

A Ten Year Analysis of Dissertation Bibliographies from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Rutgers University

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Introduction

PhD dissertation citation patterns have long been an area of interest to academic librarians, and there is copious literature examining the value of using the dissertation to conduct bibliographic analyses (Ardanuy, 2013). Haycock (2004), Pancheshnikov (2007), Feyereisen and Spoiden (2009), Conklin *et al.* (2010) and Rossmann (2013) have noted that such studies can provide valuable information for making collection development decisions, such as the ratio of money spent on books versus serials, or evaluating usage of specific journal subscriptions. Zipp (1996) found that PhD bibliographies are at least partially predictive of faculty journal citation patterns. Others (Rossmann, 2013; Ardanuy, 2013) have brought up the opportunity such analyses give the librarian to liaise with the faculty teaching in the PhD programs through sharing the findings. Dissertation bibliography analyses over lengthy time periods can also provide important information on the degree to which “disciplinary drift” is affecting a particular field (Knapp, 2013).

Methodology

The doctoral program of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Rutgers University is located on the New Brunswick, New Jersey campus, which has a Carnegie rating of RU/VH for universities with very high research activity. The department offers two PhDs: one in Bilingual Education and Second Language Acquisition, and one in Spanish Literature. The first relies on social sciences methods and the latter, humanities methods. This study aims to look at all citations together, and then separate them out by discipline for further analysis. 34 students have received PhDs from the department between 2003-2012, and all 29 available (not embargoed) dissertation bibliographies, consisting of 5735 citations, were examined for the present study. See Table 1. Most of the dissertations are available in the library’s printed holdings, others are available online through RUcore, the Rutgers University open access institutional repository, and others were requested directly from the authors themselves.

The methodology used in this study is descriptive, following Knapp (2013) and Banateppanvar, *et al.* (2013). Each dissertation was assigned a number, and the following information was recorded:

Year Approved

Discipline within the Dept. (Linguistics or Literary Studies)

Total number of citations

Publication category of each citation

No. of whole scholarly monographs

No. of scholarly monograph chapters

No. of primary literature works (novels, short stories, poetry, etc.)

No. of scholarly journal articles

No. of dissertations
No. of newspaper and magazine articles
No. of films
No. of datasets
Year of each citation
Name of each journal

Goals of the study included answering the following questions:

What is the ratio of cited works by publication category?
Does the ratio of formats cited change over time?
What are the most frequently cited journals?
Is the frequency with which a particular journal is cited in any way related to its open access status?
Are newer monographs and journal articles cited more frequently than older?
What library collection and liaison implications do these results have?

On occasion the citation was difficult to categorize, as multiple categories overlapped. For example, an article in a newspaper could consist of a poem, making it a primary literature article. When these cases arose, the final category was chosen based on format. So the example mentioned here was ultimately included in the Newspaper Article category.

Results

Citation rates of monographs and scholarly journal articles

72% (n=4141) of all citations were for monographic works. Of these, 58.1% (n=3334) were either whole scholarly monographs or scholarly monograph chapters, while only 16.7% (n=954) of all citations were scholarly articles. 14% (n=808) of all citations (19.5% of all monograph citations) were for primary literature monographic works such as novels and collections of stories and poems. Overwhelmingly, PhD students in the department are turning to book-length works as the scholarly references for their dissertations. This is not a particularly surprising finding given the heavy representation of humanities methods dissertations in the department (27 out of 29 throughout this study's time period); however, it is an important one. As library budgets are increasingly growing lopsided when it comes to monograph versus serial expenditures, it is noteworthy that there are disciplines in which books remain the primary recognition of scholarship and are very heavily used by graduate students, well known to be heavy users of library collections and collections-related services. The large number of individual monograph chapters cited (n=818, or 19.4% of monograph citations and 14.3% of all citations) suggests that book chapter document delivery services could be an important addition to a library's suite of services where it is not already provided. See Table 2.

Most Frequently Cited Journals and Their Open Access Status

The top 10 most frequently cited journals are listed in Table 3. Of these 10, over half (n=6) are

at least partially available on an open access basis, and 2 of those are available completely open access without embargo. Other embargoes range from 36 months to 10 years.

Age of citations

70.2% of all scholarly articles cited were published in the 1990s or 2000s (n=964). Only 28% of all scholarly articles cited were published during or before the 1980s (n=259), and only 13.3% were published during or prior to the 1970s (). By contrast, 65% (n=2164) of monographs and chapters cited were published in the 1990s and 2000s, and 35% (n=1155) published during or prior to the 1980s. 16.7% (n=255) of all monographs were published during or prior to the 1970s. In the humanities, scholarly monographs are perceived to have a useful shelf life that is lengthier than scholarly articles, and this is borne out by the present study. See Table 4.

Newspaper Article Citations

Newspaper articles comprised a very small percentage of total citations, at 2.5% (n=146). The overwhelming majority of citations are book reviews or theatrical performance reviews from the past 10 years and they were typically accessed freely via the newspaper websites. It does not appear that historic newspapers are being used with any regularity by graduate students in the department, which has clear implications for local collections expenditures. See Table 2.

Other material types

Other material types, including films, datasets and archival collections, comprised a very small proportion of overall citations. See Table 2.

Results from Subset of Spanish Literary Studies Bibliographies

The subset of humanities methods dissertation comprised 93% of the total sample, or 27 out of 29 dissertations. A total of 5458 citations were analyzed from these bibliographies.

The ratio of scholarly monograph and scholarly monograph chapter to journal articles was slightly higher among the literary dissertation bibliographies than it was for the overall combined dissertations. 58.3% (n=3183) of all citations were for scholarly monographs and chapters and 15.8% (n=862) for scholarly articles. See Table 2.

Results from Subset of Spanish Linguistics Bibliographies

The subset of social sciences methods dissertations comprised 6.9%, or 2 out of 29 dissertations. A total of 277 citations were analyzed from these bibliographies. With 55.2% (n=150) of citations from whole scholarly monographs or scholarly monograph chapters, the linguistics monograph citation patterns were more closely aligned with the humanities citation patterns than expected by the author. As expected, however, journal articles comprised a significantly higher percentage of all citations than the humanities dissertations: 33.2% (n=92). However, because of the small sample size, caution must be exercised when using the data to inform library decision making for these graduate students. See Table 2.

Conclusion

What this study has shown conclusively is that the monograph is still king when it comes to doctoral research in Spanish and Portuguese at Rutgers University, whether or not the research is in the social sciences or humanities. This has important implications for budget allocations, acquisitions patterns, services to graduate students, liaison relationships, as well as predicting the citation patterns of the teaching faculty.

The study demonstrates that the articles cited by doctoral students are slightly more recent than the monographs they cite, and further, that many of the most frequently cited journals and newspapers are open access and freely available on the web. This is consistent with research showing that monographs have a lengthy shelf-life to the scholar, and that open access journal articles may be cited more frequently than articles that are not available open access. This information can help evaluate current subscriptions held by Rutgers University Libraries, as well as provide information relevant when considering the purchase of backfiles of journals. In an environment of falling budgets, filling in gaps within the monograph collection would appear to be a more user-responsive decision than acquiring backfile journal packages.

These findings can also be used to help promote the development and participation with institutional repositories, which can help provide open access to articles even when the article was published in a closed journal. Sharing this information with faculty and graduate students is a liaison opportunity for librarians, and helps ensure access to the work produced within the university.

In the future these results could be used to help design a follow-up survey of graduate students. One goal might be to determine whether their reliance on open access journals is the result of the ease with which the full text may be found, and if so, does it reflect a lack of facility with paid library journal subscription access.

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Tables

Table 1: Distribution of Dissertations by Year

Year	Total number of Dissertations Included in Study	Number of Humanities Dissertations	Number of Social Sciences Dissertations	Total number of Citations
2012	2	2	0	535
2011	3	3	0	826
2010	3	2	1	511
2009	0	0	0	0
2008	2	1	1	421
2007	3	3	0	531
2006	5	5	0	825
2005	4	4	0	676
2004	6	6	0	1215
2003	1	1	0	122

Table 2: Cited Items by category

Item category cited	Percentage out of total citations (n=5735)	Percentage from subset of humanities dissertation citations (n=5458)	Percentage from subset of social sciences dissertation citations (n=277)
Whole scholarly monograph	43.9% (n=2515)	44.7% (n=2440)	27.1% (n=75)
Scholarly monograph chapter	14.3% (n=818)	13.6% (n=743)	27.1% (n=75)
Primary literature monographs	16.5% (n=946)	14.7% (n=805)	1.1% (n=3)
Scholarly journal article	16.6% (n=954)	15.8% (n=862)	33.2% (n=92)
Dissertations	<1% (n=42)	<1% (n=28)	5.1% (n=14)
Newspaper articles	2.5% (n=146)	2.7% (n=146)	0% (n=0)
Films	<1% (n=38)	<1% (n=38)	0% (n=0)
Datasets	<1% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	<1% (n=1)

Whole archival collections	<1% (n=3)	<1% (n=3)	0% (n=0)
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Table 3: Most Frequently Cited Journals and Their Open Access Status

Journal Title	Number of Times Cited	Open Access Availability
Revista Iberoamericana	39	Yes, with 36 month embargo
Atenea	21	Yes
Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos	14	Yes
Hispania	15	No
Revista de Estudios Hispánicos	13	No
Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea	13	No
Inti	11	Yes, with 10 year embargo
Latin American Theater Review	10	Yes, with 4 Year embargo
Letras Peninsulares	10	No (Out of Print)
Punto de Vista	9	Yes, with 4 year embargo

Table 4: Age Distribution of Cited Scholarly Monographs and Articles by Year

Item category cited	2 years or younger when cited (n=174)	3-5 years old when cited (n=551)	6-10 years old when cited (n=1037)	11-20 years old when cited (n=1371)	Older than 20 years when cited (n=1138)
Whole scholarly monographs and chapters (n=3341)	3.7% (n=125)	12.7% (n=423)	24% (n=801)	31.9% (n=1067)	27.7% (n=925)
Scholarly journal articles (n=930)	5.3% (n=49)	13.8% (n=128)	25.4% (n=236)	32.7% (n=304)	22.9% (n=213)