

A Bibliometric Study of LIS Literature Related to Academic Law Librarianship

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Abstract: Academic law librarianship as a career has experienced an increase in expectations as law librarians have become more closely intertwined with the scholarly mission of today's law school. A bibliometric analysis of library and information science literature pertaining to academic law librarianship supports this idea as each year more academic law librarians are publishing articles covering a wide range of complex issues faced by all law libraries. The number of scholarly articles per year increased over the time frame of this study as well as the average number of authors per article. The results of this study identified three core journals that published most of the articles on this topic: *Law Library Journal*, *Legal Information Management*, and *Legal Reference Services Quarterly*.

Keywords: Bibliometric, Academic Law Library, Core Journal, LIS, Academic Law Librarian

1. Introduction

Slinger and Slinger (2010) examined the historical role of the academic law librarian and deemed the role of the academic law librarian in the scholarly enterprise "a relatively new phenomenon" (p. 387). While the authors describe this as a new phenomenon, they admit that it "has always been essential for legal practitioners and judges to have continuing access to published court opinions, statutes, and other legal authorities" (Slinger & Slinger, 2010, p. 387). Originally, this demand for access was met through a privately owned law library that was for the sole use of members of the local bar association. The idea of having a law librarian to organize legal materials was foreign to members of the bar.

Law libraries that did exist in academic law schools were very small in size. No common classification system existed as a means of organizing the library and

its collection. Law students themselves oftentimes served as librarians as “the concept of employing someone to serve as a professional law librarian to bring order to this chaos was not widely embraced by the law schools for a very long time” (Slinger & Slinger, 2010, p. 391).

Law schools would not be required to contain a law library until 1921 when the American Bar Association (ABA) implemented new measures to require such. However, the new measures did not require the law school to staff a professional librarian. It would not be until 1940 that the American Association of Law Schools (AALS) amended its standards to require law schools “employ a qualified librarian” (Slinger & Slinger, 2010, p. 392). Even with the new AALS standard, many schools refused to comply, and, instead, used “students, janitors, and old men whose only qualification was that they would accept a small salary” as the librarian (Brock, 1974, p. 347).

Though many schools did not originally abide by ABA and AALS standards, the professional librarians at schools which did abide chose to accept “the challenge of systematically organizing the library collection so it would provide maximum accessibility and usefulness for students and faculty” (Slinger & Slinger, 2010, p. 393). Classification and indexing systems began to be adopted for a more uniform cataloging scheme. Law schools began adding new courses to the curriculum which gave academic law librarians opportunities to create and implement legal research and legal bibliography courses. Due to the hard work of academic law librarians, legal research courses were eventually made a required course at every ABA approved law school.

For a time other types of library services were not generally thought of as being important “since teaching legal research and providing an excellent and well organized collection were considered to be the chief priorities of the law library” (Slinger & Slinger, 2010, p. 395). Academic law librarians, however, did not want to limit themselves. A higher degree of service was felt throughout the profession, and an increase in reference services by academic law librarians was added. Dual degreed librarians began to be the norm after World War II as “many lawyers, taken in the armed services before they had practiced at all or only after a short period found, when they returned, that they did not care to practice, and turned to law librarianship” (Price, 1957, p. 223-24). Greater cooperation among law libraries through interlibrary loan and other services was favored which ultimately benefitted the law school faculty.

As new members entered the profession following the World Wars a new staffing model was implemented due to the growing demands of patrons and faculty members. Law libraries divided into Technical Services and Public Services. Having one library director and dividing professional academic law librarians into two units led to greater assistance for the scholarly research activities of the law faculty particularly from the public services librarians.

The new staffing model of public and technical services largely still exists today. Academic law librarians have flourished under this model, and the law faculty has reaped the benefits in the amount of assistance they now receive.

1.1 Purpose and Importance of the Study

Current scholarship appears to lean toward the notion that academic law librarians will continue to face increased expectations in the twenty-first century. As these expectations mount the issue arises as to whether the academic law librarian will be seen as mere help or as a valued collaborator in the area of faculty support. Knowing which journals and what subject matter is heavily used and discussed in today's literature will help today's academic law librarians as they continue to justify their role as a valued member of the law school community. Knowledge of core journals and subject areas is also helpful to librarians of other disciplines as they seek to understand the intricacies of academic law librarianship.

This bibliometric study will focus on library and information science literature related to academic law librarianship. Because of the increased role of the academic law librarian in the scholarly enterprise, it is beneficial to note the trends in literature written by and about academic law librarians. The study will be performed using articles indexed in the three major library and information science article databases with a time frame of 1997-2011. The goal of the study is to determine the number of articles published per year, the core journals publishing such articles, the number of authors and author occupations, and the subject matter of literature related to academic law librarianship. This paper will outline the findings of the study in an effort to determine any noticeable changes in the number of articles published per year and any dominant themes in the author occupations and subject matter.

1.2 Problem Statement

This study examines the publication patterns of library and information science literature related to academic librarianship. Included in this study is an examination of the number of articles published per year on this topic, the core journals publishing such articles, the number of authors publishing and their occupations, and the subject matter of the studied articles.

The study incorporates a fifteen year span of time from 1997-2011 to track the articles being published related to academic law librarianship. From this range of years, the study shows whether there has been a growth or decline in the publication of journal articles related to this topic.

2. Research Questions

- R1. How many articles are published per year about academic law librarianship?
- R2. In which journals are the articles in this study published?

R3. How many authors have published articles about academic law librarianship and what are the occupations of those authors?

R4. What is the focus of the published articles related to academic law librarianship?

2.2 Definitions

Academic Law Library: An academic law library is a library that supports an American Bar Association accredited law school's "teaching, scholarship, research and service programs" and has an ongoing relationship with "the faculty, students, and administration of the law school" (ABA, 2012, p. 43).

Bibliometrics: Bibliometrics is a field of study that applies "mathematical and statistical methods for measuring quantitative and qualitative changes in collections of books and other media" (von Ungern-Sternberg, 1995, n.p.).

Core Journal: A core journal is one of a group of journals that publish the majority of articles on a given topic (Herring, 2000, p. 39).

2.3 Assumptions

It is assumed that the information retrieved from the three library and information science databases is accurate and complete. It is further assumed that the author information included with each article is accurate.

3. Literature Review

While there is an abundance of literature related to academic law librarianship, no bibliometric studies on this particular subject could be found in the scholarly LIS literature. However, the methodology that is used in this study has been employed in the past by authors researching various other topics. The following articles have been chosen because they contain aspects of the methodology that is used in this study.

Wiberly, Hurd, and Weller (2006) researched the publication patterns of academic librarians during a four-year time period. The authors chose databases that would contain information relevant to their topic and limited the time period to 1998-2002. Desiring only full text articles published in scholarly journals, the authors excluded conference proceedings. The purpose of the study was to determine authorship patterns of academic librarians, and the research indicated that articles written by a single author constituted the majority of scholarly articles written by academic librarians. The study also indicated that the practice of academic librarians writing and publishing scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals had decreased from a study conducted prior to the selected time frame for the current study.

Singh, Mittal, and Ahmad (2007) collected articles related to digital libraries in an effort to determine core journals and authorship patterns. Articles from *LISA* for a seven year span with keywords such as "digital libraries" and "libraries"

occurring in the title field resulted in a total of 1062 records (Singh, Mittal & Ahman, 2007, p. 343). Forty-six articles without authors were not included. The authors' analysis found that the average number of authors per article was 1.69. The data showed that thirty-two authors contributed 180 articles. Out of the 1062 articles collected, 1037 were published in 212 journals with *D-lib Magazine* being the top journal publishing in the field. The study revealed that the concept of core journals is not applicable to digital library literature as the literature on the subject is highly scattered among many journals.

Al-Ansari (2008) used the *LISA* and *Library Literature* article databases to collect articles on the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. The purpose of the study was to analyze authorship patterns, core journals and their origin. In searching for articles, Al-Ansari used various search terms such as "Gulf Cooperation Council," "Bahrain," and "Kuwait" (2008, p. 26). The search yielded 276 citations from the *LISA* database and 157 from the *Library Literature* database. The total number of unique citations, after accounting for any duplicate articles, for the entire region yielded 282 articles. The 282 articles had a total of 191 authors with 73.33 percent being single authored. Journal articles accounted for 251 of the 282 articles. One hundred different journals published articles related to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and the top three journals published fifty-three of the 282 articles collected in the study.

Tsay (2008) explored the characteristics of energy literature from a forty year time span, 1965 to 2005, based on articles indexed in the *Science Citation Index Expanded* database using various bibliometric techniques. The search terms used included "hydrogen energy," "fuel cell," and "fuel cells" (Tsay, 2008, p. 425). Tsay's search collected a massive list of 14,449 items on hydrogen energy with 84.94 percent being published research articles. The author was interested in the origin of the core journals that published articles related to hydrogen energy, and the study's findings indicated the United States is the origin of 25.8 percent of the collected journals. Tsay was also interested in knowing the core journals, and his study found the three largest contributors to energy literature to be the *International Journal of Hydrogen Energy*, the *Journal of Power Source*, and the *Journal of the Electrochemical Society*.

In a study analyzing addictive behavior, Carbonell, Guardiola, Beranuy, and Belles (2009) collected articles related to information and communication technologies such as the internet, cell phones, and video games, to analyze the level of literature related to behavior addiction. The goal of the study was to look at what authors and what journals are doing the pertinent research and to note any trends in publication patterns over a given time period. The two databases of *PubMed* and *PsychINFO* were searched for articles over a ten year period. The authors included numerous search terms with the terms "Internet," "cellular phone," and "impulsive behavior" as examples (Carbonell, Guardiola, Beranuy & Belles, 2009, p. 103). In total, 179 unique articles were collected for the study. The study found the United States, China, and the United Kingdom

to be the top three origins of the articles' first author. The study yielded ninety-six different journals with *Cyberpsychology and Behavior* publishing the most articles at seventeen.

The research discussed in this literature review is similar to the research design of this study. Each study utilized various article databases and search terms to collect articles relevant to the research question. Analyzing the list of collected articles, each author was then able to determine items such as core journals, article authors, author and journal origin, among many others, in an effort to provide answers and insight into the research questions. This research study will similarly utilize article databases and search terms to collect articles related to the field of academic law librarianship to determine core journals, authors and their occupation, and subject matter.

4. Methodology

To locate articles pertaining to academic law librarianship, the *LIS*, *LISTA*, and *ISTA* databases were used. The search term of "academic law librar*" was used in the title field to gather articles related to law libraries and law librarians. An article title search was used rather than a subject field search in an effort to collect articles related solely to academic law librarianship. A subject field search with the given search term would include results related to laws and legislation, which is not the focus of this study. Only peer-reviewed, full-text, featured articles with the time frame of 1997 to 2011 were collected. Data were entered and compiled in a *Microsoft Excel* worksheet. Items included in the worksheet include publication year, author name, author occupation, journal name, title of the article, and main subject terms of the article. Other *Microsoft Excel* worksheets were used to present the findings of this study in table form.

5. Results

A review of the three library and information science databases yielded ninety-nine indexed articles. After the removal of duplicates, a total of fifty articles were used to ascertain the results to this study's four research questions.

5.1 How many articles are published per year about academic law librarianship?

The data accumulated and compiled from the three databases revealed that a total of fifty scholarly, peer-reviewed articles were published during the studied time frame (Table 1). An average of 3.3 articles were published per year with a steady increase in average over the years: 1997-2001 (1.4 average); 2002-2006 (4 average); and 2007-2011 (4.6 average). The years 2002 and 2008 saw the highest amount of articles published with six each year while no articles at all were published in 1998.

Table 1. Number of scholarly peer-reviewed articles per year.

Year	Articles Published
1997	1
1998	0
1999	1
2000	1
2001	4
2002	6
2003	3
2004	5
2005	4
2006	2
2007	5
2008	6
2009	5
2010	3
2011	4
TOTAL:	50

5.2 In which journals are the articles in this study published?

The data revealed a total of ten journals which published articles related to academic law librarianship over the fifteen year period (Table 2). The top three journals published forty-three (66%) of the fifty articles with the remaining seven articles scattered amongst seven journals.

Table 2. Number of articles per journal.	
Journal Title	Number of Articles Per Journal
<i>Law Library Journal</i>	17
<i>Legal Information Management</i>	17
<i>Legal Reference Services Quarterly</i>	9
<i>Cataloging and Classification Quarterly</i>	1
<i>Library Philosophy and Practice</i>	1
<i>International Journal of Legal Information</i>	1
<i>Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery, and Electronic Reserves</i>	1
<i>Current Studies in Librarianship</i>	1

<i>Journal of Philippine Librarianship</i>	1
<i>Annals of Library and Information Studies</i>	1
Total Articles:	50

5.3 How many authors have published articles about academic law librarianship and what are the occupations of those authors?

The fifty articles examined in this study were authored by a total of sixty-two authors (Table 3). The number of authors per year has increased over the specified time frame with eight authors for 1991-2001, twenty-two authors for 2002-2006, and thirty-two authors for 2007-2011. Thirty-seven articles were written by a single author (Table 4). Five articles were co-authored by two individuals, and three articles were authored by more than two individuals. No author was listed for five of the examined articles.

The occupations of the sixty-two authors are varied (Table 5). While the study revealed sixty-two authors, sixty-six entries of author occupation were noted as a number of authors hold more than one job title.

Table 3. Number of Authors Per Year	
Year	Number of Authors
1997	1
1998	0
1999	1
2000	1
2001	5
2002	6
2003	3
2004	8
2005	4
2006	1
2007	10
2008	10
2009	4
2010	4
2011	4
Total:	62

Table 4. Number of Authors Per Article	
	Number of Articles
Single Author	37
Co-Authored	5
No Listed Author	5
Authored by more than Two	3
Total:	50

Table 5. Number of Authors by Job Title	
Job Title	Number of Authors
Professor of Law	13
Reference/Faculty Services	12
Associate Dean	11
Other	10
Acquisitions/Technical Services	7
Director of Law Library	7
Law Librarian	6
Total:	66

5.4 What is the focus of the published articles related to academic law librarianship?

A total of 315 subject entries are on record for the fifty articles revealed in this study. The top ten subject entries are displayed and account for fifty-one percent of the total number of entries (Table 6). Categories, such as “Law Libraries” and “Law Librarians,” were combined in the data collection process due to the similarity of topics.

Table 6. Number of Entries per Subject Category	
Subject Categories	Number of Entries
Law Libraries/Librarians	42
Libraries and Archives	29
Academic Libraries, Librarians, and Directors	23
Surveys and Questionnaires	18
Information Retrieval and Access	14
Libraries and Librarians	10
Internet/Web/Technology	8

Law Schools and Law Students	8
Collection Development/Management	5
Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	5
Total:	162

6. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the number of scholarly peer-reviewed articles has increased during the 1997-2011 time period, increasing from one article in 1997 to four articles in 2011. The yearly average increased substantially between 1997 and 2006 but appears to be becoming more stable over the past five years. As in the earlier literature studies on publication patterns of academic librarians and the Gulf Cooperation Council, the number of articles with a single author was consistently much higher than articles with multiple authors. As with the average number of articles per year, the average of authors per year has steadily increased as well with an average of 1.6 authors during the 1997-2001 period, 4.4 authors during the 2002-2006 period, and 6.4 authors during the 2007-2011 period.

The results also indicate three core journals that have published articles pertaining to academic law librarianship. *Law Library Journal*, *Legal Information Management*, and *Legal Reference Services Quarterly* published a staggering forty-three of the fifty articles revealed in this study. As the authors of an earlier study on hydrogen energy literature were not surprised when the top three journals had similar key words in their title, so too it is not surprising these three journals, which focus specifically on law libraries and legal issues in the library context, are publishing the majority of articles on academic law librarianship. As the field of academic law librarianship grows and as more articles are published, further studies should focus on the possible application of Bradford's Law to literature on academic law librarianship.

Occupation and professional title of the authors varied widely. All facets of the academic law library, from the director to the reference librarian, are represented in the list of authors publishing the studied articles. This bodes well for the profession as law schools and law libraries grapple with determining the status of today's academic law librarian. Having librarians from each library department write and publish reflects well on the academic law library as the question of tenure for academic law librarians has not been settled by the ABA and other professional associations.

As librarians of all departments are writing and publishing, the results of the study of subject matter focus is not surprising. The top ten subject areas point this out as the subjects of "law library directors," "collection development," "archives," and "information retrieval," among many other topics, are featured prominently in the articles. The academic law library is more than just one department, and the literature should, and does, reflect this fact.

Further research could be conducted to further explore the potential application of Bradford's Law to academic law librarianship literature. Three journals publish an overwhelming amount of the literature, but it is unclear if Bradford's three zones are applicable. As more years pass and as more articles are published, further research could be done to explore any increase in publication by those law librarians without any form of tenure or job security. An increase in publication by these law librarians could provide a greater push for changes in the structure of law library job status and tenure.

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