



Reviews

The web of knowledge: a festschrift in honor of Eugene Garfield Blaise Cronin and Heen Barsky Atkins (Eds.); Information Today Inc., Medford NJ, 2000, 565 pp., price \$49.50, ISBN 1-57387-099-4

Providing a tribute to Eugene Garfield on his 75th birthday, this monograph is claimed by its publisher to be ‘the first to comprehensively address the history, theory and practical applications of citation analysis’. Although the editors do not explicitly declare a theme for the volume, it is clear that a major aspect is the development of citation indexing from a ‘simple’ tool for information retrieval, providing a complement to ‘traditional’ subject searching, to a method of analysis of scholarly communication itself, manifested as the disciplines variously described as bibliometrics, infometrics, and scientometrics, not forgetting the recent phenomema of cybermetrics and webometrics.

The editors have assembled a genuinely international panel of 37 contributors to produce the 26 chapters of this work. Most of the ‘usual suspects’, in terms of those generally associated with the citation phenomenon, are there, with some writers new (at least in the knowledge of this reviewer) to the subject. The topic has had such a great influence on information science and studies of scholarly communication that, as the editors note, it would not have been hard to assemble an equally authoritative set of contributors for a second volume.

After an introductory chapter, the book is divided into five sections: historical perspectives; the scientific literature; international issues; evaluative bibliometrics; and social network analysis. Each section contains between four and eight chapters, so that the result is a very thorough survey of the whole area. If it is not comprehensive, this is a consequence of the breadth and scope of the topic, rather than any failing of the editor’s imagination. While, as with any edited volume, there is variation in the quality of the contributions, there is a consistency of approach and which makes what might be a daunting quantity of material relatively accessible.

While all the chapters seem to be sound, authoritative and informative, some have the advantage of being highly readable. I particularly enjoyed Jashua Lederberg’s account of ‘how the Science Citation index got started’ and Tony Cawkell’s chapter on visualisation of citation networks; no doubt other readers will have their own preferences.

This book will deservedly be regarded as a classic, and will be a valuable reference tool for anyone involved in the areas which it covers. It is to be hoped that it will be, at least sometimes, read for pleasure as well; the editors, and at least some of the authors, deserve as much.

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