

Editorial

Michael Seadle

Director, Berlin School of Library and Information Science, the HEADT Centre, (a research project); Executive Director, iSchools Inc.

World Digital Libraries 14(1): v-vi (2021)

In my last editorial I talked about the importance of digital libraries in this time of COVID, and six months later the situation is better in some countries, but far worse in others, in particular in India, which is suffering from new variants. During this time it has become clearer than ever how important access to scholarly contents is, and much of that access is primarily or sometimes exclusively available online. It has also become more important to have reliable scientific data in order to make informed decisions about how to address the pandemic. The importance of wearing masks, social distancing, and getting immunizations is only clear when one understands the science behind such recommendations. Libraries play a key role in making the scientific information available to as wide a public as possible.

The article on ‘Analysing Publishing Trends in Information and Communication Technology Literature Output Using Scopus Database: a scientometrics analysis’ by M. K. Verma, M. K. Sinha, and R. Shukla helps us to understand the scope of the ‘research trends in information

and communication technology (ICT) in top 10 countries during 1999–2018, as reflected by scholarly publications index in the Scopus database.¹ The authors also discuss publishing preferences: “It was also shown by the study that present era scientists preferred to publish their research work in journals, followed by conference papers with 5557 (30.23%).”² Books play a role too, of course, but the Scopus database does not include them.

S. D. Kadam and S. C. Bhusawar have written an article entitled: ‘Websites of Indian Agricultural and Horticulture Universities: a webometric analysis’. Agriculture is of course one of the world’s essential fields of study, and one that often gets too little attention. “The aim of the study was to rank these 51 websites on the ground of their web impact factor (WIF).”³ The authors also make some recommendations, including one that: “... due care should be taken at the time of website designing to create [a] good number of in-links for better visibility of the website.”⁴

¹ P. 1

² P. 20

³ P. 24

⁴ P. 35

The article on 'Reading Habits of Undergraduate Students in [the] Digital Age: an empirical study' by D. Khatri gives readers a feel for: "... the preferred language, purpose of reading, frequency of reading, preferences for fiction and non-fiction, format preference for reading document media, preferred devices and location for reading. It also takes into account the total number of books read in a year."⁵ These are all important factors for library collection policies. The article "... also explored students' choice and frequency of reading different newspapers and books from popular fiction and non-fiction genre, particularly short stories, historical fiction, adventure, crime, mystery, textbooks, reference books, self-help books, essays, and journalism."⁶

A. Ali and P. M. Iqbal wrote about: 'Scholarly Communication of Deemed Universities: a scientometric approach towards Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences.' In medical studies, especially the timeliness of information is critical.

This is one of the reasons that the authors conclude that "... scholars prefer online mode rather than printed form."⁷ It is interesting but perhaps unsurprising that: "... surgery was the most favoured area (22.72%) of [the] research community of SKIMS."⁸

The final article in this issue is 'Learning to Build Media and Information Literacy Skills in Thailand' by S. Tukphimai and T. P. Dev. These skills are clearly critical for anyone making use of digital libraries, and the authors point out how these skills help to promote: "...equal citizen's rights in information access, thinking, and decision-making..." so that citizens will have 'weapons' in order to "... protect their own rights..."⁹. Of particular interest is at their extensive table one on 'Factors and behavioural indicators of media and information literacy'.¹⁰

As always, I hope you will enjoy reading this issue and will learn from the articles.

⁵ P. 39

⁶ P. 66

⁷ P. 74

⁸ P. 81

⁹ P. 84

¹⁰ P. 90