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A 24-Year Bibliometric Analysis of the Journal *Information Research*: Insights from CiteSpace

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Abstract

Introduction. This study employs a bibliometric methodology, utilising CiteSpace 6.2.R4 as an analytical tool to examine the evolution of the journal *Information Research* over the past 24 years from the multivariate, time-phased, and dynamic perspective.

Method. The journal was analysed by using CiteSpace to perform co-occurrence analysis, co-citation analysis, cluster analysis, and burst detection.

Analysis. By analysing 2,180 articles indexed in the Web of Science database, it uncovered publication trends, research hotspots, and thematic evolution within the journal.

Results. The findings of bibliometric study highlighted the journal's significant contributions to information behaviour, information retrieval, information management, and digital libraries. As an open-access journal, the *Information Research* journal has played a vital role in advancing both theoretical and practical dimensions of information science and information management.

Conclusions. This study presents the first analysis of the academic contributions of the journal *Information Research*. It highlights the journal's growing global influence, its core position within Librarianship and Information Science academia and its success in bridging disciplines through innovative research. These findings underscore the journals' foundational role in shaping the past and future of information science.

Introduction

Information Research is an international peer-reviewed journal that significantly impacts the development of information science. It was founded in 1995. Over the past 30 years, the journal has become an important platform for disseminating research in information behaviour, information retrieval, knowledge organization, digital libraries, information management and other related fields. It is well-known for its open-access policy, which ensures that high-quality research results are freely available to a global audience. During the 1990s-2000s, Information Research addressed critical gaps in library and information science (LIS) scholarship by offering freely accessible and high-quality research when commercial databases were still emerging and print journals remained prohibitively expensive, especially for institutions in developing countries. Information Research was among the e-journals that first adopted a digital open-access model to democratise knowledge dissemination while mitigating economic and infrastructural barriers in underserved regions.

Professor Thomas Daniel Wilson, founding editor-in-chief of Information Research, is a universally revered figure in international Library and Information Science (LIS) scholarship. He put forward seminal theoretical models of information behaviour that deeply shaped the contemporary research paradigm. His pioneering and foundational contributions to information behaviour and information management have profoundly advanced the LIS discipline. As an educator, he institutionalized information science pedagogy through curriculum development at Sheffield University, establishing enduring educational standards while mentoring generations of scholars who expanded LIS research globally. These achievements establish Wilson as one of the most influential figures in defining modern information science. He received honorary doctorates from the Swedish School of Library and Information Science and the University of Murcia, Spain, and was awarded the Association for Information Science and Technology's Merit Award in 2017.

In this study, we analyse the Information Research journal's scholarly trajectory over approximately the past quarter century and its role in advancing the discipline. We employed Citespace to review the development of the journal, focusing on its evolution, key research trends, and contributions to information science.

Data and Method

This study utilizes the Web of Science database (WoS) for a document search. The search term "INFORMATION RESEARCH AN INTERNATIONAL ELECTRONIC JOURNAL" was used. A publication search was conducted in the database resulting in a total of 2180 records for screening. The time span of the publications ranged from 2002 to 2025, ending on the day of our search (March 20, 2025). The temporal scope of this study is constrained to the period between 2002 and 2025, as the WoS database commenced indexing the relevant literature from 2002 onward. The data of 2180 records were entered into CiteSpace for analysis.

We adopted a bibliometric method, leveraging CiteSpace 6.2.R4 as an analytical tool to examine data from multivariate, time-phased, and dynamic perspectives. It investigates the development of the journal Information Research across its 24-year history and discusses potential future directions.

Publication volume analysis

From 2002 to 2024, there was a general trend of fluctuating growth in the number of articles issued per annum. In the early years, the journal maintained a modest publication output, which grew steadily in tandem with its rising academic influence, culminating in its first publication peak of 132 articles in 2007. The reason may be related to the significant research growth in the fields of information behaviour and information management. The yearly publication output peaked in 2017

with 165 publications, which demonstrates the prosperity of the journal during this developmental phase. The publication peak in 2017 may be due to several reasons:

First, 2017 was the year University of Borås took on publishing the journal, which likely increased the journal's visibility and influence, attracting more academic contributions. As the host institution of the Swedish School of Library and Information Science, the University of Borås provides Information Research with cutting-edge research networks and institutional publishing expertise in LIS.

Secondly, it also can be explained by inclusion of conference proceedings. The conference (CoLIS and ISIC conference) proceedings in Information Research are usually subject to a certain level of peer review and can be expected to have high quality and research value. Such inclusion can help to identify hotspots, critical issues and development trends in information science.

Thirdly, it reflects the research boom in the information science discipline driven by digital transformation and emerging Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). As information science advances – particularly with growing research in Artificial Intelligence (AI), big data, and information behaviour – the journal Information Research is projected to sustain a steady increase in publication volume.

Citation cluster analysis

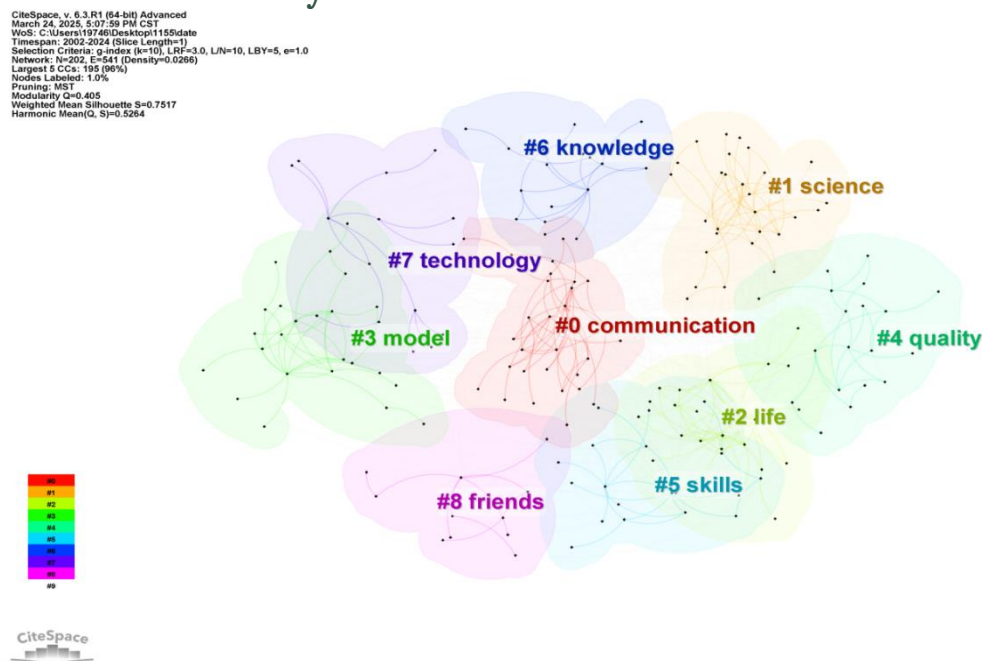


Figure 1. Citation clustering.

As shown in Figure 1 above, the mapping shows eight major cited clusters, each comprising related papers and keywords and distinguished by different colours and numbers (#0 to #8). The modularity Q value of the clusters is 0.406, indicating a high significance of the cluster structure; the weighted average silhouette score is 0.7517, indicating good consistency within the clusters.

It can be seen from the mapping that a complex knowledge network is formed by connecting the clusters. The core cluster #0 "communication" is more closely connected with #7 'technology' and #6 'knowledge', indicating that there is a high degree of academic intersection between information sharing/dissemination, ICT application and knowledge management. Cluster #0: Communication is the most significant and central, indicating that communication is a critical

issue in the journal. It explores the significance of communication in information research, such as information exchange, dissemination, and use. Cluster #1: Science highlights the focus on information science discipline, including philosophy, theories, methodologies, and frameworks that shape the information studies. Cluster #2: Life reflects studies that link information research to various aspects of life, such as its societal, cultural, or personal impacts, emphasizing the practical applications of information science research in real-world contexts. It also indicates the rise of every-day life information behaviour research. It has close relation with Cluster #5 Skill, which means the importance of information/digital literacy. Cluster #3: Model focuses on theoretical and conceptual models, showcasing the development and application of models that underpin the LIS foundation. Cluster #8 'Friends' reflects the hotspot of digitally mediated social relationships, driven by the rapid rise of social media. 'Friends' demonstrates the prosperity of online communities, which underscores how social media has reshaped the conceptualisation of communication in academic research.

The core contributions and research trends of Information Research journal in information science can be summarized through the citation clustering analysis. The research themes have gradually expanded from traditional information behaviour and information retrieval to emerging fields such as online information behaviour, knowledge management, technological innovation, and social media (Cluster#8 Friends), reflecting the diversity and frontiers of information science. Future research should focus on the cross-cutting areas between clusters.

Country co-occurrence analysis

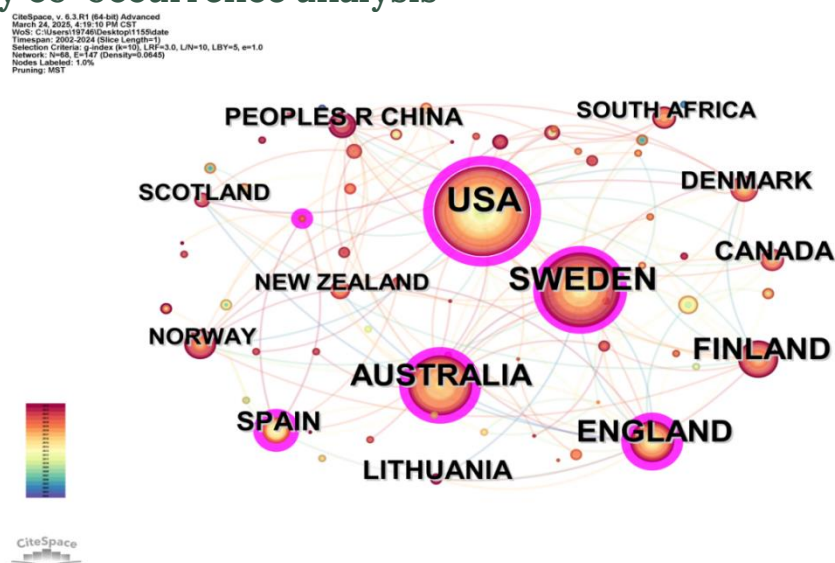


Figure 2. National co-occurrence.

The national collaboration network analysis of Information Research (Figure 2) employs CiteSpace's co-occurrence mapping to elucidate international academic partnerships in information science. Key network parameters demonstrate robust structural characteristics: the nodes in Figure 2 represent countries, the node size reflects the publication volume of the country, and the connecting lines between the nodes indicate the cooperative relationship between countries. The modularity Q value of the mapping is 0.645, which indicates that it confirms significant community structure. A high silhouette score ($S=0.751$) shows strong within-cluster homogeneity.

The bibliometric analysis reveals distinct patterns in global research output and collaboration networks. The United States, Sweden, Australia, and the United Kingdom emerge as the most

productive nations regarding publication volume, indicating their dominant role in information science research. Spatially, international collaboration is most concentrated in North America (United States, Canada), Europe (Sweden, United Kingdom, Spain, Finland), and Oceania (Australia, New Zealand). These regions exhibit dense cooperative networks, forming multiple core research clusters that drive global LIS exchange. Meanwhile, China and South Africa show a steady increase in node centrality. They represent the emerging research force in international academia. Generally speaking, LIS communities in North America and Europe remain at the forefront of the discipline, as evidenced by their high-impact contributions.

Institutional co-occurrence analysis

CiteSpace, v. 6.3.R1 (64-bit) Advanced
March 24, 2025, 4:23:55 PM CST
Win: C:\Users\19746\Desktop\1155\data
Timespan: 2002-2024 (Slice Length=1)
Selection Criteria: g-index (k=10), LRF=3.0, L/N=10, LBW=5, e=1.0
Network: N=198, E=140 (Density=0.0073)
Nodes Labeled: 1.0%
Pruning: MST

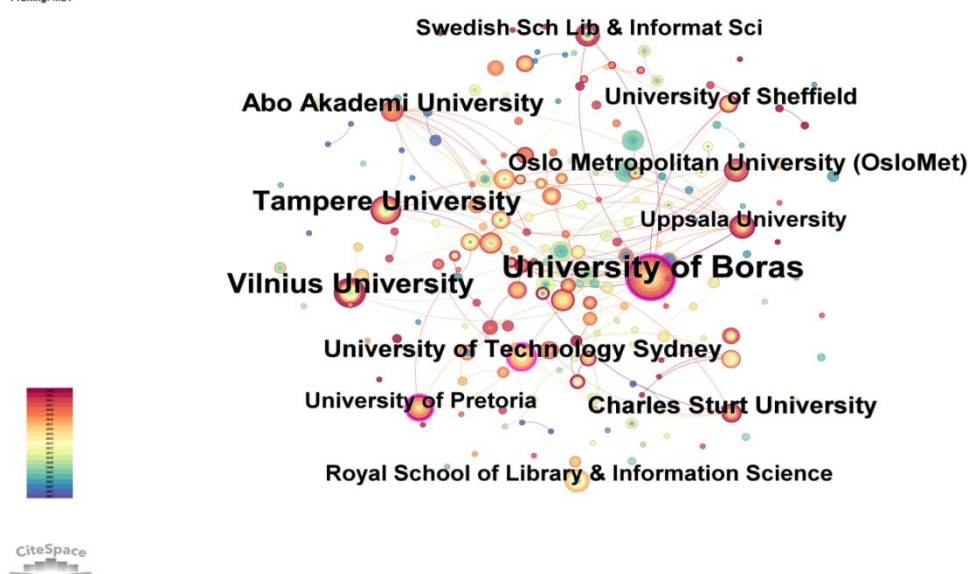


Figure 3. Institutional co-occurrence.

As shown in Figure 3 in the institutional cooperation network mapping, the nodes represent the research institutions, the node size reflects the number of publications or academic influence of the institutions, and the connecting lines between the nodes indicate the cooperation relationship between the institutions. The modularity Q value is 0.406, which indicates a strong clustering tendency within the inter-institutional cooperation network. The weighted average silhouette score is 0.807, meaning a high level of cohesion and uniformity in the network's structure. It should be noted that although the Swedish School of Library and Information Science (SSLIS) represents a department of the University of Borås, they are each represented as distinct nodes in the figure due to inconsistencies in the data.

The Nordic region (e.g., University of Borås, University of Tampere, OsloMet, Uppsala University) has formed a close academic cooperation network, reflecting the international visibility and citation impact of Scandinavian research in information science (Ingwersen, 2000). This Nordic academic network as a unique and strong research force has contributed significantly to advancing LIS theories and practice. The dense collaboration among these institutions highlights the region's emphasis on interdisciplinary research and innovation in addressing global information challenges. University of Sheffield is a close partner of this region. The cooperation between the Oceania region (e.g., University of Technology Sydney, Charles Sturt University) and the Nordic region is more significant, demonstrating the vibrancy of cross-continent academic exchanges. Some institutions (e.g., Vilnius University, University of Pretoria, etc.) are gradually involved in

international cooperation, showing that the cooperation network of information science is diversifying. Attracting more scholars from excellent institutions to publish their academic achievements in the journal also shows that the academic influence of the journal has become considerable.

A global academic cooperation pattern in information science, reflected from the journal Information Research, is characterized by the University of Borås at the core of the Nordic academic network and the University of Technology Sydney representing institutions in Oceania. Together, these institutions form a significant collaborative force within the global information science community.

Journal co-citations analysis

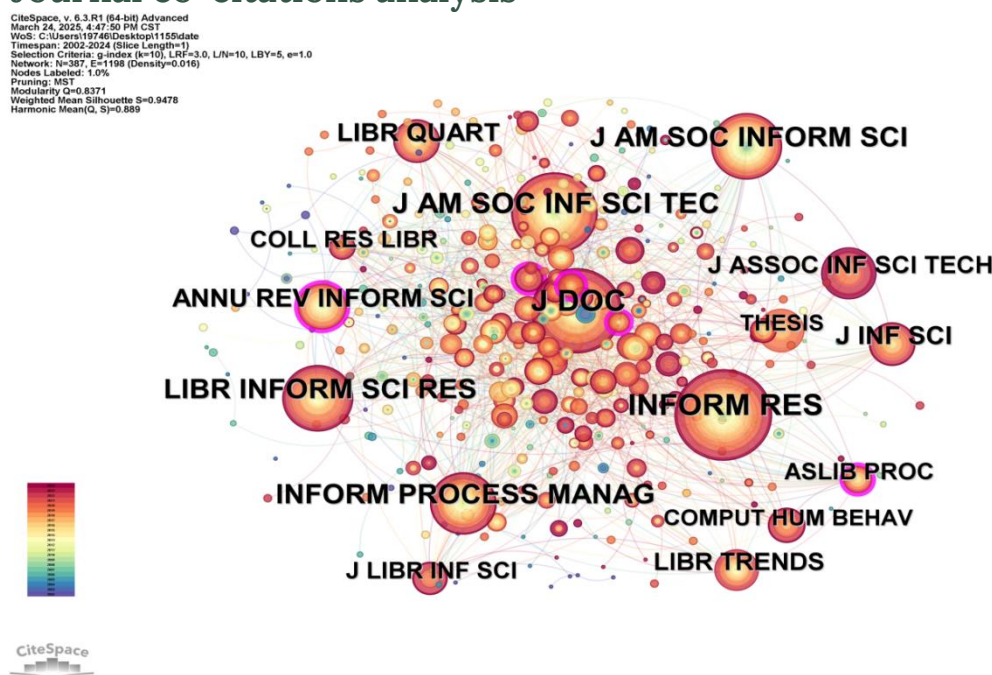


Figure 4. Journal co-citation.

The journal co-citation network analysis shows that prominent journals – notably the Journal of Documentation (J DOC), Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology (JASIST), Information Processing & Management (IP&M), Library & Information Science Research (LISR), and Information Research (INFORM RES) – anchor the intellectual foundation of information science, dominating network centrality (Figure 4). Here too, it should be noted that inconsistencies in the data have prevented some of the nodes in Figure 4 from clustering correctly. In this case, this is because the publication we currently know as JASIST was called ‘Journal of the American Society for Information Science’ from 1970 to 2000, ‘Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology’ from 2001 to 2012, and ‘Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology’ from 2013 onwards.

J DOC and INFORM RES share an interest in the theoretical foundation of LIS and the socio-cultural, historical study of information. Both have high academic reputations by attracting submissions from leading scholars worldwide. The close relationship between JASIST and Information Research implies that the two journals are concerned with the healthy development of the entire LIS discipline. They are key in advancing LIS and addressing emerging challenges in the discipline construction. The close co-citation relationship among these journals forms a stable and high-level academic cooperation network. The participation of interdisciplinary journals such

as Computers in Human Behavior reflects the trend of cross-fertilisation between information science and other disciplines (e.g., psychology). At the same time, the emergence of these core journals in the figure proves that Information Research has joined the ranks of top-tier journals (Small, 1973).

Dual-map overlay of journals analysis

Figure 5. Dual-map overlay of journals analysis.

Dual-map overlay analysis is a visual analysis method based on CiteSpace, which shows the knowledge flow and topic evolution patterns of academic research by integrating the citation literature and the cited literature of journals into a single graph. On the left side is the distribution map of citing literature, and on the right is the distribution map of cited literature. The arcs indicate the cross-field flow of citation behaviour, and the colour and direction of the lines show the knowledge dissemination path between fields (Börner and Boyack, 2003). As a core academic platform in the LIS discipline, the journal *Information Research* systematically bridges the epistemological divide among the fields of *social psychology - ophthalmology - educational psychology*. Through its unique disciplinary positioning, it has promoted the integration of sociological, humanistic, and technological methodologies in information science research. This kind of knowledge integration has given rise to innovative research paths that break through the boundaries of traditional disciplines. As Buckland(2017) argued, "only an approach that combines the physical, the mental, and the social aspects can be adequate for the challenge of examining the complex relationships of information and society". This journal has established an interdisciplinary dialogue mechanism of seeking such an approach and generated a collaborative knowledge system to address the serious challenges in the intersection of humans, information, and technology in the digital intelligence age.

Author co-citation analysis

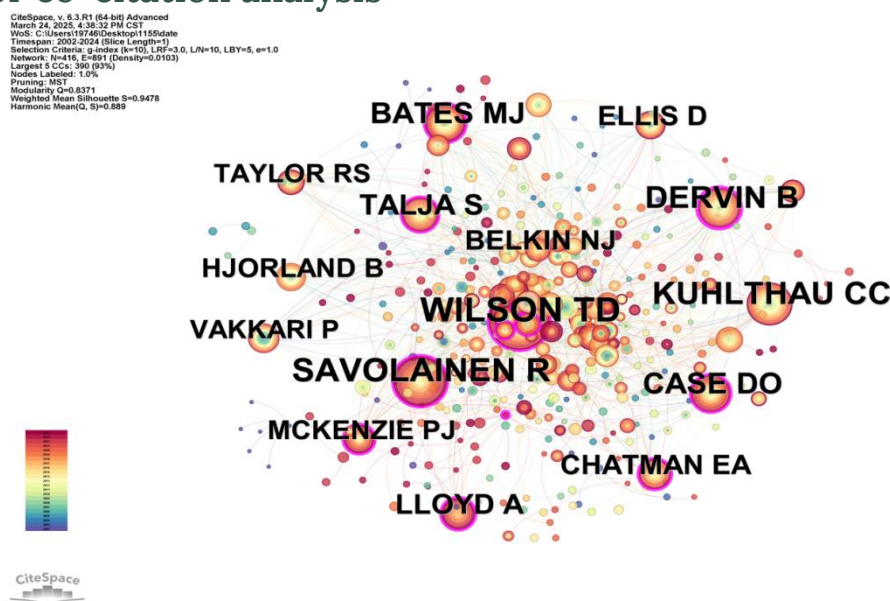


Figure 6. Author co-citation.

Author co-citation analysis illustrates the core authors of LIS research and their knowledge network by counting the number of co-cited authors. The nodes in the graph represent authors, the node size reflects authors' co-citation frequency, and the connecting line between the nodes indicates the co-citation relationship between authors. The modularity Q-value of 0.837 suggests that the network exhibits a significant level of clustering. Similarly, the weighted average profile value of 0.9478 means substantial cohesion and structural consistency within the network (White and McCain, 1998).

As shown in Figure 5, many scholars are academic stars of information behaviour, offering their unique insights and making significant contributions. Some are also outstanding LIS theorists, exploring the fundamentals of the discipline, like Marcia Bates and Birger Hjørland. The core authors in the Figure, such as Tom Wilson, Marcia Bates, Branda Dervin, Alfrada Chatman, Carol Kuhlthau, Nicolas Belkin, and Reijo Savolainen, have developed vibrant and original models and theories of information behaviour, greatly advancing the field. They laid the theoretical foundation of information behaviour. Other authors have also contributed to the different aspects of information behaviour, like information needs, information practice, epistemologies of information behaviour, and health information behaviour. In the context of AIGC, information behaviour theories will continue to evolve, integrating advanced tools and methods to understand human-information/AI interaction fully.

Co-citation of references

CiteSpace v. 5.3.R1 (64-bit) Advanced
March 24, 2025, 4:29:48 PM CST
WoS: C:\Users\19746\Desktop\1159\data
Timespan: 2002-2024 (Slice Length=1)
Selection Criteria: g-index (k=10), LRF=3.0, L/N=10, LBY=5, e=1.0
Network: N=441, E=442 (Density=0.0046)
Largest CCs: 350 (79%)
Nodes Labeled: 1.0%
Pruning: MST

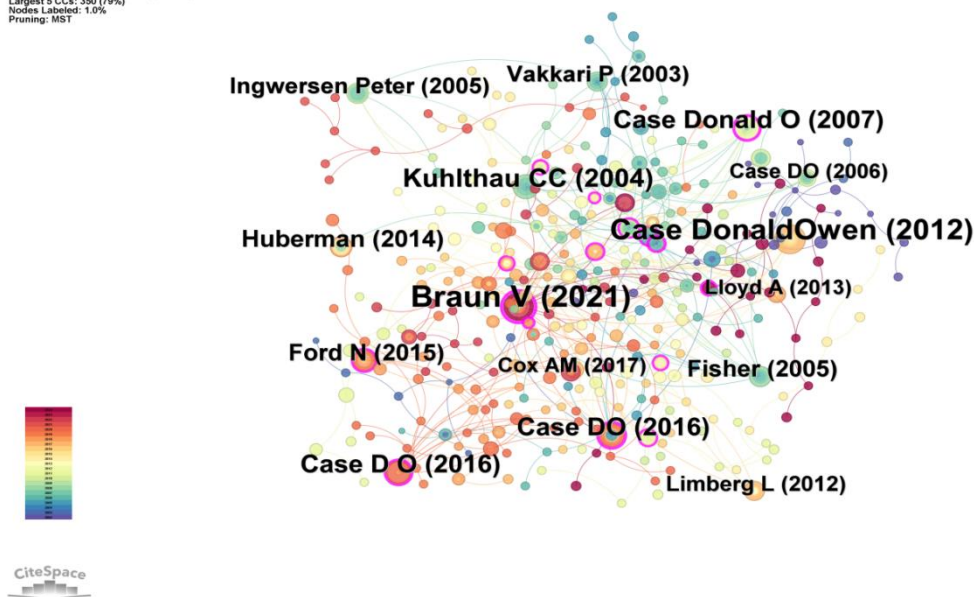


Figure 7. Co-citation of references

Co-citation of references analysis discloses academic research's knowledge base and core literature. The nodes in Figure 7 represent papers, the node size reflects the citation frequency of papers, and the connecting line between the nodes indicates the co-citation relationship of the papers. The modularity Q value of 0.644 suggests a strong clustering tendency within the network. The weighted average silhouette value of 0.746 reflects a high compactness and structural consistency level in the network.

The classical literature represented by Case (2012) and Kuhlthau (2004) has laid the theoretical foundation of information behaviour research. Case's different versions of the book 'Looking for Information: A Survey of Research on Information Seeking, Needs, and Behavior' has become a must-have reference on the desks of LIS scholars and students. Kuhlthau's (2004) monograph 'Seeking Meaning: A Process Approach to Library and Information Services' introduced the Information Search Process (ISP) model, a milestone of information behaviour. As Bates (1994) commented on the original version of this book 'If we in this field draw on the full implications of Kuhlthau's ideas expressed here, the impact on our understanding of information seeking behavior, reference work, and bibliographic instruction will be profound'. Emerging works (e.g., Braun, 2021) have led to the growth of information science.

Burst detection of reference co-citation

Top 25 References with the Strongest Citation Bursts

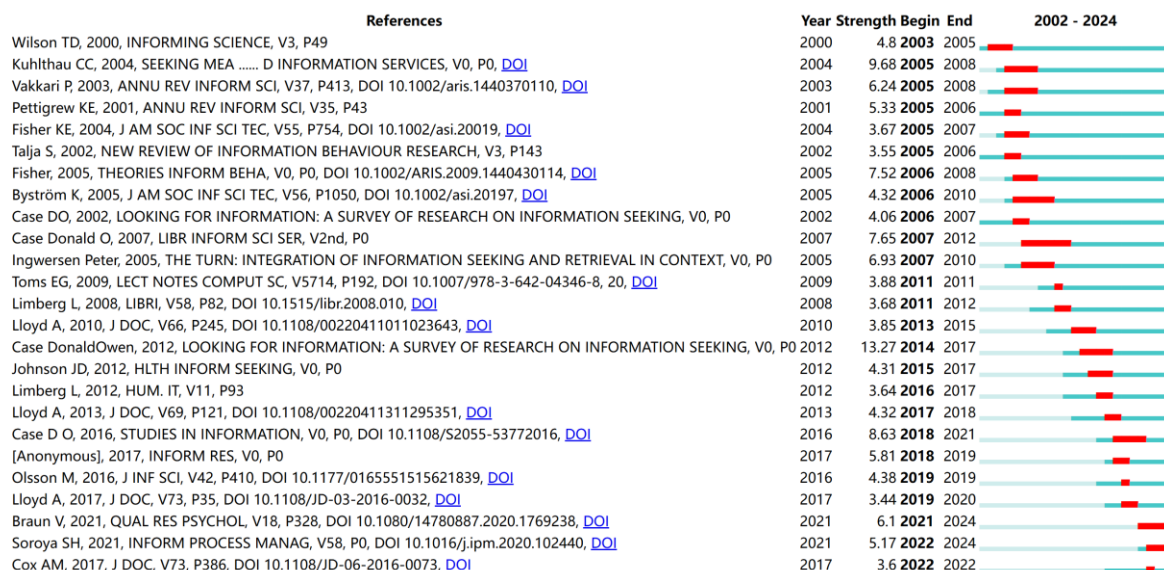


Figure 8. Burst detection of reference co-citation

Literature co-citation burst analysis is to expose the research hotspots and development trends in the academic field by identifying the literature that has been frequently cited within a specific time period. The intensity of burst reflects the extent to which the literature has received attention from academics within a certain period, and the burst duration suggests the peak impact of the literature. This method provides a clear picture of the key literature in LIS and the evolution of its research hotspots from the perspective of the journal Information Research.

As we observe from Figure 8, Wilson's (2000) foundational paper, 'Human Information Behaviour', initiated the trajectory of burst literature in the LIS discipline. Interestingly, the hosting journal, Informing Science, is itself an open-access publication. Information behaviour research was the core burst theme from 2000 to 2010, and then it has gradually combined ICT, everyday life and sociological perspectives. The integration of information-seeking and information-retrieval research developed rapidly during 2005-2010. Ingwersen and Järvelin's (2005) 'The Turn: Integration of Information Seeking and Retrieval in Context' marks this burst theme. Again, Case (2012) and Kuhlthau's (2004) have the largest and second largest burst strength (13.27 and 9.68 respectively). The early version burst reference (Case, 2007) also has the longest extended duration. Information literacy research (Lloyd, 2010) has become a priority since 2015, especially in the context of digital transformation.

Highly Cited Literature

Rank	Title (Simplified)	Citations	Authors
1	Being in place: embodied information practices	615	Olsson, Michael; Lloyd, Annemaree
2	The IIR evaluation model: framework for interactive information retrieval	265	Borlund, P
3	Five personality dimensions and information behaviour	212	Heinström, J
4	Information and knowledge: evolutionary framework	201	Bates, MJ
5	Information literacy in Europe: literature review	170	Virkus, S
6	Scientific journal publishing: open access availability	149	Bjork, Bo-Christer et al.
7	The 'information search process' revisited	147	Kuhlthau, Carol C. et al.
8	Scholarly use of information: graduate students' behaviour	140	George, Carole et al.
9	Open access: analysis of barriers to change	121	Björk, BC
10	Conceptual models for information seeking	114	Järvelin, K; Wilson, TD
11	Recasting information literacy as sociocultural practice	92	Lloyd, AnneMaree
12	Predictors of cancer information overload	91	Kim, Kyunghye et al.
13	What is browsing? Model from behavioural science	90	Bates, Marcia J.
14	Mobile technologies and information overload	84	Allen, DK; Shoard, M
15	Small worlds, lifeworlds, and public policy	82	Burnett, Gary; Jaeger, Paul T.
16	Longitudinal study of Web page persistence	82	Koehler, W

Rank	Title (Simplified)	Citations	Authors
17	Information seeking research needs extension	80	Järvelin, K; Ingwersen, P
18	Teaching information seeking: behaviour theories	78	Limberg, Louise; Sundin, Olof
19	Trends in information behaviour research	75	Vakkari, Pertti
20	General model of information behaviour	75	Godbold, Natalya

Table 1. Top 20 Cited Publications.

The table 1 presents the top 20 most-cited publications in Information Research. Topping the list is Olsson and Lloyd's (2017) study with 615 citations—more than double that of the second-ranked paper. Their work examines information embodiment practices, significantly expanding the scope of information behaviour research while enriching the information concept in LIS. Notably, this paper was published in a special issue of the 9th CoLIS Proceedings, justifying the inclusion of high-quality conference proceedings.

The second most-cited paper, Borlund's (2003) *The IIR Evaluation Model: A Framework for Evaluation of Interactive Information Retrieval Systems*, exemplifies Information Research editors' keen ability to recognize impactful research in core LIS domains such as information retrieval evaluation. Published the same year, Heinström's (2003) 'Five Personality Dimensions and Their Influence on Information Behaviour' emerged as a landmark study in the cognitive paradigm of LIS in the 21st century.

Bates' foundational contributions are prominently featured, with two papers ranking 4th (*Information and Knowledge: An Evolutionary Framework for Information Science*) and 13th (*What Is Browsing — Really? : A Model Drawing from Behavioural Science Research*). The high citation count further attests to Bates' authoritative status and enduring impact on LIS foundation and information behaviour studies.

Classical information behaviour models also hold significant positions on the list, including Kuhlthau's information search process (ISP) model (Kuhlthau, Heinström, & Todd, 2008) and Chatman's small world theory (Burnett and Jaeger, 2008). The prevalence of studies on information behaviour and literacy (e.g., Järvelin and Wilson, 2003; Järvelin and Ingwersen, 2005; Vakkari, 2008; Virkus, 2003) underscores their centrality to LIS scholarship. These citations affirm Information Research as a premier venue for cutting-edge research in these domains.

Conclusion

Through a bibliometric analysis of 24 years of publications in Information Research, this study displays the journal's substantial academic achievements and the evolution of its research themes in information science. As a key platform and top-tier journal in the LIS discipline, Information Research has contributed to establishing a solid theoretical foundation in core LIS fields such as information behaviour, information management, information literacy and digital libraries. Now this journal is actively promoting the integration and application of emerging technologies like AI, big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT) in Information Studies.

The Information Research journal has a strong international presence, with productive and influential contributions from countries such as the United States, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The Nordic academic network, led by the University of Borås, alongside universities in Oceania, forms a significant cross-regional alliance, fostering global scholarly exchange. Institutional cooperation analysis highlights a dense network of LIS research hubs, with the Nordic region as a key contributor, demonstrating the journals growing academic influence. Co-citation and dual-map overlay analyses confirm Information Research's central position within the core LIS citation network, with close ties to top-tier journals. The journal's interdisciplinary citation patterns reveal its success in bridging LIS with social sciences, humanities and technical engineering. Author co-citation analysis identifies seminal theorists such as Tom Wilson and others as central figures, suggesting that the Information Research journal remains a vital platform for advancing both foundational and innovative LIS research.

Reflecting on the early days of the Information Research journal, it was essentially Wilson's single-handed dedication that brought it to life. He shouldered comprehensive responsibilities, as evidenced by the journal's first issue on its website 'Information Research is designed, maintained and published by Professor Tom Wilson'. Only those who have undertaken such endeavours understand their true difficulty. Through thirty years of development, this journal has grown from a sapling into a towering tree in information science. We express our deep gratitude and profound respect to Professor Wilson on behalf of Chinese scholars and students. Looking to the journal's future, we describe it with a Chinese cultural proverb, 'The torch of wisdom passes through generations, illuminating an ever-brighter path'.

Acknowledgments

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