

Editorial

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The *Impact Factor* invented by Eugene Garfield in (1972) as an indicator for the evaluation of journals has become one of the mainly used tools in scientometrics, bibliometrics, informatics and webometrics. Its use has been rapidly expanded from journals to the evaluation of individuals, groups, units, universities, institutions, fields, countries, geopolitical regions, etc. Thousands of papers published in a plethora of journals around the world have dealt with many aspects of its application for all the above-mentioned evaluations and analyses.

Garfield's original database, "*The Journal Citation Reports*" published yearly has, is, and probably will be the bible for many citation indicators for journals including the *Impact Factor*.

In 2007 we at *Scientometrics* have felt that time was ripe to embark on a project we have titled *Scientometrics Guidebooks Series* aimed at as a compendium of papers from our journal serving interested researchers to access a doubly quality filtered literature on the topic. The first part of the filtering referred to the peer reviewing all manuscripts went through before publication in *Scientometrics*. The second one has been made as been described in the introduction of Braun (2007) as follows.

"For being a true and useful *Guidebook*, the selection of the content papers had to be done in the possibly wisest way. That is why we have decided this to be done based on the collective wisdom and experience of a recognized group of internationally known and reputed group of experts, the Members of the Editorial and Advisory Board of *Scientometrics*. Letters have been sent to those experts inviting them to select and suggest papers from the journal they consider to serve the readers best.

The response has been unusually enthusiastic. As a result a first list of papers has been compiled and iterated to the participants. After many iterations a final list was created and has been ordered along the following chapters:

- Basic concepts and general issues
- Using, improving, extending and modifying the impact factor
- Critical issues

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The aims and scope of the *Guidebook* is to provide PhD students, research scientists, science managers, committee decision-makers, science and research policy people, granting bodies and any interested person in such topics a detailed, precise and theoretically and practically useful tool.

The content is hoped to represent the best available compendium for helping the above-mentioned readers in the best way for investigations and decisions on evaluations at individual and departmental level” (Braun 2007).

Five years have passed since the publication of that *Guidebook*. During those years many new papers on the *Impact Factor* have been published in *Scientometrics* and in other journals around the globe.

We have considered that time has come now for another analysis of the same nature newly dedicated to the Impact Factor’s use and misuse in research evaluation. This special issue of our journal dedicated to this topic has been conceived and built in a somewhat different way by not limiting the scope of the topic to the selection of papers from only one journal. In fact we have invited a number of scientists from all around the world being members of the board of *Scientometrics* and others to expose their thoughts re the *Impact Factor*.

The issue which follows is a collection of a quite comprehensive assembly of competent papers from worldwide experts on the topic.

After tens of years dealing with scientometrics and with its main journal I am not that naive to suppose that in this issue we will be able to clear up and settle all the questions, problems, and views once for ever re the *Impact Factor*. But as an incorrigible optimist I am hoping that the present issue could be considered as perhaps one of the milestones on the way scientometrics will and could reach a useful and promising future.

Finally I would like to express my most sincere thanks to all those colleagues who have enthusiastically responded to my invitation to contribute to this special issue.

References

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