Using information obtained through informetrics to address practical problems and to aid decision making

Sponsored by: ASIS&T SIG/MET

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ABSTRACT
This panel aims to inform participants of, and to stimulate interest in, the diverse ways in which the measurement of information (informetrics) is used in real-world applications. Its timeliness is indicated by the recent increase in interest amongst ASIS&T members in informetrics that culminated in the endorsement of the change of status of SIG/MET from a virtual SIG to fully functional ASIS&T SIG. The panelists, selected for their diverse experiences in informetrics, address a diversity of issues in the use of informetric information in real-world situations. The format of the panel is designed to encourage audience participation with the audience being encouraged to suggest issues for discussion.

Keywords
information use, informetrics, scientometrics, bibliometrics, SIG/MET

INTRODUCTION
This panel aims to inform participants of, and to stimulate interest in, the diverse ways in which the measurement of information (informetrics) is used in real-world applications, for example in the ranking of university departments. It addresses this aim through interaction between participants and diverse specialists in the field of informetrics. It fits well within the scope of ASIS&T’s Track 5, as track 5 encompasses “how information is used to help solve problems and aid decision making.” For example, information obtained through informetrics is used to inform research policy, in the development of libraries, and in the mapping of science.

For many years SIG-USE has provided a valuable function of stimulating interest in information behavior and management at ASIS&T meetings and workshops. Their focus has been, primarily, on qualitative information. This panel provides a different perspective on information use, in that it focuses on the use of quantitative information. Whereas SIG-USE have focused on qualitative studies of how people interact with information (e.g., model building, ethnographies, surveys), this panel focuses on a complementary approach, that uses larger-scale, quantitative studies of bibliographic, usage, internet and new media data.

TIMELINESS AND INTEREST
This panel is timely and likely to generate interest, as demonstrated by the increased focus on informetrics amongst ASIS&T members over the past two years. The ‘Symposium on Informetrics and Scientometrics Research’ (http://www.sois.uwm.edu/MetricsPreCon/program.html), co-sponsored by SIG/MET, attracted considerable interest. Encouraged by this success, two members of SIG/MET sought to obtain signatories in support of SIG/MET changing from a virtual SIG into a fully functional SIG. The strong endorsement of this change in status of SIG/MET (fifty signatories were obtained in less than a month amongst ASIS&T members), indicates that a significant section of ASIS&T members are interested in informetrics.

This panel is also likely to attract interest because its approach is quantitative whereas recent ASIS&T information use sessions (often sponsored by SIG-USE) have focused heavily on qualitative approaches.
ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED
Questions that the panelists will address include:
(1) How has informetrics been applied to real-world situations?
(2) What are the main barriers to the greater use of informetrics to address practical problems?
(3) What measures can be taken to overcome barriers to the greater use of informetrics?
(4) How can findings from informetric research be applied in practice?
(5) How do informetric research findings benefit the LIS profession and society?
(6) Typically, investigations of information use either quantitative or qualitative methods. In keeping with the conference theme, how could the gulf between these two approaches be bridged so that quantitative investigations of information make more effective use of qualitative methods?

Other questions will originate from your participation. The organizers need your help in making this session interactive and responsive to your needs. You can help by: (a) emailing questions for the panelists to the corresponding author (Jonathan Levitt, j.levitt@lboro.ac.uk) and (b) attending the session and adding to the list of questions to be discussed.

STRUCTURE
The structure is designed to capitalize on the diverse expertise of the panel and to maximize interactivity. Its planned structure is:
(1) First the panel members briefly introduce themselves, using short Pecha Kucha style presentations.
(2) Then the panel members address questions on the practical use of informetrics.
(3) The initial list of issues to be discussed will be presented to the audience and they will be encouraged to add to the list.
(4) In order to maximize interactivity, each issue is discussed by members of the panel and then the audience is given the opportunity to comment and ask questions.
(5) In order to stimulate interest, panel members will be encouraged to describe emerging cutting-edge research and analyze tools and techniques suited to using informetrics to address real-world problems.

PANELISTS
In order to effectively represent the wide diversity of perspectives in the subject matter, the panelists were chosen on the basis of their diverse expertise in the field of information use. The panelists include:

Judit Bar-Ilan: Head of department and professor at the Department of Information Science of Bar-Ilan University in Israel. She received her PhD in computer science from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and started her research in information science in the mid-1990s at the School of Library, Archive and Information Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She moved to the Department of Information Science at Bar-Ilan University in 2002. She is a member of the editorial boards of JASIST, Scientometrics, Journal of Informetrics, Cybermetrics, and Online Information Review. Her areas of interest include: informetrics, information retrieval, Internet research, information behavior, the semantic Web and usability. She is currently participating in an EU project on the evaluation of the individual researcher.

Jonathan Levitt: Project head and principal investigator of a government funded project on the use of bibliometrics at the Department of Information Science, Loughborough University, UK and Honorary Research Fellow, Statistical Cybermetrics Research Group, University of Wolverhampton, UK. Jonathan has a diverse background with Masters degrees in Mathematics, Computer Science and Social Research methodology and a Ph.D. in Information Science. His research focuses on the use of citation data to address problems in disciplinarity, collaboration and research policy. In his most recent research he examines whether citation evidence supports funding collaborative research. He has published articles on informetrics in JASIST, Information Processing & Management and Scientometrics.

Katherine McCain: Professor in the iSchool at Drexel. She holds two degrees in the life sciences and the PhD in Information Studies from Drexel University in 1985 and has been at Drexel ever since. She has been a bibliometrician for over 30 years, publishing her first paper in JASIST while still in the PhD program, and, in 2007, received the Derek J. DeSolla Price Memorial Medal for her contributions to quantitative studies of science. Dr. McCain is a member of the editorial boards of JASIST, Scientometrics, and the Journal of Informetrics. Her areas of interest include quantitative studies of structure and change in scholarly fields and their literatures—including the evolution of research specialties over time, the emergence of interdisciplinary fields, and the diffusion of research innovations over time and subject areas.

Debora (Ralf) Shaw: Professor and Interim Dean at the Indiana University School of Library and Information Science. She has conducted bibliometric research since the 1970s; she currently teaches collection development and has worked with students and librarians on quantitative evaluations of library collections. These experiences demonstrate that today's libraries provide a real-world challenge for the application of informetrics:
* limited (and shrinking) budgets,
* increasing prices,
* changes in delivery and access technologies, and
* appreciation for the "long tail" in meeting people's information needs.
Dietmar Wolfram: Professor and Interim Dean at the School of Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He received his PhD in Library and Information Science from the University of Western Ontario. He teaches in the areas of information retrieval, information technology, and research methods. His research interests include user and system-centered information retrieval, applied informetrics, and Internet research. His publications on informetrics have appeared in JASIST, Information Processing & Management, Journal of Information Science, Cybermetrics, Journal of Informetrics and Scientometrics.

Cassidy Sugimoto will moderate the panel and Liwen Vaughan has agreed to be a panelist provided that she is able to attend the ASIS&T meeting.

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REFERENCES
Selected articles authored by the panelists:

Selected books on informetrics:
- De Bellis, N. (2009). Bibliometrics and Citation Analysis: From the Science Citation Index to Cybermetrics. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.