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Celebrating 30 years of the ISIC conference: citation impact and collaboration

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Abstract

Introduction. The ISIC conference series has served as a central venue for interdisciplinary research on information behaviour since 1996. This paper commemorates 30 years of ISIC by examining its scholarly impact and collaborative characteristics.

Method. A descriptive and bibliometric analysis was conducted on 495 ISIC papers published between 1996 and 2024. Citation data (N=20,865) were retrieved via SerpAPI from Google Scholar. Author metadata, including affiliation and academic seniority, were manually extracted from conference proceedings and journal publications.

Results. Collaboration has increased over time, with a shift from single-author papers to multi-authored contributions. Authors from 42 countries have participated and citing authors represent a broad range of institutions and research interests, with ‘information behaviour’ being the most frequent. ISIC papers have been cited extensively, with an average of 39.8 citations per paper.

Conclusion. The ISIC conference continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the field of information behaviour. Its international reach, interdisciplinary nature, and sustained scholarly influence underscore its importance. Future research should explore citation contexts to better understand how and why ISIC papers are cited.

Introduction

Since 1996, the ISIC conference has been a central international initiative for research on information seeking and behaviour, serving as a focal point for an interdisciplinary community. The first ISIC conference, held in Tampere, Finland, was introduced in the foreword to the conference proceedings by Pertti Vakkari, Reijo Savolainen, and Brenda Dervin as a response to the lack of an international forum for researchers in information needs and seeking (INS), noting that *'the ISIC conference in Tampere signified a new beginning, a time when INS researchers from all over the world could convene'* (Vakkari et al., 1997, p. 8). Following the line of argument in Dervin and Nilan's (1986) landmark article, the new beginning challenged the prevailing system-centred focus in the field, advocating instead of a user- or person-centred approach (Vakkari et al., 1997). While the conference acronym, ISIC, has remained unchanged since 1996, the full conference name has developed from 'Conference on research in information needs, seeking and use in different contexts' in 1996 to the 'The Information Behaviour Conference' today.

The ISIC 2026 Call for Papers (n.d.) signals that the term information behaviour is used as an umbrella concept for research focusing on contextualized information activities including numerous subfields. Even though the use of information behaviour as an umbrella concept has been contested (Savolainen, 2007) and critically reflected upon (Ruthven et al., 2025), recent contributions reviewing trends in research on how people look for and interact with information have adopted the term (e.g., Greifeneder, 2014; Huvila & Gorichanaz, 2025). Thus, the conference title, The Information Behaviour Conference, can be seen as an effort to consolidate and embrace the broad field of information behaviour and related subfields, thereby reflecting the complexity and diversity of information-related phenomena in contemporary society.

The 1996 conference marked the beginning of an uninterrupted series of biennial events sustained and shaped by an active and evolving interdisciplinary research community. This paper commemorates 30 years of ISIC conferences by analysing their impact and characteristics, focusing on collaboration, international reach, and academic influence. A total of 495 long and short papers from 1996 to 2024 are included in the analysis, and the following research questions are addressed:

RQ1: What characterises the ISIC community in terms of authors' academic seniority, publication frequency, and collaboration?

RQ2: What is the scholarly impact of ISIC publications from 1996 to 2024?

Related work

There is an increased focus on measuring impact of scientific research to evaluate the significance, influence, and reach of ideas and research outputs. Bibliometric analysis is an established approach to evaluate the scholarly impact of research activities by measuring their associated publications and the citations they receive (Egghe & Rousseau, 1990). Earlier research has shown how bibliometric analysis can be used to evaluate the impact of scientific conferences by looking at citations, collaboration patterns, alternative metrics, etc. (Gäde et al., 2024; Islam & Agarwal, 2023; Tsikrika et al., 2013). Islam and Agarwal found that, *'While there are a plethora of bibliometrics studies on information science and LIS journals, very few studies have focused on conference proceedings in information science and LIS'* (2023, p. 106).

To the best of our knowledge, there have been no prior bibliometric studies of the entire set of ISIC conference publications. McKechnie et al.'s (2005) citation analysis study of information behaviour research noted that ISIC conference proceedings were relevant to include; however, they were unable to include the first two ISIC conference proceeding papers as these were not indexed in the major citation platform Web of Knowledge (now Web of Science). Instead, several studies have used content analysis to critically examine the content, quality and development of ISIC

conference papers. In a series of papers, McKechnie and colleagues have used content analysis to examine different aspects of ISIC papers, including if and how information behaviour research communicates findings to library and information science practitioners (McKechnie et al., 2008), the use of postmodern approaches in information behaviour research (McKechnie et al., 2012), the use of research rigour tactics in writing research results (McKechnie et al., 2016), and an analysis of how ‘users’ are constructed in ISIC papers (Julien et al., 2018).

The use of theory in information behaviour research has been studied quite extensively (see, for example Huvila & Gorichanaz, 2025; Julien et al., 2011), and this has influenced researchers within the ISIC community. Recognising the importance of theoretical engagement, two studies have specifically examined the use of theory in ISIC conference papers. Vakkari (2008) compared the use of theory and methods in ISIC papers from the 1996 and 2008 conferences, respectively, and noted a decline in quality, understood as a decrease in studies employing analytical approaches, with a shift towards more descriptive work. In a more recent and extensive study of 243 ISIC papers, VanScoy et al. (2022) offer a more positive account of theory usage. Their analysis shows that *‘empirical papers presented at ISIC tend to include at least some theoretical content, and many use theory substantially’* (Conclusion section). The aim here is not to contribute to the discussion of what qualifies as theory usage (Pilerot & Ekström, 2025), but rather to examine what previous studies of ISIC research have focused on and remarked upon. Together, these studies critically examine central aspects and reveal important nuances that may serve as learning points, thereby contributing to the advancement of the field. The present paper complements these studies with quantitative and bibliometric analysis of the entire set of ISIC publications 1996–2024.

Methods

To answer the research questions, we conducted a two-part study comprising: (1) a descriptive, quantitative analysis of basic publication characteristics of the 495 ISIC papers, and (2) an analysis of the 20,865 citations referencing those papers.

Dataset and descriptive analysis

The dataset includes all ISIC conference proceedings papers from 1996 through the most recent conference in 2024. We included both short and full conference papers, as well as keynote papers when these were published in the conference proceedings, such as Dervin’s (1997) well-known keynote paper on context and methodological tools for taming the unruly beast. In total, the dataset comprises 495 papers.

Information about authors’ affiliation countries was added manually. For the 1996 and 1998 conferences, affiliation data were retrieved from the printed conference proceedings, while for the 2004–2024 conferences we used the ‘About the Author’ sections of papers published in *Information Research*. Information on authors’ academic seniority was extracted using the same sources. Descriptive statistics related to publication output, authorship, and collaboration patterns were calculated using Microsoft Excel.

Citation data collection

Citation data was collected in three steps in September 2025 using Google Scholar via SerpAPI (<https://serpapi.com/>), a commercial scraping service that provides a programmatic API access to structured search engine data. SerpAPI enables automated retrieval of Google Scholar search result elements, including publication metadata and lists of citing documents (see Figures 1–3 for examples). While we are aware of the heterogenous data quality of Google Scholar, we chose it over more traditional citation indexes such as Web of Science and Scopus for its broader coverage of non-journal sources and of social science and humanities fields (Harzing & Alakangas, 2016), which fits well with the of interdisciplinary nature of information behaviour research.

[HTML] Toward an integrated model of information seeking and searching

[HTML] ucla.edu

MJ Bates

The New Review of Information Behaviour Research, 2002 · pages.gseis.ucla.edu

Abstract

The emphasis in much information seeking research at the current time is on the social and cultural context of human interaction with information. This effort is highly desirable, but is incomplete. The model to be developed here has integration as its objective in two senses: 1) to provide a single model that incorporates both information seeking and searching within it, and 2) to integrate the social and cultural with the underlying biological and physical anthropological layers of human experience with respect to information

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Figure 1. Google Scholar search result, with title, author(s), snippet (in this example part of the abstract), full text link and link to citing publications in Google Scholar. Source: Google Scholar, September 2025.

 Scholar About 589 results (0,07 sec) YEAR ▾

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Purpose—Describes the basic premises of three metatheories that represent important or emerging perspectives on information seeking, retrieval and knowledge formation in ...
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Figure 2. Example list of citing articles from Google Scholar – with title, summary, author(s), source, citing year, domain of citing source, snippet, number of citing publications as well as full text link. Source: Google Scholar, September 2025.



Karen E Fisher
information school, [university of washington](#)
Verified email at uw.edu - [Homepage](#)
HCI forced displacement youth information behavior
international development



Cited by

[VIEW ALL](#)

	All	Since 2020
Citations	10698	3192
h-index	40	26
i10-index	78	48

Figure 3. Example Google Scholar user profile – with affiliation (where some include position as well), domain of verified email, homepage as well as Areas of Interest.

First, each of the 495 ISIC papers was queried by title (best match, not phrase search) to retrieve each paper's cite_id (the link behind 'Cited by 589' in Figure 1). In 67 cases, a paper produced

multiple potential matches; these were resolved manually to ensure that the correct ISIC paper was included in the analysis.

Second, all publications citing an ISIC paper (like those in Figure 2) were retrieved using the extracted *cite_ids*. This resulted in a total of 20,865 citations originating from 13,223 unique publications. Only 23 of the 495 ISIC papers had not received any citations at the time of data collections. Citing publications were retrieved in batches of 20, following Google Scholar's interface limitations.

Third, metadata for all unique citing authors were collected using *author_ids* extracted from the data downloaded in step two. In total, this yielded 6,682 unique Google Scholar author profiles (see Figure 3 for an example). For authors who had claimed their Google Scholar profiles, metadata included verified email domains and self-reported research interests.

The total cost of SerpAPI usage, including testing, amounted to approximately 8,545 tokens, corresponding to less than USD 100. Data collection and extraction were implemented using *vibe* coding in Google AI Studio, based on the Gemini large language model. All SerpAPI outputs were saved in JSON format and subsequently imported into Microsoft Excel, which was also used for the data analysis. The dataset is made available and can be assessed through Aalborg University research repository (<https://vbn.aau.dk/da/datasets/paper-data-set-celebrating-30-years-of-the-isic-conference-citati/>).

Results

The results are presented in two parts. First, we describe key characteristics of ISIC publications, focusing on authorship, collaboration, and geographical reach. Second, we examine the citation impact of ISIC papers and analyse who cites this body of work.

Characteristics of ISIC publications

We begin by examining basic publication characteristics. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the 495 ISIC papers across the 15 conferences held between 1996 and 2024. The figure illustrates considerable variations in the number of papers published per conference year. Across all years, the 495 papers were authored by a total of 1,010 individuals. Figure 5 presents the number of authors per paper. Overall, 41.6% of papers were single-authored, while 27.3% had two authors, with the remaining papers written by three or more authors. This proportion of single-authored papers is relatively high compared to, for example, the ACM CHIIR conference, where only 5% of papers are single-authored (Bogers et al., 2023).

Examining authorship patterns over time, Figure 6 shows a general development trend towards increased multi-authorship. Since the 2014 conference, the majority of ISIC papers have been co-authored by two or three authors. A similar trend can be observed in the publication patterns of the ASIS&T conference, with the share of multi-authored papers rising from 50% in 2000 to 85% in 2020 (Islam & Agarwal, 2023). This trend is noteworthy as it suggests a growing level of collaboration among ISIC researchers, and prior studies have observed higher citation rates for collaborative work (Levitt & Thelwall, 2009). This growth is not limited to information science fields and may be affected by increased external funding that encourages increased collaboration (e.g., Birnholtz, 2006; Larivière et al., 2015).

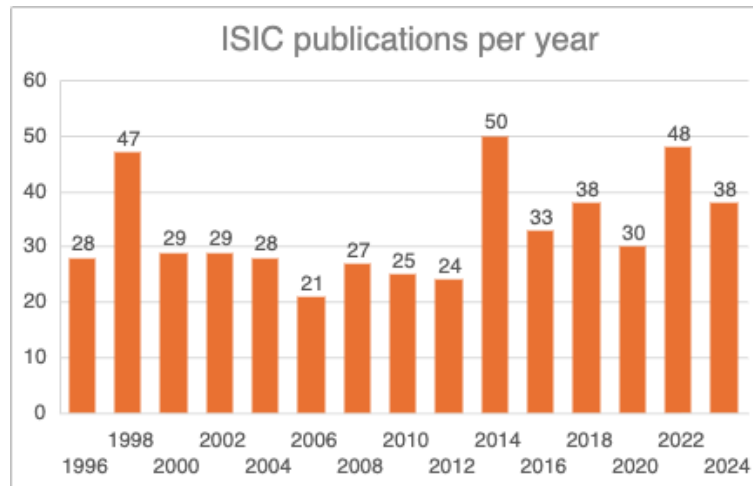


Figure 4. Number of ISIC publications (short, full and keynote papers) included in the dataset from the conferences 1996-2024. N=495.

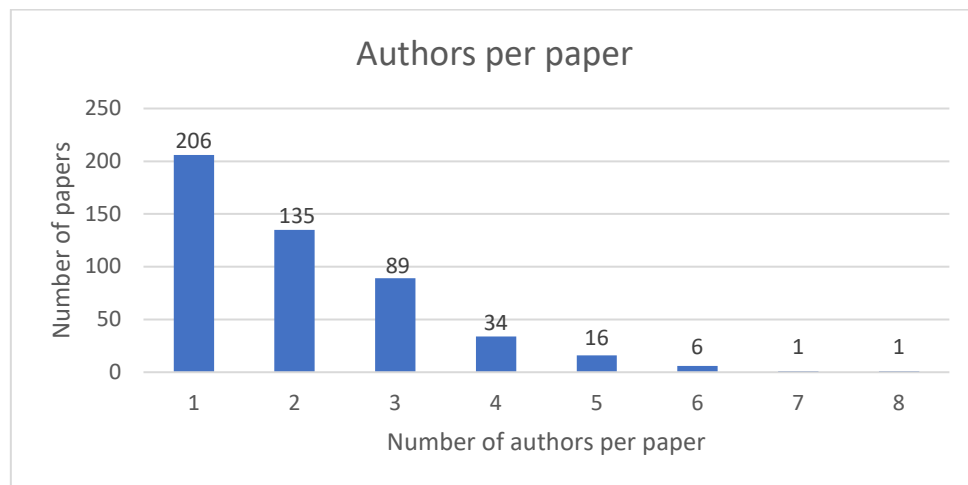


Figure 5. Number of authors per paper across all years (1996-2024).

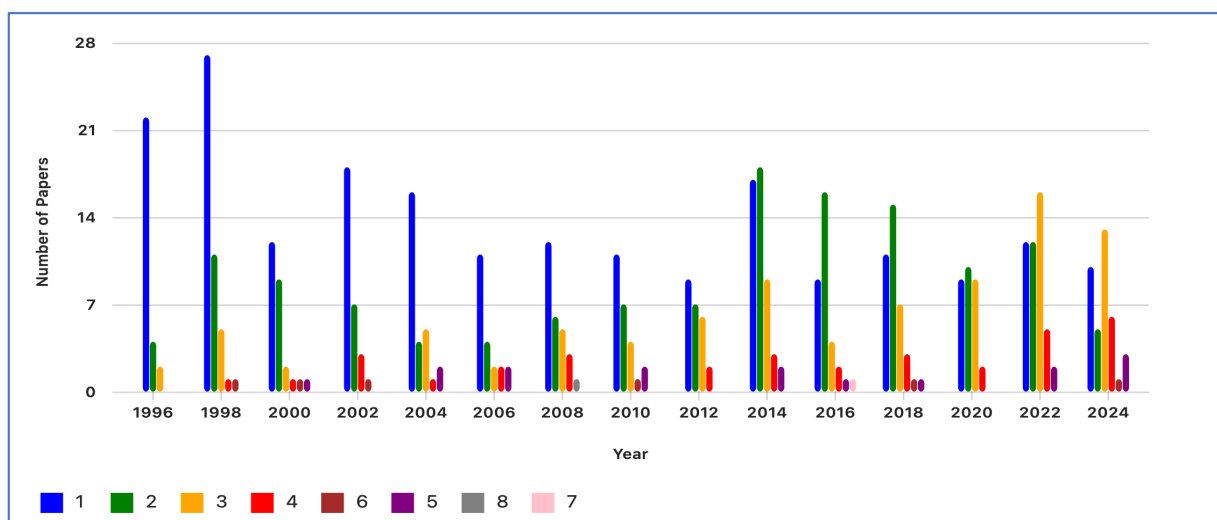


Figure 6. The number of authors per paper for each conference year 1996-2024. Blue column=1 author, green column=2 authors, yellow column=3 authors etc.

The ISIC conference has been described as the ‘academic home of the Information Behaviour research community’ (ISIC 2026 Call for Papers, n.d.). This sense of continuity and community is reflected in Table 1, which shows how frequently individual authors have published at ISIC over the years. A small core group of authors has contributed extensively to the conference, while the majority of contributors have published only a single paper, forming a classic long-tail distribution.

Information on authors’ academic seniority was available from the 2010 conference onwards. Table 2 demonstrates that ISIC attracts researchers at all career stages, ranging from master’s-level graduates to full professors. Since the introduction of the Doctoral Workshop at the 1998 Sheffield conference (Wilson & Allen, 1999), PhD students have become a visible part of the conference community. From 2010 onwards, 105 PhD students have published at ISIC, including 19 as sole authors, highlighting the conference’s role as a venue for early-career researchers.

#Papers	19	15	13	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
#Authors	1	1	2	1	2	2	5	3	8	14	40	80	477

Table 1. The number of ISIC papers authors have written across the years 1996-2024. One author has written 19 papers; one author has written 15 papers... 477 authors have written one ISIC paper. N=1,010 authors.

Authors academic title	Frequency	%
Master's degree	23	3,9
PhD student	105	17,8
Postdoctoral researcher	20	3,4
Assistant professor / researcher / lecturer	133	22,5
Associate professor / senior researcher	113	19,2
Professor	171	29,0
Other	25	4,2
Total	590	100

Table 2. Information on academic seniority of ISIC authors across 2010-2024 (N=590). Information on academic title is missing for 420 authors, as the dataset does not include this information for conferences held between 1996 and 2008.

Finally, we examine the geographical reach of the ISIC conference. The foreword to the first ISIC conference proceedings noted contributions from the United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Finland, Canada, Sweden and Germany (Vakkari et al., 1997). As shown in Figure 7 these countries continue to be among the major contributors, but the conference has expanded substantially in scope. Authors affiliated with institutions in 42 countries have published at ISIC, including growing contributions from countries such as China and South Africa. This development reflects the increasingly international character of the ISIC research community.

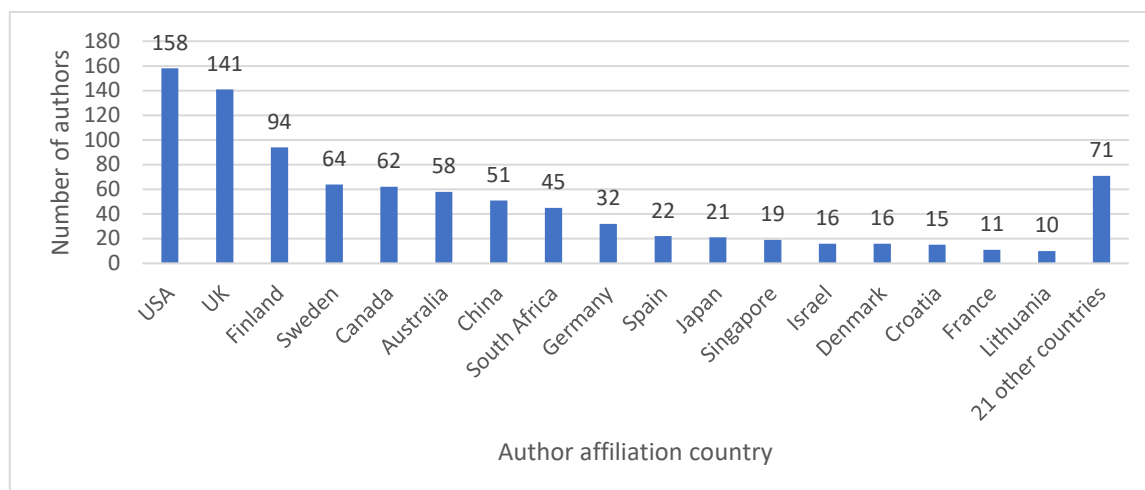


Figure 7. Affiliation country for ISIC authors 1996–2024 (N=906). Information on author affiliation country is missing for 104 authors. The 21 'other countries' include Norway, Poland, New Zealand, Slovenia, Malaysia, Uruguay, Iceland, Portugal, Slovakia, Ireland, Taiwan, Oman, Switzerland, Uganda, Philippines, The Netherlands, Turkey, Norway, Italy, Kuwait, Vietnam, Brazil, Uruguay, India, and Brazil.

Citation analysis

To address the second research question, we conducted a citation analysis of ISIC papers published between 1996 and 2024. In an initial analysis, one paper stood out: Tom Wilson's 'Information behaviour: an inter-disciplinary perspective' from the inaugural 1996 conference, which reached exactly 1000 citations. Further inspection revealed that Google Scholar caps search results at 1,000 citations and conflates multiple versions of the same work. Wilson published at least three closely related versions of this work with the same title: 1) A comprehensive (1996) report to the British Library with Christina Walsh, 2) the ISIC paper from the 1996 conference (Wilson, 1997a), and 3) a highly cited (1997b) *Information Processing & Management* article. These three versions have jointly received more than 2400 citations at present. Because it is not possible to reliably distinguish citations to the ISIC version alone, this paper was excluded from the citation analysis.

The remaining 494 ISIC papers have received an impressive total of 19,685 citations in Google Scholar from a total of 12,660 unique citing publications. Only 23 papers have not received any citations at the time of data collection.

Google Scholar assigns publication years to citing documents, but this information is occasionally missing or incorrect. In our dataset, 1,310 citing publications (6.7%) lacked a publication year, while 71 publications (0.4%) had clearly erroneous years (e.g. a 1996 paper citing a 2013 ISIC paper), and three publications were assigned the year 2026. These last 74 records were excluded from the analysis.

Across all years, ISIC papers received an average of 39.8 citations per paper, corresponding to 2.48 citations per paper per year. This citation rate is almost on par with the ACM CHIIR conference, whose 2016–2023 papers received an average of 3.03 citations per paper per year (Gäde et al., 2024) and the ASIS&T annual meeting, whose 2000–2019 papers received an average of 3.6 citations per paper per year (Islam & Agarwal, 2023). As expected, older ISIC papers have accrued more citations. For example, the 27 papers from the 1996 conference (excluding Wilson's paper) have received a total of 2,272 citations, while the 38 papers from the 2024 conference have so far received 92 citations.

To enable comparisons across conference years, we applied fixed citation windows of three and five years. The five-year window includes citations received in the publication year and the subsequent five years (i.e., citations from 1996 to 2001 for a 1996 paper). Figure 8 presents the

development of ISIC citation impact over time using both three- and five-year windows, The citation impact of ISIC papers varies substantially over the years: the 1996, 2002-2006 and 2012 papers overall receive significantly more citations.

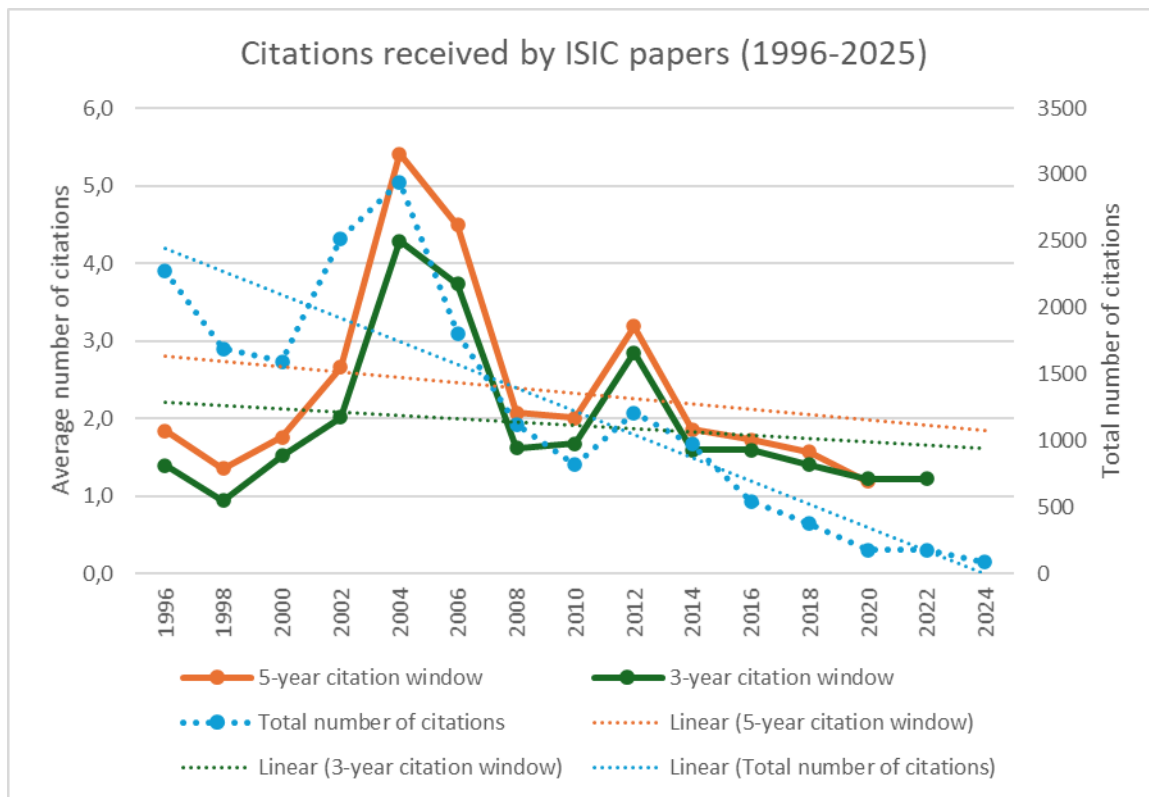


Figure 8. Citations received in the years 1996-2025 by 494 ISIC papers: Citations per year in 3-year (green) and 5-year (orange) citation windows (primary y-axis) and total number of citations (blue) per year (secondary y-axis) – with linear trend lines for each. Based on 18,301 citing publications with a publication year. Source: Google Scholar via SerpAPI, September 2025.

Table 3 and Table 4 shows selected top-cited papers among all the ISIC papers. Table 3 shows the Top-10 most cited overall for all years (where early papers has had longer to receive citations), and Table 4 shows the most cited ISIC papers in the last five years (i.e., cited in papers published 2021-2025 – that shows which papers are cited more recently). The most cited paper overall is Marcia J. Bates' 2002 paper on 'Toward an integrated model of information seeking and searching' with 587 citations at this point in time. The second most cited paper is by Karlova and Fisher (2012), followed by Dervin (1996).

There is a substantial overlap between the two lists: 6 of the 10 are also most cited in the recent five years. Additional papers in Table 4 includes papers by Wilson and Sonnenwald and colleagues.

Several of the papers in Table 3 and Table 4 contribute to the elevated citation impact of specific conference years shown in Figure 8. An exception is the 2004 conference, which has no papers among the top-cited list despite exhibiting high overall citation impact. In this case, the elevated average reflects the cumulative contribution of several moderately highly cited papers rather than a small number of standout publications. Figure 8 also shows that, since the 2012 conference, so far no year stands out as having a significantly higher-than-average impact in either the three- or five-year citation windows or in total citation counts.

Overall, citation patterns indicate that ISIC papers have had substantial influence beyond the conference itself. To further examine who cites ISIC research, we analysed the affiliations and research interests of citing authors. While Google Scholar provides limited bibliographic control, many authors have claimed their user profiles that then often include verified university email domains and self-reported research interests. In total, our dataset of 12,660 citing documents includes 6,682 unique citing author profiles (see an example in Figure 3), and we extracted 2,839 unique and verified email domains of the citing authors. ChatGPT was used to resolve the citing authors' main university or organisation as well as their country.

Paper	Citations	Citations/year
Marcia J. <u>Bates</u> (2002): <i>Toward an integrated model of information seeking and searching</i>	587	25.4
Natascha A. <u>Karlova</u> and Karen E. <u>Fisher</u> (2012): <i>A social diffusion model of misinformation and disinformation for understanding human information behaviour</i>	531	40.7
Brenda <u>Dervin</u> (1996): <i>Given a context by any other name: methodological tools for taming the unruly beast</i>	487	16.8
Sanne <u>Talja</u> (2002): <i>Information sharing in academic communities: types and levels of collaboration in information seeking and use</i>	460	20.0
Diane <u>Sonnenwald</u> (1998): <i>Perspectives of human information behaviour: contexts, situations, social networks and information horizons</i>	454	16.7
Sanda <u>Erdelez</u> (1996): <i>Information encountering: a conceptual framework for accidental information discovery</i>	430	14.8
Carol C. <u>Kuhlthau</u> , Jannica <u>Heinström</u> and Ross J. <u>Todd</u> (2008): <i>The 'information search process' revisited: is the model still useful?</i>	409	24.0
Elfreda A. <u>Chatman</u> (2000): <i>Framing social life in theory and research</i>	348	13.8
Tom Wilson (1998): <i>Exploring models of information behaviour: the 'Uncertainty' Project</i>	298	11
Sanne Talja (1996): <i>Constituting "information" and "user" as research objects: a theory of knowledge formations as an alternative to the information man-theory</i>	294	10.1

Table 3. Top-10 most cited ISIC papers 1996–2024, sorted number of citations received. Source: Google Scholar via SerpAPI, September 2025.

Paper	Citations 2021-2025	In Top-10 cited
Natascha A. <u>Karlova</u> and Karen E. <u>Fisher</u> (2012): <i>A social diffusion model of misinformation and disinformation for understanding human information behaviour</i>	312	x
Marcia J. <u>Bates</u> (2002): <i>Toward an integrated model of information seeking and searching</i>	133	x
Carol C. <u>Kuhlthau</u> , Jannica <u>Heinström</u> and Ross J. <u>Todd</u> (2008): <i>The 'information search process' revisited: is the model still useful?</i>	128	x
Diane <u>Sonnenwald</u> (1998): <i>Perspectives of human information behaviour: contexts, situations, social networks and information horizons</i>	92	x
Brenda <u>Dervin</u> (1996): <i>Given a context by any other name: methodological tools for taming the unruly beast</i>	84	x
T.D. <u>Wilson</u> (2016): <i>A general theory of human information behaviour</i>	68	
Sanne <u>Talja</u> (2002): <i>Information sharing in academic communities: types and levels of collaboration in information seeking and use</i>	66	x
Diane H. <u>Sonnenwald</u> (2006): <i>Challenges in sharing information effectively: examples from command and control</i>	60	
Diane H. <u>Sonnenwald</u> , Barbara M. <u>Wildemuth</u> and Gary L. <u>Harmon</u> (2000): <i>A research method to investigate information seeking using the concept of information horizons: an ...</i>	54	
Tom <u>Wilson</u> (2002): <i>Alfred Schutz, phenomenology and research methodology for information behaviour research</i>	54	

Table 4. Most cited ISIC papers the last five years (cited in papers published 2021-2025). Source: Google Scholar via SerpAPI, September 2025.

Table 5 presents the top 25 institutions affiliated with authors citing ISIC papers, based on verified email domains. Tampere University (Finland) heads the list of citing institutions, followed by University of Pretoria (South Africa) and RMIT University (Australia). A complete analysis of the geographical distribution of citing authors can be seen in Table 6 across continental region and geographical subregion. Europe and the Americas dominate, particularly Northern Europe and Northern America, although all inhabited continents are represented. With respect to individual countries authors in United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and Finland head the list (not shown). The top-citing authors can be seen in Table 7. The list is headed by Lisa M. Given and Donald O. Case, who in their widely acclaimed book ‘Looking for Information cite a large number of ISIC papers in each of its five editions.

Finally, we analysed the research interests of citing authors as reported in their Google Scholar profiles. Approximately 90% of citing authors listed at least one research interest in their Google Scholar profiles, while 82% had two and 31% had five. We use a weighted count that accounts for authors citing multiple ISIC papers. That is, the research interests of a citing author that cites multiple ISIC papers are multiplied by that number of papers – giving a proportional weight.

Table 8 shows that ‘information behaviour’ is by far the most frequently reported research interest of citing authors. This is followed by ‘information literacy’, ‘human computer interaction’, ‘information science’, and ‘information seeking’. The current conference name ‘The Information Behaviour Conference’ is thus heavily reflected in the research interest of the authors citing ISIC papers. Many of the other top research interests are not surprising, but notably include ‘artificial intelligence’, reflecting broader developments in the research areas that engage with ISIC publications.

University/Organisation (Country)	Sum
Tampere University (Finland)	486
University of Pretoria (South Africa)	404
RMIT University (Australia)	384
University of Kentucky (USA)	364
McGill University (Canada)	298
University of Washington (USA)	294
University of Sheffield (United Kingdom)	290
Uppsala University (Sweden)	279
University of Borås (Sweden)	238
University at Buffalo (USA)	230
Western University (Canada)	202
University of Oulu (Finland)	198
Charles Sturt University (Australia)	197
Åbo Akademi University (Finland)	167
University College London (United Kingdom)	151
University of Toronto (Canada)	143
University of Michigan (USA)	140
Simmons University (USA)	137
University of Strathclyde (United Kingdom)	137
White Gauntlet Design (company, Australia)	133
Robert Gordon University (United Kingdom)	129
Jagiellonian University (Poland)	128
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (USA)	127
University of British Columbia (Canada)	121
Nanyang Technological University (Singapore)	119

Table 5. Top 25 among universities, companies and organisations of authors citing 1996–2024 ISIC papers. Retrieved via verified email domains of Google Scholar authors and resolved to main university names and its country by ChatGPT-5. Source: Google Scholar via SerpAPI, September 2025.

Europe	6861
- Northern Europe	4509
- Southern Europe	974
- Western Europe	955
- Eastern Europe	423
Americas	6486
- Northern America	5819
- South America	563
- Central America	60
- Caribbean	44
Asia	2762
- South-eastern Asia	750
- Eastern Asia	735
- Southern Asia	729
- Western Asia	545
- Central Asia	3
Oceania	1559
- Australia and New Zealand	1559
Africa	1293
- Southern Africa	688
- Western Africa	415
- Eastern Africa	141
- Northern Africa	49
(unknown)	202

Table 6. Geographical distribution across continental region and geographical subregion following the United Nations Geoscheme of the affiliations of the authors citing 1996–2024 ISIC papers. Retrieved via verified email domains of Google Scholar authors and resolved to main university names and its country by ChatGPT-5. Source: Google Scholar via SerpAPI, September 2025.

Citing author	# citations to ISIC papers
Lisa M. Given	325
Donald O. Case	308
Reijo Savolainen	257
Rebekah (Becky) Willson	255
Isto Huvila	230
Ina Fourie	209
Heidi Julien	134
Michael Olsson	133
Karen E Fisher	106
Sanna Talja	99
Tumelo Maungwa	94
Louise Limberg	90
Naresh Agarwal	89
Gunilla Widén	88
Pamela J McKenzie	86
Christine Urquhart	83
Brenda Dervin	78
Martha Sabelli	77
Preben Hansen	74
Olof Sundin	74
Jenna Hartel	73
Sei-Ching Joanna Sin	72
Jia Tina Du	70
Heidi Enwald	68
Thomas D. Wilson	62

Table 7. Top 25 authors citing 1996-2024 ISIC papers. Number of citations to ISIC papers where one publication can cite more than one ISIC paper. Source: Google Scholar via SerpAPI, September 2025.

Interest	Count
Information behaviour*	4076
Information literacy	1713
Human computer interaction*	1281
Information science	1170
Information seeking	1006
Social media	751
Library and information science*	704
Information retrieval	649
Information practices	527
Knowledge management	524
Communication	512
User experience	450
Artificial intelligence*	416
Qualitative research	404
Information studies	382
Information management	369
Interactive information retrieval	352
Information seeking behaviour*	350
Information systems	342
Societal impact	332
Social change	330
Policy	316
Digital literacy	303
Scholarly communication	274
Virtual worlds	271

Table 8. Top 25 research interests as given in the Google user profiles of authors citing 1996–2024 ISIC papers. Research interests of a citing author that cites multiple ISIC papers are multiplied by that number of papers. Interests with a star (*) have been merged with semantically identical ones. E.g., HCI, human-computer interaction, human-computer interaction. Source: Google Scholar via SerpAPI, September 2025.

Discussion and conclusion

Whereas earlier studies have examined the content, quality and approaches of ISIC contributions (Julien et al., 2018; McKechnie et al., 2008, 2012, 2016; Vakkari, 2008; VanScoy et al., 2022), this study examines the scholarly footprint of the ISIC conference over three decades by analysing publication characteristics, collaboration patterns, and citation impact. Beyond documenting descriptive trends, the findings offer insights into how ISIC has functioned as a durable intellectual infrastructure for the field of information behaviour research.

One key finding concerns the development of collaboration practices within the ISIC community. While single-authored papers remain common, particularly in the early years, the steady increase in multi-authored papers since 2014 points to a maturing research community characterised by greater collaboration. This shift aligns with broader developments in information science and related fields, where interdisciplinary and collaborative research has become increasingly important (Zhang et al., 2024). Importantly, ISIC appears to support this development without

losing its openness to single-author, suggesting that the conference accommodates multiple scholarly traditions. Although authors from Europe and North America continue to dominate ISIC contributions, the conference has, over time, attracted authors from 42 countries, underscoring its international reach. Future research could examine the extent to which collaboration patterns in ISIC publications transcend national and continental boundaries and the development of this over time.

The analysis of authors' academic seniority further highlights ISIC's role as an inclusive venue. The presence of researchers at all career stages—ranging from PhD students to senior scholars—indicates that ISIC functions not only as a site for presenting mature research but also as a formative space for emerging scholars. The continued participation of PhD students, including a substantial number of sole-authored papers, suggests that ISIC provides an environment in which early-career researchers can engage meaningfully with the field and establish scholarly visibility. In this sense, ISIC contributes to the reproduction and renewal of the information behaviour research community.

Citation patterns demonstrate that ISIC papers have had a sustained and substantial impact beyond the conference itself. With an average of 2.48 citations per paper per year, an average of 39.8 citations per paper and citation rates comparable to other conferences in the field, ISIC emerges as an influential venue within its domain. The analysis further shows that this impact is not driven solely by a small number of outlier papers. While several highly cited foundational contributions elevate specific conference years, other years—such as 2004—achieve high citation impact through the cumulative influence of multiple moderately cited papers. The most cited papers span foundational theoretical contributions and methodological innovations, underscoring ISIC's role in advancing both conceptual and empirical dimensions of information behaviour research. An important observation is that, since the 2012 conference, no single year stands out as having a markedly higher citation impact than others. Rather than indicating stagnation, this pattern may reflect the consolidation of ISIC as a stable and recognised forum whose contributions are routinely integrated into ongoing research across related fields. From this perspective, ISIC's role has shifted from establishing foundational concepts to sustaining and extending them across diverse contexts and applications. While using Google Scholar as a data source will have resulted in higher citation counts, we expect that the overall trends in the results would remain the same if more limited and more controlled citation indexes had been used.

The analysis of citing authors further underscores ISIC's reach and relevance. Authors citing ISIC papers are affiliated with institutions across all inhabited continents, with particularly strong representation from Northern Europe, North America, and Oceania. The prominence of 'information behaviour' as a reported research interest among citing authors confirms the conference's thematic coherence, while the presence of adjacent interests—such as information literacy, human-computer interaction, and artificial intelligence—illustrates how ISIC research resonates beyond its core domain. Taken together, these findings suggest that ISIC's significance lies not merely in its longevity, but in its capacity to sustain an intellectually diverse yet coherent research community over time.

This study is limited by its reliance on descriptive bibliometric indicators, which capture patterns of influence but do not explain how or why ISIC papers are cited. Future research should therefore examine citation contexts, in order to better understand the specific roles ISIC papers play in subsequent research, for example as theoretical foundations, methodological exemplars, or empirical reference points (Gäde et al., 2024). Future work should also include a more detailed analysis of the development of publication metrics over time.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the literature on scholarly communication by demonstrating how a long-running conference can function as a stable site of knowledge

production, community formation, and sustained impact within a specialised research field. The ISIC conference has established itself as a cornerstone of information behaviour research. Its sustained citation impact, international reach, and inclusive authorship profile demonstrate its importance as both a scholarly venue and a community-building institution. As information-related practices continue to evolve in response to societal and technological change, ISIC appears well positioned to remain a central forum for critical reflection and scholarly exchange in the field.

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