Should we wait until an article is cited?

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Introduction

Every year, approximately 2.5 million new scientific papers are published [1]. An analysis of the percentage of cited papers listed in Scopus from 2006 to 2015 shows that only 62.6% of all articles in the world are cited (Fig. 1). The citation distribution of the articles varies widely, ranging from being cited merely once to as many as 53,435 times as of January 18, 2017. Looking at the percentages of cited publications in the graph below (Fig. 2) [2], the Pareto principle can be applied to 80% of the citations made in 20% of the articles. Does this mean that 80% of the articles should merely wait to be cited?

Suggestions How to Increase Articles' Visibility and Citations

Current publications take a while to get cited because researchers cite earlier research and published papers, Lancho-Barrantes et al.'s research [3] shows that a 3-year publication window is the best compromise as shown in Fig. 2 of Reference 3. The observations that 1) citations are focused on only 20% of the articles, and 2) it takes three years to capture the citation peak of the majority of subjects, along with the two citation trends mentioned above show that more assertive promotion is necessary. Though the quality of the article itself is crucial for it to be cited and influence follow-up studies, it is quite a challenge to not only compete with similar articles, but also increase their impact among millions of articles. Therefore, researchers must consider how to actively promote their articles.

Apart from the traditional way of assessing an article's influence by examining its frequency, other strategies, such as assessing an article's influence within its field through various communication channels, are suggested. The first way of assessment is through social media, such as mentioning the articles on Twitter, Facebook, or Google+. This opens up conversations with other researchers and attracts their attention as well. The second way is the utilization of scholarly commentaries. By presenting articles on blogs or Wikipedia, one can allow people to share, discuss, edit, and improve them by applying other related research and information [4]. The third way is to use citation/reference managing tools such as Mendeley and Refworks and engage in a scholarly activity that both shares and advertises the articles. The fourth way is to present the article at a conference. Conference presentation is a direct way to attract the attention of the conference audience and heighten the article's influence. The fifth way is to be reported in various mass media. However, this is less related to a researcher's effort and more to

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Fig. 1. Percentage of cited publications among those listed in Scopus vs. year.

the institution's support and efforts.

Beyond promoting individual articles, researchers can also consider strategy to promote all of their research performance. The researcher could upload their curriculum vitae on LinkedIn, along with research performance and media resources, and advertise their publications on ORCID, Research Gate, Google Scholar, PUBFACTS, and Scopus author profiles. These activities are considered an effective way to make a stronger influence.

Exposing the article through various channels for promotion is not enough. Regular monitoring is necessary to see how often the article is cited and how much attention it is receiving on social media. The result of these endeavor can be identified in Abstract and Index database like Web of Science and Scopus. "Citation alert" on Web of Science and Scopus shows how many times the article is cited and Altmetrics on the article page shows its influence on social media.

Conclusion

Getting an article published is no longer enough. It is crucial to develop strategies to increase the visibility of articles to get cited. Furthermore, researchers should not only communicate with others researchers through various communication channels, but also monitor article's attentions.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Fig. 2. The Pareto principle. Scopus data for all articles published in 2008 versus citations received from 2008 to 2012. While approximately 80% of the citations come from just 20% of the articles, about 32% of these articles remain uncited in this period. Reproduced from UK's Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. International comparative performance of the UK research base: 2013 [Internet]. Amsterdam: Elsevier; 2013 [2].

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