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Searching for Information Research: A bibliometric analysis celebrating 30 years of a pioneering open access journal (1995–2024)

Gustaf Nelhans, Camilla Lindelöw, Pablo Lillo Cea, Marco Schirone, Rui José António
and Björn Hammarfelt

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Abstract

Introduction. This paper analyses the presence of the journal *Information Research* in traditional citation databases, such as Web of Science, as well as in new open sources like OpenAlex; and services tracking policy and technological impact, such as SciVal and Overton.

Method. We analyse the visibility of the journal across sources. With the limitations of representation in the different sources we proceed to study the impact of the journal in the scholarly community, as well as in society, by looking at how *Information Research* papers are situated in the scholarly world and how they are cited in patents and policy papers. Finally, we look at the openness of the journal as seen through the data sources.

Results. Our results show that *Information Research* has made quite a journey. It has found a place in the scholarly universe: authors from institutions from around the world publish there and other prestigious journals cite the content. The content coverage in the perused data sources could be improved, as can metadata, for example markup of article types.

Conclusions. Whilst the journal has been openly available on the Internet throughout its history, this is not well reflected in the data sources. This is something that the new home, [Publicera.kb.se](https://publicera.kb.se), might help with. Larger platforms can help individual journals fulfil the data standards needed to be properly indexed in the large data sources.

Introduction

The first issue of *Information Research* was published on the 1st of April 1995 under the editorship of Professor Tom Wilson. On that day ‘Don’t Stop (Wiggle Wiggle)’ by The Outthere Brothers topped the UK music charts, and, as the lyrics of this song repeatedly exclaim, *Information Research* would not stop. Rather than a *one hit wonder* it has, over the last thirty years, grown to become a key journal in the field of Information Studies.

This paper analyses the presence of the journal in traditional citation databases, such as Web of Science, as well as in new open sources like *OpenAlex*, and services tracking policy and technological impact such as *SciVal* and *Overton*. As the music charts are important to the musical one-hit wonders, these sources are important to the visibility of journals, as they are used both for information retrieval and research evaluation. Not being indexed in such sources risks seriously hampering the outreach of journals. This study sets out to make a historical overview of *Information Research*, using the available data in these sources. We hope that this analysis can be used to understand its development and role in the scholarly community, whilst also providing insights to what might lie ahead as the journal enters its early thirties. An advantage of using multiple sources is that we can also test a range of alternative ways of studying the development and influence of a journal, and in this aspect, our paper has an explorative approach. Hence, we both search for, and celebrate, *Information Research* and its thirty years of service to Information studies scholars.

The basis for the analysis is the papers, and their associated metadata, published over the past thirty years, noting trends and changes over time. To analyse published papers in *Information Research* over the last thirty years (1995–2024) we use different *lenses* (data sources snapshots). Together we argue that these lenses allow us to see aspects of impact which would not be visible using just one or a few perspectives. Using this approach, we are thus able to track the visibility and research impact to the present, which is not captured in traditional metrics and ranking lists.

The paper is structured as follows: we start by investigating the visibility of the journal across sources. Within the limitations of representation in the different sources we proceed to look at the impact of the journal in the scholarly community, as well as in society, by examining how *Information Research* papers are situated in the scholarly world and how they are cited in patents and policy papers. Finally, we look at the openness of the journal, as seen through the data sources. This also serves as a springboard to the future and the concluding section, which brings these perspectives (or lenses) together by discussing the impact of the journal in more general terms, whilst also reflecting on the different possibilities offered by the methods and materials used. Throughout the study we discuss how limitations in the indexing of publications in the journal might influence how its content is seen through the various sources we have used. Whether this is correct or not, this is how the journal appears through its different representations in these sources.

Findings

Lens 1: Visibility across sources

This section starts with Web of Science (WoS) as a baseline, as this source will be used for the citation analyses presented later. Records for 2,173 documents covering the years 2002–2024 were identified, consisting of all entries indexed from the journal’s inclusion in the database until its last published full year. For the bibliometric analyses in this study, the categories *book review* and *software review* (683 and 12 entries, respectively) were excluded from the analyses, which yielded 1,458 source documents for the study. These were identified in WoS using the query:

“SO=(INFORMATION RESEARCH AN INTERNATIONAL ELECTRONIC JOURNAL)”

Figure 1 shows the articles of *Information Research* indexed in WoS per publication year:

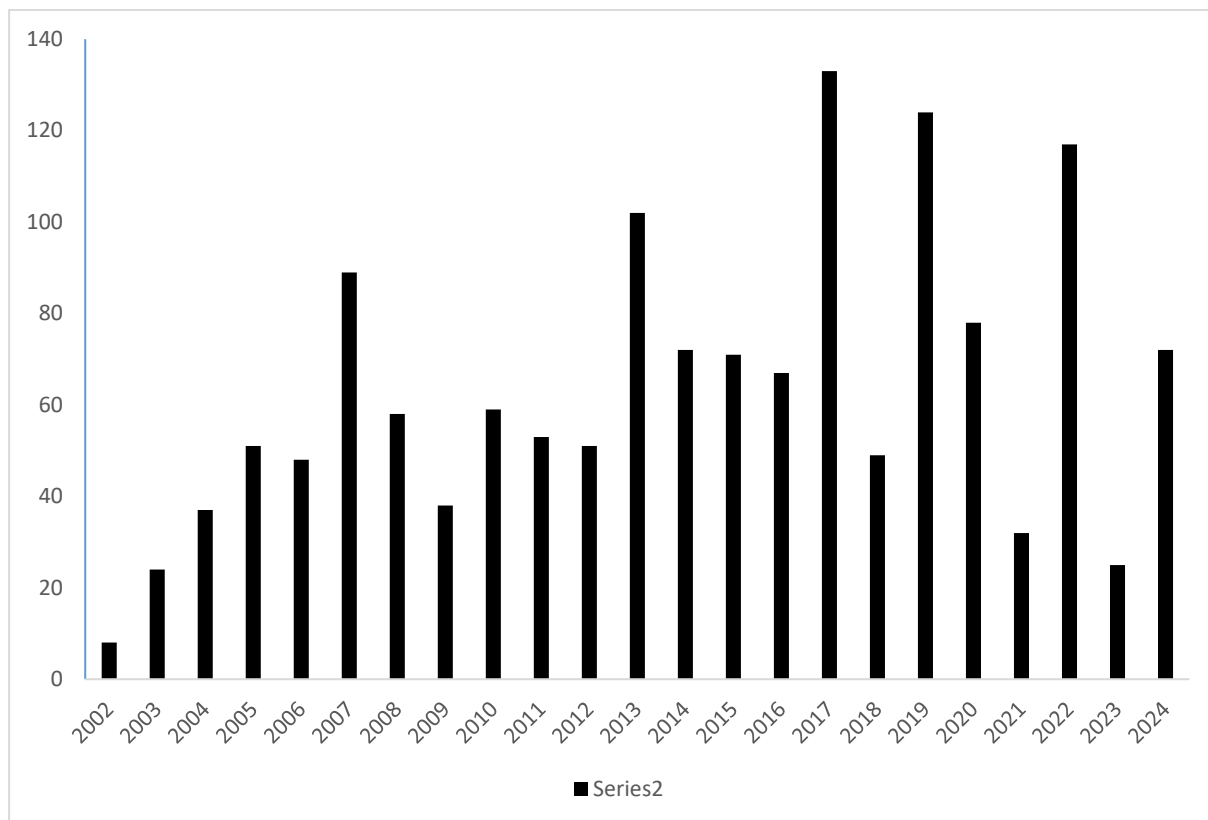


Figure 1. Publication year for the 1,458 articles in the data set.

The variance across years which is visible in Figure 1 can partly be explained by the publication of proceedings of major conferences in the journal. This increases the output significantly for the year in question. This cannot easily be handled, since the publications often are not classified as *proceedings paper*, but as *article* in WoS.

In Table 1, the institutional affiliation of the researchers publishing in *Information Research* are listed. While there is a certain focus on Northern Europe, institutions from all over the world are represented.

Organisation	Publ. (n)
University of Boras	77
Tampere University	61
University of Technology Sydney	45
Abo Akademi University	40
Uppsala University	34
Charles Sturt University	33
University of Sheffield	32
Oslo Metropolitan University Oslomet	31
State University System of Florida	30
University of Washington	28
State University of New York Suny System	27
University of Pretoria	27
University of Washington Seattle	27
Royal School of Library Information Science	25
Vilnius University	25
Lund University	22
Rutgers University New Brunswick	22
University of Oulu	22
Victoria University Wellington	21
Western University University of Western Ontario	21
Bar Ilan University	20
University of Copenhagen	20
University of Toronto	20
Monash University	19

Table 1. Overview of 24 universities with ≥ 19 affiliation shares in the data set (N=772).

European universities top the chart (Table 1), but it is evident that the journal is popular among authors across continents with European, North American, Australian, and African institutions all being represented. It is notable that a well-represented institution like the Danish Royal School of Library and Information Science is no longer in existence (it is now part of The University of Copenhagen). Another top institution, OsloMet, is rather new, established in 2018.

While table data could provide some insights to the publication activity of the journal, we will include visualisations of various aspects of article metadata to identify not just the quantity, but also the relationships between the data. One such category is authorship affiliations, which could shed light not just about where authors are affiliated, but also which organisations collaborate with each other. But as always, a caveat is prompted, since organisation information has not been harmonised, and this is partly for educational purposes. For instance, while [univ boras], (68 documents), the harmonised name form of the institution, is the biggest contributor, there are at least nine other name forms that could be recognised to relate to the same organisation. Right next to it, we see [univ coll boras], (7) and [swedish sch lib & information sci], (a mouthful! (3)). But there are at least five more name forms hidden in the map: [hgsk boras], (1); [hogskolan boras], (3); the “swenglicism”: [hogskolan & boras], (1 doc), as well as [Goteborg univ & hogskolan boras], (1 doc); Lastly, we find some variants of the SSLIS moniker: [swedish sch lib & information sci] (as mentioned above, 3); or plain old [sslis], (4).

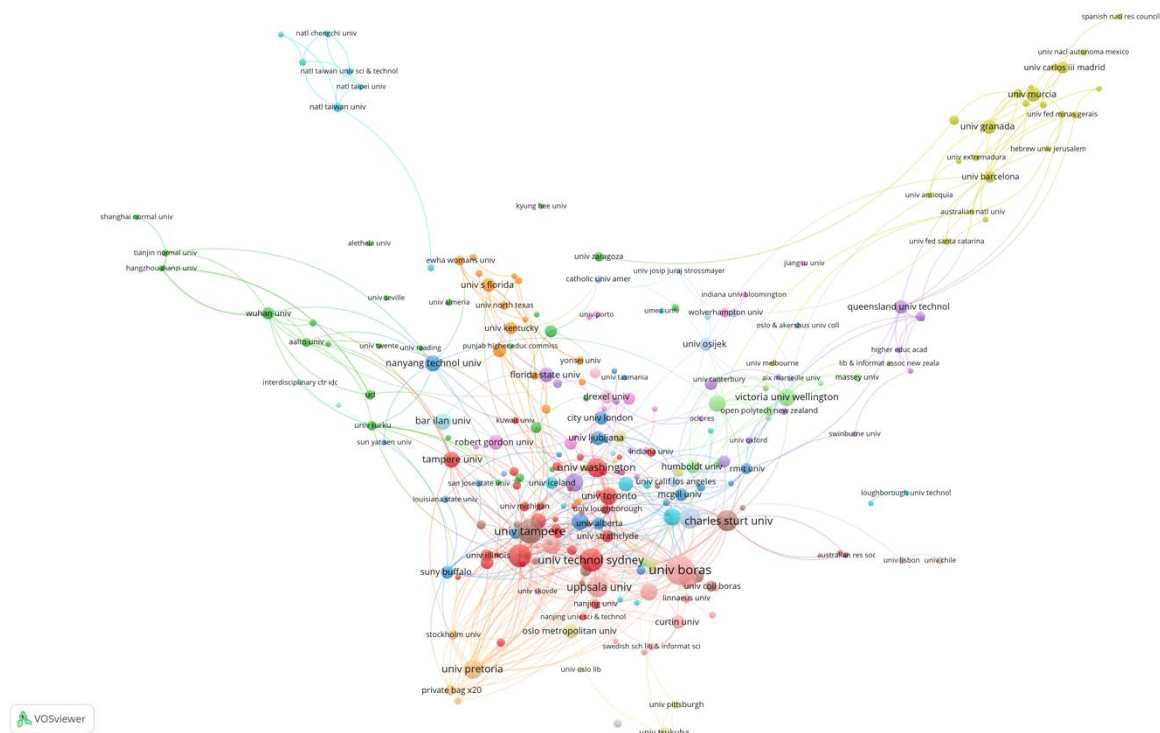


Figure 2. Co-authorship at the organisation level: Of 786 organisations, there were 269 organisations that contributed with ≥ 2 papers (main component: 214). Closeness = share of collaborations in the data set.

Compared with the other bibliographic sources we find more results in one database, *OpenAlex*. A search for “*Information Research*” identifies the journal as a “Source published by the Swedish School of Library and Information Science” and a hefty amount of published material: 1,542 entries. But unfortunately, there are some issues. First, the coverage is limited to the years 1997–2021. While this is earlier coverage than WoS, it is not complete and lacks the final years. One reason for the lack of the earlier years might be that many databases index material based on DOIs, which *Information Research* only recently acquired. 2022 is also the year *OpenAlex* was rebuilt from the original *Microsoft Academic Search*, and it is possible that *OurResearch*, the developer of *OpenAlex*, uses a somewhat different approach to indexing content. Another issue in *OpenAlex* is that almost all these entries are categorised as articles, with only five being categorised as other types. This is specifically problematic, since a large share of the published matter are book reviews (according to WoS: 683, and proceedings papers for conferences that have used *Information Research* as the outlet (537). Lastly, an error in *OpenAlex* has led to the attribution of citations to the books reviewed in the article to these reviews, leading to an inflated number of citations to the *Information Research* book reviews, in one case assigning almost 1,900 citations to a review by Professor Wilson(!). Two other large data sources, *Scopus* and *Dimensions*, index fewer articles, 1,213 in *Scopus* and only 255 in *Dimensions* (indexing from 2020–). *Scopus*, indexing from 1996, divides between different article types, whereas *Dimensions*, like *OpenAlex*, denotes all publications as articles.

Lens 2: Scholarly impact

Citation analysis is one way of measuring impact in the scholarly world. This can be done in several ways, by sheer counting of citations to source documents, or by more complex analyses of aggregated data, such as bibliographic coupling and creating co-citation networks.

In this study, bibliometric visualisations, depicting metadata information based on the search query in *Web of Science*, are shown. Here, all document types not related to book or software

reviews have been used as the basis for metrics and visualisations. The argument for this is that publications of the kind *invited articles* (e.g. Marcia Bates “[What is browsing - really? A model drawing from behavioural science research](#)”), *keynote addresses* (e.g. Kulthau [Towards collaboration between information seeking and information retrieval](#)) within conference proceedings, as well as *guest editorials* (e.g. Koskiala and Savolainen’s [Special issue: papers from the Conference, Toward User-Centered Approach to Digital Libraries \(DigiLib 2003\), September, 2003, Espoo, Finland. - Issue editorial](#)) for collections of papers that are often cited as a way of referring to the whole collection are found within this document type category in WoS. Examples of wrongly classified papers were also identified, such as Murillo’s [Communities of practice in the business and organization studies literature](#) and other articles in Vol 16, no 1. This also means that we have not distinguished between published material submitted directly to the journal and *proceedings materials*, belonging to collections of conference proceedings published within the journal. The software VOSviewer was used to construct visualisation networks (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). A total of 1,458 *citable papers* have been used as the source for these analyses and visualisations.

The bibliometric algorithm *bibliographic coupling* is used to cluster data on documents within the data set at the article level in Figure 3 and at the author level in Figure 4. The algorithm clusters information based on the number of shared references between the identified units for analysis. At the article level, this means that two articles are found close to each other in the visualisation if they have a considerable overlap of cited references in their reference lists. This report also focuses on *co-citation* network analysis. We show the most cited source outlets (Figure 5) that the articles in the dataset cite.

While bibliographic coupling is often equated with *research fronts*, based on the notion that papers with a higher overlap of references tend to belong to a similar research focus, the co-citation network shows the *intellectual basis* of the collective (Persson, 1994). Highly cited articles and source outlets contain the most frequently used research among the collected data. The articles cluster around specific topics, as can be seen through the titles of the sources.

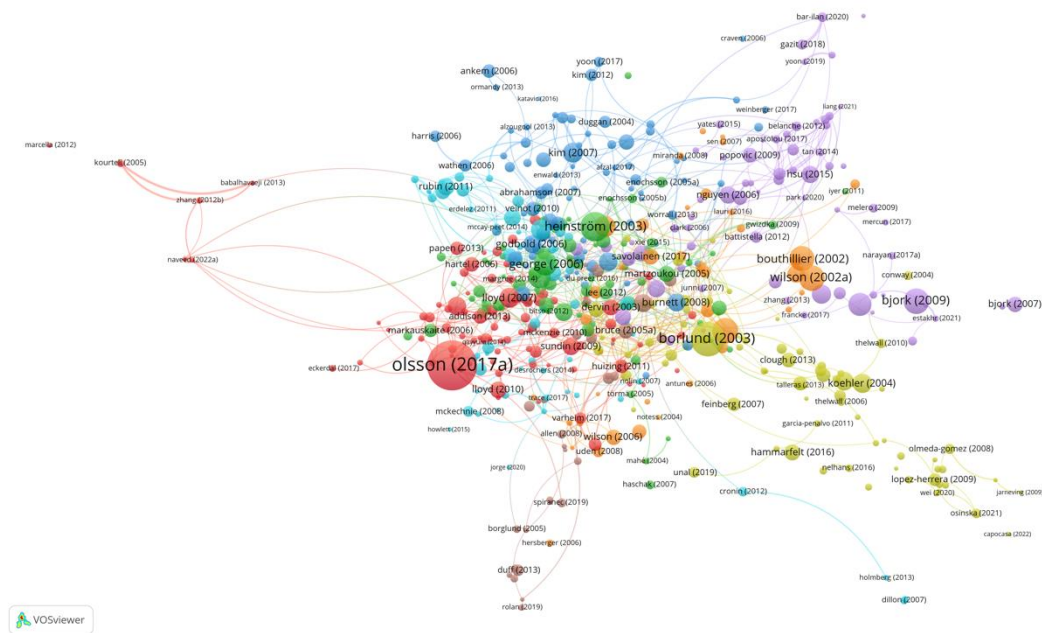


Figure 3. Bibliographic coupling at the article level: 1,497 articles cited ≥ 5 times 570 (544 found in the main component). Closeness = similarities in reference lists Node scale: citations.

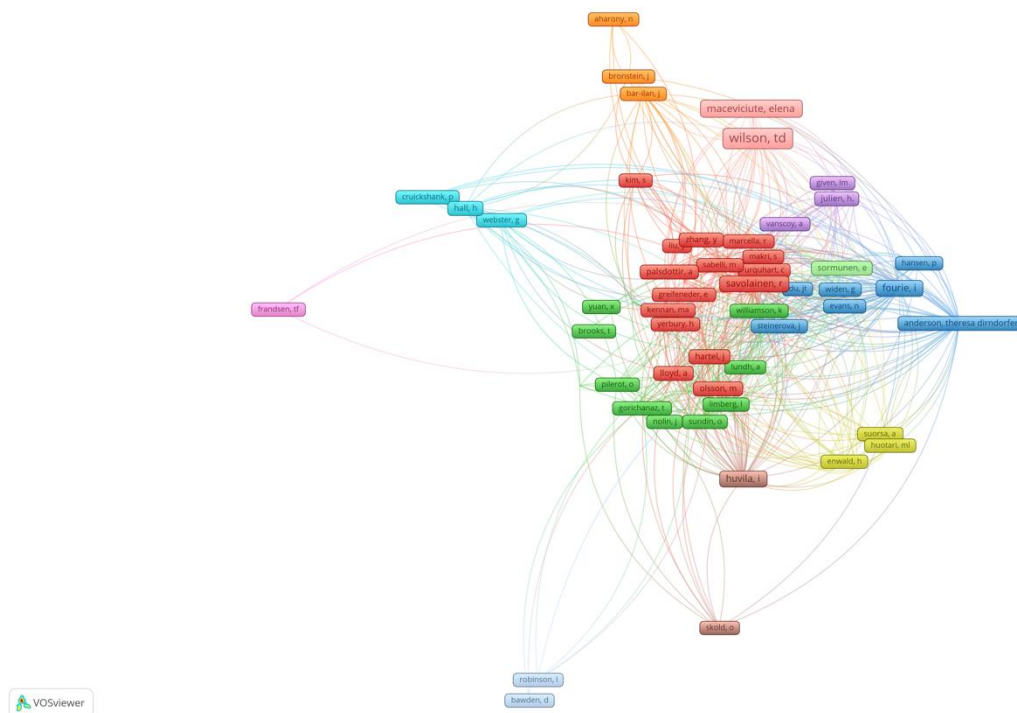


Figure 4. Bibliographic coupling at the author level: Of 2,010 authors cited ≥ 5 times 74. Closeness = similarities in reference lists for the respective authors.

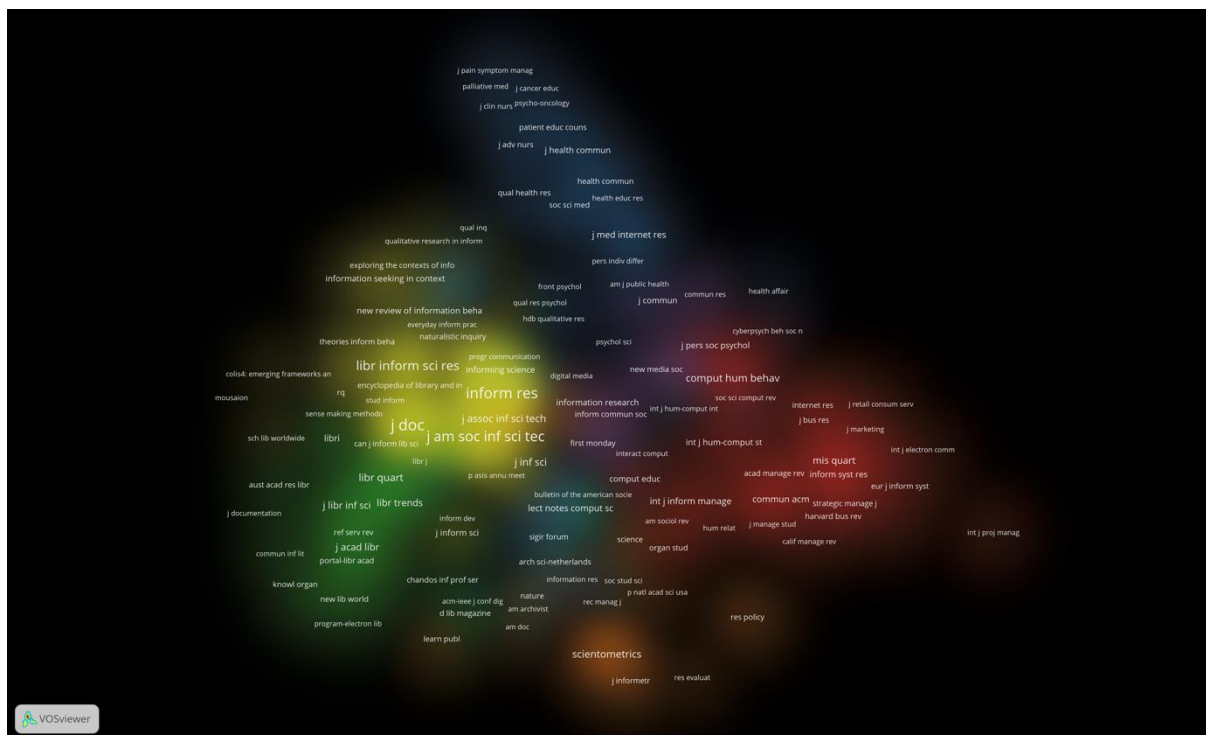


Figure 5. Co-citation: Cited sources in the full set of 2,173 source publications in Information Research: Of 21,396 cited sources, 265 were cited ≥ 20 times.

Additionally, a text mining approach, called *co-word analysis*, links relevant noun phrases to each other if found in titles and abstracts in the data set. The text-based analysis of keywords and key terms in the WoS dataset's titles and abstracts is used first (Figure 6). Keywords are registered at the article level by the publisher, often chosen by researchers themselves, but sometimes chosen from a list of pre-determined keywords. This algorithm considers pair-wise relationships between all keywords identified in the articles citing the institutes' publications based on how often the terms occur together in the *author generated* keyword list.¹ Another way of identifying key terms and phrases uses terms identified in the articles' titles and abstracts. This is a more *free form* of text, and while sometimes noisy, can provide insights into the actual terminology used, instead of the more restricted set of keywords (Figure 7). Using VOSviewer, the co-word algorithm filters the text for meaningful noun phrases, including nouns and adjectives in front of nouns to identify semantic phrases of relevance, using linguistic techniques.

¹ As opposed to Keywords PLUS™, which is a set of keywords that is added by Web of Science.

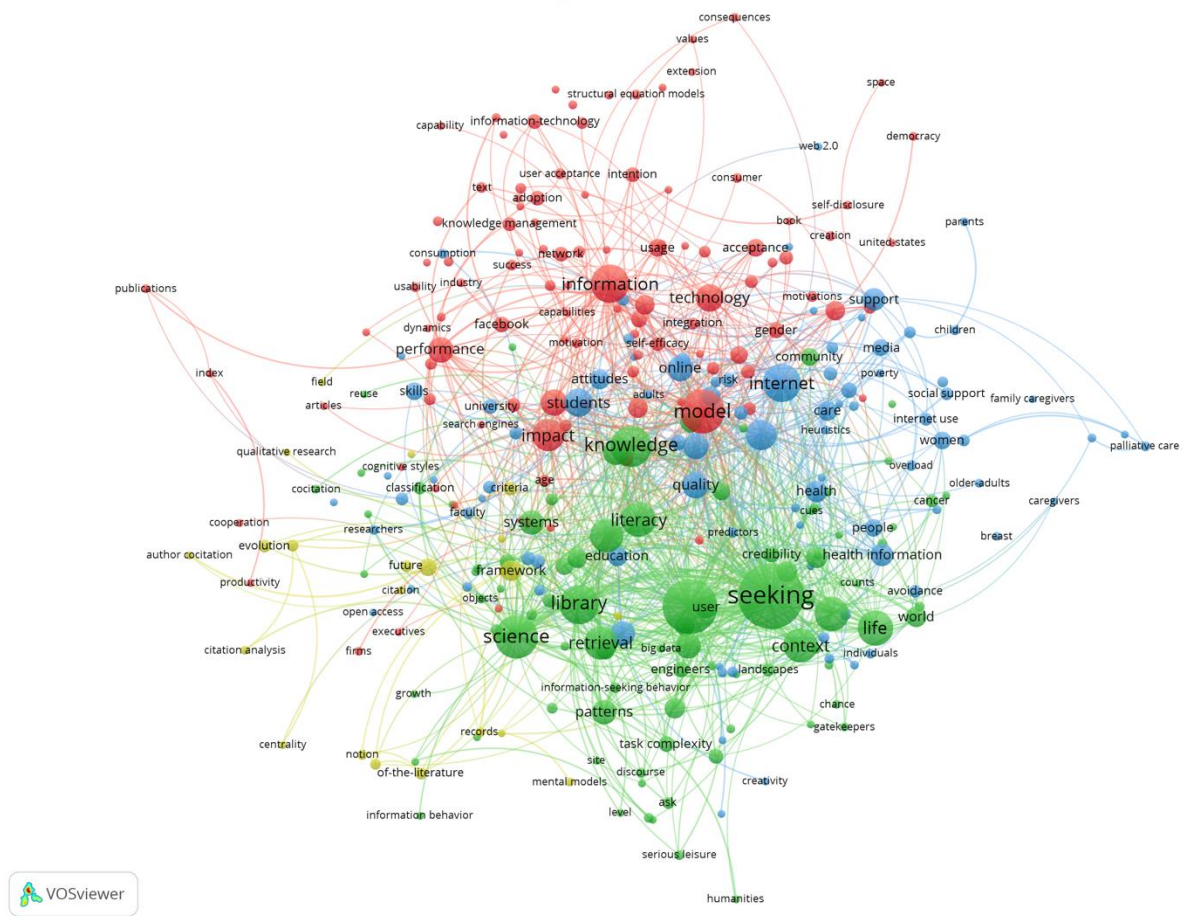


Figure 6. Keyword analysis in the full set of 2,173 source publications in Information Research: Of 1,455 keywords, 315 keywords found ≥ 3 times.

Four clusters are identified by the algorithm: green (focusing on information seeking and retrieval), red (technology, models, management), blue (internet, media, students) and yellow (citations, evaluations, and future prognosis). What is evident however, is the strong linkages between clusters, which point to the many linkages between topics addressed in the journal.

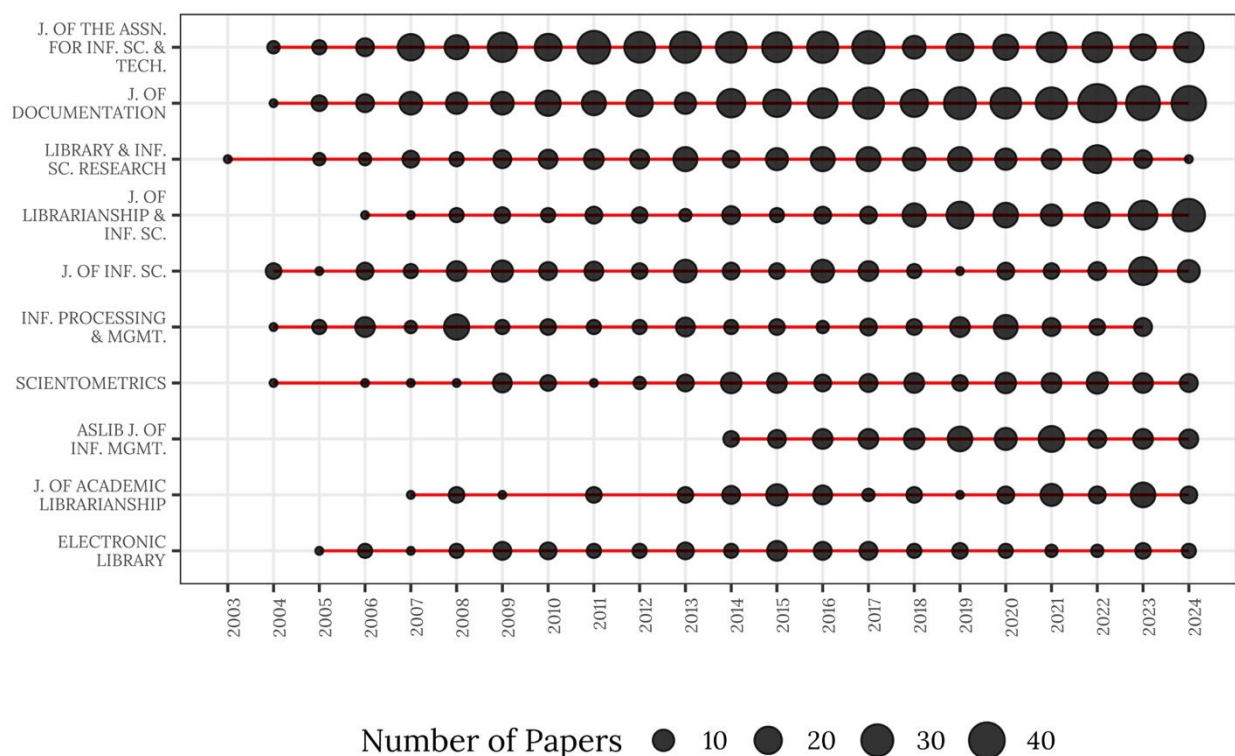


Figure 8. Journals citing *Information Research* based on yearly citations.

Not surprisingly, the top-citing journals are key and leading journals within the field, such as *JASIST*, *Journal of Documentation* and *JOLIS*. This finding appears relatively stable over time, and it confirms the journals position as a well-established source within Information Studies.

The dissemination profile of *Information Research* reveals a strong and sustained presence in the academic discourse of the information sciences. An analysis of the top ten journals citing *Information Research*, which account for about 18% of the total citations, uncovers a dual pattern: consistent long-term engagement by core disciplinary journals and more recent surges in citation activity, hinting at a contemporary revitalisation of the journal's influence.

The *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* (*JASIST*) stands as the single most prolific citing source, accounting for 423 citations to *Information Research* across the observed period. *JASIST*, widely regarded as one of the leading journals in the field, reflects the degree to which *Information Research* has been integrated into foundational debates within information science.

Close behind *JASIST* is the *Journal of Documentation*, which cited *Information Research* 422 times. However, unlike *JASIST*, the *Journal of Documentation* exhibits a markedly different temporal profile. Its peak year came much later, in 2022, when 47 articles referenced *Information Research*, the highest single year citation count recorded in the dataset across all journals. This recent uptick signals not only ongoing relevance, but possibly a renewed theoretical alignment, suggesting that *Information Research* continues to provide conceptual tools and empirical findings that resonate with contemporary debates in documentation studies and information theory.

The presence of *Library & Information Science Research* and the *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, with 171 and 169 citations respectively, further anchors *Information Research* within the core of the field. These journals, often publishing empirical studies and policy-relevant

work, suggest that *Information Research* contributes to both theoretical and practical knowledge production. Notably, the *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* reached its peak citation count in 2024, indicating that *Information Research* remains not only relevant, but increasingly cited in recent discussions about library practices, digital transition, and community-oriented information work.

Further down the list, the *Journal of Information Science* registered 140 citations, peaking in 2023. Though lower in total volume, this journal's recent peak contributes to a broader trend: citations to *Information Research* are active references within an evolving field. These citation peaks in the early 2020s suggest that recent contributions from *Information Research* are successfully engaging with contemporary concerns, particularly those related to digital information environments and user experience.

The data also shows that these journals cite *Information Research* over extended periods, most starting in the early 2000s and continuing up to 2024. This longevity confirms *Information Research*'s status as a durable reference point in the field. However, the pattern is not uniform. The early peak of JASIST contrasts with the more recent peaks observed in other journals, suggesting shifts in thematic convergence. One interpretation is that while *Information Research* initially influenced theory-building and information-seeking models, it is now contributing more to empirical and applied debates, especially in journals focused on librarianship and information practice.

The citation profile, then, is both concentrated and dynamic. JASIST and the *Journal of Documentation* alone account for nearly fifty percent of all citations in the top ten journals. Yet their temporal profiles diverge noticeably, indicating that the journal's influence is distributed across both foundational and emerging scholarly dialogue.

This breadth is further illustrated by the presence of *Scientometrics* among the top ten citing journals. With 104 citations, spanning from 2004 to 2024, and a peak in 2022, *Scientometrics* confirms that *Information Research* is not only valued within qualitative and interpretive traditions, but also recognised within quantitatively oriented subfields of the information sciences. Its inclusion signals that the journal's articles are cited in conversations about scholarly communication, knowledge mapping, and evaluative bibliometrics, domains often associated with different methodological commitments than those typically foregrounded in *Information Research*. Rather than occupying a marginal position in these discussions, the journal appears to serve as a conceptual or empirical touchstone, even in domains driven by large-scale data analysis and metric-based assessments.

Overall, the citation data shows that *Information Research* plays an important role across different parts of the information sciences. It continues to be a key reference in areas like information behaviour and documentation studies, while it is also cited in more data-driven and evaluative research. This shows that the journal's influence is not limited to one type of research or method. Instead, it contributes to a broad range of scholarly work, making it a relevant and active part of both long-standing and emerging conversations in the field.

While studying citations by countries as shares (Figure 9), we note that while the US stands for the largest share of cited papers, the UK, Spain and several other European countries, as well as Australia, China and several other countries worldwide, cite publications in *Information Research*.

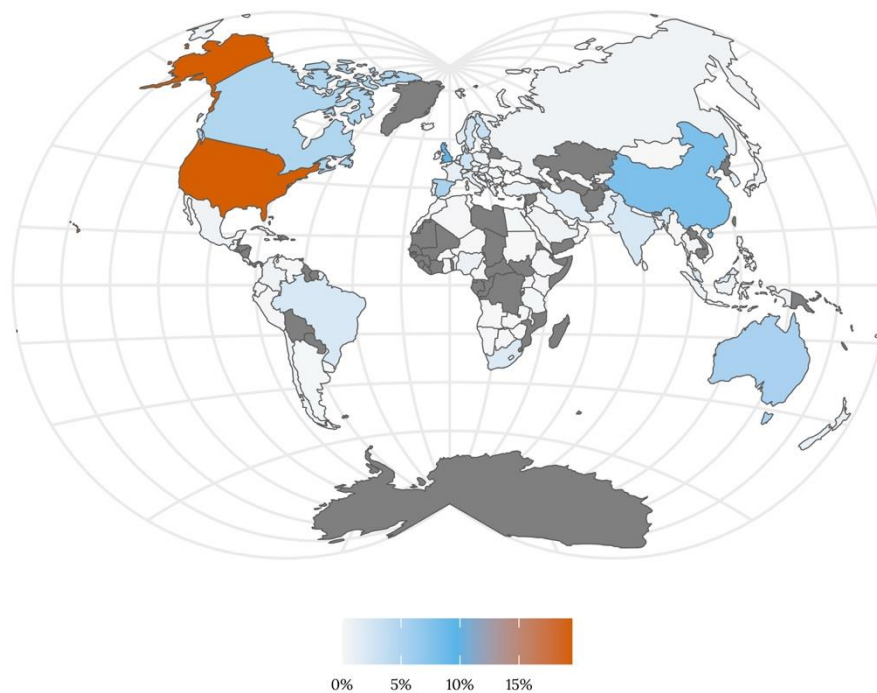


Figure 9. Heatmap of citation share across countries. Grey indicates no data, light blue less than 10% of all citations, darker blue and orange more than 10% of all citations to the journal. 234 papers with no country are excluded from the analysis.

The geographical distribution of citations to *Information Research*, based on the affiliation of the first author, highlights both the journal's global reach and the uneven landscape of its academic reception. The United States clearly dominates, with 1,817 citations, accounting for nearly 20% of the total. This level of engagement suggests that *Information Research* maintains a strong presence within the American research community, likely reflecting the country's large-scale academic output and the alignment of the journal's themes with US-based information science research traditions.

The United Kingdom follows with 879 citations, or 9.4% of the total, reinforcing *Information Research*'s alignment with the Anglo-Saxon academic landscape. Given the journal's origins and editorial leadership, this is not surprising. It suggests a persistent national engagement, perhaps also driven by institutional proximity and citation norms within UK information studies departments.

China, in third position with 731 citations (7.9%), demonstrates the journal's clear integration into the mainstream of global research. By 2025, China is not only the world's largest producer of peer-reviewed articles across many domains, but also increasingly active in LIS research, particularly in areas such as scientometrics, knowledge organisation, and digital library systems.

Australia (497 citations) and Spain (488) complete the top five, both contributing over 5% of the total. Their position reflects mature national information science communities with strong international visibility. Australia's presence is especially notable given its relatively small population, suggesting a high per capita impact. Spain's strong showing likely reflects a strong

research community focused on documentation, knowledge organisation, and digital information systems, areas frequently featured in *Information Research*.

Finland and Sweden, though smaller in terms of overall output, show strong representation relative to their size, with 351 and 319 citations respectively. The journal's Swedish base likely facilitates greater visibility in the Nordic region, but the citation data suggests that regional engagement is driven as much by scholarly relevance as by geography.

Notably, Brazil appears as the most prominent contributor from the Global South, with over 250 citations, reflecting an active and internationally oriented information science community that has long engaged with open-access platforms and user-focused research. This points to *Information Research*'s capacity to resonate beyond the core Anglophone and East Asian academic spheres, particularly in Latin America.

In summary, the geographical breakdown of citations reveals a journal that is widely cited across major research-producing regions, but with clear centres of gravity. The United States, the United Kingdom, and China dominate in absolute numbers, while countries like Australia, Spain, Sweden, and Finland show high engagement relative to their size. However, the data also highlight persistent imbalances. Large parts of Eastern Europe remain underrepresented, and engagement from regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia appears minimal. These gaps suggest that while *Information Research* has achieved broad visibility, its international reception remains characterised by structural asymmetries in research capacity, publication infrastructure, and thematic alignment.

Lens 4: Impact in society – a perspective from SciVal

Another lens through which *Information Research* can be analysed is its impact on policy documents and patents. To conduct this analysis, we used data from Elsevier's *Scopus* database, as processed through *SciVal*. Additionally, policy data was examined using the *Overton* database interface. A total of 1,213 documents published in *Information Research* between 1996 and 2024 were available in the database *Scopus* and could be imported into the tool for bibliometric analyses *SciVal* (Elsevier, 2025a; 2025b). Additionally, policy data was examined using the *Overton* database interface (Open Policy, 2025). As of March 2025, six documents had been cited in policy-related sources and thirty-four had been cited in patents.

Research published in *Information Research* has influenced policy discussions at both international and national levels, with six documents from the journal cited in official policy reports. The most-cited article, Adhinugroho et al. (2020), has been referenced in multiple editions and translations of the *Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade*, published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (World Trade Organization, 2023). This handbook highlights the study's findings on using data mining techniques to analyse digital commerce in Indonesia and the challenges associated with data access and quality. Additionally, regional and national policy bodies such as Generalitat Valenciana in Spain and the Strategic Research Council of Finland have incorporated *Information Research* findings into reports addressing digital transformation in labour markets and crisis preparedness in urban planning, demonstrating the journal's impact across multiple governance sectors. Moreover, one of the six articles from *Information Research* cited in policy documents was published in Portuguese, reflecting the journal's diverse linguistic contributions and its international reach (Paletta & Moreira González, 2021). This article analyses job advertisements as a data source for understanding labour market trends in the information science field, particularly in the context of digital transformation. Its inclusion in policy citations highlights the relevance of non-English research for labour market policies and professional development strategies, particularly in Portuguese-speaking countries.

The thirty-four patents citing *Information Research*, shown in Figure , primarily focus on information retrieval, collaborative systems, and user information behaviour, reflecting the journal's contributions to technological innovation. The most-referenced scholarly articles address topics such as search algorithms, collaborative document editing, and decision-support systems, influencing patented technologies in areas like web search engines, hosted word processors, and e-commerce platforms. Geographically, the United States dominates both in patent applicants and patent office filings, followed by a smaller presence in France, China, and international filings through the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Several major technology companies, including Google LLC, Amadeus S.A.S., International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), and ExxonMobil Upstream Research Company, have cited research from *Information Research* in their patent filings, reflecting the journal's influence on search algorithms, information retrieval systems, collaborative platforms, and user information behaviour modelling. Over time, citations of *Information Research* in patents have increased, peaking around 2016 and 2020, indicating a growing recognition of its academic insights into real-world technological advancements.

Patent Filings Citing the Journal by Country

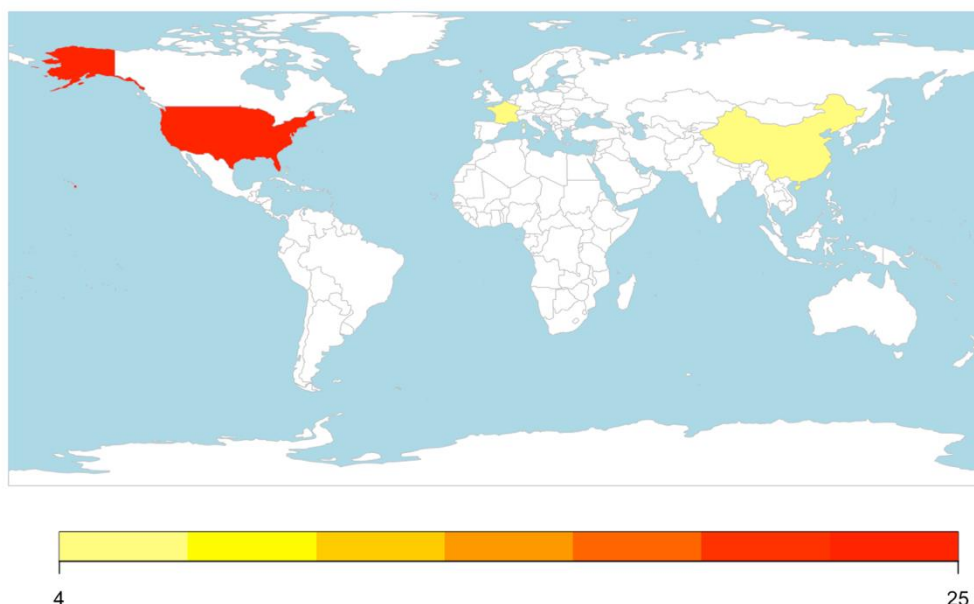


Figure 10. Patent Filings Citing *Information Research* by country (Source: Overton).

Lens 5: The openness of an open journal

From its inception, *Information Research* has been openly accessible to readers without subscription fees. Authors, likewise, are not charged for publication, a model that continues to be adopted by many small publishers, including individual researchers and some university presses. These journals often operate with limited resources, and navigating the evolving infrastructure of scholarly publishing can present challenges. Today, journals are generally expected to offer features such as Crossref DOIs and multiple article formats (e.g. PDF and XML), among other technical standards. This is where the ideal of independence intersects with practical considerations. Maintaining a standalone website is no longer sufficient; integration with broader systems is often necessary to ensure that references become citations within major academic databases. As the journal transitions to its new platform, Publicera.kb.se, it may allow more

attention and resources to be directed toward content development, rather than formatting and technical maintenance.

How visible is the open access status of *Information Research*? *OpenAlex*, a recently developed and rapidly expanding scholarly database has focused heavily on identifying and cataloguing open access content. As of 2025, it includes information on over 250 million records (Open Alex, 2025). However, a search via its interface currently presents *Information Research* as having no open access content at all.

This contrasts with data from other platforms: in *Scopus*, 26 percent are marked as open access, while in *Dimensions*, all articles are labelled as such, though coverage there is relatively low. Interestingly, *OpenAlex* does contain data related to alternative open access sources, which reveal a more nuanced picture.

Instead of indexing the journal through its initial website, *OpenAlex* has picked up versions of articles hosted in a variety of secondary repositories around the world. These include institutional and subject-based repositories in countries such as Taiwan, Cyprus and Mexico. The three most frequent top-level domains are .de (Germany, 1,036 items), .org (US-based, 203) and .gov (US government, 132). Germany offers a particularly interesting case: DBLP, a German computer science bibliography, appears to have archived full-text versions of all *Information Research* articles, assigning the journal an open access level of 91 per cent. This is in stark contrast to the 0 percent indicated by *OpenAlex* when considering only primary sources.

Concluding discussion

Our findings show that *Information Research* has undergone a remarkable journey. It has secured a place in the scholarly landscape, attracting contributions from authors affiliated with institutions across the globe and receiving citations from respected journals. While there is room for improvement in terms of content coverage across the data sources examined, as well as in metadata quality, such as consistent article type markup, the journal's longstanding open accessibility is not always accurately reflected in these systems.

The move to its new platform, [Publicera.kb.se](https://publicera.kb.se), holds promise in addressing these challenges. Larger publishing platforms can support individual journals in meeting the technical standards required for more comprehensive indexing in major scholarly databases. Having already achieved significant milestones, *Information Research* appears to be on a steady and promising path, with no signs of slowing down: far from a one-hit wonder, it continues to evolve with purpose and resilience.

Acknowledgements

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