Letter to the Editor

Comments on “A Bibliometric Analysis of Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage Using CiteSpace” by Su et al. (2019)

Yuh-Shan Ho

The article entitled “A Bibliometric Analysis of Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage Using CiteSpace” was recently published in Sage Open by Su et al. (2019). The authors stated in section “Data Collection” that “This study used the core set of the WoS database as the data source and the search strategy of ‘Topic = Intangible cultural heritage + Document type = Article’ to collect a total of 249 articles on April 13, 2018.”

Web of Science databases (https://clarivate.com/products/web-of-science/databases/) include the following:

1. Web of Science Core Collection
2. Specialist Collection: BIOSIS Citation Index, BIOSIS Previews, Biological Abstracts, Zoological Record, MEDLINE, CAB Abstracts, CABI Global Health, Inspec, and FSTA
3. Regional Collection: Chinese Science Citation Database, Russian Science Citation Index, KCI Korean Journal Database, and SciELO Citation Index
4. Data Collection: Data Citation Index
5. Patent Collection: Derwent Innovations Index (DII)

When we applied the same method mentioned in the original paper (Su et al., 2019), 884 articles were found from 2003 to 2018 (data last updated: April 22, 2019). The result from the original paper with 249 articles (Su et al., 2019) shows an obvious difference compared with the result we found.

Web of Science Core Collection
Web of Science Core Collection: Citation Indexes include the following:

1. Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED)
2. Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)
3. Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI)
4. Conference Proceedings Citation Index–Science (CPCI-S)
5. Conference Proceedings Citation Index–Social Science & Humanities (CPCI-SSH)
6. Book Citation Index–Science (BKCI-S)
7. Book Citation Index–Social Sciences & Humanities (BKCI-SSH)
8. Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)

Web of Science Core Collection: Chemical Indexes include the following:

1. Current Chemical Reactions (CCR-EXPANDED)
2. Index Chemicus (IC)

As there are many levels of databases listed above, authors should choose the suitable databases for their bibliometric researches (Ho, 2019a, 2019b). For instance, ESCI complements the highly selective indexes by providing earlier visibility for sources under evaluation as part of SCIE, SSCI, and A&HCI’s rigorous journal selection process (http://liu.brooklyn.libguides.com/az.php?a=e) (Ho, 2019a, 2019b).

ESCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH, BKCI-S, BKCI-SSH, CCR-EXPANDED, IC, and other databases from Web of Science are inappropriate for “A bibliometric analysis of research on intangible cultural heritage using CiteSpace” (Su et al., 2019). Using the Topic: (Intangible cultural heritage) that means Topic: (Intangible and cultural and heritage) is inappropriate for the study of Su et al. (2019). Based on the searching keywords from the original paper (Su et al., 2019), an improved method is to use SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, and A&HCI with the searching keyword “intangible cultural heritage” from 1900 to 2018. Document type of “article” was considered. This method resulted in 355 articles. However, SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, and A&HCI are designed mainly for researchers to find published literature works not used for bibliometric studies (Ho, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b). Thus, it is always necessary to use an accurate bibliometric method when using the SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, and A&HCI (Ho, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a). It was pointed out that the articles, which can only be searched by KeyWords Plus, were irrelevant to “intangible cultural heritage” (Fu & Ho, 2015). Ho’s group was the first to propose “front page” as a filter to improve the bibliometric method (Fu & Ho, 2014; Fu et al., 2012; Ho & Fu, 2016). Only documents with searching
keywords in their “front page,” including the article title, the abstract, and the author keywords, were considered. As a result, 329 articles (98% of the 335 articles) had search keywords in their “front page,” whereas six articles (1.7%) did not include “intangible cultural heritage” in their “front page.” Similar comments have also been published in Environmental Science and Pollution Research (Ho, 2018a), Renewable & Sustainable Energy Reviews (Ho, 2018c), Journal of Soils and Sediments (Ho, 2019c), and Chinese Medical Journal (Ho, 2019d) in recent years. In addition to such limited data, 335 articles published in 15 years (2004–2018) were not appropriate to have a bibliometric study from a statistical point of view.

Furthermore, Su et al. (2019) noticed that “Because articles are more academic in nature than conference proceedings, using a longer publication span helps to collect more a complete body of literature.” in section “Data Collection.” Documents in SCI-EXPANDED and SSCI can be categorized as more than one document. For example, documents “Oral sensing of food properties” (Kohyama, 2015) and “Mediterranean diet, culture and heritage: Challenges for a new conception” (Medina, 2009) were both document types of articles and also proceedings papers.

Su et al. (2019) published the bibliometric paper in Sage Open using an inappropriate method; this may result in misleading the journal readers (Ho, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). From perspective, Su et al. could have provided a greater accuracy and information about their data if they understood Web of Science beforehand. In addition, Su et al. used only 249 papers published in 16 years (2003–2018) for bibliometric study. Using such limited numbers of articles for bibliometric studies may be inappropriate from a statistical point of view.

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