Beyond Bibliometrics – Identifying the Best

Results

"Beyond Bibliometrics – Identifying the Best" was the topic of the 8th Forum on the Internationalization of Sciences and Humanities in Berlin on November 6 – 7, 2014. The Forum was held by the International Advisory Board of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. The International Advisory Board came to the following conclusions:

- **Bibliometrics is a frequently applied tool that increasingly is shaping today’s academic landscape world-wide and is influencing behavior.** Bibliometrics is criticized for contributing to a homogenization of sciences, a lack of true objectivity, a tendency to intensify managerialism, a bias concerning gender and country. This calls for a discussion of the potential need of a paradigm shift.

- **Bibliometrics is a useful “filter”**. The sheer mass of researchers and publications in the global system make it necessary to involve IT-supported judgments when questions are asked at the level of whole institutions, national research systems, and even transnational collaborations. Research and policy communities are faced with the necessity to find a set of core values to accommodate varying scholarly and institutional cultures and increasingly mobile researchers. Bibliometrics and impact factors are not acceptable tools for researchers at all levels, and are particularly problematic with regards to early-stage researchers and tenure decisions. Bibliometrics may not be appropriate at all for certain subject fields. Additional methods e.g. interviews and peer review need to be predominant in these cases.

- **Depending mainly on bibliometrics has far-reaching consequences for research systems as well as for individuals, especially young scientists.** It is about deciding on the value of scientific output in an environment where there are connections between publishing, funding, and ultimately the success of individual careers as well as of entire research markets. Bibliometrics provides an environment where especially a young generation of researchers is encouraged to adopt mainstream positions. This constitutes a danger for knowledge-based societies highly dependent on cutting-edge scientific output. Especially funding organizations are called upon to use their leverage to fund scientific risk.

- **Finding appropriate ways of identifying “the best” is – and will remain – one of THE central questions of science and research.** There is a widespread desire in the academic community for guidelines that clearly limit the use of bibliometrics and allow for their measured intelligent incorporation into evaluations appreciative of different cultures in subject fields and also in countries; additional methods for identifying "the best" are needed. However, existing means can be labor-intensive (such as interviews and peer reviews), and may be reaching their own breaking point. The International Advisory Board will continue its discussions along the two central questions: How do we define the best? What are the procedures to find them – beyond bibliometrics?
International Advisory Board

For more information, please visit the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation’s website.

The International Advisory Board of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation:

- Background

- Members
  [http://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/iab-members.html](http://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/iab-members.html)

The 8th Forum on the Internationalization of Sciences and Humanities:
“Beyond Bibliometrics – Identifying the Best”:

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