

Taking the right care of scientometric indicators will take care of research quality

Piermaria Corona^{1,2*}

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Science has recently been accelerating at a fast rate (~3.5% per year in the compound annual growth rate of the number of papers published in scientific journals, according to Scopus source). There are now more scholarly communications than ever before, and scientists have too many choices of journals to read, refer, and where to submit: therefore, the evaluation of the performance of each journal has become necessary to delineate impact and contribution of any journal in its respective field of interest and application.

With this perspective in mind, bibliometric indicators can play an important role. On the one hand, opinions on the appropriate use of such indicators can be dividing, and, of course, a researcher is efficient only when his/her production is really original and innovative. On the other hand, journal-level bibliometric indicators have now long been used as measures in journal evaluation, and many Editors see it as part of their editorial duty to try and improve such indicators and rankings for their journal: a high quality journal targeted at the right audience should enjoy respectable performance indicators in its field, which should be a sign of its value rather than being an end in themselves.

Since 2013, *Annals of Silvicultural Research* (ASR) has gained increasing consideration within the international scientific community, reaching the second quartile (Q2) for the Forestry and the Ecology subject categories of the SCImago Journal Rank. On average, the number of citations per document (calculated over the previous four years) is approaching 1.3, with the most quoted articles receiving between 10 and 15 citations per year; citations per document referring to the preceeding two years (i.e. the metrics usually known as impact factor) have increased from 0.1 in 2013 up to 2 in 2020, as calculated using Scopus database. These rewarding achievements are even more relevant considering that only a very minor part of the articles published worldwide under the Forestry and Ecology subject categories directly refers to silvicultural aspects (Corona 2017).

While temptation to improve a journal's bibliometrics ranking as a proof of journal's impact is high for any Editor, it has to be recognized that rankings are only as meaningful as the data that feed into them. There are various techniques through which journal ranking and bibliometric indicators can be raised, particularly regarding journal self-citations (observed when a paper published in a journal cites content previously published in that same journal). There are probably as many ethically acceptable levels of journal self-citations as there are journals. Journal self-citation rates differ between scientific fields, and a highly specialised journal is likely to have a larger proportion of journal self-citations than a journal of broader scope. Across the titles under the Forestry and Ecology subject categories, variations in self-citations span widely (up to more than 30%), with most journals showing fewer than 20% journal self-citations. The 7% recorded by ASR can be deemed as an ethically acceptable level of journal self-citations.

The future of scientific writing and the classification of articles is evolving: our transition from the Gutenberg era to the age of electronic publishing brings with it exciting and innovative forms of scientific communication. Authors looking to achieve success in the world of scientific publishing need to know the purpose and requirements of each article type in order to maximize their chances of publication and viewership. ASR promotes discussion, debate and research into silviculture, aimed at elucidating fundamental skills, mechanisms and outcomes underpinning activities and experiences: types of scientific articles include primary articles (original research articles, review papers, concept notes), secondary articles (international project reports, dataset papers), technical notes and editorials.

A vast expertise in silviculture builds upon the legacy of many years of practical experience (Fabbio 2013): a well-grounded past is a requisite to suitably understand the present research context and to creatively envision future scenarios. However, we have

1 - DIBAF, University of Tuscia – Italy

2 - CREA - Research Centre for Forestry and Wood – Italy

*Corresponding author: piermaria.corona@crea.gov.it

to overcome the traditional paths of forestry, and its latent vision to unquestionably do what it has been always done. With advanced conceptual, methodological and technical tools becoming more and more accessible to the scientific and practitioners communities, silvicultural research should constantly address new issues and questions, making use of both consolidated and original field techniques and data analysis. Under such a perspective, ASR has been founded and managed by scientists to make peer-review constructive, to bring the best reliable and up-to-date, evidence-based information to the service of stakeholders, and to ensure that active researchers shape the direction of silvicultural science.

To this end, ASR publishing model is based on both the principles of rigorous peer-review and open access (Corona 2020). Distinctively, ASR latest

journal impact metrics reflect the power of research that is open for all. Thanks to Authors, Reviewers, and Editors for accelerating scientific discovery, developing innovation and new solutions, and for evolving constantly with forestry community feedbacks.

References list

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