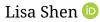# Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

Scientometric Analysis of Library Science Literature Identifies Publication Trends and Thematic Developments Concerning Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) in Research Published Since 1971

Ashiq, M., Ur Rehman, S. & Warraich, N.F. (2023). A scientometrics analysis of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) literature in library and information science profession, Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-12-2022-0298

Lisa Shen ⓘD

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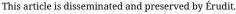
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A Review of:

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Reviewed by:
Lisa Shen
Business Librarian & Director of Public Services
Newton Gresham Library
Sam Houston State University
Huntsville, Texas, United States of America
Email: lshen@shsu.edu

Abstract

Objective – To analyze publication trends, authorship and collaboration patterns, and thematic developments concerning equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) in library and information science (LIS) research.

Design – Scientometric analysis.

Setting – The indexing and citation platform Web of Science (WoS), accessed on July 14, 2022.

Subjects – A collection of 628 articles, proceeding papers, and reviews published between 1971 and 2021.

Methods – A literature search of citations assigned under the WoS subject category of "Information Science Library Science" was conducted using the keywords EDIA, LIS, and synonyms of LIS in the WoS "Topic" field. The authors then each manually reviewed title and abstract information of the resulting citations for relevancy. Finally, bibliometric analysis was conducted on the selected 628 articles using MS Excel, VOS viewer, Biblioshiny, and CiteSpace to discern publication patterns, characteristics, and relationships between the remaining publications.

Main Results – The researchers identified a period of rapid growth in both publications and citations of LIS EDIA literature between 2006 and 2010. Although while publications of EDIA research continued to slowly increase each year, annual totals of cited EDIA publications and average citations per article have begun to gradually decline since 2015. Using similar publication and citation metrics as indicators for impact, the United Kingdom was identified as host to the most (n = 5) top-10 influential LIS journals for EDIA scholarship over the 50-year study period, while the United States was home to the most productive LIS authors and institutions for EDIA research, and the leading country in publications, citations, and citation impact measures. The researchers further identified five interconnected EDIA thematic streams using co-citation analysis of the 150 most cited articles, including, in descending order of stream size: disability and accessibility; diversity, inclusion, and recruitment; social justice and libraries; libraries and immigrants; and libraries and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community.

Conclusion – The authors recommended further investigations and increased support for EDIA issues by LIS researchers and policymakers, especially for the smaller or less matured subject streams and in underrepresented geographic regions. Future researchers are also encouraged to conduct similar bibliometric analysis using other LIS databases.

Commentary

This study provided a timely contribution to scientometrics research by capturing the development of LIS literature concerning EDIA topics over the past five decades, including the period when issues of social justice and equity gained increasing global prominence. The article offered some valuable insights into the publication patterns, emerging themes, and areas in need of further investigations for LIS practitioners and scholars interested in engaging in EDIA work or research. The authors also succinctly referenced several relevant bibliometric studies that would benefit those wishing to employ similar research methodologies.

The authors' selection of research methodology and data analysis software are appropriate for the research questions and the results are clearly outlined. However, an evaluation using the EBL Critical Appraisal Checklist (Glynn, 2006) yielded an overall study validity of 70%, below the acceptable threshold of 75%. The primary issue affecting comprehensiveness and accuracy of this study was its sole reliance on WoS citations, especially for addressing research questions with a global scope concerning a field of research not necessarily fully covered by WoS. Even though the authors acknowledged this limitation when making recommendations for future research, it might not be prudent to draw conclusion for the most impactful country, publication, or author using bibliometrics from a single database (Öztürk et al., 2024).

In addition, there were some discrepancies in the description of methodology regarding citation selection. The authors indicated they had manually reviewed 1,527 citation records generated from a WoS literature search, eliminated 810 for irrelevance, then "selected" 628 for analysis (p. 4). However, treatment of the remaining 89 records that were not eliminated nor selected was not addressed. The authors' approach to their individual relevancy reviews, including methods for differentiating between LIS (relevant) and information science (deemed as irrelevant) publications were also absent.

Some mathematical inconsistencies were likewise present in the results section. The authors noted that 50 of the selected articles were published by Australian authors, but the table for impact by country showed a total publication count of 28 for Australia (Table 2, p.7). The publication count for the journal *Library Quarterly* also showed a small discrepancy, with the article text stating 35 and the table showing 34 articles (Table 4, p.8). These details, while each not critical on their own, nonetheless affected the overall reliability and applicability of the results.

Because of these limitations, it may be advisable for readers to consider the article findings with some reservation, as publications from WoS might not fully represent the totality of research impact and patterns of all LIS literature. Nonetheless, the interconnecting thematic streams identified by the researcher can improve readers' understanding of more nuanced EDIA issues in relations to the experiences of unique patron or employee populations, and advance LIS practitioner and researchers' approach to EDIA topics such as equities in recruitment practices and proactive accessibility service or programming designs.

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Ashiq, M., Ur Rehman, S. & Warraich, N.F. (2023). A scientometrics analysis of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) literature in library and information science profession, *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-12-2022-0298

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