, Paine, & Sauterey, 2016; Glänzel & De Lange, 2002).

RESULTS

Bibliometric scoring classifies a notably larger share of outputs as “Excellent” than peer review, with the three-year window yielding roughly 48.5% “Excellent” compared with about 33% under panel evaluation. Across all authorship codings, female-authored publications are underrepresented in the top tier, and this underrepresentation is more pronounced in peer review. For papers with a female first author, peer review is associated with a statistically significant penalty ($OR \approx 0.885$). In contrast, bibliometric classifications tend to be more balanced, and differences are often non-significant for shorter citation windows. A modest disadvantage emerges for women in the sixteen-year window, consistent with cumulative advantage dynamics; however, the gap remains smaller than the one observed in peer review.

Broadening beyond first-authorship, every specification indicates that the sex coefficient departs further from parity in peer review than in the bibliometric models. The sharpest peer-review penalty appears for exclusively female teams (≈ 0.63). In bibliometrics, penalties strengthen as the window lengthens ($\approx 0.81 \rightarrow 0.64$ from 1 to 16 years), yet they do not surpass the peer-review gap. These patterns align with the idea that sex is more observable and reviewer incentives are less disciplining in panel settings than in citation behavior.

The control variables behave as expected. International collaboration is positively associated with scores, with a more substantial effect under peer review, suggesting possible prestige or halo dynamics. Meanwhile, larger teams correlate with higher evaluations in both approaches, especially for early bibliometric windows (Glänzel & De Lange, 2002; Fox, Paine, & Sauterey, 2016). Marginal-effect

calculations corroborate the main results: holding covariates at their means, the probability of an “Excellent” rating for female first authors is about 2.5 percentage points lower in peer review, compared with roughly 1.1 points in the three-year bibliometric window and around 2.1 points at sixteen years, again, smaller than the peer-review gap (Abramo, D’Angelo, & Reale, 2019; Merton, 1968).

INTERPRETATION

The patterns we observe are consistent with a framework that links bias to both observability and incentives. In panel settings, sex is salient to reviewers, and anonymity typically lowers the personal costs of expressing bias, creating conditions under which disparities can more readily emerge. By contrast, citation behavior involves lower identifiability of authors’ sex and stronger reputational and team constraints, which together discourage explicit discriminatory choices (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Leslie et al., 2015). Although cumulative advantage mechanisms, often described as the “Matthew effect”, amplify bibliometric disparities as the citation window lengthens (Merton, 1968), this dynamic does not overturn our central comparative finding: the magnitude of sex bias detected in bibliometrics remains smaller than that observed in peer review.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Taken together, the evidence supports using field- and year-normalized bibliometric indicators as the primary scaffold for large-scale STEM assessments, favoring short windows (e.g., three years) that reduce cumulative advantage while retaining timeliness. Peer review should then be deployed selectively: first, to adjudicate outputs that are weakly covered by citation databases; second, to evaluate attributes that bibliometrics does not capture well. Where peer review is employed, process design should aim to narrow discretion and dampen bias through partial

anonymization where feasible, diverse and trained panels, explicit rubrics, and calibration with exemplars (Helmer et al., 2017; van der Lee & Ellemers, 2015).

Finally, evaluation agencies should routinely audit outcomes for sex-differential effects, report sensitivity to indicator choices (e.g., window length, self-citation handling), and document the coverage of their databases. Outputs not amenable to robust bibliometric treatment should be routed transparently to review, ensuring equitable treatment without stretching metrics beyond their evidentiary remit.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

The cohort (2001–2003) predates recent policy shifts; generalizability beyond STEM fields (and article-centric outputs) is limited. Even with careful disambiguation, sex assignment is imperfect for a small subset; selection of submitted outputs may vary by sex. Future studies should replicate this research on later cohorts and in other countries, model career stages, and link evaluation outcomes to subsequent funding and promotion decisions.

CONCLUSION

Both peer review and bibliometrics reflect sex disparities; however, peer review consistently shows larger gaps across authorship codings. Short, normalized bibliometric windows provide a comparatively fairer and operationally practical basis for large-scale STEM assessments. Rebalancing evaluation systems toward transparent, bias-aware metrics, complemented by better-designed peer review, can help advance gender equity in academia (Abramo, 2024; Ioannidis & Maniadis, 2023).

NB

The full version of this study, titled “Sex bias in peer review and citation practices: Implica-

tions for research evaluation,” will be shortly available in the *Journal of Informetrics*.

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