

**Part II**  
**The Current State of Quality-Based  
Publication Rankings and Publication  
Databases**

# The ESF Scoping Project 'Towards a Bibliometric Database for the Social Sciences and Humanities'

Gerhard Lauer

**Abstract** This paper is a brief report on the European Science Foundation (ESF) Scoping Project, installed in 2009, results published in 2010, which examines the potential for developing some form of research output database that could be used for assessing research performance in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH). Suggestions were made as to how such a database might look.

Bibliometrics is loved neither in the natural sciences, nor in the life sciences, nor in engineering. However, it is a more or less common practice in all of these areas of research. In the humanities and some social sciences, it is neither loved nor practiced—to put it simply. The situation hasn't changed since the European Research Index in the Humanities' (ERIH)<sup>1</sup> was established in 2002. ERIH was established both for humanities 'purposes and in order to present their ongoing research achievements systematically to the rest of the world'. The Index adds: 'It is also a unique project because, in the context of a world dominated by publications in English, it highlights the vast range of world-class research published by humanities researchers in the European languages'. It was, and is, its major goal to improve the unsatisfactory coverage of European Humanities' research through better bibliometric tools.

In 2009, Bonnie Wheeler, President of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals, raised serious objections against ERIH (Zey 2010). She argued: 'ERIH claims that its goal is to aid journals and their contributors, but it will inevitably inform institutional assessments and may result in rigid common protocols for scholarly journals' (Wheeler 2009; cf. Wheeler 2011). Wheeler's concerns are those of many editors regardless of whether their journals are ranked in the ERIH list or not. Maybe not the best, but certainly the most common argument is a different one: In principle, research output in the humanities is not countable and even social sciences are to be treated differently from the science, technology, engineering and medicine (STEM)

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.esf.org/erih>.

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disciplines. Finally, there is an incongruity between the steadily growing numbers of publications and the need for a fair and effective practice of peer review for sufficient library budgets and preservation services. Because the entire system is heavily dependent on tax-payer money, research organizations are calling for an alternative. They advocate for university-based and open-access publishing models (Harley and Krzys Acord 2011). Not only bibliometrics, but the whole system of scholarly publication is challenged and will be under much more pressure in the next few years than it is today (Leydesdorff 2001).

The Agence National de la Recherche (ANR), the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NOW) are working together with the European Research Foundation to meet the challenges presented by the current pressure to establish a more robust bibliometric database for assessing the impact of all types of research output in the domains of social sciences and humanities (SSH). They ask how a bibliometric database for the humanities and social sciences can be developed that more accurately represents humanist work than current citation indices like ERIH or newer 'usage' indices. A European scoping project was established in 2009 to answer the question: 'What is the potential for developing some form of research output database that could be used for assessing research performance in SSH?' In the field of social sciences and humanities the main problems are well known, i.e. the wider scale and variety of research outputs from SSH, the need to consider national journals (in particular those published in languages other than English) and the highly variable quality of existing SSH bibliographical databases due to the lack of a standardized database structure for the input data. On the other hand, it's obvious how rapidly Web of Science (Thomson-Reuters), which is the former Science Citation Index/Social Sciences Citation Index/Arts and Humanities Citation Index, and Scopus (Elsevier) have expanded their coverage of social sciences and humanities journals in the last years. Web of Science has increased the covered number of SSH journals from 1,700 in 2002 to 2,400 in 2009. And Scopus, much stronger in the field, added 1,450 SSH journals in 2009 to its collection of more than 3,500 SSH journals. Moreover, Scopus has already started to add bibliographic meta-data on highly cited books in its database. So-called regional journals are an increasing part of these two main bibliometric database providers. In March 2014, Elsevier indexed 30,000 books, expecting to index around 75,000 by the end of 2015 (Scopus blog, see Dyas 2014). And, as Henk Moed puts it, Google is already the poor man's bibliometrics (Moed et al. 2010, p. 19; cf. Harzing and van der Wal 2009). The driving force, however, is the interest of many researchers and universities to make their results more visible.

Within this situation, the European Scoping Project (cf. SPRU 2009) understands bibliometrics in a broad sense, from bibliographic to statistics, and has taken political, strategic and operational issues into account. Two experts—Diana Hicks and Henk Moed—were asked to give a short report on the actual situation of SSH bibliometrics (Hicks and Wang 2009; Moed et al. 2010). After having discussed the evaluations by Hicks and Moed, the scoping project board members developed a variety of solutions and examined more closely six suggestions: First, to create more comprehensive

national bibliographic systems through the development of institutional repositories. Second, to enhance and build upon existing national documentation systems like METIS in the Netherlands or the DRIVER initiative through the creation and standardization of institutional research management systems. The third suggestion discussed the possibilities for a new database of SSH research outputs from publishers' archives and institutional repositories, and adding to this appropriate data on enlightenment literature and curated events. A further point considered was to take advantage of the competition between Web of Science and Scopus to strengthen the coverage of SSH research outputs, and of the potential of Google Scholar to become a more rigorous bibliometric database provider. The fifth suggestion was whether it would be suitable to integrate the specialized SSH bibliographic lists into one comprehensive bibliographic database. And last, there was a discussion on the chances to encourage the further development of the Open Access approach, since it offers a potential means to overcome barriers of accessibility and to enhance the visibility of SSH journals and books published by small European publishers.

Advantages and disadvantages of each approach were weighed and recommendations were given. These recommendations were based on a combination of top-down and bottom-up actions, with an emphasis on extensive bottom-up involvement in the development of an SSH bibliometric database. Main functions of the recommendations were to provide accountability with regard to the use of public funds, to assess research quality, to provide a comprehensive overview of SSH research outputs in Europe, to map the directions of SSH research and to identify new emerging areas of interdisciplinary SSH research. The four recommendations were:

1. Defining the criteria for inclusion of SSH research outputs and establishing a standardized database structure for national bibliometric databases;
2. exploring the option of involving a commercial supplier in the construction of a single international SSH bibliometric database;
3. conducting a pilot study of one or several specific SSH disciplines; and
4. longer-term expansion and enhancement of the SSH bibliometric database.

The required actions for each recommendation were laid out, to mark very concrete further steps. The roadmap was described as a two year path towards a bibliometric database for the humanities and social sciences. The full report was published with both research reports by Moed and Hicks (Martin et al. 2010; Moed et al. 2010; Hicks and Wang 2009).

The European Science Foundation has already reacted and recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). The decision was made to transfer the ERIH to the NSD website, where it will be possible to submit new journals. However, no decision has been reached whether ERIH should play a larger role, while the oligopoly of major publishing houses and their bibliometrics steadily enlarge their positions. New ways of open review ratings with self-publishing have stepped into the field. The rise of ResearchGate is but one example of an alternative scoring system based on a scholarly social network which, however, still faces the same problems of fair indexing (Murray 2014). How to change the conduct of social sciences and humanities and their reputation-based

system towards a more data-based is still an open question. Neither the established reputation-based system nor a more quantitative combination of many indices is better, more abstract or more valuable. Fairness cannot be born from the head of computers and of scholarly networks alone.

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# Publication-Based Funding: The Norwegian Model

Gunnar Sivertsen

**Abstract** The ‘Norwegian Model’ attempts to comprehensively cover all the peer-reviewed scholarly literatures in all areas of research—including the preferred formats and languages of scholarly publishing in the humanities—in one single weighted indicator which makes the research efforts comparable across departments and faculties within and between research institutions. This article describes the main components of the model and how it has been implemented, as well as the effects and experiences in three of the countries that are making use of the model, and where it has been evaluated: Belgium (Flanders), Denmark and Norway. The article concludes with a discussion of the model from the perspective of the humanities.

## 1 Introduction

The so-called ‘Norwegian Model’ (Ahlgren et al. 2012; Schneider 2009), which so far has been adopted at the national level by Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Finland, Norway and Portugal, as well as at the local level by several Swedish universities, has three components:

- (A) A complete representation in a national database of structured, verifiable and validated bibliographical records of the peer-reviewed scholarly literature in all areas of research;
- (B) A publication indicator with a system of weights that makes field-specific publishing traditions comparable across fields in the measurement of ‘Publication points’ at the level of institutions;
- (C) A performance-based funding model which reallocates a small proportion of the annual direct institutional funding according the institutions’ shares in the total of Publication points.

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In principle, component C is not necessary to establish components A and B. The experience is, however, that the funding models in C support the need for completeness and validation of the bibliographic data in component A. Since the largest commercial data sources, such as *Scopus* or *Web of Science*, so far lack the completeness needed for the model to function properly, the bibliographic data are delivered by the institutions themselves through Current Research Information Systems (CRIS).

The Norwegian model is designed to represent all areas of research equally and properly. The typical mode of implementation in each country has been for the governments to involve prominent researchers in each major area of research, e.g. deans appointed by the rector's conference to represent the respective faculties at all universities, or experts appointed by the learned societies on the national level. The representative researchers have then been involved directly in the national adaptation and design of the publication indicator (component B). The result of these design processes has been one single and simple pragmatic compromise—the first bibliometric indicator to cover all areas of research comprehensively and comparably—rather than several separate and ideal representations of scholarly publishing standards in each individual field.

The Norwegian model usually attracts more attention in the social sciences and humanities than in the other areas. Initially, the reaction is negative or sceptical because the model turns scholarly values into measurable points. There are also concerns about the fact that, although it covers book publishing and the national level of publishing better than other indicators, it still disregards other valuable publication practices by concentrating on the peer-reviewed literature and giving extra incentives to publishing on the international level.

The model has been evaluated three times. I will refer results from the evaluation in Belgium (Flanders) here in the introduction and return to the evaluations in Denmark and Norway later on.

Flanders introduced a performance-based funding model called the BOF-key for the five Flemish universities in 2003. The bibliometric part of the funding formula was initially based on data from the Web of Science only. As a response to criticisms from the social sciences and the humanities, the Government decided in 2008 to supplement the commercial data source by introducing modifications of component A and B in the Norwegian model. Since 2009, the Flemish Academic Bibliographic Database for the Social Sciences and the Humanities (Vlaams Academisch Bibliografisch Bestand voor de Sociale en Humane Wetenschappen, VABB-SHW) has collected supplementing bibliographic data from the five universities (Engels et al. 2012). An evaluation of the VABB-SHW was performed in 2012 by the Technopolis Group for the Flemish Government. They found these effects of the initiative (Technopolis Group 2013, pp. 9–10):

- ‘The VABB-SHW protects certain types of publications in the SSH from becoming marginal.
- The VABB-SHW boosts publications in peer-reviewed journals and those with publishers who are using peer review procedures. It thus provides some guidance to publication behaviour of researchers in the SSH domain.

- More generally, the VABB-SHW has led to a greater emphasis on using peer review procedures in journals and by publishers.
- The VABB-SHW has contributed to an increased visibility of both the SSH and the recognition of SSH publications within the academic community.
- The VABB-SHW has also contributed to an increased quality of the bibliographic databases in the SSH domain of the university associations. This provides, in turn, new opportunities for strategic intelligence’.

In the following, I will shortly present the three components of the Norwegian model in more detail. I will then present more results from evaluations of the model. I will conclude by discussing the model from the perspective of the humanities.

My contribution here is not a neutral and objective study of the Norwegian model as seen from the outside. I designed the model in 2003–2004 in collaboration with academic representatives from Norwegian universities and as a consultant to the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (Sivertsen 2010). I still have a role in the further development of the model, both in Norway and in Denmark.

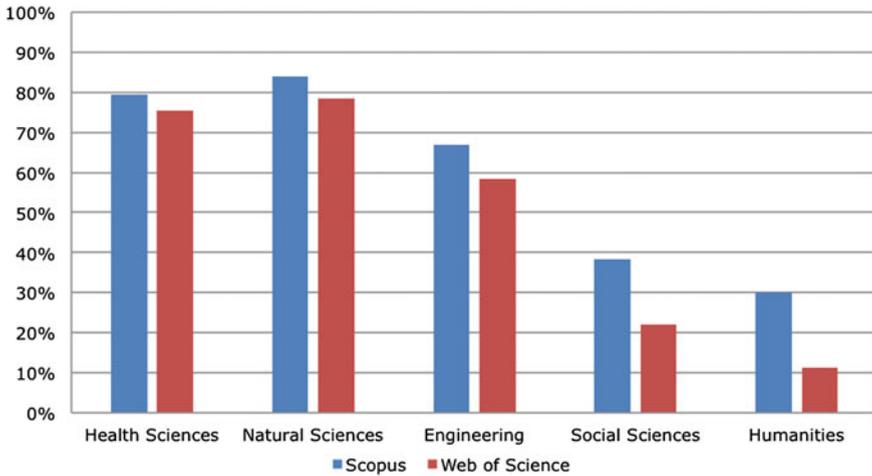
## 2 Component A: Delimitation and Collection of Data

The Norwegian model is designed to serve a partly indicator-based funding system for research institutions. Since institutions have different research profiles (e. g. a general university versus a technical university), the model needs to represent all research areas in a comprehensive and comparable way.

There is no single comprehensive international data source for all scholarly publications in all research areas. Figure 1 exhibits the patterns and degrees of coverage in the two largest commercial data sources, Scopus and Web of Science. We know from the complete data set that we use here for comparison, which is based on data from the Norwegian model in Norway since 2005, that the deficiencies in coverage of the social sciences and humanities are mainly due to incomplete coverage of the international journals, limited or no coverage of national scholarly journals and very limited coverage of peer-reviewed scholarly books (Sivertsen 2014).

The data for the Norwegian model are delimited by a *definition* which all areas of research contributed to develop and agree on before it was published in 2004 (Sivertsen and Larsen 2012, p. 569). According to this definition, a scholarly publication must:

1. present new insight
2. in a scholarly format that allows the research findings to be verified and/or used in new research activity
3. in a language and with a distribution that makes the publication accessible for a relevant audience of researchers
4. in a publication channel (journal, series, book publisher) which represents authors from several institutions and organizes independent peer review of manuscripts before publication.



**Fig. 1** Coverage in Scopus and Web of Science of 70,500 peer-reviewed scholarly publications in journals, series and books from the higher education sector in Norway 2005–2012

While the first two requirements of the definition demand originality and scholarly format in the publication itself, the third and fourth requirement are supported by a dynamic register of approved scholarly publication channels at <http://dbh.nsd.uib.no/kanaler/>. Suggestions for additions can be made at any time through the same web page.<sup>1</sup> Publications in local channels (serving only one institution's authors) are not included in the definition, partly because independent peer-review cannot be expected in local channels, and partly because the indicator connected to institutional funding of research is not meant to subsidize in-house publishing.

The definition is not meant to cover the researchers' publishing activities in general. It is meant to represent *research*, not publications. Accordingly, it is limited to original research publications.

In addition to a definition, there is need for a comprehensive data source with bibliographic data that can be connected to persons and their institutional affiliations. These data need to be well-structured (thereby comparable and measurable), verifiable (in external data sources, e. g. in the library) and validated (inter-subjective agreement on what is included according to the definition). These needs are now possible to serve due to the development during the last two decades of Current Research Information Systems (CRIS). They can be designed to produce quality assured metadata at the level of institutions or countries.

CRIS systems on the institutional level have become widespread recently, both in locally and commercially developed solutions. Norway is one of a few countries that has a fully integrated non-commercial CRIS system at the national level. *Cristin* (The

<sup>1</sup>A parallel service at the Norwegian Social Science Data Services was recently established for ERIH PLUS, formerly ERIH (European Reference Index for the Humanities) in collaboration with the European Science Foundation: <https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/publiseringskanaler/erihplus/>.

Current Research Information System in Norway; cristin.no) is a shared system for all research organizations in the public sector: universities, university colleges, university hospitals and independent research institutes. The Norwegian model, which is now used for institutional funding in all sectors, was a driver in the development of a *shared* system. One reason is that many publications are affiliated with more than one institution and need to be treated as such in the validation process and in the indicator. Another reason is that transparency across institutions stimulates data quality. Every institution can see and check all other institutions’ data. The publication database in the CRIS system is also online and open to society at large.

The costs of running Cristin would not be legitimate without multiple use of the same data. References to publications are registered only once, after which they can be used in CV’s, applications to research councils, evaluations, annual reports, internal administration, bibliographies for Open Archives, links to full text, etc.

### 3 Component B: Comparable Measurement

In the measurement for the funding formula by the end of each year, the publications are *weighted* as they are counted. The intention is to balance between field specific publishing patterns, thereby making the publication output comparable across research areas and institutions that may have different research profiles. In one dimension, three main publication types are given different weights: articles in journals and series (ISSN), articles in books (ISBN) and books (ISBN). In another dimension, publication channels are divided into two levels in order to stimulate publishing in the most prestigious and demanding publication channels within each field of research. The highest level is named ‘Level 2’. It includes only the leading and most selective international journals, series and book publishers. There is also a quantitative restriction, since the publication channels selected for Level 2 can only in total represent up to 20% of the world’s publications in each field. The weighting of publications by type and channel is shown in Table 1.

Publication points are measured at the level of institutions, not at the level of individual researchers. The points for publications with multiple authors representing several institutions are *fractionalized* among the participating institutions according to their number of participating authors.

**Table 1** Publication points in Norway

	Channels at (the normal) level 1	Channels at (the high) level 2
Articles in ISSN-titles	1	3
Articles in ISBN-titles	0.7	1
Books (ISBN-titles)	5	8

The list of journals, series and book publishers on ‘Level 2’ is revised annually in collaboration with national councils in each discipline or field of research (Sivertsen 2010). These councils propose changes to an interdisciplinary National Publishing Board, which governs the process on behalf of all institutions and has the final decision. Bibliometric statistics (world production versus national production in channels on both levels, and citation statistics for publication channels) are used as an aid in this process, but not as criteria by themselves.

## 4 Component C: Incentives and Funding

There are two main variants of performance-based funding of research institutions in Europe: the evaluation-based variants (United Kingdom and Italy, also being developed in the Czech Republic and in Sweden), and the indicator-based variants (many smaller European countries). The Norwegian model was developed for indicator-based funding. It is, however, not an alternative to research evaluation. In all of the countries using the Norwegian model presently, research evaluations with expert panels are also practiced, but not with direct consequences for institutional funding.

Countries with indicator-based funding of research institutions do not rely solely on bibliometric indicators. Other indicators may be for example be external funding or the number of doctoral degrees. In addition, the indicators usually reallocate only a minor part of the total funding. Consequently, the economic consequences of an institution’s score on the publication indicator in the Norwegian model are therefore relatively small in all countries. In Norway, the publication indicator reallocates less than 2% of the total expenses in the Higher Education Sector. One publication point represents less than 5,000 Euro.

Still, the publication indicator receives a lot of attention from the researchers, much more attention than is given other and more consequential parts of the funding system. A reason might be that this indicator can be influenced directly by the researchers themselves. Consequently, the Norwegian model seems to be able to change the behaviour of researchers—and that might be a problem.

## 5 Evaluations of Effects and Experiences

There have been several studies already of the effects of the Norwegian model in different contexts in Denmark, Flanders, Norway and Sweden (Ahlgrén et al. 2012; Hammarfelt and de Rijcke 2014; Ossenblok et al. 2012). In addition, there have been three evaluations commissioned by the Governments in Denmark, Flanders and Norway. Above, we referred to the Flemish evaluation in 2012.

The evaluation of the model in Denmark (Sivertsen and Schneider 2012) covered all of the universities and their research areas. As it was performed only three years after the implementation, not much could be said about the effects and possible

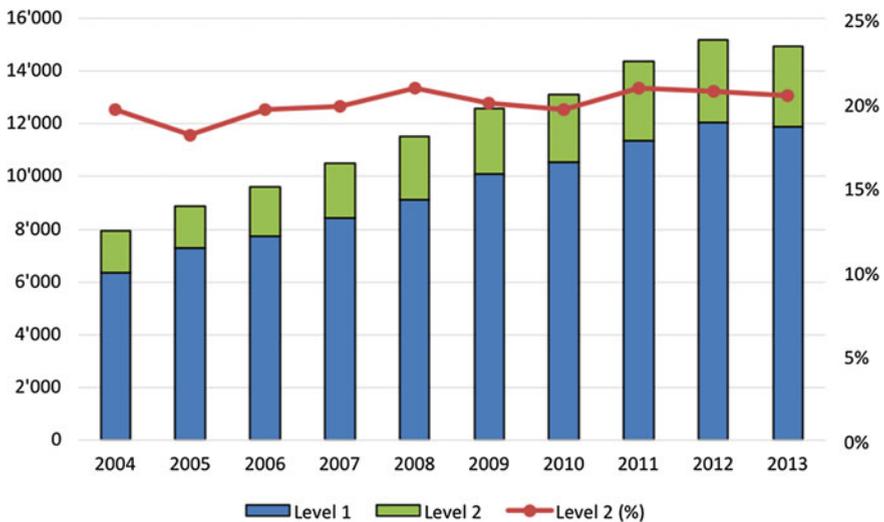
unintended consequences. Instead, based on a dialogue with each university, the evaluation identified a number of ideas for improvement of the model which have been taken forward into development work.

The Norwegian model, introduced in 2004, has influenced the funding of Norwegian research institutions since 2005. An evaluation of the effects and experiences was undertaken in 2013. The evaluation was commissioned by the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions and performed by the Danish Centre for Studies in Research and Research Policy at Aarhus University. The report from the evaluation (Dansk Center for Forskningsanalyse 2014), which is in Danish with a ten page summary in English, is being supplemented by a journal article that discusses the results (Aagaard et al. 2015).

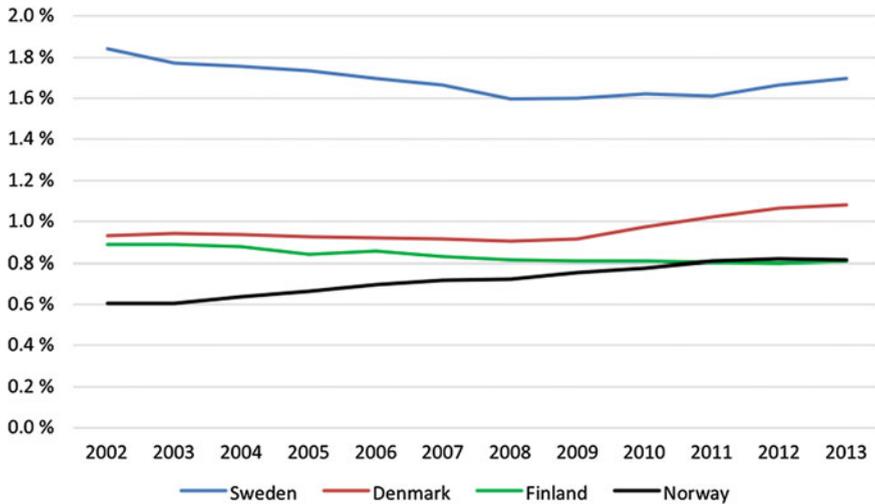
Interviews with researchers and surveys to a large number of them was part of the evaluation in Norway. Since no broad general discontent with the model was found except for the identified problems (see below), and since unintended changes in the researchers' behaviour could not be detected, at least at the macro level, the Ministry of Education and Research has decided to continue using the model as part of the performance-based funding.

The evaluation identified one major effect of the indicator, increased productivity, along with three major problems, all of which I will discuss shortly here.

A main finding was an increased publication rate above what could be expected from the increase of funding. Figure 2 below shows the increase in publication points in the higher education sector since 2004. Figure 3 below has a more independent measurement based on Web of Science. It shows the development in world shares



**Fig. 2** Publication points in the Norwegian Higher Education Sector 2004–2013. Level 2 represents internationally leading publication channels expected to publish around 20% of the total. The red line and the axis on the right side represent the observed percentages on Level 2



**Fig. 3** Shares in the world's scientific output in Web of Science 2000–2013. *Source* National Science Indicators (NSI), Thomson Reuters

of articles for four Scandinavian countries. Note that the incentive to publish was introduced in Norway in 2004 and in Denmark and Sweden in 2009. It will be introduced in Finland in 2015.

The evaluation in Norway found no other changes in the publication patterns than the increase. The balances between publication types (books, articles in books, articles in journals and series) and publication languages (the native language versus international languages) remain the same. Collaboration in authorship is increasing at the same rate as in other countries of the same size. The length of publications remains the same. The citation impact on country level is also stable. And, as seen in Fig. 2, the percentage publications in the most internationally influential publication channels has been stable around 20%, while the absolute number of those publications has almost doubled.

The evaluation in Norway identified three major problems with the model; one problem in the design of the indicator, and two problems with how the model is practiced.

As mentioned above, the publication points for publications with multiple authors representing several institutions are *fractionalized* among the participating institutions according to their number of participating authors. The evaluation found that this method of fractionalization favours the social sciences and humanities. The average annual publication points per researcher are higher in these areas. Without fractionalization, however, it would be the other way round. Researchers in science, technology and medicine on average contribute to a significantly higher number of publications per year—with the help of their co-authors. The intermediate solution seems to be to use the square root of the institution's fraction of the publication.

The *transparency* and thereby the *legitimacy* of the annual nomination process for Level 2 (described above in component B) is the second problem identified in the evaluation. Here, the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions has started a project to make the whole process of decisions (and their explicit grounds) available in an internet portal open to all researchers, both for influence and for information.

The third problem is the *local use of the indicator*. Although the Norwegian model was developed for institutional funding on the national level, the indicator has become widely used also for internal purposes at the level of institutions, faculties, departments, etc. Some of these practices may be reasonable; other practices can be highly problematic, especially if the indicator replaces responsible leadership and human judgment. Norwegian research institutions are relatively autonomous and cannot be instructed from the outside with regard to leadership practices. However, a large national conference was arranged early in 2015 where leaders of research organizations at all levels shared their views and experiences related to the use of the publication indicator at the local level.

## **6 Discussion: The Norwegian Model from the Perspective of the Humanities**

The humanities are known to have more heterogeneous publication patterns than other areas of research. On the one hand, original peer-reviewed research is published in a wider range of formats. Book publishing (monographs or articles in edited volumes) may even be more important than journal publishing in some of the disciplines (Sivertsen and Larsen 2012). On the other hand, scholars in the humanities, more often than their colleagues in the sciences, publish directly for a wider audience in the societies and cultures that they relate to in their research (Bentley and Kyvik 2011). Even the peer-reviewed scholarly publications may appear in the national language if this is more relevant with regard to contents and outreach (Hicks 2004). In addition, nationally adapted textbooks for students are often preferred over international standard editions. Consequently, scholars in the humanities more often appear as authors of textbooks and other educational material.

Publications for wider audiences and for students can be regarded as the most important expression of societal relevance for the humanities. Furthermore, it can often be difficult to draw a line between publications resulting from new research and publications for students and wider audiences. From this perspective, the Norwegian model seems to be restrictive and disincentivising. However, publishing for wider audiences has in fact increased in Norway after the implementation of the model (Kyvik and Sivertsen 2013). From another perspective, the limitation of the indicator to peer-reviewed publications representing original research can be questioned in relation to its purpose: Does it give a balanced representation of the humanities compared to other research areas? The experience is that it does; the research efforts in the humanities can in fact be matched to the efforts in other areas.

The disciplines *within* the humanities are heterogeneous in their publication patterns. As an example, the degree of international publishing differs a lot across disciplines, and even within them (e. g. in classical versus local archaeology). However, generally, one will find that humanistic scholars will be publishing in a minimum of two languages, one of which is the native language and the other the dominant international language of the field (which in certain humanistic disciplines needs not be English). This is not a new phenomenon; it has been a humanistic practice for two thousand years. Certainly, in our time, we see a gradual and stable increase in English language publishing in the humanities, but there are also large differences between the disciplines (van Leeuwen 2006; Ossenblok et al. 2012), indicating that the bilingual situation will prevail in the humanities due to the societal obligations and wider audiences, as explained above. Furthermore, there is no evidence that book publishing is being replaced by journal publishing in the humanities. The monograph, the edited volume and the journal article, all exist in the humanities because they represent supplementing methodologies in the research itself. Accordingly, all publication types and all languages need to be represented comprehensively in a publication indicator from the perspective of the humanities. From this point of view, the Norwegian model represents a defence of the humanities in a situation where other bibliometric indicators are misrepresenting the disciplines or even creating tensions between them (because there are large variations within the humanities in the representation of the disciplines in commercial data sources).

Access to other publications is perhaps the most important *research infrastructure* in the humanities. It is a paradox, therefore, that this infrastructure is not in place in the humanities as comprehensively as in other research areas. Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, Chemical Abstracts, etc., were not created for the purpose of research evaluation, but for bibliographic information retrieval. Figure 1 above is, from this perspective, a demonstration of the deficiency of the library system in serving the humanities with an international infrastructure. Figure 1 also illustrates how the Norwegian model can detect this deficiency. A move forward in the direction of making the scholarly output of the humanities searchable and accessible across countries and languages is more needed now, but also more feasible, with the internationalization of research communication. Visibility and availability can be gained for the humanities by the same move forward. However, this goal is less attainable if we regard the humanistic literatures as endless and want everything that we write to be included. As a first step, the Norwegian model provides definitions, thresholds and empirical statistics that can help delimit the scholarly literatures from other literatures and thereby make them internationally searchable and available.

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# Assessment of Journal & Book Publishers in the Humanities and Social Sciences in Spain

Elea Giménez Toledo

**Abstract** This chapter reflects on how journals and book publishers in the fields of humanities and social sciences are studied and evaluated in Spain, particularly with regard to assessments of books and book publishers. The lack of coverage of Spanish output in international databases is underlined as one of the reasons for the development of nationwide assessment tools, both for scholarly journals and books. These tools, such as RESH and DICE (developed by ILIA research team), are based on a methodology which does not rely exclusively on a citation basis, thus providing a much richer set of information. They were used by the main Spanish assessment agencies, whose key criteria are discussed in this chapter. This chapter also presents the recently developed expert survey-based methodology for the assessment of book publishers included in the system Scholarly Publishers Indicators.

## 1 Introduction

There is little doubt that scholarly communication, reading and citation habits among humanists and social scientists differ from those in other scientific disciplines (as has been studied by Glänzel and Schoepflin 1999; Hicks 2004; Nederhof 2006; Nederhof and Zwaan 1991; Thompson 2002, among many others). Considerable scientific evidence points to the following: in the social sciences and the humanities (SSH), (a) there is a stronger citation pattern in books and book chapters; (b) taking into account the more limited use of scholarly journals, the national-oriented ones are more relevant than the international-oriented ones; (c) this last attribute is related to the local/national character of the research topics covered by the SSH; and (d) the internationality of the research in these branches is conditioned by the research topics.

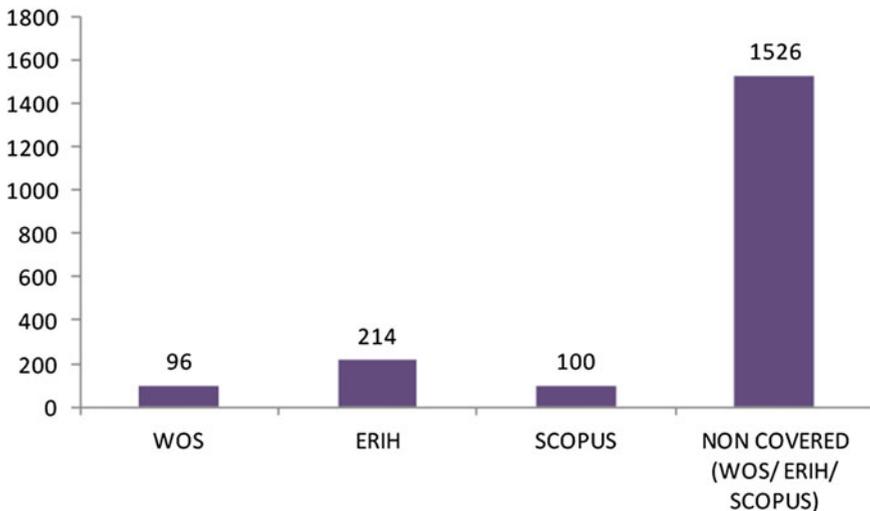
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As a brief profile of Spanish scholarly journals, Thomson Reuters Essential Science Indicators ranks Spain ninth for its scientific production and eleventh for the number of citations received. The number of scholarly journals produced in Spain is quite impressive (data from 2012): 1,826 in SSH, 277 in science and technology and 240 in biomedical sciences. Concerning SSH titles, 58 are covered by the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI), 44 by the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), 214 by the European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH)—both in the 2007 and 2011 lists. These figures indicate an acceptable degree of visibility of Spanish literature in the major international databases, especially if compared with the undercoverage in these databases 15 years ago. Nevertheless, these percentages are not sufficient for dealing adequately with the evaluation process of researchers, departments or schools of SSH. Taking into consideration just the scholarly production included in Web of Science (WoS) or in Scopus, a type of scholarly output which is essential in SSH is underestimated: works published in national languages which have a regional or local scope.

As shown in Fig. 1, the number of Spanish journals not covered by any of these sources is enormous—a group too large to be dismissed. There are at least three reasons for this lack of coverage: (a) Perhaps there are too many journals published in these areas, which can be explained not only by the existence of different schools of thought but also because of the eagerness of universities to have their own reference publications, as another indicator of their status within the scholarly community; (b) in some of these journals, there is a lack of quality and professionalization; and (c) there are high quality journals which will never be covered by those databases due to their lack of internationality—they are specialized in local topics—because they are published in Spanish and because international databases need to define a limited



**Fig. 1** Coverage of Spanish SSH journals in international databases/indexes

corpus of source journals. It is important to note, on the one hand, that indexing new journals is costly, and, on the other hand, the selective nature of these databases make them suitable for evaluation purposes.

Providing a solution to this problem has been a priority of different research groups in Spain. In the last two decades, several open indicators systems covering Spanish scholarly journals have been created especially for SSH. In all cases, the main motivation for doing so was to build national sources with indicators for journals in a way that complements international sources, to obtain a complete picture of scholarly output in SSH.

The construction of those tools constitutes the applied research developed by the aforementioned research groups, while the theoretical research has had as its object of study the communication and citation habits of humanists and social scientists, as well as the Spanish scientific policy and its research evaluation processes. Such work has drawn the following unequivocal conclusion: not only it is desirable to provide indirect quality indicators for the whole set of journals in a given country; for the successful development of research evaluation in those fields, it is necessary to pay attention to scholarly books, recognize their role as scientific output, increase their weight in assessment processes and develop and apply indicators which might help with assessment processes—but not provide the ultimate verdict (Giménez-Toledo et al. 2015).

## 2 Research Evaluation in Social Sciences and Humanities in Spain

Research evaluation in Spain is not centralized in a single institution. Several agencies have, among their aims, the assessment of higher education and research institutions, research teams, research projects and scholars. All these agencies are publicly funded and depend on the Spanish Public Administration; nevertheless, their procedures and criteria are not harmonized. This lack of coordination in procedures and criteria can be partially explained by the different objectives which each of these agencies has, but it puzzles scholars and causes confusion regarding the national science policy, which must be the sole one.<sup>1</sup>

The three main evaluation agencies in Spain are CNEAI, ANEP and ANECA. CNEAI (National Commission for the Assessment of Research Activity) is in charge of evaluating lecturers and research staff, through assessing their scientific activity, especially their scientific output. Every 6 years, each researcher may apply for the evaluation of his/her scholarly activity during the last 6 years. A successful result means a salary complement, but what is more important is the social recognition that

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<sup>1</sup>At the time of writing this chapter, ANECA (National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation) and CNEAI (National Commission for the Assessment of Research Activity) are in merger process and changes are announced in the evaluation procedures; these are specified in a more qualitative assessment and according to the characteristics of each area.

this evaluation entails: it enables promotions or appointment to PhD committees, or even having a lower workload as a lecturer (BOE 2009).

ANEP (National Evaluation and Foresigh Agency) assesses research projects. Part of its work includes evaluating the research teams leading research projects. Its reports are strongly considered by the Ministry in its decisions to fund (or not fund) research projects.

Finally, ANECA (National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation) has the ultimate goal of contributing to improving the quality of the higher education system through the assessment, certification and accreditation of university degrees, programmes, teaching staff and institutions.

Although the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, which currently handles research policy matters,<sup>2</sup> performs *ex ante* and *ex post* assessments of its funded projects, and the executive channel for that assessment is ANEP. In addition, FECYT (the Spanish Foundation on Science and Technology) manages assessment issues, since it has the task of evaluating the execution and results of the Spanish National Research Plan. Nevertheless, its conclusions do not directly target researchers nor universities but the national science policy as a whole.

Unlike in other European countries, Spanish assessment agencies are not funding bodies. Each of them establishes its own evaluation procedures, criteria and sources from which to obtain indicators.

Over the past several years, all of these organizations progressively defined specific criteria for the different groups of disciplines, as a form of recognition of their differences. This occurred not only in the case of SSH but also in other fields, such as engineering and architecture. Some researchers regard this specificity as a less demanding subsystem for certain disciplines. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that if communication patterns differ because of the nature of the research, the research evaluation methods should not omit them. Moreover, research assessment by field or discipline is not unique to the Spanish context; a clear example of the extended use of such methodologies is the assessment system applied in the Research Excellence Framework (REF).<sup>3</sup>

The difference in the assessment procedures established by Spanish agencies can be clearly seen in the criteria for publications. With respect to SSH, the following points are worth mentioning:

- Books are taken into account. This might seem obvious, but, in other disciplines, they are not considered at all. In SSH, some quality indicators for books or book publishers are foreseen (see below).
- Regarding journals, and as a common pattern for all fields, WoS is the main source, that is, hierarchically it has much more value than the others. Nevertheless, there are two relevant differences in journal sources for SSH. On one hand, alternative international sources, such as ERIH, Scopus and Latindex, are also mentioned,

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<sup>2</sup>From December 2011, and as a consequence of the change of government, the former socialist government created the Ministry for Science and Innovation, a more focused organization for research issues.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.ref.ac.uk/>.

even if they appear to have a lower weight. On the other hand, national sources, such as DICE<sup>4</sup> or In Recs,<sup>5</sup> which provide quality and impact indicators for Spanish journals, are considered as well.

The fact that national or international sources are taken into account to obtain the quality indicators of journals (impact, visibility, editorial management, etc.) does not mean that all sources have the same status or weight. However, it does guarantee that a more complete research evaluation can be carried out, by considering most of the scholarly production of an author, research team, etc., and not only what is indexed by WoS. Since some national sources include all journals published in the country, expert panels consider the value of indicators (level of internationalization, peer reviewed journal, etc.), not just their inclusion in the information system.

This is not how it was 15 years ago. However, the appearance of various evaluation agencies, the development of national scientific research plans and the demands of the scientific community have caused the various evaluation agencies (ANECA, CNEAI and ANEP) to gradually refine their research evaluation criteria, and specifically those that refer to publications.

### 3 Spanish Social Sciences and Humanities Journals' Indicators

Similar to some Latin American countries, such as Colombia, Mexico or Brazil, Spain has extensive experience in the study of its scholarly publications, both in its librarian aspects, such as identification and contents indexation, and in bibliometric or evaluative dimensions.

The Evaluation of Scientific Publications Research Group (EPUC)<sup>6</sup>—recently transformed into *ÍLLIA. Research Team on Scholarly Books*—is part of the Centre for Human and Social Sciences (CCHS) at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). It was created in 1997 in order to carry out the first systematic studies on the evaluation of scientific journals in SSH.

Shortly thereafter, Spain joined the Latindex system (journal evaluation system, at the basic level, for the countries of Latin America, Spain and Portugal), and this group took charge of representing Spain in this system until 2013.

The team is dedicated to the study of scholarly publications in SSH, particularly in the development and application of quality indicators for scholarly journals and books. One of the objectives of the research is to define the published SSH research so that the systems of research evaluation can consider the particularities of scholarly communication in these fields without renouncing the quality requirements. Another

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<sup>4</sup><http://epuc.cchs.csic.es/dice>.

<sup>5</sup><http://ec3.ugr.es/in-recs/>. IN-RECS is a bibliometric index that offered statistical information from a count of the bibliographical citations, seeking to determine the scientific relevance, influence and impact of Spanish social science journals.

<sup>6</sup><http://ilia.cchs.csic.es>.

objective is to improve, by means of evaluation, the average quality of Spanish publications.

During the last decade, the team developed the journal evaluation systems RESH<sup>7</sup> and DICE.<sup>8</sup> The former was built and funded within the framework of competitive research projects (Spanish National Plan for Research, Development & Innovation), while the latter was funded between 2006 and 2013 by ANECA. It is worth mentioning the issue of funding, since it is a crucial issue not only for creating rigorous and reliable information systems but also for guaranteeing the sustainability of those systems. Going even further, public institutions should support the production of indicators which can be used for evaluating research outputs, mostly developed under the auspices of Spanish public funds (METRIS 2012, p. 25). In this way, public funding generates open systems and makes them available, as a public service, to all researchers, guaranteeing transparency and avoiding extra-scholarly interests from non-public database producers. Furthermore, these systems are complementary to the information which can be extracted from the international databases.

Unfortunately, the production of indicators for Spanish publications has not had stable funding. Even the funding of DICE by ANECA, probably the most stable source, ended in 2013 due to budgetary cuts.

As regards RESH and DICE, although they are no longer updated, they are still available online, and they have influenced other Latin American systems. Both systems provided quality indicators for Spanish SSH journals and were useful for researchers, publishers, evaluators of scientific activity and librarians. In addition, they were an essential source of information for the studies carried out by EPUC, as they permitted the recognition, for each discipline, of publication practices, the extent of the validity of each indicator, the particular characteristics of each publication, the level of compliance with editorial standards, the kind of editorial management, etc.

The most complete of these is RESH (see Fig. 2), developed in collaboration with the EC3 group from the University of Granada. It includes more than 30 indirect quality indicators for 1,800 SSH journals.

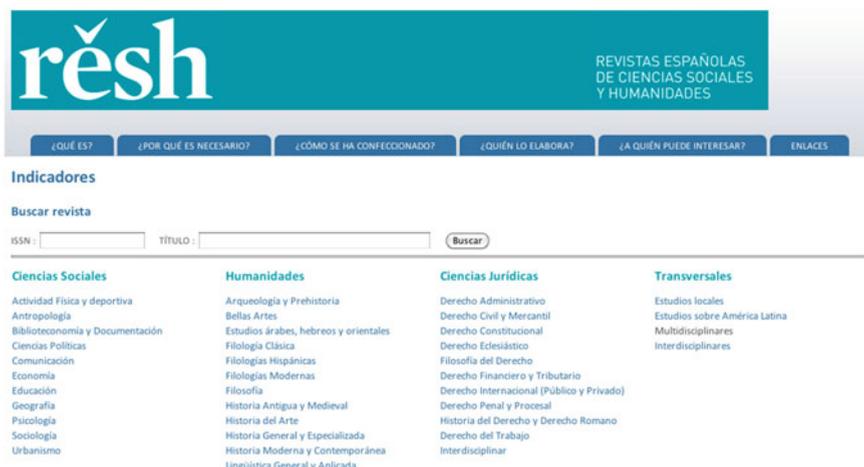
Users can see all Spanish scholarly journals classified by field. For every single title, its level of compliance with the different indicators established by evaluation agencies (see Table 1 for a list of indicators) is provided (ANECA 2007). Some of them include peer review (refereed/non-refereed journal), databases indexing/abstracting the journal, features of the editorial/advisory board (internationality and represented institutions), percentage of international papers (international authorship) and compliance with the frequency of publication.

This kind of layout makes the system practical. In other words, agencies may check the quality level of a journal according to their established criteria; researchers may search for journals of different disciplines and different levels of compliance with quality indicators; and editors may check how the journals are behaving according to the quality indicators (Fig. 3).

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<sup>7</sup><http://epuc.cchs.csic.es/resh>.

<sup>8</sup><http://epuc.cchs.csic.es/dice>.



**Fig. 2** RESH: a multi-indicator system for evaluating Spanish SSH journals (screenshot)

**Table 1** CNEAI indicators of publishing quality

Presence of an Editorial and Advisory Board and Scientific Committee
Detailed guidelines for authors
Summary (Bilingual)
Details about the publishing process
Frequency fulfilled
Blind peer review
Institutional openness of the Advisory Committee
Institutional openness of the Editorial Board
Institutional openness of authors (regarding Editorial Board)
Rate of manuscripts accepted
Indexed in specialized databases
Identification of editorial members
Abstract
Peer review system
Frequency declaration
External reviewers
Justified communication of the editorial decision
Percentage of internationality of the Advisory Committee
Original research
Institutional openness of authors (regarding publishing institution)
Indexed in WoS/JCR and/or ERIH

## Revistas

Comunicar. Revista Científica Iberoamericana de Comunicación y Educación

ISSN	1134-3478
AÑO COMIENZO - FIN	1994 -
PERIODICIDAD	SEMESTRAL
EDITOR	Grupo Comunicar, Colectivo Andaluz de Educación en Medios de Comunicación
LUGAR DE EDICIÓN	HUELVA
SOPORTE	IMPRESA
HISTORIA	Hasta marzo de 1994: Comunica. Revista de Medios de Comunicación y Enseñanza. AC-F: 1993-1994
URL	<a href="http://www.revistacomunicar.com">http://www.revistacomunicar.com</a>
ÁREA TEMÁTICA 1	COMUNICACIÓN
ÁREA TEMÁTICA 2	CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN
ÁREA DE CONOCIMIENTO 1	COMUNICACIÓN AUDIOVISUAL Y PUBLICIDAD
ÁREA DE CONOCIMIENTO 2	DIDÁCTICA Y ORGANIZACIÓN ESCOLAR
CNEAI	18
ANECA	22
LATINDEX	33
OPINIÓN DE LOS EXPERTOS 2009	79.54
BASES DE DATOS	<a href="#">ISOC</a> <a href="#">ACADEMIC SEARCH COMPLETE</a> <a href="#">CMMIC</a> <a href="#">DOAJ</a> <a href="#">ERA</a> <a href="#">FRANCIS</a> <a href="#">MLA</a> <a href="#">PAIS</a> <a href="#">RED ALyC</a> <a href="#">SA</a> <a href="#">SCOPUS</a> <a href="#">SSCI</a>
FECHA DE ACTUALIZACIÓN	2012-06-07

Fig. 3 Databases indexing/abstracting the journal in RESH (screenshot)

RESH also included three more quality indicators not specifically mentioned by evaluation agencies:

- Number and name of databases indexing/abstracting the journal, as a measure of the journals dissemination (see Fig. 3). This information was obtained by carrying out searches and analysing lists of publications indexed in national and international databases.
- An indicator related to experts opinion, since scholars are the only ones who can judge the journals content quality. This indicator was obtained from a survey among Spanish SSH researchers carried out in 2009. The study had a response rate of over 50 % (more than 5,000 answers). By including this element in the integrated assessment of a journal, correlations (or the lack thereof) among different quality indicators may arise. This shall allow for a more accurate analysis of each journal.
- An impact measure for each journal, similar to the Thomson Reuters Impact Factor, but calculated just on the basis of Spanish SSH journals. These data will reveal how Spanish journals cite Spanish journals.

Since no single indicator may summarize the quality of a journal, it seems to be more objective to take into account all these elements in order to provide a clear idea of the global quality of each publication.

## **4 Book Publishers Assessment**

On the one hand, as mentioned previously, books are essential as scholarly outputs of humanists and certain social scientists. Publishing books or using them as preferential sources of research are not erratic choices. On the contrary, books are the most adequate communication channel for the research carried out in the SSH fields.

On the other hand, SSH research should not be evaluated according to others fields patterns but according to their own communication habits. This is not a question of the exceptionality of SSH research but of the nature and features of each discipline. Therefore, an appropriate weight to books in the evaluation of scholarly output is needed to avoid forcing the humanist in the long run to research and publish in a different format, with subsequent prejudices to advance certain kinds of knowledge.

Scholarly publications are the main pillar of the scholarly evaluation conducted by the different assessment agencies.

During the last decade, Spanish evaluation agencies have provided details on journal evaluation criteria. Consequently, the rules are now clearer and more specific for scholars. However, in the case of book assessments, there is still a lot of work to be done. Evaluation agencies have mentioned quality indicators for books. Despite citation products, such as Book Citation Index, Scopus and Google Scholar, there were no sources offering data for making more objective the evaluation of a certain book.

Spanish evaluation agencies have mentioned the following indicators for assessing books in SSH: citations, editors, collections, book reviews in scholarly journals, peer review, translations to other languages, research manuscripts, dissemination in databases, library catalogues and publisher prestige. Nevertheless, generally speaking, the formulation of these criteria is diffuse, subjective or difficult for conducting an objective assessment.

## **5 Publisher's Prestige**

One of the possible approaches to infer the quality of books is to focus on the publisher. In fact, a publishers prestige is one of the most cited indicators by evaluation agencies. Moreover, the methods for analysing quality at the publisher level seem to be more feasible and efficient than at the series or book level, at least if a qualitative approach is pursued. By establishing the quality or prestige of the publisher, the quality of the monographs published could be inferred somehow. The same actually

happens with scholarly papers: they are valued according to the quality or impact of the journal in which they have been published.

With the aim of going into more depth in the study of the quality of books, and mainly to provide some guideline indicators on the subject, the ILIA research team has been working on the concept of publishers prestige. In the framework of our last research projects,<sup>9</sup> we wondered about what publishing prestige is, how it could be defined, which publishers are considered prestigious or how we could make this concept more objective.

The main objectives of this research<sup>10</sup> have been (a) to know the indicators or features that are more valued and accepted by Spanish SSH researchers for evaluating books or book publishers, (b) to identify more relevant publishers according to expert opinion and (c) to analyse how these results could be used in evaluation processes.

In order to achieve these objectives, ILIA designed a survey, aimed at Spanish researchers working in the different disciplines of SSH. Their opinion is the closest expression to the quality of the monographs published by a publisher, as they are the specialized readers and authors who can judge the content of the works, although globally. As the results are opinions, there is always room for bias. Bias nevertheless becomes weaker when the population consulted is wide and the response rate is high.

The survey was sent by e-mail to 11,000 Spanish researchers and lecturers. They had at least a 6-year research period approved by CNEAI. In total, 3,045 completed surveys were returned, representing a 26 % response rate.

One of the questions asked the experts to indicate the three most important publishers in their disciplines. The Indicator of Quality of Publishers according to Experts (ICEE) was applied to the results obtained:

$$ICEE = \sum_{i=1}^3 n_i * \frac{N_i}{N_j} \quad (1)$$

where  $n_i$  is the number of votes received by the publisher in position  $i$  (1st, 2nd or 3rd),  $N_i$  is the number of votes received by all the publishers in each position (1st, 2nd or 3rd) and  $N_j$  is the total number of votes received by all publishers in all positions (1st, 2nd or 3rd).

The weight applied to the votes received by a publisher in each position is the result of dividing the mean of the votes received in that position (in (1st, 2nd or 3rd)) by the sum of the mean of the three positions. In the results, the weight is always bigger for the first position than for the second, and the second bigger than the third.

This indicator has allowed ILIA to produce a general ranking of publishers as well as different rankings by each of the SSH disciplines. The results indicate that there are vast differences between the global ranking and the discipline-based one.

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<sup>9</sup>*Assessment of scientific publishers and books on humanities and social sciences: qualitative and quantitative indicators HAR2011-30383-C02-01* (2012–2014), funded by Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. R&D National Plan and *Categorization of scholarly publications on humanities & social sciences* (2009–2010), funded by Spanish National Research Council (CSIC).

<sup>10</sup>Some details on the first project may be found in Giménez-Toledo et al. (2013), p. 68.

Therefore, they also highlight the convenience of using both rankings in the frame of any given research assessment process, as each of them can provide different and relevant information.

### 5.1 *Scholarly Publishers Indicators*

These rankings were published for the very first time on the Scholarly Publishers Indicators (SPI) website<sup>11</sup> in 2012. This information system is aimed at collecting the indicators of a different nature for publishers (editorial processes, transparency, etc.), not with the intention of considering them as definitive but as a guide of the quality of the publishers. Indicators and information included are to inform not to perform. In order to avoid the temptation of using them automatically, it is necessary to promote a responsible use of the system.

Since 2013, SPI has been considered by CNEAI as a reference source, albeit not the only one, for the evaluation exercises in some fields of the humanities (history, geography, arts, philosophy and philology). This represents a challenge for further research and developments on this issue. It would be very interesting, for example, to extend the survey to the international scientific community, in order to consolidate and increase the robustness of the results.

## 6 Conclusions

The aforementioned evaluation tools are a way to improve or at least obtain more information on SSH research evaluation processes. If experts can provide their judgments on the research results, indicators for publications offer objective information on the channel of communication, providing a guide for evaluation processes.

Complementary sources for journals as well as indicators for books or book publishers are needed at the national level if a fair and complete research evaluation is pursued. Although quality indicators for publications may be improved, refined or adapted to special features of certain disciplines, three more complex problems have to be tackled: (a) gaining the acceptance of the scientific community for these kind of indicators, (b) the *formula* for funding these systems and (c) the relationship between large companies devoted to scientific information and selection of information sources for evaluation purposes in evaluation agencies at the national and international level. All of them should be studied in detail in order to handle the underlying problems regarding evaluation tools. Without such a research, any of the evaluation systems will remain limited, biased or unaccepted.

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<sup>11</sup><http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI/>.