

Description

Rankings are Forever?

For decades, eager young researchers with a new article or paper to submit have been directed towards [specific journals](#) in their field based upon their respective rank. The higher the rank the higher the perceived prestige for the journal and, most likely, the higher the [subscription fee](#)!

The journal would most likely have a rejection rate around 90%, and those submissions that were considered worthy of consideration would likely face a slow but thorough [peer review](#) by unpaid but dedicated academic professionals.

Over time, different ranking frameworks were developed, each with their respective merits, but underneath them all rested the ubiquitous *citation*.

The True Value of a Citation

In academic terms, a citation acknowledges the work of another author or authors that has been referenced or directly quoted in an article, [research paper](#), or manuscript.

The more citations a piece of work receives, the better it is assumed to be, and for journals, the more citations a specific article receives, the more authoritative that journal is assumed to be in its respective field.

However, when students and academic researchers are under pressure to deliver on a deadline, do they really have the time to read every citation they have listed in the references or bibliography at the end of their work? If author A's paper includes something from Author B's book, and the cited passage from Author B includes a reference to Author C, which Author A then includes in his bibliography, did Author A really experience the work of Author C?

The Commoditization of Citations

In recent years, as [Open Access journals](#) have struggled to compete against the persistent prestige of traditional journals, citations have become something of a commodity to be either traded or completely fabricated in an effort to 'game the system' of research [citation volume tracking](#).

Rather than establishing the comprehensive nature of your preparatory research in authoring a paper or your expertise in the development of a [comprehensive literature review](#), a citation can now be developed out of thin air with ease.

[Predatory journals](#) will require that accepted submissions include citations from sister journals in order to raise their ranking, and some researchers will go as far as creating citation rings where they collude to cite each others papers to raise their respective h-index scores.

A Better Approach

Counting on citations as indicators of a [journal's quality](#) and a researcher's value no longer works.

In this increasingly digital world, there are too many alternative ways to measure true utilization of and feedback on academic content to just rely on references and bibliographies.

Article level metrics ([altmetrics](#)) are starting to explore the possibilities of tracking forum comments and other social media data, and a few open access journals are starting to embrace the concept.

The greatest challenge lies, not surprisingly, in convincing traditional journals to move away from citation rankings that have been built up over decades of published works.

Category

1. Reference Management
2. Reporting Research

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