Bibliometric services in research evaluation: A new task area strengthening the jurisdiction of academic librarians?

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35th IATUL Conference
Aalto University, Finland
3. June 2014
Outline

1. Introduction
2. Research interest
3. Research interest and previous research
4. Abbott’s sociology of profession as theoretical framework
5. Empirical data and method
6. Workbench insights into data analysis
1. Changes and challenges affecting the library

- Technological innovations in computing, telecommunication, automatization etc.
- Funding cuts
- Changes in the scholarly communications landscape
- Changes in the higher education and research environment: university reforms due to a new governance of science, increased use of bibliometric indicators in research assessment
1. Changes affecting the library- and possible reactions

„Bibliometrics is an ideal field for academic librarians to develop and provide innovative services for both academic and administrative university staff. In so doing librarians make sure to take an active part in the development of new strategies and in fostering innovation. “
(Gumpenberger, Wieland & Gorraiz, 2012, p. 181)
1. Changes in the „federated profession of librarianship“

The „bibliometrician librarian?!

The reference librarian/the subject librarian

The digital librarian
2. Research questions

• Are academic librarians claiming a professional jurisdiction on bibliometric expertise in research support services and research assessment?

• How do they assert cognitive claims as scientometric practitioners?

• How do they socially gain and maintain control over bibliometric practices in their workplace, the research organization, and in the public?
3. Previous studies and my research

Baseline data on bibliometric services - who, what, how much?

New library role? Institutionalization of a new task area?

Study early instances of claim-making and knowledge transfer between research field and practitioners
4. Abbott’s sociology of profession as theoretical framework

Expertise can be institutionalized in people (professions), organizations and commodities (Abbott 1991)

Professions are exclusive occupational groups applying somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases

Nature of professional work
How is exclusive control maintained over professional work?
4. Abbott’s sociology of profession as theoretical framework

Cognitive claim

- Based on abstract academic knowledge
- Professional problem definition and solutions

Social claim

- Workplace
- Public arena
- Legal arena
5. Empirical data subject to qualitative content analysis

- **Cognitive claim**
  - 28 expert interviews
  - Course material
  - Blogs

- **Social claim**
  - Institutional websites
  - Opinion articles and case studies
  - Blogs
6. Insights into the data analysis

How does the theoretical lens contribute to an understanding of current bibliometric practices in libraries?
6. Data analysis- social claim

Who else in the scientific environment is able and willing to provide bibliometric data as a service for science managers – in an interdisciplinary manner and independent of their own scientific interests?

Only libraries and information facilities are independent, interdisciplinary institutions capable of providing these central services.

(Ball & Tunger, 2006, p. 565)
6. Data analysis – cognitive claim

Diagnosis - main clients and needs

- Information problem: bibliometric literacy
- Researchers

- Information problem
- Researchers + management

- Strategy problem: ensure competitiveness
- Mainly management
6. Data analysis – cognitive claim
Diagnosis- bibliometric literacy

“What they are interested in is what the measures mean to them:
• What do we do about the REF?
• What is an h-index and how do I find mine?
• Getting evidence for a job application/grant application/salary review, etc.
• Considering where to publish: how do I find journal impact factors?”
(Delassalle 2011, p.2)
6. Data analysis – cognitive claim
Diagnosis- bibliometric consultancy

“I'm providing an information service to senior management of the university (…)

“We've used bibliometrics as part of that process and it's getting it integrated into the universities thinking, in my view, is the goal of using bibliometrics to help enhance the citation impact.”

(expert UK B2)
6. Data analysis – cognitive claim

Treatment

- Training
- Researchers

- Information
- Researchers + management

- Consultancy
- Mainly management
6. Data analysis – cognitive claim treatment

“What I do is providing training to staff so on a various series of events. Just sort of explaining that these - what the different numbers are and this is how they are calculated and this is, you know, what they mean. (…) I also do with inquiries from members of staff so we have a library help desk, so if anything comes into that that's particularly related to bibliometrics or people contact me directly on that. Then I help them out with whatever their questions are.” (expert UK B1)
6. Data analysis – cognitive claim treatment

“So actually I do not calculate the h-index but I do look at citation counts principally across the university at an overall scale and then faculty and then department. I will do fairly simple calculations like mean citation counts and where we are publishing, who we are collaborating with, what impact factors are we publishing our journals in, what are the mean impact factors and that sort of thing. And I do that comparatively, so how do we compare with (university name) or (university name) ...”

(expert UK B2)
6. Data analysis – cognitive claim treatment

“(…) in fact we're just starting to develop a series of reports where each will help the departments analyze their own publications so perhaps particularly if they haven't got as high a proportion of their research in the top ten percent as they'd want then they can sort of look and see whether perhaps is it articles in particular journals which aren't being cited as often and does that mean perhaps they ought to look somewhere else to get their research published or is it research of particular topics which is being- which is cited very well or cited not very well and if so perhaps that might inform the direction of their research.“ (expert UK B3)
6. Data analysis – exclusivity of treatment

Plain information

Information provision with the aim to build up bibliometric literacy

Consultancy without any influence on strategic decisions

Commissioned work with possible/ intended influence on strategic decisions
7. Aims and expected results

Do bibliometric services constitute a new professional practice?

No full cognitive claim yet

Divergence of bibliometrics as a research field and professional practice

Jurisdictional settlement: division of labour
Thank you for your attention!

Comments?

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