

European Journals in Humanities: A Case Study

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Introduction

The possibility of fostering the development of a Citation Index in Humanities at the European level has been repeatedly discussed among European humanities researchers. The Humanities in Europe are recognised for their influences on the language, culture and history of different European countries. Such research has had a distinctly national focus, and there has been relatively little collaboration across national boundaries.

The first steps of the development of a European Citation Index in Humanities were made under the aegis of the European Science Foundation (Peyraube, 2002).

It was decided, as a first step, that every country could propose lists of journals by a directory of discipline fields* according to a set grading system. It was decided that the lists should include three categories of journals:

1. A-ranked journals – high-ranking international publications that have a very strong reputation among researchers of the particular field in different countries and are regularly cited all over the world;
2. B-ranked journals – standard international publications that have a good reputation among researchers of the discipline in different countries;
3. C-ranked journals – scientific publications that have an important local significance and which can occasionally be cited outside the publishing country through their main target group is the domestic academic community.

Publications that do not fulfil normal international academic standards (citation techniques, referee systems etc.) even if they can play an important role in the local situation and are in that sense useful and worth supporting were excluded from the list. Methodology, how to achieve attained objectives was left for judgement of every country. In most cases the expert researchers of a given community

were asked what they considered to be a scholarly journal in that field.

The participating countries have proposed lists of journals in 15 disciplinary fields according to a grading system.

Further work will be done under the FP6 ERA NET project HERA* which is linking ESF and research councils in humanities from 15 countries.

The current paper will concentrate on results delivered from the gender studies field.

Methods

Expert panel (Ülle Must, Gregory Woods) investigated all proposed lists (in total 144 titles proposed by experts from six countries), and made its suggestions for final list.

Data from ISI Web of Knowledge, Ulrich's Plus, ISSN Online were used as additional sources.

Results

Discussions about Humanities research indicate that the dominant characteristics are its locality and individuality.

Results, however, attained by an expert group did not prove this statement. As their prime objective was to define the best journals published in Europe, the results were intriguing. 60% of the journals on the list were published in Europe and the remainder mostly in USA. It shows that nowadays it is not important for Humanities researchers in which country a journal is published, but how their disciplines are reflected in these journals.

As the scope of themes in Humanities is very wide, there are no generally accepted journals. The preferences of different countries overlapped only in seven cases. Journals proposed by national experts overlapped in only 26 cases. This shows that the creation of the list, which is acknowledged by the whole research community, is a very complicated task in the case of Humanities.

Humanities are, naturally, oriented to the public. As their object of exploration is the human being, in all its activities, dialogue is very important in these fields. Therefore Humanities researchers do not have any

* Anthropology/ethnology, archaeology, arts and art history, classical studies or philology, history, history and philosophy of sciences, linguistics, literary studies, music and musicology, oriental studies, pedagogy, philosophy, psychology, religious studies, and gender studies.

* Humanities in the European Research Are (=HERA) is FP6 ERA NET coordination action which started 1 March 2005.

qualms about publishing their research results in non-scholarly publications. The same tendency was followed in study lead by Henk Moed et al (Moed, 2002).

Table 1: The number of gender studies journals (Ulrich's Plus, 2005)

| Region | Total | Referee journals from these | Proposed | Referee journals from these |
|------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| EUROPE | 486 | 111 | 87 | 15 |
| SOUTH AMERICA | 28 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| NORTH AMERICA | 514 | 113 | 47 | 17 |
| ASIA | 38 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| AFRICA | 6 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| AUSTRALIA/ NEW ZEALAND | 17 | 8 | 2 | 1 |
| No information | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 1089 | 242 | 144 | 33 |

In the instance of current study, 10% of the journals did not fulfil normal international academic

standards (citation techniques, referee systems, ISSN etc.).

Conclusions

Derived results show the complexity of the task. It is hard in the contemporary academic world to define excellence by geographic characteristics.

Researchers tend to prefer those journals in which they publish their own papers.

As gender studies are essentially interdisciplinary, it is very hard to define which journals include or exclude from the list.

Received data shows that researchers in Humanities are not as locally oriented as is usually believed.

Researchers in Humanities differ considerably in publication behavior from those in sciences. This needs to be taken into consideration when setting indicators for Humanities evaluation.

References

Moed, H., Lewel, M., Nederhof, A. (2002). Towards Research Performance in the Humanities. *Library Trends*, 50 (3), 498-520.

Peyraube, A. (2002) Project for Building a European Citation Index for the Humanities. *Reflections. The newsletter of the Standing Committee for the Humanities*, December, pp13-15.