

WEB REFERENCING IN ONLINE SCHOLARLY WORLD: A CASE STUDY OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE RESEARCH

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Abstract: Referencing is one of the popular methods of citing the material which the author has used in his/her research for readers. Due to the emergence of World Wide Web, the use of web references has become common in the scholarly research. The present study makes an attempt to explore and analyse the growth of web references in one of the eminent journals in the field of Library and Information Sciences, *Library and Information Science Research*. In order to fulfill the set objectives, we conducted a survey of the scholarly articles published over ten years' time span (2004-2013). Data collected from the journal included the no. of articles and no. of references. The results reveal that the total of 293 articles were published from the year 2004-2013 with 13468 references, the journal references being the dominating ones contributing 57.94% of the total references. The web references are contributing 16.3% of the total references and have shown a growth rate of 25.72% in 2013 with respect 11.61% in 2004. Since the data was collected from Library and Information Sciences Research only, hence precautions should be taken while generalising the results.

Keywords: Internet; WWW; Scholarly Communication; Referencing; Web Referencing; Citation Analysis; URL Domains.

1.0 Introduction: The internet is one of the most important and complicated invention in the history of mankind. It has emerged as a technology that is influencing every sphere of human activity. Millions of users access internet every day for various beneficial purposes. It is also an integral component of academic and scholarly world. "The internet is not just about finding information, but it encompasses publishing, broadcasting, establishing networks, and interactive services" (Kanungo, 2007). It has revolutionized and improved the scholarly communication system by greatly expanding rapid dissemination of scholarly information. Due to the accelerated development of information technology, especially the rapid growth of the web, the scholarly communication system is showing a rapid transformation, as the web has provided new and powerful media of communication. Scholars in every field have now access to wealth of online information, tools and services. They further use the internet to develop ideas, build contacts and networks, and promote their work and publications. Goodrum, McCain, Lawrence and Giles (2001) state that the web is revolutionizing the entire scholarly communication process and changing the way that researchers exchange the information. Further they state that web has provided a new communication channel for traditional publication of scholarly research and is also enabling the publishers to publish the electronic versions of the traditional print titles. It has allowed authors to substitute some of the traditional paper-based resources such as books, journals, reports and notes with an electronic equivalent. With the advent of web, the scholarly communication methods are becoming more diverse in form, as the formal mechanisms are supplemented and complemented by new, informal, self-regulated methods such as online discussion groups, weblogs, webcasts, wikis, podcasts and much more (Swan, 2006). Indeed the web has facilitated the real time collaborative interaction of peer group scholars and the use of hypertext linking systems to minimize data loss or decay (as cited in Swan, 2006). The internet has enabled the scholars to exchange more and more scientific information, not only by e-mail but also by publishing papers on the web (Zhao & Logan, 2002). It is emerging as a medium that will be able to solve many of the difficulties associated with traditional publishing. One obvious advantage of scholarly publishing over the

internet is the potential speed with which texts can be made available to the public. Papers can be published more quickly online than in print media. Readers can access these papers at their home places rather than having visit to the library. Also, the large numbers of open access, free resources in the form of journals, archives, repositories, databases etc are available in thousands of public domains throughout the world (Maharana, Nayak & Sahu, 2006). Open access journals give free and unrestricted access through the internet to all primary literature published within the journals. This literature is given to the world by scholars without expectation of payment and in the hope that it is distributed and read as widely as possible. Scholars continue to take advantage of e- only journals as they increasingly get access to the material via digital channels, including internet search engines and more specific discovery tools provided by academic libraries. These tools have opened up the possibility of new topics of inquiry applying new methods leading to new theories (Zhao & Logan, 2002). Further, the internet research is vital to scholarship, since the accessibility to data is possible at all hours and in great quantities, thereby increasing the scope and breadth of scholarship (Jalalifard, Norouzi & Moghaddam, 2013). The Internet also expands the limited presentation capabilities of printed publications and facilitates access to audio, video, animated graphics, interactive web sites, databases, source code, and executable programs (Aronsky, Madani, Carnevale, Duda & Feyder, 2007).

2.0 Referencing

While performing any sort of scholarly work, we need to state the source of our ideas, facts and opinions. This art is called as referencing. It refers to the way by which we give credit to the writers from whom we borrow words and ideas. Referencing is the practice of acknowledging in your own writing the intellectual work of others; work that has been presented in some way into the public domain (Neville, 2007). It is also useful in accessing the works that are related to a study (Aronsky, Madani, Carnevale, Duda & Feyder, 2007). Neville (2007) states that citing the work of others plays an important role in locating and placing ideas and arguments in their historical, social, cultural and geographical contexts. It is also very helpful in drawing millions of ideas, insights or arguments published by other authors. Citations represent the pool of archival knowledge from which authors retrieve established ideas and, in turn, generate new research ideas (Sharif & Mahmood, 2004). It aims to estimate the varying contributions of scholarly work to the advancement of knowledge (Neuhaus & Daniel, 2006). Referencing provides evidence to support the assertions and claims in our work. Citing the work of the particular author depicts that we are very well aware of the field in which we are working. Referencing also makes our work more persuasive. Referencing should always be accurate, so that it becomes easy for the readers to locate the information we have used in our work. In scholarly research, cited references often play an important role in the conceptual formulation and methodological operationalization of a study (Tang & Safer, 2006). Academic study involves not just presenting and describing ideas, but also being aware of where they came from, who developed them, why and when (Neville, 2007). Not only printed books, but any work from any source needs citation.

3.0 Web Referencing

Wu (2009) states that Web references, also called as “Web Citations”, “Online Citations”, “Citations to the Web”, “Electronic references and scholarly citations of Internet sources”, etc are web information used as academic references. He further defines web references as those listed at the end of article after a heading of “References” and containing URL’s, whether they link to online databases or common websites. The increased amount of information available on the web has influenced the corresponding use of web citations by authors in their scholarly works (Lawrence, Coetzee, Glover, Pennock, Flake & Nielsen, 2001; Wu, 2009). Web citations play a prominent role as a medium of information in helping researchers with their studies and it has been supported in numerous theoretical and empirical studies (Mardani, 2011). The use of online/web referencing is rapidly increasing in the scholarly world. Consequently, citation behaviour of researchers has been affected with the invention of WWW, and in fact, it can be said that they have been interested in web citations (Jalalifard, Norouzi & Moghaddam, 2013). In recent years web sources have gained momentum, and this has played an important role in the increase of citations to web resources in scholarly publications in all disciplines (Kumar & Raj, 2010). Library and information science (LIS) is also no exception to this increase (Maharana, Nayak & Sahu, 2006). Zhao and Logan (2002) have believed that the reason of such an increase in the number of web citations in scholarly papers in LIS is that the web has become the first choice to find information on current research, break scientific discoveries, and to keep up with colleagues at other institutions. Moreover, from the last couple of decades, scholarly communication has been greatly enhanced with the development of Open access journals which has lead the authors to consult more and more web resources as a part of their increased research productivity (Jalalifard, et al, 2013).

4.0 Trends in Web referencing

Referencing is not a new idea. Its history dates back to Roman jurists who provided very precise references to earlier legal treatises they drew upon (as cited in Neville, 2007). Glosses or explanations were used in earlier

manuscripts to connect to the consulted sources. Later, the invention of printing press encouraged people to write in order to make their ideas more accessible. Printing press also gave rise to the practice of annotation into printed footnotes which provided a way for authors to identify their sources in a work (Neville, 2007). These footnotes later developed into references and several referencing styles also came into existence. Before the advent of internet, the researchers typically selected journal articles, monographs and conference proceedings for referring to in their study. Print journal has served as the primary source for scholarly communication for more than three centuries (Zhao & Logan, 2002) but with the development of internet especially the rapid growth of web, the trend of using these print journals is shifting towards online journals, as the cost of academic print journals has got high and it has become difficult for researchers to utilize them. With the advent of internet, the scholarly material appeared on the web free of charge, thus making academicians and researchers realize the importance of internet in the scholarly world (Kumar & Raj, 2010). Researchers give more preference to web referencing than traditional referencing, as the internet enables quick and easy access to resources. Further, with the growth of scholarly communication on the web, the use of web citations in journals articles, conference papers and other publications in all disciplines is becoming common. Internet has enabled the scholars to use other sources like e-books, online theses, dissertations and reports for their study, which in traditional mode of scholarly publishing was mainly confined to journals. In areas such as physics and computer sciences, the web is often the first choice for finding information on current research, for breaking scientific discoveries, and for keeping up with colleagues at other institutions (Lawrence, Coetzee, Glover, Pennock, Flake & Nielsen, 2001). The use of web citations in law review articles is also increasing rapidly (Rumsey, 2002). Internet has encouraged interdisciplinary relations among researchers. Sedighi (2013) defines interdisciplinarity as a scientific activity using knowledge, methods and tools from two or more disciplines. Due to the availability of tremendous amount of scholarly information on web, the researchers are not confined to one discipline only, but they refer to the sources from other disciplines as well, thereby increasing the citation counts of scholarly sources from multidisciplinary fields.

5.0 URL Domains

A digital object has a certain address of location on the web. This address is termed as URL (Uniform Resource Locator). It comprises of four parts: *protocol*, *domain*, *directory* and *file*. Domain is used to identify and locate the computers connected over internet. Domain name is different for different organizations. It contains two or more parts separated by periods called "dots". A domain name tells a user if it is a government site, academic site or a commercial site. Some common domains are:

- .com or .co : A commercial site.
- .edu or .ac : An educational site.
- .gov : An official government site.
- .org : Non-profit organizational site.
- .net : Network organizations.

5.1 “.com” Domain Extension: “.com” web address represents the term "commercial," and is the most widely used extension in the world. Most businesses prefer a .com domain name because it is a highly recognized symbol for having a business presence on the Internet. Individuals also usually prefer to use a .com extension for their own personal use.

5.2 “.org” Domain Extension : “.org” is another domain type representing the term “organization” and is primarily used by non-profit organizations, groups and associations. Nowadays, this domain is also used for businesses but is still most commonly used by non-profit organizations.

5.3 “.edu” and “.ac” Domain Extension: “.edu” and “.ac” domain extensions are mainly used for educational institutions/organizations. These domains are widely preferred for, but not limited to schools, colleges and universities.

5.4 “.gov” Domain Extension: “.gov” domain type represents the term “Government” and is widely preferred for government entities. It is administered by General Services Administration (GSA), an independent agency of United States federal government.

5.5 “.net” Domain Extension : “.net” is another popular domain extension, abbreviating the term “Network”. It was originally used by internet service providers. .Net is growing in popularity amongst other kinds of businesses. (Domainpurpose.com, n.d).

The information sources available in the .org and .edu/.ac domains are more research oriented and have preference to other websites and reflect the author's perceived image towards these resources (Mardani, 2011).

6.0 Citation Analysis

As web is becoming new and powerful medium in scientific research, citation analysis and other bibliometric techniques have found some applications in studying this new phenomenon in scholarly communication (Zhao & Logan, 2002). Citation analysis, a branch of bibliometrics, is one of the most widely used methods in the evaluation of journals. It has been a tool of research in literature for many years. It was first given by Eugene Garfield and since then, it has been used to study the rankings of journals in various subject fields. The scholarly communication system has relied on this method as the mainstream study of journal use (Eason, Richardson & Yu, 2000). This technique is helpful in measuring quantitatively the value of document through arranging the citations in some kind of rank and order (Kumar & Reddy, 2012). Citation analysis provides information on the use of references or literature in journals, thesis and others materials. In analyzing the citations, the frequency of the journal title, type and age of the resources used, place of publication, language and frequency of the author are analyzed to study use trends, which suggests means to enhance the library collection. The method of citation analysis consists of counting and ranking the number of times documents are cited in bibliographies, footnotes, and/or indexing tools (as cited in Sylvia, 1998). It also gives a picture of the material that local users find essential to their research and helps to identify the quality of information sources. Gao, Yu and Luo (2009) state four advantages of citation analysis over other methods: First, citing a publication may be the best indication of its importance since the citation implies that researchers read the publication and considered it important enough to include as a reference; Second, managing a citation study is relatively simple — it can be conducted by a single person; Third, citation studies are reliable, valid, rapid, and economical and the data may be obtained unobtrusively. Fourth, and perhaps most valuable for an academic librarian is the fact that a citation is a component of the most important product of the academic enterprise. Citation analysis is useful in identifying the core journals because of the bibliometric phenomenon known as Law of Scattering, which describes the manner in which articles on a subject are dispersed through the periodical literature (Sylvia, 1998). It not only facilitates the understanding of which journals are to be ranked highly in a specific domain but also helps in understanding the local use of journals (Kumar & Dora, 2011). Citation analysis is often compared to past studies to build on the literature. The present study is also based on this technique whereby we will study the pattern and use of references in the articles of a well renowned journal in the field of library and information sciences.

7.0 Problem

Use of web references has become common in the scholarly research with the passage of time the internet is growing at a tremendous speed. The present study makes an attempt to explore and analyse the growth of web references in one of the eminent journals in the field of Library and Information Sciences, *Library and Information Science Research*.

8.0 Objectives

The research has been conducted for the purpose of studying the preference of references by authors in the field of library and information sciences. The specific objectives are:

- 1) To study the distribution of citations by type of source.
- 2) To identify and quantify the web references in scholarly papers.
- 3) To find out a ratio of citations from print sources to those of web sources.
- 4) To find out the average number of web references per article.
- 5) To find out the types of domains where the authors have cited.

9.0 Methodology

9.1 Selection of journal: *Library and Information Science Research* journal was selected as a source for the present study. It is a renowned journal in the field of library and information sciences having an H-index of 45 and Impact Factor (IF) of 1.185 (Scimago, 2017). It is a quarterly journal, published by *Elsevier* and is available through Science Direct database on subscription basis.

9.2 Data collection: In order to fulfill the set objectives, we conducted a survey of the scholarly articles, excluding Editorials and Reviews, published over ten years period (2004-2013). Data collected from the journal included the no. of articles and no. of references. The references in each article were classified into five categories: journals, books, conference proceedings, websites and others (Others included reports, magazines, theses, dissertations, newspaper, encyclopedia etc.). Each category was further divide into 2: Online and Offline.

Online sources identified were also categorized as per the type of domain. The collected data were then tabulated for further analysis.

10.0 Literature Review

Over the past few years, the preferences of scholars for print and electronic sources have been the focus of various studies. Citations to web sources have been studied since as early as the mid 1990's. **Harter and Kim (1996)** performed a citation analysis of peer reviewed electronic journals and conclude that significant percentage of electronic resources is being utilized by researchers for their research. **Lawrence, Coetzee, Glover, Pennock, Flake & Nielsen (2001)** find that there is a considerable increase in web references over the years. This has also been concluded by **Zhang (2001)**, **Maharana, Nayak and Sahu (2006)**, **Mardani (2011)** and **Yang, Ruizhen, Ding and Song (2011)**. **Davis and Cohen (2001)** conclude that citations to web sources are increasing at a tremendous rate. **Ullah (2006)** finds that most of the articles are with online citations. **Rumsey (2002)** concludes that the web citations per article are also increasing at a notable rate. **Vaughan and Shaw (2005)** reveal that journals receive more web citations as compared to other sources. **Liew, Foo, and Chennupati (2000)** report that majority of the users prefer electronic journals over print journals, reasons include links to additional resources, searching capability, currency, availability, and ease of access. Another study of **Bhat and Kumar (2008)** reveal that the use of web based resources in scholarly e-journals is almost equal to that of print sources. **Anilkumar and Rajaram (2013)** came out with a result that proportion of print and electronic sources have been cited. All these works are in contradiction to those of **Dilevoka and Gotllieb (2002)**, **Megnigbeto (2006)**, and **Sathe, Grady, and Giuse (2002)** who conclude that the number of citations to internet resources is very low and the scholars prefer print resources over electronic ones. **Asemi (2010)** also concludes that the majority of citations are from print resources, the reason being their reliability and permanent accessibility.

11.0 General Analysis

In the present study, the web resources referred to by the authors in the field of Library and Information Sciences have been studied. A total number of 13468 references, as obtained from 294 papers published in Library and Information Science Research journal have been analyzed and the results interpreted.

11.1 Distribution of References by Source Type: In order to assess the type of sources referred to in the present analysis; the references from all the selected research articles are categorized into four categories: Journals, Books, Conference Proceedings and Websites. The references which do not fall in any of these categories are kept in the "Others" Category (Reports, Theses, Unpublished doctoral dissertations, Magazines etc.).

Highest numbers of citations are taken from journal articles (7804; 57.94%), followed by books (3208; 23.81%); conference proceedings (660; 4.9%) and websites (473; 3.51%) (Table 1). The findings are in tune with that of Yang and Pan (2006); Gawande and Choukhande (2013); Zhang (2001); Michael and Olayinka (2009) wherein they also conclude that journals are the most widely used sources of information by scholars.

Table 1: Distribution of References by Type of Source

Year	Journals	Books	Conf. Proceedings	Websites	Others
2004	542	215	52	44	126
2005	532	197	69	15	138
2006	621	272	74	49	118
2007	679	306	32	36	90
2008	709	306	57	41	172
2009	701	334	75	43	134
2010	759	327	69	58	76
2011	1000	319	67	66	160
2012	1090	503	75	52	163
2013	1171	429	90	69	146
Total	7804	3208	660	473	1323
%age	57.94	23.81	4.9	3.51	9.82

11.2 Growth of Web References : In 2004, the references to the web sources were 11.61 % (113 references) which has increased up to 25.72 % (490 references) in 2013. Table 2 represents the RGR and DT for web references for the period 2004-2013. A consistency in RGR indicates that there exists an exponential growth in the literature (Bajwa, Yaldrum and Rafique, 2013). From table 2, it can be seen that RGR is inconsistent and doubling time is also inconsistent, suggesting that the growth is not exponential.

Table 2: Growth of Web References

Year	Total References	Web References	Cum. Web Ref. Score	RGR	Mean RGR	Dt	Mean Dt	
2004	973	113	113		0.330		2.50	
2005	951	144	257	0.822		0.85		
2006	1051	140	397	0.435		1.60		
2007	1143	117	514	0.258		2.69		
2008	1285	154	668	0.262		2.65		
2009	1287	213	881	0.277		2.51		
2010	1289	211	1092	0.215		3.23		
2011	1612	263	1355	0.216		3.21		
2012	1883	350	1705	0.229		3.03		
2013	1905	490	2195	0.253		2.74		
Total	13468	2195						

11.3 Ratio of Print and Web References

Out of total 13468 references, 11273 (83.7%) are from print sources and 2195 (16.3%) are from web sources. The study reveals that there is a growing trend of using web resources among researchers in the field of library and information sciences, but still print sources are dominating the web sources.

Table 3: Ratio of Print and Web References

Total References	Print References	%age	Web References	%age
13468	11273	83.7	2195	16.3

11.4 Average Web Reference Per Article:

During the period under study (2004-2013), total of 293 articles were published in the selected journal. Table 3 shows the average number of web references per article within the same period which ranged from a high of 13.61 in 2013 and a low of 4.52 in 2004. The average number of web references per article was 7.49 across all articles and years.

Table 4: Average Web References Per Article

Year	Articles	Web References	Avg Web reference per article
2004	25	113	4.52
2005	26	144	5.54
2006	27	140	5.18
2007	25	117	4.68
2008	29	154	5.31
2009	27	213	7.88
2010	27	211	7.81
2011	35	263	7.51
2012	36	350	9.72
2013	36	490	13.61
Total	293	2195	7.49

12.0 Examining the Diversity of Top Level Domains Used by Authors

In order to find out the diversity of domains used in the URL's of web references, five different types of domains have been taken into consideration. These are .org, .edu/.ac, .com/.co, .gov and .net, while the domains which do not fall in any of the above mentioned categories are placed in "Others" category. Maharana et al. (2006) explains that the domain extensions often tell the users whether they are exploring a government, educational or a business's web site.

Highest numbers of cited URL's are from .org (854; 42.24%) and .edu/.ac type (331; 16.37%) followed by .com/.co (254; 12.56%); .gov (197; 9.74%) and .net (154; 7.62%). The findings are in tune with that of Mardani (2011).

Table 5: Distribution of Web References by Domain Type

Domain Type	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total	%age
.org	48	56	65	48	62	71	62	94	132	216	854	42.24
.edu/.ac	20	17	26	17	34	35	36	32	63	51	331	16.37

.com/co	18	16	21	26	8	35	24	44	30	32	254	12.56
.gov	11	10	10	4	28	32	11	38	31	22	197	9.74
.net	2	7	9	16	5	15	22	21	22	35	154	7.62
Others	14	38	9	6	16	24	20	26	39	40	232	11.47
Annual total	113	144	140	117	153	212	175	255	317	396	2022	

13.0 Findings

The advent of information and communication technologies has increased the pace of research due to its fast and efficient capability of disseminating and accessing scientific information. A large number of resources in the form of e-journals, e-books, archives, repositories etc. are available via World Wide Web in thousands of public domains throughout the world. As a result, the number of web citations has been increasing. For the purposes of the present study, we focused on the behaviour of LIS authors, in referencing and citing web resources in their research papers. The findings of the study are meant to serve as a pathfinder for the academic and research community in LIS, to help them assess the impact of the Web on scholarship and to show the extent to which we can be said to select appropriately and cite accurately the Web's authentic and reliable resources.

The major findings are enumerated as follows:

1. A total of 293 articles were published from the year 2004-2013. Total of 13468 references were identified from these articles, out of which 7804 (57.94 %) are from journals and 3208 (23.81 %) are from books, which is an indicative of the wide usage of journals in scholarly research. journals cover the major portion of references in the articles of selected journal. This clearly indicates the importance of journals in scholarly communication.
2. Out of total 13468 references, 2195 (16.3 %) are web references. The percentage of web references has increased from 113 (11.61 %) in 2004 to 490 (25.72 %) in 2013. Based on this finding, it can be said that researchers are increasingly making use of web based resources every year.
3. The average number of web references across all articles was 7.49. The average web references per article have increased from 4.52 in 2004 to 13.61 in 2013. The findings reveal that researchers are making more and more use of web resources in their articles.
4. The domains of the cited URL's mostly include .org type. From 2194 web references, the highest numbers of domains (854; 42.24 %) are of .org type, followed by .edu/.ac type (331; 16.37 %). This indicates that most of the web references are websites of various non-profit organizations and academic organizations.

14.0 Conclusion

The World Wide Web provides a fast and efficient means of disseminating and accessing scientific information. A large number of open accessed, free resources are available in thousands of public domains throughout the world. As a result, the number of web citations has been increasing. For the purpose of the present study, we focused on the behaviour of LIS authors, in referencing and citing web resources in their research papers. The findings of the study are meant to serve as a pathfinder for the academic and research community in LIS, to help them assess the impact of the Web on scholarship and to show the extent to which we can be said to select judiciously and cite accurately the Web's authentic and reliable resources. In this article, we showed that the use of web citations in the articles of Library and Information Sciences has increased to a significant amount. This could be due to the growth in the internet resources that has caused researchers to better recognize the internet as a valuable information source. Zhao and Logan (2002) state that the reason behind the increase in the number of web citations in research articles is that internet resources are the first choices of researchers when seeking information on current research, for breaking scientific discoveries and for keeping up with their colleagues in other organizations.

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