

Webology, Volume 6, Number 2, June, 2009

Home	Table of Contents	Titles & Subject Index	Authors Index
----------------------	-----------------------------------	--	-------------------------------

Editorial**Wikipedia popularity from a citation analysis point of view**

[Alireza Noruzi](#), Ph.D., Editor-in-Chief

Introduction

This study aims to provide an overview of the citation rate of *Wikipedia* since its launch in 2004. It is worth noting that since its inception *Wikipedia*, the free international multi-lingual encyclopedia, has been subject to criticism ([Fasoldt](#), 2004; [Orlowski](#), 2005; [Lipczynska](#), 2005). *Wikipedia* as a popular web resource appears in response to every keyword search on Google.

One way to test the popularity of a web resource is to use citation analysis method to predict to what extent it is cited by scientific papers. This study tries to identify and quantify the number of citations to *Wikipedia* in the papers indexed by the ISI Web of Science, studying the citation behavior of authors who have published papers in journals indexed by this database.

Materials and Methods

A simple search was carried out in June 2009, in the ISI Web of Science (WoS) in the Cited Work=(Wikipedia*) search for total citations. The total number of citations to *Wikipedia* in WoS was 263.

Table 1 reveals how many *Wikipedia* entries were cited in each year. The pattern shows the increasing or decreasing trends of *Wikipedia* citations as used per annum. Yearly distribution of citations gives an idea about scattering of citations. The total number of citations of the six year period is 263 of which the highest number of citations is 81 in the year 2007 and the lowest number of citations is 10 in the year 2004.

Table 1. The total number of citations per year

Publication Year	Number of citations
2009	21
20/08	56
2007	81
2006	70
2005	24
2004	10

The first 18 Subject Areas citing *Wikipedia* are shown (by record count) in Table 2. Table 2 shows that *Wikipedia* is highly cited by Information Science and Computer Science.

Table 2. Subject areas frequently citing *Wikipedia*

Subject Areas	Number of citations
---------------	---------------------

Information Science & Library Science	19
Computer Science, Information Systems	16
Computer Science, Theory & Methods	16
Engineering, Electrical & Electronic	11
Literature	10
Computer Science, Software Engineering	8
Law	8
Communication	7
Humanities, Multidisciplinary	7
Management	7
Sociology	7
Chemistry, Analytical	6
Education & Educational Research	6
Education, Scientific Disciplines	6
Integrative & Complementary Medicine	6
Medicine, General & Internal	6
Political Science	6
Public, Environmental & Occupational Health	6

Table 3 shows the distribution of citations by place of publication (affiliation). It can be seen that Americans cite *Wikipedia* more than others.

Table 3. Countries cited *Wikipedia*

Country	Number of citations
USA	106
Canada	14
Germany	13
England	12
Australia	9
Taiwan	8
France	7
China	7
Singapore	7
Austria	6

Table 4 shows the language distribution of citations. The authors of citing papers used *Wikipedia* in different languages. It is important to know the most dominant language citing *Wikipedia*. English language was found to be the most dominant language with 251 citations.

Table 4. Languages cited *Wikipedia*

Language	Number of citations
English	251
German	8
French	1
Portuguese	1
Slovene	1

Discussion and Conclusion

Another simple search was conducted in order to analyze the number of citations to *Britannica* in the Cited Work=(*Britannica**) AND Cited Year=(2004-2009). The result showed that *Britannica* was cited only 10 times by 10 different subject areas and only in English language documents. The data show that *Wikipedia* is cited 26 times more than *Britannica*.

Although, the credibility and reliability of content of *Wikipedia* as an authoritative reference source was widely criticized (e.g., [Lih](#), 2004; [Andrew et al.](#), 2005; [Korfiatis, Poulos, & Bokos](#), 2006), it is cited more than *Britannica*. The significance of *Wikipedia* from a citation analysis point of view goes well beyond *open access* and enhanced opportunities for citation.

References

- Andrew, L., Jakob, V., Cathy, M., Samuel, K., & Reinhold, H. (Eds.) (2005), *Proceedings of Wikimania 2005 - The First International Wikimedia Conference*.
- Fasoldt, A. (2004). Librarian: don't use Wikipedia as a source. *Syracuse Post Standard*, 25 August.
- Korfiatis, N.T., Poulos, M., & Bokos, G. (2006). Evaluating authoritative sources using social networks: an insight from Wikipedia. *Online Information Review*, 30(3), 252-262.
- Lih, A. (2004). [Wikipedia as participatory journalism: reliable sources? Metrics for evaluating collaborative media as a news resource](#). *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Online Journalism*, April 16-17, 2004, University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved June 15, 2009, from <http://jmsc.hku.hk/faculty/alih/publications/utaustin-2004-wikipedia-rc2.pdf>
- Lipczynska, S. (2005). Power to the people: the case for Wikipedia. *Reference Reviews*, 19(2).
- Orłowski, A. (2005). [Wikipedia science 31% more cronky than Britannica's](#). *The Register*, 16th December 2005. Retrieved June 15, 2009, from http://www.theregister.co.uk/2005/12/16/wikipedia_britannica_science_comparison/

Bibliographic information of this paper for citing:

Noruzi, Alireza (2009). "Editorial: Wikipedia popularity from a citation analysis point of view." *Webology*, 6(2), editorial 20. Available at:
<http://www.webology.org/2009/v6n2/editorial20.html>

Copyright © 2009, Alireza Noruzi.

