

## Core Journal Lists: Classic Tool, New Relevance

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## **Core Journal Lists: Classic Tool, New Relevance**

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**ABSTRACT.** Reviews the historical context of core journal lists, current uses in collection assessment, and existing methodologies for creating lists. Outlines two next generation core list projects developing new methodologies and integrating novel information/data sources to improve precision: a national-level core psychology list and the other a local institutional core list for the interdisciplinary field of urban studies and planning. The paper is based on the authors' panel presentation at the 2009 ACRL National Conference (Seattle, WA) entitled "Core Journal Lists Re-viewed and Re-imagined."

**KEYWORDS.** Core lists. Metrics. Collection assessment. Psychology. Urban Studies and Planning. Collection development, journals, serials

## **Core Journal Lists: Classic Tool, New Relevance**

Core journal lists have remained an important tool for the assessment of academic libraries' serials collections for many years. Increasingly, as budgets stagnate or decline, and funds for serials acquisition are harder to come by, academic librarians need to ascertain whether journal collections are relevant, and whether they represent the "core" of excellence in terms of the expectations of researchers in a discipline. Scholars, now used to discussion of their publications in terms of citation metrics, want to know the relative stature of journals in their field, and look to librarians for ranked lists of "top tier" serials titles. Scholarly communication committees and certain university departments may now exhort researchers, especially junior faculty, to publish in open access journals, or at least journals with liberal self-archiving policies. These open access journals may lack a track record as far as stature in a field. Academic librarians, especially subject specialists or library liaisons to departments, are the natural "go to" professionals for definitive information on the current core list for a discipline or subfield.

Almost every discipline has traditionally published its lists of "core" books and serials, the essential titles whose collective ownership denoted excellence in research-level collections. Many librarians eagerly awaited the publication of these lists in order to make the statement that the library held the "core" resources for the discipline. These lists were passed down and updated in a few select print publications, and mainly represented the output of well-known journal publishers. Publishers had a stake in the lists as well, with important core journals potentially commanding higher prices due to anticipated demand coming from the increased stature of certain essential titles. Core journals were somewhat immune from cancellation in lean times, and long print runs of these important titles were spared during weeding projects that reclaimed needed shelf space. These core journal titles formed the basis of the serials collections held in high esteem by research institutions and communities of scholars. The lists were published alongside the

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established library handbooks that acted as “roadmaps” when used by collection development librarians. Ownership of titles on the core lists was used as an assessment tool that both new and seasoned librarians could point to when administrators asked for assurance about the state of the journal collections. Libraries’ journal collections could be compared against those of peer institutions based on quantified strengths. Libraries’ and institutions’ reputations hinged on quality of collections and the services provided to access those collections.

In other areas of collections work, various other types of standard lists of essential book and journal materials have been published by domain experts and librarians. Reference book collections had their own lists of essential titles as well, which librarians kept up to date by judiciously adding to the basic core collection for each discipline. However, with ownership of serials and some books now being replaced by digital access models, collection development tools are being reassessed. Librarians may wonder what sources to consult to assess their disciplinary book and journal collections today, especially when funding is uncertain. Weeding of print runs has taken on greater urgency as journal content has often been made available through electronic backfiles and valuable shelf space is at stake.

In terms of the library literature on core lists, a recent article by Nisonger detailed the history and current issues surrounding this topic comprehensively (Nisonger 2007). Although there are few articles dealing specifically with core journal lists, the development of these tools for another social sciences area, management, has been detailed in the literature. (Van Fleet, McWilliams, and Siegel 2000). With bundling and other package deals, librarians began to lose touch with the selection of each and every journal title for either acquisition or cancellation. Further compounding this problem, single titles often change publishers, and publishing companies themselves are undergoing mergers. Some question whether electronic resources and serials librarians can manage subscriptions without as much input as

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in the past from subject librarians. Subject specialist librarians, on the other hand, want current tools that will help them in the assessment of collections for disciplinary strengths. Librarians working in subject areas look for “best practices” and guides to provide background and structure to collection development work. Serials acquisitions work has become increasingly complicated, and current guides and published core lists will still be useful to many librarians assessing collections in a particular discipline. Due to the closing of ranks when open library positions cannot be filled, interdisciplinarity, or other factors, librarians may find themselves covering unfamiliar disciplines, and thus published core lists as collection development tools will be most welcome.

A variety of metrics have become increasingly important to collection development work. With the development of the “Journal Impact Factor” (Garfield 2006), certain journals became essential to disciplines, and as Guedon stated, “printed scholarly core journals suddenly enjoyed a sizable and secure market” and “there was gold in those there stacks after all!” (Guedon 2001). As time went on, especially in the sciences, use of the impact factor began to take on greater importance for ranking journals in a field. Many began to conflate the idea of “ranking” with “core” in terms of lists, with everyone in the serials chain looking for lists defining the most important journals in a field. The proprietary “Journal Impact Factor,” calculated annually and reported in Thomson Reuters *Journal Citation Reports (JCR)*, is well known and can be accessed at many academic libraries. There are problems with solely using impact factor for deriving core lists of journals for disciplines outside of the sciences, and those in disciplines within arts and humanities and behavioral and social sciences may need to consult other tools. The social sciences, with less title coverage in *JCR* than the sciences, do not find *JCR* as useful in looking at the total scholarly literature available in the discipline. Arts and humanities disciplines are not covered, and have fewer metrics with which to work.

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There are many issues with the use of impact factor evaluation of individual journal performance, and these have been elucidated by many authors (Pringle 2008). Other librarians focus on the major disciplinary abstracting and indexing (A&I) services, (such as *PsycINFO* for psychology) as a guide to journal titles in building serials collections. The disciplinary A&Is have stringent coverage criteria and retain credibility among librarians working in the disciplines. Yet other librarians may focus on the holdings of other academic library collections that are well-known for excellence in a given discipline, and rely on large bibliographic utilities such as *WorldCat* for that information. Individual librarians may also use factors such as rejection rate (where reported publicly) from resources such as *Cabell's Directories* (Cabell Publishing 2007) as well as faculty input to create lists of desirable journals. *Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Reports* now also includes five year impact factor analysis, and an add-on product entitled "*Journal Performance Indicators*" (Thomson Reuters 2009a) offers trend analysis of journal titles over time.

Other new and emerging metrics have muddied the water and caused confusion. Many new metrics are more appropriate for evaluating an individual researcher, and may be confused with metrics that have been developed to evaluate and compare journal titles. Researchers have a toolkit of metrics available for evaluation of their own work and for determining the research impact of each particular article. Where *Web of Science* was previously the only tool for citation analysis, *Scopus*, Google Scholar, and other search tools now also provide this feature. *Scopus* covers the behavioral sciences more extensively than *Web of Science*, so researchers in psychology may begin to turn to *Scopus* to see citing information for a larger selection of articles. *Scopus*, *Web of Science*, and *Journal Citation Reports* are subscription products, and those without access may depend on Google Scholar. There are other new citation analysis metrics based around Google

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Scholar data, such as Harzing's "Publish or Perish," (Harzing n.d.) and these are most useful for informal evaluation of individual articles at this point.

Google Scholar, with its near ubiquitous presence in all areas of the library, does not publish its journal coverage lists or ranking algorithms, claiming only to cover what it deems "scholarly." Thomson Reuters' products, besides reporting cited references, now include availability of tools for personal citation analysis that include metrics such as "h-index"(Hirsch 2005). *Scopus* also offers tools for personal citation analysis. Researchers know that personal impact can hinge on choosing the best publication outlets, as well as the most appropriate journals for submission of research results. Researchers want librarians to point them to tools that will increase their chances of choosing publications that will be more apt to lead to successful promotion and tenure actions, as well as increase their stature in their respective fields. Along with this "top tier" journal list is the desire for a "B" level list when a quicker publication time is needed, or where work considered less important or cutting edge can be submitted. It is a great value-added service for the librarian to have a handle on what is happening with the journals in the field; which are on the way up in terms of metrics, and which are falling out of favor. For this, the librarian may follow the rankings, but for building and assessing the collection, the librarian may wish to rely on established "core lists," published under the imprimatur of a credible, authoritative source. The library community in each discipline can be a producer of core lists as long as there is a published methodology, a plan for sustainability, and a program for production of an accessible publication.

Further complicating the situation is vocal library support for the open access movement, especially for the self-archiving of articles (accepted or postprint version) in subject or institutional repositories, or in support for open access journals. Where "author pays" or other business models requiring publication, page, or even submission fees are not desirable due to disciplinary culture (primarily those fields

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not supported heavily by grants), librarians have been heavy advocates of “free to read, free to author” open access journals. The established core journal lists would not be expected to include any fledgling open access journals, even from a reputable institutional publisher using the utmost stringency of peer review, until these journals have had the time to become more visible in their respective fields. It can take some time for an individual open access journal, maybe published by a university library, to raise its profile to the extent necessary to make it onto an annual list of core titles. Librarians may want to showcase some of these journals, and include born digital journals, even if they are free, in core lists as a matter of support for the open access movement. The former list published by ACRL EBSS Psychology/Psychiatry Committee (now Psychology Committee) included this practice. (Psychology/Psychiatry 2007)

Many of the traditional disciplinary published core journal lists are now dated, and librarians may be seeking updated editions of these familiar collection development tools. Some library groups, such as the ACRL EBSS Psychology Committee, have been taking a new look at the usefulness, relevance, and future prospects for the traditional idea of core journal lists in a specific field. Complicating matters is the blurring of boundaries in terms of the disciplines; psychology is a case in point with its recent forays into more classically scientific areas such as brain research and cognitive neuroscience. Finding a way to represent a core list that takes into account the variety of areas covered is a challenge, but an important one. Library organizations may be the groups that can put an imprimatur on collection development and assessment tools at a time when traditional handbooks and other standard sources of this information are outdated. The ACRL EBSS Psychology/Psychiatry Committee has produced a list in the past and published it on its website (Psychology/Psychiatry 2007). The Committee has spent the last two years studying the concept and discussing ways to develop a new kind of list which

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would take into account both traditional and emerging metrics. Librarians making up the Committee are often responsible for collection development in psychology, and constitute a national group of subject-focused librarians for the purposes of wide-ranging discussion of important topics of interest as well as important decision-making about areas of concern to academic libraries.

Another question revolves around the identity of the best potential producer or author of a core list in a discipline, and how often it should be updated. A committee of disciplinary librarians may be a credible, authoritative group that can produce the list, and if ownership is not taken, commercial interests may fill the void. Producers of citation products, commercial database producers, Google or other search engine companies, or scholarly societies with vested interests may be able to promote specific titles. As sustainability of such a list is always an issue, a national organization dedicated to best practices of the profession might be the best source for such a list. Some of the available metrics available these days for use by those interested in core lists include: Thomson Reuters' "Journal Impact Factor" (with implications for subject areas)(Cross 2008); Eigenfactor (now included in *JCR*)(West et al. 2007); "Journal Usage Impact Factor" from the UK Serials Working Group (Bollen and Van de Sompel 2008); creative use of *SCOPUS*' relatively limited "Journal Analyzer," (SCOPUS 2009); common library tools such as *WorldCat's* holding library listings; download statistics from publishers; local *Project COUNTER* compliant usage statistics; and a variety of publisher-generated "journal performance indicators." Other lesser-known journal ranking indicators include "SCImago Journal Rank" (SJR) (SCImago Journal & Country Rank n.d.), which is based on Scopus data, and the "journal-ranking.com" tool published by Red Jasper's "Center for Journal Ranking (CJR)" (Jasper n.d.) that extends the concept of "page ranking". These new options have not yet made inroads into traditional sets of tools familiar to most researchers or tenure committees. Traditionally-published lists can

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be consulted for background, but may be deemed too dated for use in making current lists. Historical core lists can be important for weeding print back runs, or for use in studies of changing patterns of journal publishing in the disciplines. Most important in the local situation would be the input of domain experts (the faculty at the institution), subject librarian experience, and listings that may be generated from national forums of disciplinary faculty, members of scholarly societies, and other experts.

In times of economic uncertainty, and even in such times as the recent severe budgetary stress facing both public and private academic libraries, the core lists may be instructive in cancellation and weeding decision-making situations. Even though librarians have lost some ability to manage single titles due to “big deals” and other package offerings, it is still possible to spare certain titles from the budget ax if they are deemed important, core titles. The ACRL EBSS Psychology Committee, after analyzing the situation over the previous two years, has decided to continue with the production of the core list for psychology using new methods. As psychology can be considered a somewhat discrete area in terms of library collections (even with its many subfields), it was also deemed of interest to compare another interdisciplinary social sciences area in terms of tools for serials decision-making. The area of “urban studies and planning” is illustrative of a different kind of dilemma; the need to piece together a list of serials that can be considered “core” in a more interdisciplinary field.

A new core list for psychology will be produced by the ACRL EBSS Psychology Committee for use by interested academic librarians in collection development work with serials. Following Committee discussion, literature review and feedback received from the authors’ presentation at the 2009 ACRL National Conference (Paynter, Jackson, and Mullen 2009), it was determined that the Committee will use new methods to produce the core list, continuing to showcase any important new

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open access titles for interested parties. It has been said that collection development is an art, and librarians may, more than ever, need tools to stand behind their work in an increasingly digital world. The future for librarians may hinge on continuing to reiterate the need for collection development standards and information on best practices so that libraries can continue to make available top-notch journal collections, no matter what format or business model, even in challenging economic circumstances.

### **CORE PSYCHOLOGY JOURNALS: A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT**

At the ALA Midwinter Meeting (Philadelphia, PA 2008) the ACRL EBSS Psychology Committee appointed a task force to investigate whether the criteria used in creating its existing *Core Journals in Psychology* list were still useful, and if not, to devise a new set of criteria. The existing criteria and issues arising from them are reviewed, followed by an outline of the demonstration project's new criteria and database structure.

#### **Existing criteria**

Existing criteria used to compile the *Core Journals in Psychology 2007* (Psychology/Psychiatry 2007) list include:

1. Journals ranked in the top ten in their subject category by impact factor in Journal Citation Reports 2005.
2. Journals listed in Baxter, P. M. (1993). *Psychology: A guide to reference and information sources*. Reference sources in the social sciences series, no. 6. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
3. Journals held by 500+ libraries, according to WorldCat.

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The core list used Thomson Reuters' *JCR (Social Sciences Edition)* psychology subject category rankings list by "Journal Impact Factor" to determine the initial titles included in the core list. *JCR* publishes subject lists that may be sorted to show the top ten journals by impact factor for each category. "Journal Impact Factor" is derived using a sophisticated mathematical algorithm to portray the overall influence (or 'impact') of a given journal in a field based on citations to articles published in the journal.

*JCR* citation data is derived from the journals covered in Thomson Reuters' *Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)* and *Science Citation Index (SCI)* databases. Comparing *SSCI* and *SCI* 2009 master journal title lists (Thomson Reuters 2009b) with the American Psychological Association's *PsycINFO* 2009 journal list (American Psychological Association 2009), which serves as the master list for the project, reveals that only 42.8% of the *PsycINFO* titles are in *SSCI* and *SCI*. Thus, it was decided to seek out additional sources of impact factor data in hopes of expanding the number of journals with this type of data to improve the accuracy of the core list.

Another issue arises in the subject category top ten journal lists because the ranking is by the most recent year's impact factor data, which masks the often significant volatility of impact factor scores year-to-year. For example: *Attachment & Human Development's* impact factor was 0.0 in 2005, whereas in 2006 it was 1.625. The median impact factor for titles in the development psychology subject category (*Attachment & Human Development's* category) in 2006 was 1.349, so as a journal it went from zero impact factor in 2005 to above median in 2006. Thus, even though it was not considered for inclusion in the 2005 *JCR* edition, it was a very strong contender in 2006. For collection development purposes, such volatility makes subscription/continuation decisions based on impact factors unwise, since few librarians would consider it best practice to continuously subscribe and cancel based solely on impact factors. For the core journal list project the solution was to develop

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an impact factor five year average as the base figure for ranking because this is a more accurate measure over time of a journal's influence.

The second criterion used in forming the list was inclusion of the journal in *Baxter's Psychology: A guide to reference and information sources* (Baxter 1993). Due to the age of the publication, particularly in a fast changing discipline such as psychology, the committee recommended discontinuing its use.

The final criterion required that 500+ *WorldCat* libraries indicate holdings of the title. On the face of it, this appears to be a reasonable requirement since core journals ideally would be widely held. In practice however, it is not a reliable measure for the following reasons:

- Most journals have multiple ISSNs, thus each ISSN must be searched separately and the holding libraries added together.
- *WorldCat* often lists multiple records for the same ISSN, requiring additional searching and adding more holdings to the journal's tally.
- Libraries often have holdings of a single journal in multiple formats, i.e. print, microfilm, and online versions. Should that count as one holding or three?
- *WorldCat* records give no indication as to whether the journal holding is a current subscription or not.

Given the likelihood of error creeping in during record keeping of all of the libraries' holdings, in addition to the sheer amount of time required to compile the data, the committee recommended discontinuing this criteria's use. Of the three original criteria, the committee decided only *JCR's* "Journal Impact Factor" would continue to be used as a criterion in the demonstration project.

### **New criteria**

Critiquing existing criteria is one thing; articulating new criteria that results in a more accurate list of core journals is quite another. The first issue to consider is 'what is

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core to whom'? There are three groups whose perspectives must be addressed when devising criteria and measures:

- **Researchers** trying to find articles on a topic are likely to define core journals as those they deem relevant while searching A&I databases or the Internet.
- **Scholars** who are seeking to determine which journals are best when submitting a manuscript or evaluating tenure portfolios.
- **Librarians** evaluating their collections for program/accreditation reviews or cancellation projects.

To integrate and weight these various perspectives, a number of resources were identified and evaluated for inclusion in the project. For example, circulation numbers for the journals was considered as a criterion, but upon investigation it proved too time-consuming to collect the often spotty data (many publishers do not publish their circulation figures). Resources that have been integrated into the database that will be used to generate the list of core titles include: relevant A&I database journal title coverage lists; *JCR's* "Journal Impact Factors", Scopus Journal Analyzer figures, and Eigenfactor figures.

Journal title coverage lists of widely subscribed psychology databases were used as a proxy to represent the end user/researchers' experience of 'core' titles, i.e. the journals they would most likely find while searching A&I databases. The journal title coverage lists from common psychology A&I databases used include: the American Psychological Association's *PsycINFO*, EBSCO's *Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection*, Gale's *Psychology Collection*, National Library of Medicine's *Medline*, and Proquest's *Psychology Journals*. *PsycINFO's* journal coverage list was designated the master list to track new ISSNs and journal status (cessations or new titles) going forward. The new *Core Journals in Psychology* list ranking algorithm

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weights inclusion on one or more of the journal title coverage lists, with more weight given to journals indexed in multiple databases.

Scholars and librarians are also interested in the prestige and ranking of journals; thus, to better represent different measures of importance, the demonstration project used a weighted composite ranking based on *JCR*, *Scopus*, and *Eigenfactor* annual ranking data. This data was collected by task force members and used to calculate a five year average for each journal on the master list of *PsycINFO* journals.

End-users will not have access to the *JCR*, *Scopus*, or *Eigenfactor* data, but will instead be able to search the full ranked list of journals and limit by subject category (e.g., developmental, social, educational, etc). The journal subject categories are based on the American Psychological Association's *PsycINFO Classification Codes*, not on *JCR* subject categories as was previously the practice. Upon clicking on a listed journal title, users will be presented with information about the serial's history (former titles and ISSNs), as well as information on which of the database(s) index it, and finally with three graphs (one each for *JCR*, *Scopus*, and *Eigenfactor*) with a trend line plotting the journal's rating over a five year period, with a second line plotting the trend line of the average of journals within its subject category to help readers gauge the journal's importance within its subject area. The graph's x axis will not present units of measure - this will keep the actual and proximate values from each of the three services hidden. It is also designed to keep users' attention focused on the primary goal of the graphs - as an illustration of the performance of a specific journal in relation to the average of other journals in the same subject category over a five year period, across all three data sets.

Due to the data heavy nature of this approach, a MySQL relational database was created to support the increasing types of analysis possible on the data while making the ongoing work less burdensome for future ACRL EBSS Psychology

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Committee members, especially given its distributed work environment. For end-users, rather than working with traditional flat HTML lists, the database structure will allow a variety of searching approaches and downloading options. The database will be freely available to search on the Internet, though as of this writing where it will be hosted is yet to be determined.

This demonstration project began with a reconsideration of whom core lists are meant to serve, then evaluated existing resources, integrated new data sources, and ultimately created a database to support this new data rich environment which it is hoped will serve users well.

## **CORE JOURNAL LISTS ACROSS THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: ARE THEY RELEVANT TO OTHER RELATED FIELDS?**

The ACRL EBSS Psychology Committee is a long-standing group within a well-defined and well-developed academic discipline. Will the data-driven model proposed by this group be of value to other social science fields? More importantly, is the concept of a "core" journal collection relevant for other social science fields? The number of degree programs offered by universities and colleges has expanded significantly in the last five decades. What began as one-off courses have become certificate programs, educational minors, and now, educational majors with graduate programs (Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Women's Studies, etc).

Urban Studies and Planning (USP) was chosen as a case study to examine whether existing core list criteria are applicable to other social science fields. For those unfamiliar with the discipline, USP focuses upon how the physical environment of cities influences human social engagements. Though USP programs have existed

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for several decades, there has never been a defined "core" journal collection developed by librarians or researchers. There are no longer any existing USP professional library groups or a scholarly society addressing the issue of "core," nor is there specific accreditation criteria focused on library "core" holdings.

### **Existing ACRL EBSS Psychology Committee criteria as a model for Urban Studies and Planning**

All of the existing criteria in use in psychology's core journal list depend upon a set of national criteria whose sources are available and widely distributed among academic libraries. In other social science disciplines, data, data sets, and data sources may not be as widely distributed and the metrics may need adjustment. Additional factors that can be applied to create local core journal lists include faculty publication data (Nisonger 2007) and faculty surveys. The three existing psychology core list criteria are analyzed in turn for their relevance and utility to USP.

*Journal Citation Report's* 2006 and 2007 lists include thirty titles for USP while the 2008 edition lists thirty-two. Using the 2006 *JCR* as a baseline, the top ten journals varied yearly; however, eight of the top ten titles in 2006 were within the top ten on the five-year journal "Journal Impact Factor" average (2008 *JCR*). Though there is some annual variability, it is somewhat averaged out over an extended time period; therefore, for a social science such as USP, this metric works well.

USP does not have a current journal guide; similar to the Baxter publication in psychology, the most recent was Duensing's *Information Sources in Urban and Regional Planning*, in which chapter two is devoted to indexes and abstracts (Duensing 1994). Interestingly, Duensing mentions the now defunct Council of Planning Librarians who might have addressed the issue of creating a "core" journal list for USP. This book is held by approximately 350 *WorldCat* libraries.

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The last of the existing criteria, journals held by 500+ *WorldCat* libraries, is based on the assumption that the field is widely taught and covered. In regards to USP in the United States, only thirty-five institutions award a Ph.D. in the field, therefore a more reasonable number of holdings across *WorldCat* libraries might be 100-200+. To test this hypothesis, the holdings statements of libraries at universities with USP Ph.D. degree programs were examined to determine which of the top ten "Journal Impact Factor" titles listed on the 2006 *JCR* as "core" to the field were held.

Table 1.

### **New criteria**

In an effort to determine if there is a substantial difference between national and local criteria, two local sources were examined to get researchers' and scholars' perspectives. Given the limited number of Ph.D. programs nationally, some important questions emerged regarding whether faculty publications, the creation of vendor specific database packages, and/or other local and regional influences have a significant effect on journal collection management practices.

Course offerings within Portland State University's (PSU) USP program were reviewed, and the course most likely to focus on USP literature was selected for the case study. Additionally, USP faculty and graduate students were surveyed and asked to categorize a list of journals based on their perceptions, from core to non-core continuum.

Professor Carl Abbott, who teaches the "History and Theory of Urban Studies" course to all incoming graduate students, graciously provided the course's journal list,

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which contains thirty-one titles for students to review (C. Abbott, pers. comm.). The assignment's goal is for students to review a year's worth of articles within one of the journals and consider whether "one of the ways that a discipline, or field, or field of study defines itself is through a set of scholarly journals in which scholars discuss a shared set of issues and theoretical approaches. They constitute a possible core for the field of Urban Studies" (C. Abbott, pers. comm.). This list, which includes some red herrings, contains all but one of the top ten titles from the 2006 *JCR* list.

Next, faculty and graduate students in the USP program were surveyed to garner their opinion of core titles in 2008. In total, twenty-eight responses were received: fourteen faculty and fourteen graduate students. There are twenty-two tenure/tenure-track faculty and approximately ten adjunct faculty per year; and there were 203 Master and Ph.D. graduate students in the program in 2008. Though the results are not statistically significant, they did yield a difference of opinion from *JCR's* "core."

Faculty and graduate students were asked to use one, and only one, grouping for each journal title listed. The definitions for groups were: a "core" journal (essential for the field); a "research" journal (not essential but is frequently referenced and highly recommend for graduate research); a "curriculum" journal (supports an USP subfield and is not frequently consulted but has value for undergraduate students); an "other" journal (reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the field); and lastly, other options which included "not familiar with" or "not sure." Only one of the thirty-nine journals listed (*JCR's list* plus the USP course list) obtained a 75% core acceptance rate among participants - it was the *Journal of the American Planning Association*. By dropping down to a 50% core acceptance rate, three other journals were added:

- *Environment and Planning A*
  - Not on the *JCR* for Urban Studies

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- On *JCR* for Environmental Studies
- *Journal of Urban Affairs*
  - Ranked twelfth on 2006 *JCR* by "Journal Impact Factor"
- *Urban Studies*
  - Ranked tenth on 2006 *JCR* by "Journal Impact Factor"

Thus, *JCR* may overstate the definition of core as recognized by a local institution (R. Jackson, unpublished data), though further research is needed to confirm this finding.

An analysis was conducted of USP faculty publications over the last five years by randomly selecting two full professors, two associate professors and two assistant professors. Of the twenty-five articles published during this time frame, only two appeared in *JCR*'s top ten impact factor journals for USP. Fourteen of the articles were published in journals within the field of transportation, which is a separate *JCR* subject category. PSU hosts a National Center for Transportation, so this high level of production within transportation makes sense and logically should have an impact on local core journal collection decisions. Additional future research should include an examination of the USP faculty publishing records at universities with National Transportation Centers nationwide to determine the level of interdisciplinary influence.

In 2005, PSU Library, in consultation with the School of Urban Studies and Planning, purchased a three year subscription to a vendor newly developed "Urban Studies Package." The electronic package contained twelve journal titles, of which four were on the 2006 *JCR* top ten "Journal Impact Factor" list for Urban Studies and Planning. Reviewing the *JCR* 2008 five-year "Journal Impact Factor" average, the package now has six journals within the top twenty in the field. As vendors "mine" the *JCR* seeking to build custom packages for smaller disciplines, their influence on "core" journal collections must be a factor in emerging core list models.

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The core journal algorithm used in the 2007 *Core Psychology Journal List* by the ACRL EBSS Psychology Committee could provide smaller disciplines within the social sciences a tool for determining core journals with minimal tweaking. Additionally, smaller, interdisciplinary fields may also want to explore other metrics, such as local surveys and publication analyses to better determine their 'local core.'

### **IN CONCLUSION**

Core lists are still a useful tool for librarians for a range of collection development and assessment activities, as well as for use by faculty to choose publication outlets and/or for tenure committees to assess candidates. As with any metric however, regular review and updating ensure continued relevance by maximizing new data sources and methodologies. A review of the historical and contemporary context of core journal lists set the stage by detailing important issues affecting the creation and usage of the lists across disciplines. Initially focused on the pros/cons of existing criteria for the ACRL EBSS Psychology Committee's *Core Psychology Journal List*, the proposed new additional criteria and structure demonstrate how added data points can improve the list. The difficulty that many emerging and/or small interdisciplinary social science fields face in developing a core list as compared to larger and more developed fields is apparent. Thus, a new methodology, developed to generate an Urban Studies and Planning list, with an analysis of its utility compared to existing metrics in other social science fields was detailed. Academic librarians, especially subject specialists, must continue to develop current tools for use in collection development, management, and assessment. These tools, including "core journal lists" will add to librarians' ability to make important decisions when speaking for the institution's discipline-based serials collection. Production of the lists can also promote continued oversight over journal

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ranking resources (and their producers) by librarians. Subject specialist librarians will find knowledge of journal ranking valuable for their own work, as well as for collection assessment and communication with faculty, library administrators and other interested parties. Ongoing work by the ACRL EBSS Psychology Committee will focus on the identification of optimal publication outlets for an annual "core journal list" for psychology. Eventual publication will need to take into account librarian preference for format, web visibility for maximum dissemination, and open access accessibility for those who are interested in making use of a current core list for psychology.

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Top Ten JCR Titles held by PhD Granting Institutions  
Percentages

