Libraries and bibliometrics: institutional and professional perspectives

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Overview

• The local and practical view
• The national (and somewhat international) perspective
  – An old survey
  – and since that survey…
• A process of professionalization
• A framework for interpretation
Why…?

• Increase
  – Practice
  – Literature, scholarly and professional
  – Discussion
    » Conferences, e.g. Forum Bibliometrie, TUM 2016
    » Discussion e-mail lists, e.g. LIS-BIBLIOMETRICS@JISCMAIL.AC.UK

• Wider perspective
  – Resource allocation systems
  – Responsible metrics
  – The Competencies
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Bibliometric practices at libraries (Åström & Hansson, 2013)

• A survey in Sweden to figure out…:
  • How is bibliometric activities organized at the libraries?
  • What is the background – and reasoning – for placing the bibliometric activities of a university at the library?
  • What are the potential effects of libraries taking on bibliometric activities, in terms of:
    – The role and identity of the library?
    – The relation between the library and the wider university organization?
Background

• Changes in research policies
  – NPM
  – Resource allocation systems

• Changes in scholarly communication processes
  – Open Access
  – Systems for communication vs system for merit/reward

• Changes in libraries
  – Online access to information resources
  – Redefining and developing the role and purpose of the organization and the profession
Why at the Library?

• Competencies
  – Bibliographic databases & Metadata
  – Bibliometrics as part of LIS
  – Scholarly communication & support to publishing

• Access to data
  – Bibliographic and citation databases
  – Development and maintenance of repositories

• Organizational status
  – A stable unit within the university
  – A neutral position in relation to faculties and departments
  – However: developed at own initiative, gradually receiving official mandate from university/faculty management
Opportunities

• A new role for the library (and librarianship?)
  – New tasks and responsibilities
  – A broader set of competencies

• Increased visibility
  – In relation to scholars
    » As part of support to grant application and publication processes
    » Informing about systems for research evaluation
  – In relation to university management
    » Increase in influence and prestige
    » An increased role in university management processes
Drawbacks/Risks

• The level of competency in terms of:
  – Advances statistics
  – The construction of different indicators

• Legitimacy
  – Are libraries legitimate evaluators of research?

• The library being associated with:
  – Poor performance in evaluations
  – Controversial methods

• The library being perceived as an institution with a surveillance or monitoring function in relation to the scholars at the university
The Changing Role…

• Visibility
  – In relation to university management (a new user group)
  – In relation to scholars
    » Service: analyses and support
    » Monitoring/surveillance

• Status
  – Part of management processes
  – Quantitative methods = Scientific methods
    » Exclusive competency on methods used by few others
• Legitimacy
  – Established specialists on scholarly communication
  – A stronger position within the university as a whole
  – How developed are our competencies on bibliometrics?
  – Are we legitimate evaluators of scientific research?
Almost ten years since the survey…

- Continued increase in activity and interest in Northern Europe
- Responsible metrics
  - Awareness
  - Competencies
- Broadened discussion on impact
- In Sweden:
  - More libraries and more people
  - Increasingly with PhDs and with various backgrounds (including statistics)
  - Also, increasingly local models for allocating funds on different levels (Hammarfelt et.al, 2016)
Process of professionalization

Professionalization of bibliometrics (Cox et al., 2017; Petersohn, 2016; Petersohn & Heinze, 2018)
- Abbot’s theories on professionalization
- Libraries, CWTS, CRIS

Jurisdictional claims & Professional competencies/responsibilities (Petersohn, 2016; 2018)
- LIS training & professional networks
- Databases and institutional repositories
- A neutral institution
• Training (Petersohn, 2016)
  – Variations in LIS programs
  – Professional development
    » Self studies
    » Commodity aided learning
    » Webinars/workshops

• Claim of jurisdiction (Petersohn, 2016)
  – Full jurisdiction
    » Empowering users
    » The use of commodities
  – Varying degrees of shared jurisdiction
    » Negative effect on neutral position
  – No claim of jurisdiction
• Competencies and activities (Cox et.al, 2017)
  – Entry level
    » Explaining concepts
    » Basic calculations
  – Core
    » Awareness raising and responsible use
    » Training, education and advice to users
    » Systems procurement and use
  – Specialist
    » Evaluate institutional performance
    » Monitoring national policies
    » Evaluation of systems
Evaluation Infrastructures (Åström, 2016; Star & Bowker, 2006)

- "Software"
  - Indicators
  - Evaluation systems

- "People"
  - Evaluatees
  - Evaluators
  - Auxiliary

- "Hardware"
  - Data
  - Tools
Evaluee
Research at the library

Evaluator
Analyses for management

Auxiliary
Maintaining IR
Providing tools for analysis
Delivering data

Evaluee
Advice to research groups
Analyses supporting:
- Grant applications
- Project evaluation

Evaluator
Instructions and indicators from:
- Government
- Funding agencies
- Management

Auxiliary
Data and tools
- CRIS
- Tools for analysis
- Databases
To conclude…

• Professionalization of bibliometrics as professional practice
  – Competition
  – Competencies

• Increasing use of bibliometric indicators in research evaluation
  – At different levels
  – Societal impact, Open access/Open science…

• Increasing complexity of involved stakeholders
  – Interdependencies
  – Multiple roles
References


