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Analysis of a Decade in Library Literature: 1994–2004

Kelly Blessinger and Michele Frasier

The purpose of this study was to analyze trends in publication and citation in library and information science journals over a decade (1994–2004) of the literature. This examination revealed the areas of concentration within the research, frequently published subjects through the years, and the characteristics of the top-cited authors and resources during this time. This information allows those in the field to follow the trends in publication, gives researchers the tools to determine which journals might give their work the most exposure and recognition, and can help libraries to make collection management decisions in this subject area.



Citation and content analysis within a field of literature can give insight into the development of a profession. An evaluation of the content of the literature can determine subject trends, thus revealing the major issues confronting the profession at a given period of time. Citation analysis data may be utilized for a number of purposes: as a tool to assist librarians making collection and weeding decisions; as a mechanism for discovering bibliometric trends; and as a way for publishers to track the competition. Moreover, citation and content studies have been adapted to a variety of research questions. Citation studies used to examine publication trends in specific academic disciplines can illustrate a number of interesting currents. Haiqi's examination of three prominent biology journals reveals that multiauthored articles are a growing trend in the field. In one journal studied, the average number of authors per article was 7.71. In addition, the author found that the

"hot papers" (those articles receiving the greatest number of citations) in the field of biology had more funding sources as well as the participation of more institutions.¹ In a bibliometric analysis of anthropology literature, Hider examined, among other things, the age of cited publications in anthropology journals as well as the form of cited material. He concluded that the age of cited references is dropping, for anthropologists no longer feel the obligation to cite the established literature. In addition, Hider contends that, in the United Kingdom, "books remain the most important literary form in anthropology."²

Content analysis of library and information science (LIS) research is the central topic of several studies. A 1988 article by Atkins reviewed a decade of the literature from 1975 through 1985. His quantitative analysis of subject trends in LIS publishing illustrated "a heavy concentration on such automation-related subjects as information retrieval, databases, cataloging, library automation, technology, and research

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methods."³ Likewise, Buttlar's analysis of sixteen library journals reveals that automation was still a frequently discussed topic in library literature in the late 1980s.⁴ Other studies focused on subject coverage as well as the methodology behind the articles published. Examining over 800 articles from 1985, Järvelin and Vakkari divided the literature into two groups: research articles and professional articles (e.g., reviews, discussions, bibliographies). They found that, despite this division, the most frequent subjects in both groups were those discussing practical topics that involved the daily operations of libraries.⁵

Other articles have researched the authorship of the literature, or studied certain populations such as U.S. LIS faculty,⁶ LIS professionals in Africa,⁷ or U.K. LIS chair holders⁸ to determine publication productivity within these groups. Several studies found that academic librarians are major contributors to the body of literature. Yerkey's examination of 855 documents affirms that academic librarians published the greatest percentage of documents, followed by library school faculty and medical librarians.⁹ Another study on this topic found that academic librarians produced 43.6 percent (1,579) of 3,624 articles examined.¹⁰ The articles previously mentioned also note that, since academic librarians far outnumber library school faculty, library school faculty are the most productive when analyzed on a percentage basis.

For this study, the authors chose to investigate several aspects within a recent decade (1994–2004) of LIS literature. First, the authors wished to examine what topics were being discussed within the scholarly communications to see what patterns emerged over the years. Second, the authors wanted to study citation patterns to determine the characteristics of the top-cited researchers and materials. Research into the highly cited authors would reveal the demographic of this group as a whole, and the analysis of the top-cited journals would illustrate whether authors were primarily using journals within the field for their research.

Methodology

Thomson's *Journal Citation Reports (JCR)* Social Science Edition was consulted to ascertain the journals of high repute within library and information science. This resource was chosen due to the high-quality standards for journals indexed in Thomson's journal citation products.¹¹ Fifty-five journals appeared in the category of Library and Information Science in the *JCR* in 2003. *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory* was then consulted to ensure that the journals had the designation of Library and Information Sciences as a subject descriptor. This was done to eliminate the journals that focused mainly on information science. *Ulrich's* was also used to determine that the journals were indexed in both the *Library Literature* and the *Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)* databases for the ten-year study period. The twenty-eight journals that met these criteria are listed in table 1, which is sorted by impact factor. Impact factor can be defined as "a measure of the frequency with which the 'average article' in a journal has been cited in a particular year or period. The annual *JCR* impact factor is a ratio between citations and recent citable items published."¹² The impact factor of the 28 journals listed in the table averaged .542. From the list of twenty-eight journals, ten journals were randomly selected by the computer for inclusion in this study, and these journals are highlighted in table 1. A random sample of ten influential journals was thought to be representative of the trends of the literature as a whole during this time period, while also helping to keep the study at a manageable size. The ten journals studied reflect an average impact factor of .604, slightly above the mean.

Each journal studied was searched both in *Library Literature* and *SSCI* for the ten-year period of this study. Searches were limited strictly to journal articles in the databases to eliminate items such as book reviews, editorials, bibliographies, and letters to the editor. Each article's subjects and citations were edited for consistency and then imported into Microsoft Access for further analysis. If the information did

not include all of the required fields such as author, cited year, and source, the citations were deleted. The group of deleted citations represented a small percentage of the total citations. While SSCI was used to do the citation analysis, the subject analysis was determined using the subjects

listed in the indexing for *Library Literature*, as the subjects within the *Library Literature* database are much more detailed and consistent than those in SSCI.

Results

A total of 2,220 articles were published in

TABLE 1
Library and Information Science Journals that Met Criteria
(Those used in study are highlighted)

Title	Impact Factor 2003
<i>Journal of Documentation</i>	1.603
<i>Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology</i>	1.473
<i>College & Research Libraries</i>	1.343
<i>Information Processing & Management</i>	1.179
<i>Journal of Information Science</i>	1.067
<i>Library Resources & Technical Services</i>	0.923
<i>Library and Information Science</i>	0.833
<i>Library & Information Science Research</i>	0.735
<i>Journal of Academic Librarianship</i>	0.647
<i>Restaurator International Journal for the Preservation of Library and Archival Material</i>	0.559
<i>Library Quarterly</i>	0.485
<i>ASLIB Proceedings</i>	0.459
<i>Library Trends</i>	0.440
<i>Online Information Review</i>	0.417
<i>Journal of the Medical Library Association</i>	0.408
<i>Law Library Journal</i>	0.326
<i>Libri</i>	0.312
<i>Reference & User Services Quarterly</i>	0.312
<i>Journal of Librarianship & Information Science</i>	0.294
<i>Interlending & Document Supply</i>	0.273
<i>Library Collections Acquisitions & Technical Services</i>	0.231
<i>Library Journal</i>	0.208
<i>Information Technology and Libraries</i>	0.200
<i>Knowledge Organization</i>	0.200
<i>Journal of Government Information</i>	0.086
<i>Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science</i>	0.071
<i>Zeitschrift für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie</i>	0.069
<i>NFD Information-Wissenschaft und Praxis</i>	0.013

the ten journals during the period of this study. The journals varied considerably in how many articles they published over this ten-year period. *Library Trends* published the most articles (434), while *Library & Information Science* published the least (56). Of the articles studied, 41 percent were written with the help of a second author, and 13 percent were written by three or more authors. This high collaboration rate has been noted in past studies on the literature within the profession as well.^{13,14} A 2000 article by Hart gives several reasons for this, such as increased quality with multiple authorship and higher acceptance in peer-reviewed journals.¹⁵

Subjects

The articles queried had an average of three subjects assigned to each article. Due to such a large number of subjects covered, the subjects were divided into 43 general subject categories. Once specific institutional names and personal names were excluded, the subjects were grouped into five major categories. The categories (ranked by percentage of subjects that fell within that topic) were:

1. Library Operations (33%)
2. Research in Library and Information Science/Users (20%)
3. Library/Information Science Profession (18%)
4. Technology (18%)
5. Publishing/Publishing Studies (11%)

See Appendix A for the list of which subjects fell under various categories. The reader can tell from the results that practical items are still what is highly discussed within the literature. As our profession changes with new technologies, the literature naturally reflects this. Most of the subjects within the categories experienced periods of low and high discussion within the literature.

The subjects most covered within Library Operations included cataloging, reference/information services, and user instruction and education. Cataloging peaked in 1997 with articles regarding

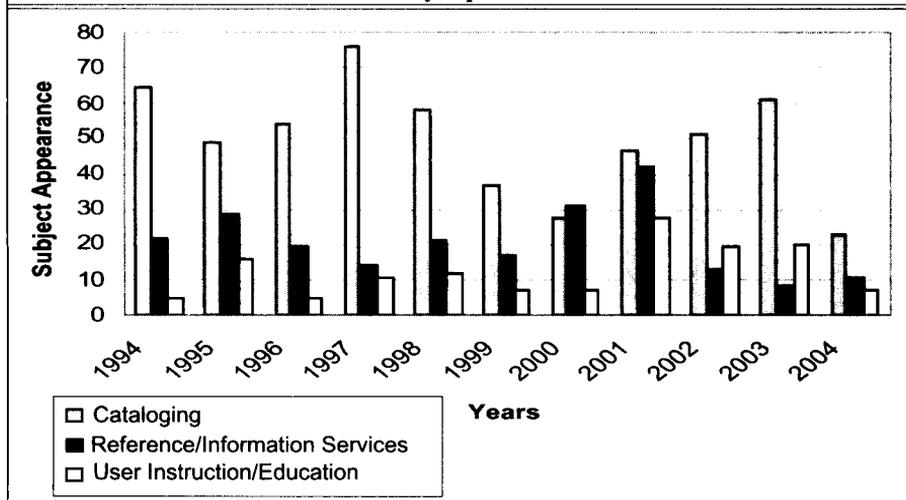
automation. Traditional subjects including classification systems and authority control were also discussed frequently during the study period. Other popular subjects within cataloging that reflected the increase of technology that dominated this decade include metadata and the cataloging of Internet Web sites. The subject of reference/information services rose from 1999 to its peak in 2001, with articles primarily on automation and virtual libraries. Since many libraries were looking into or had implemented virtual chat services during this time, this could easily explain the popularity of this subject. The evaluation of reference/information services was a traditional topic that was popular during this time period as well. User instruction/education rose sharply in prevalence in the literature from 2000 to 2001, with a large number of articles on bibliographic instruction geared toward college and university students. The big push toward information literacy during this time is most likely accountable for this trend. Other topics that were popular within this subject include computer-assisted instruction and distance education. Due to the plethora of resources that became available electronically during the time of this study, computer-assisted instruction became the norm as more students were able to access materials electronically and to take classes and obtain degrees from a distance.

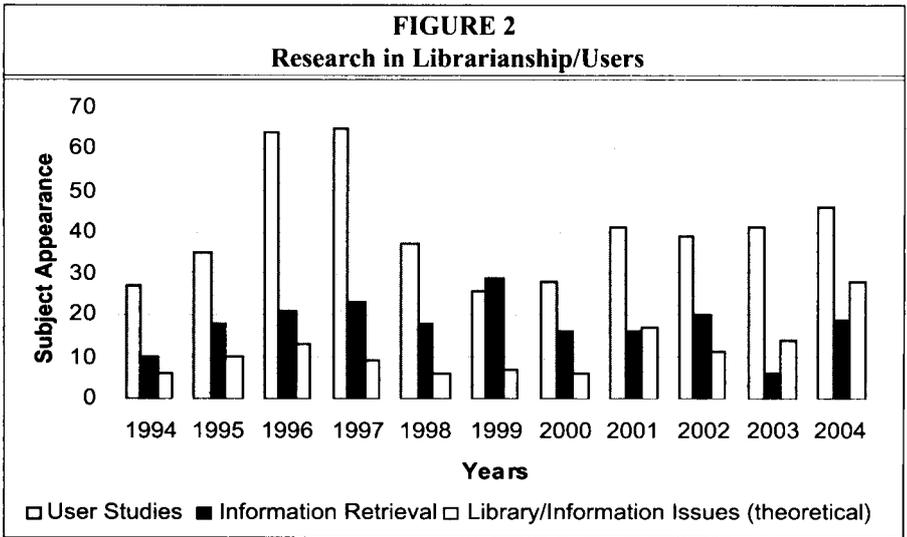
In the category of Research in Library and Information Science/Users, the popular topics were user studies, information retrieval, and theoretical issues. User studies were popular as a research method for many of the articles. The studies were primarily conducted by surveys and use statistics. This is consistent with findings of an earlier study, which stated that the methods of research in library and information science are "heavily concentrated in the survey, historical, and observation and description methods."¹⁶ Some of the more popular topics for studies included information needs, the Internet, online catalogs, and serial publications. Articles

on information retrieval reached a peak in 1999. All of the new electronic indexes and databases no doubt revived interest in how users retrieved information through this new media. While there were many articles regarding the evaluation of information retrieval, there was also a large portion that focused on the social aspects of the topic. Of the theoretical topics covered, the most popular were cognition, information theory, philosophical aspects of information science, knowledge management, and ethics. Academic and research libraries were the types of institutions most discussed across all subjects, particularly within the category of Library/Information Science Profession, followed by public libraries. Some popular topics discussed within librarianship and professional issues included relations with faculty and curriculum, the status of librarians in general—particularly academic librarians—philosophical aspects of the profession, as well as various careers within the field. The subjects that fell into the Technology category mainly covered the Internet, information science, indexes and databases, and automation. The Internet, as we all know, has changed most aspects of our profession, so it is no

surprise that it was heavily discussed during this decade. In 1994 there were very few articles on this subject, but research increased with a peak in 2001. The most popular topics within this subject were the design and evaluation of Web sites, likely due to libraries making their Web presence known during this decade. Other topics included Web portals and the Internet in general. Information science peaked as a subject in 1997, when the design of information systems was a frequently published subject. Other frequently published subjects within information science included optical data processing and open source software. Popular topics within indexes/databases included databases in the humanities, databases with pictures and full-text databases. Automation was the one subject within technology that demonstrated a sharp decline during the period of this study. The subject was a popular topic until it peaked in 1997 and has been decreasing in popularity since then. In the category of Publishing/Publishing Studies, articles on serials and bibliometrics were the most common. In serials, the most popular topic was the evaluation of serials, specifically scientific and library and information science jour-

FIGURE 1
Library Operations





nals. Escalating serial costs, particularly in the sciences, forced libraries to evaluate their collections during this decade. For a graphical display of the top subjects in the categories, refer to figures 1–5. The top twenty-five overall subjects written about from 1994–2004 are listed in table 2.

Citations

Of the 47,389 citations listed by the journals studied, 19,482 (41%) were from sources cited only once. Materials cited in articles during the period studied ranged in pub-

lication date from 1605 through 2004. The majority of articles cited fell in the more recent date range, with 62 percent of the articles cited published from 1990 to 2004. Journals with over 100 citations attributed to them are listed in table 3. Most of the journals fell squarely into the subject area of Library and Information Science, but the few that did not (in order of times cited) were *Communications of the ACM* (Association for Computing Machinery) which is primarily an information science publication, and *Science*, a well-known and highly

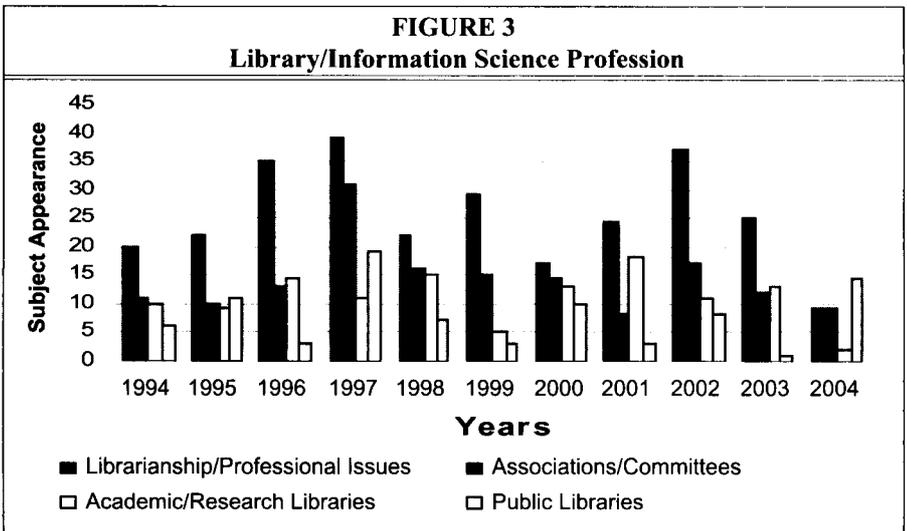
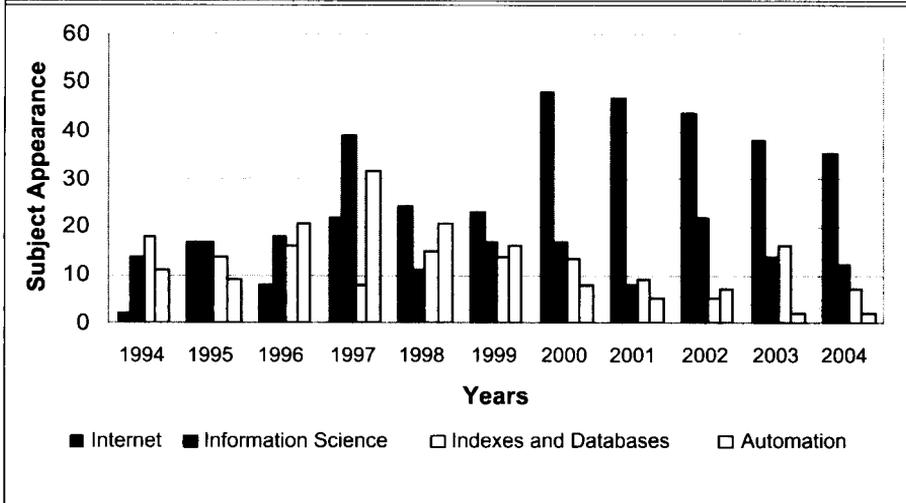


FIGURE 4
Technology



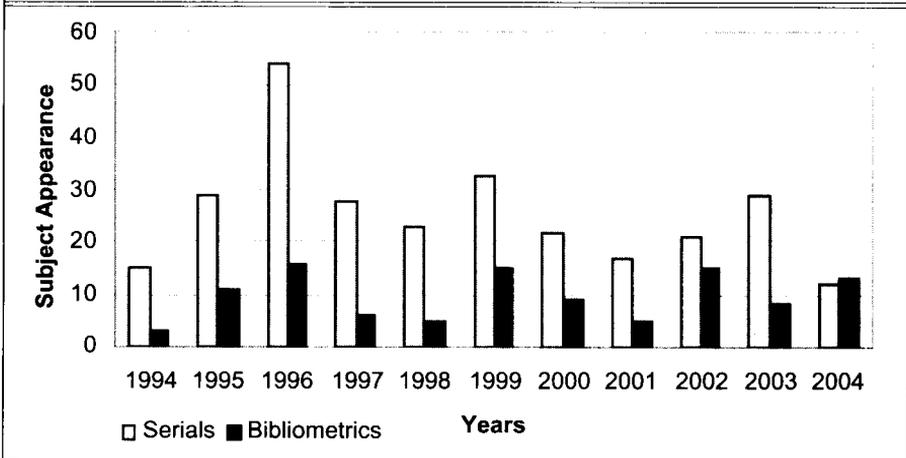
regarded general science journal. This table provides information on all of the journals that were heavily cited by the ten journals studied, not just those indexed by *SSCI*, as the *JCR* product provides. The result is a more complete list of what journals were heavily cited during this decade.

Authors

There were a total of 21,994 unique authors cited in this study, with 69 percent of these authors cited only once. The top-cited au-

thors are listed in Table 4. The list contains the authors who had more than fifty citations attributed to their work in the journals queried in this study. The authors are listed in descending order of total citations to materials written by them. The reader should note that the number listed under the "times cited in study" column is the number of citations that were culled from the specific journals studied for this article, not all journals over this time period. When there was a tie between the authors who

FIGURE 5
Publishing/Publishing Studies



had the same number of citations to their work in this study, this was indicated by a (T). The "works cited" column indicates how many different works were cited for each author during the period of this study. As the reader can tell, the highly cited authors are also very prolific. The average number of different works cited by authors on this list was forty. Although Birger Hjørland received the most citations to his work in this study (165), Stephen Wiberley, who tied for 28th place with 50 citations to his work, had the highest average number of citations per work (4.2). The SSCI record contains the author's address as one of its fields, so this source was consulted to find the affiliation of the authors for their most cited work. The institutions' Web pages were then checked to see if they were currently affiliated with that institution in 2005. The top researchers are overwhelmingly affiliated with academic institutions, specifically with LIS programs.

It was found that most of the top-cited authors were full professors or of high academic rank at their institutions, indicating that they had worked in that capacity for some time. Only a few authors fell out of this category. Several institutions had more than one highly cited researcher, including the Royal School of Library and Information Science in Denmark, Rutgers University, UCLA, and Indiana University. All of these programs except the Royal School of Library and Information Science are ALA

TABLE 2
Top Subjects from 1994 through 2004

Rank	Subject	Times Covered
1	Cataloging	548
2	User Studies	449
3	Internet	308
4	Serials	283
5	Librarianship/Professional Issues	279
6	Reference/Information Services	227
7	Information Retrieval	196
8	Information Science	189
9	Associations/Committees	156
10	User Instruction/Education	136
11	Indexes/Databases	135
12	Automation	134
13	Library/Information Issues (theoretical)	127
14	Academic/Research Libraries	121
15	Bibliometrics	106
16	Library/Information Issues (practical)	104
17	Administration	97
18	Collection Development	93
19	Information Needs	88
20	Public Libraries	85
21	Publishing/Publishers	82
22	Library/Information networks	77
23	Research Methodology	72
24	Literature Evaluation	71
25	Indexing/Abstracting	62

accredited and offer Ph.D. programs in Library and Information Science. A majority (75%) of the authors are currently working in the United States, with only eight highly cited LIS researchers currently working in other locales. The other areas represented include Denmark, the United Kingdom, and India. This is consistent with findings from other studies, such as a 1993 article on international librarianship that "revealed a dominance by the more industrialized countries, which published the majority of documents."¹⁷

TABLE 3
Top Quartile of Journals Cited, 1994–2004
(Those listed in Table 1 are highlighted)

Rank	Source	Times Cited
1	<i>Journal of the American Society for Information Science</i>	1516
2	<i>College & Research Libraries</i>	1440
3	<i>Journal of Documentation</i>	828
4	<i>Journal of Academic Librarianship</i>	654
5	<i>Library Journal</i>	558
6	<i>Library & Information Science Research</i>	498
7	<i>Library Trends</i>	454
8	<i>Library Quarterly</i>	419
9	<i>Reference & User Services Quarterly</i>	407
10	<i>Information Processing & Management</i>	369
11	<i>Library Resources & Technical Services</i>	298
12	<i>Journal of Information Science</i>	296
13	<i>Scientometrics</i>	244
14	<i>American Libraries</i>	218
15	<i>Information Technology & Libraries</i>	216
16	<i>Cataloging & Classification Quarterly</i>	210
17	<i>Bulletin of the Medical Library Association</i>	201
18	<i>Journal of Library Administration</i>	190
19	<i>Annual Review of Information Science & Technology</i>	176
20	<i>Collection Management</i>	173
21	<i>Reference Librarian</i>	167
22	<i>Communications of the ACM</i>	163
23	<i>Research Strategies</i>	158
24	<i>Serials Librarian</i>	134
25	<i>ONLINE</i>	133
26	<i>Reference Services Review</i>	131
27	<i>ASLIB Proceedings</i>	131
28	<i>Library Administration & Management</i>	124
29	<i>Library Acquisitions-Practice and Theory</i>	122
30	<i>Computers in Libraries</i>	117
31	<i>College & Research Libraries News</i>	114
32	<i>Knowledge Organization</i>	114
33	<i>Information Technology</i>	108
34	<i>Science</i>	106
35	<i>Serials Review</i>	102
36	<i>Journal of Librarianship and Information Science</i>	100

TABLE 4
Most Cited Personal Authors, 1994–2004 (in rank order)

Rank	Author	Most Recent Affiliation/Department	Times Cited in Study	Works Cited
1	Birger Hjørland	Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark/ Department of Information Studies	165	56
2	Brenda Dervin	Ohio State University/School of Communication	135	52
3	Carol Kuhlthau	Rutgers University/School of Communication, Information and Library Studies	131	38
4	Blaise Cronin	Indiana University/School of Library and Information Science	127	65
5	Peter Herson	Simmons College/Graduate School of Library and Information Science	117	62
6	Marcia Bates	UCLA/ Graduate School of Education and Information Studies	105	40
7	Peter Ingwersen	Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark/ Department of Information Studies	101	43
8(T)	F.W. Lancaster	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign/ Graduate School of Library and Information Science	100	58
8(T)	Gerard Salton	Cornell/Computer Science (deceased 1995)	100	52
9	Tefko Saracevic	Rutgers University/School of Communication, Information and Library Studies	99	44
10(T)	Eugene Garfield	President and Editor-in-Chief of The Scientist/Founder and Chairman Emeritus of the Institute of Scientific Information	98	70
10(T)	Tom Wilson	University of Sheffield/The Department of Information Studies	98	27
11	David Ellis	University of Wales/Information Studies	96	31
12(T)	Nicholas Belkin	Rutgers University/School of Communication, Information and Library Studies	92	39
12(T)	Christine Borgman	UCLA/ Graduate School of Education and Information Studies	92	42
13	Charles McClure	Indiana University/School of Library and Information Science	91	52
14	Amanda Spink	University of Pittsburgh/School of Information Sciences	81	44

TABLE 4
Most Cited Personal Authors, 1994–2004 (in rank order)

Rank	Author	Most Recent Affiliation/Department	Times Cited in Study	Works Cited
15	Raya Fidel	University of Washington/Information School	79	25
16	Maurice Line	British Library, library consultant, editor Alexandria The Journal of National and International Library and Information Issues (retired)	76	40
17	Carol Tenopir	University of Tennessee/School of Information Sciences	73	53
18	S.R. Ranganathan	Documentation Research and Training Center, Bangalore, India, founder, professor, and director (deceased 1972)	72	54
19	Patrick Wilson	University of California, Berkeley/ School of Library and Information Studies (deceased 2003)	71	32
20	Gary Marchionini	University of North Carolina/School of Information and Library Science	70	34
21	Elfreda Chatman	Florida State University/School of Information Studies (deceased 2002)	66	16
22	Michael Gorman	California State University, Fresno/ Dean of Library Services at the Henry Madden Library	61	42
23	Stephen Harter	Indiana University/School of Library & Information Science (retired)	60	28
24	Michael Buckland	University of California, Berkeley/ Co-Director of the Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative and Emeritus Professor in the School of Information Management and Systems	59	31
25	Mike Thelwall	University of Wolverhampton/ School of Computing and Information Technology	56	30
26	John Budd	University of Missouri/School of Information Science & Learning Technologies	55	35
27	Walt Crawford	Senior Analyst, RLG	53	29
28(T)	Bertram Brookes	University College, London/School of Library, Archive, and Information Studies, visiting professor other universities (deceased 1991)	50	33
28(T)	Stephen Wiberley Jr.	University of Illinois Chicago/ University Library	50	12

Most of the authors listed are still actively working within the profession, with the exception of two who have retired and five who are deceased. Although LIS is still a female-dominated profession, most of the top-cited researchers were male, with a 75 percent representation of the whole. While studies indicate that men were much more prevalent in the literature in the past, the same studies now show that the gap is closing in regard to gender and publication. A 1999 study on the history of the journal *JASIS* shows that participation in female authorship increased over the years from 33 percent in 1955 to 43 percent in 1995.¹⁸ Likewise, a 1996 article that studied *College & Research Libraries* articles found that, for the first time since its publication, the number of articles primarily authored by women equaled that of men from 1989 through 1994, and the total number of women authors was more than that of men.¹⁹ A shift in citations may soon reflect this trend as well.

Conclusion

The analysis of LIS literature over a decade illustrated that librarians are still largely writing about the practical issues that face the profession. As the issues change, our literature reflects these currents. Naturally, new technologies in information science, most notably the Internet, had a tremendous impact on almost every aspect of our profession during this decade. An analysis of authorship shows the highly collaborative nature of the profession, and citation research indicates that primarily journals within the field are used for research. Knowing which journals are highly cited

is helpful to authors submitting scholarly work by helping them to determine where their research might have the largest use and influence. Additionally, the list will help them to determine which journals may be held in the highest regard for performance appraisals, promotion, and tenure decisions. When used in conjunction with other information such as local use data, this could also assist libraries in making collection management and help publishers track their competition within the field. The list of highly cited authors revealed whose research within the field was well known and respected during this decade, although the demographics are different from the profession as a whole. While prior studies indicate that academic librarians and LIS educators publish at nearly the same rate, it is clear from the data gathered during this study that LIS educators dominate the list of authors who are highly cited. Reasons for this differential citation rate would be an interesting basis for further study. The snapshot in time of the top-cited researchers will allow those who wish to do studies in the future on the field's highly cited authors to compare trends over time in demographics such as gender, institutional affiliation, and job position. It could also serve to help those considering a Ph.D. in the field to determine which universities have professors who are highly cited within the literature. Periodic evaluation of the literature is important because it grants insight into the evolution of the profession by revealing the issues, resources, and researchers that are of importance to our field.

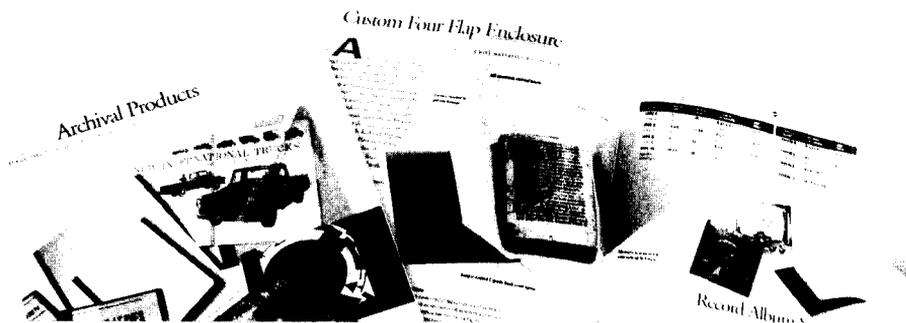
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APPENDIX A

Category	Subject	Number
Library Operations		1,624
	Cataloging	548
	Reference/Information Services	227
	User Instruction/Education	136
	Library/Information Issues (practical)	104
	Administration	97
	Collection Development	93
	Indexing/Abstracting	62
	Acquisitions	60
	Interlibrary Loan	56
	Public Relations	49
	Communications	41
	Library Finance	35
	Circulation	35
	Library Staff	32
	Disability Services	29
	Library Environment	20
Research in Librarianship/ Users		997
	User Studies	449
	Information Retrieval	196
	Library/Information Issues (theoretical)	127
	Information Needs	88
	Research Methodology	72
	Research in Librarianship	41
	Library/Information Science Research	24
Library/Information Science Profession		888
	Librarianship/Professional Issues	279
	Associations/Committees	156
	Academic/Research Libraries	121
	Public Libraries	85
	Library/Information networks	77
	LIS Education	52
	Special Collections/Libraries	42
	Archives/Preservation	40
	Children's Libraries/Materials	36

Technology		871
	Internet	308
	Information Science	189
	Indexes/Databases	135
	Automation	134
	Software	53
	Electronic Publishing	52
Publishing/Publishing Studies		560
	Serials	283
	Bibliometrics	106
	Publishing/Publishers	82
	Literature Evaluation	71
	Monographic Publications	18

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