

Editorial

The Impact Factor: “Goin’ Up”

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Two years ago, an Editorial discussed the impact factor (IF) metric, with a particular focus on sex and gender-related journals (Zucker & Cantor, 2003). Pen-in-cheek, it was noted that there was nothing more heart-warming than to hear a colleague call out, after a few drinks in a darkened bar in the middle of a scientific meeting, “What’s the impact factor?”

This Editorial provides a summary of IF data for the year 2003. To review, the operational definition of the IF used by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) is as follows: A journal’s IF for a given year is a measure of the frequency with which its recent articles are cited on average during that year. “Recent” refers to the two prior calendar years. Thus, a journal’s IF for a year is calculated as the total number of times articles from the journal are cited over the two prior years, divided by the total number of articles that the journal published during those two years. For example, to calculate the IF for Journal X for 2002, one would count the number of times articles from Journal X were cited in 2000 and 2001 and divide it by the number of articles that Journal X published in 2000 and 2001. Although the IF is the best known metric for citation analysis, there are other measures, including the Immediacy Index (II) and the Cited Half-Life (CHL). The II is a measure of how frequently the journal’s “average article” is cited the same year in which it is published. Thus, the II for a year is calculated as the number of times articles from that journal are cited during that year, divided by the number of articles that journal published that year. The CHL is a measure of the longevity of the frequency of citations to the journal, i.e., for how long the average article maintains its currency. The CHL for a year is determined by the number of prior publication years

required to account for a cumulative total of 50% of that year’s citations to the journal.

In Zucker’s (2002) inaugural commentary as Editor three years ago, it was noted that, at the beginning of the 21st century, there were a lot of sex and gender journals floating around: about 75 of them. Since then, a few of these journals have, so to speak, “bit the dust” (i.e., they have ceased publication): *Gender & Psychoanalysis*, *Journal of Gender, Culture, and Health*, *Journal of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association*, *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, and the *Scandinavian Journal of Sexology*. A few new journals have appeared on the scene: *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *Sexuality Research & Social Policy: Journal of NSRC*, *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Politics*, and the *International Chinese Sexology Journal*.

As noted by Zucker and Cantor (2003), however, only about a third of the journals that were listed in Zucker’s (2002) editorial are covered by *Current Contents* (CC), the weekly compendium of journal contents issued by the ISI. There are three main reasons for this: (1) some of the journals have just commenced publishing and thus have not yet been considered for inclusion in CC; (2) the ISI has considered a request by the Editor or publisher of some of the journals, but the request was denied for various reasons (e.g., erratic publication schedule, too obscure); (3) the Editor of the journal or the publisher has not asked for the periodical to be considered for inclusion in CC. As was the case two years ago, it remains a pity that some of the more interesting sexology journals that have appeared on the scene in the 1990s continue to be missing from CC, including *Sexualities* (Vol. 1 = 1998), *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment* (Vol. 6 = 1994),⁴ and *Sexualities, Evolution & Gender* (Vol. 1 = 1999).⁵ In this regard, it is also of note that some other long-standing sexology journals, such as *Journal of*

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⁴Originally published as *Annals of Sex Research* (Vol. 1 = 1988), which ceased publication in 1992.

⁵Originally published as *Psychology, Evolution & Gender*.

Table I. Impact Factor of Sexology- and Gender-Related Journals in 2003

Journal	Impact factor	2003 Total cites	2003 Articles	Immediacy index
Archives of Sexual Behavior	1.718	1032	40	0.375
Psychoneuroendocrinology	3.732	2838	85	0.988
Hormones and Behavior	3.222	2736	101	0.396
International Journal of Impotence Research	3.063	1431	128	0.234
Evolution and Human Behavior	2.222	442	35	0.143
Journal of Women's Health and Gender-Related Medicine	1.561	559	54	0.019
Signs	1.122	707	36	0.111
Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy	1.109	529	42	0.167
Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology	0.818	508	24	0.208
Journal of Sex Research	0.764	824	37	0.054
Psychology of Women Quarterly	0.658	932	33	0.061
Gender and Society	0.519	624	43	0.116
GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies	0.500	85	20	ND
Gender and Education	0.500	192	25	0.040
Sex Roles	0.468	1883	109	0.046
Feminism and Psychology	0.357	195	30	0.033
Feminist Review	0.333	153	22	0.045
Australian Feminist Studies	0.308	60	20	0.000
Journal of Homosexuality	0.277	511	28	0.143
Sexuality and Disability	0.257	120	10	0.000
Women's Studies International Forum	0.238	318	40	0.025
Journal of Gender Studies	0.171	39	12	0.000
Women and Therapy	0.135	202	22	1.045
Journal of the History of Sexuality	0.125	64	10	0.000
European Journal of Women's Studies	0.125	50	21	0.048
Frontiers: Journal of Women's Studies	0.106	46	ND	ND

Note. ND = no data. For each journal, Total Cites refers to the total number of unique references that were cited in the articles. Thus, for example, the mean number of unique references per article cited in the *Archives* was 25.8 (1032/40).

Psychology & Human Sexuality (Vol. 1 = 1988), have never been picked up by CC. Only one sex/gender journal, *AIDS and Behavior* (Vol. 1 = 1997), has now been added to the ISI database, but information on its IF is not yet available (R. Joyce, personal communication, November 11, 2003).

Table I shows the IF for the year 2003 of 26 journals that were evaluated in the previous editorial (Zucker & Cantor, 2003). In order to place these figures in comparative perspective, one should note the IF for four "alpha" journals, often the publication outlet of first choice for many authors: *New England Journal of Medicine* (IF = 34.83), *Nature* (30.97), *Science* (IF = 29.16), and the *Lancet* (IF = 18.31).

Within the field of sexology- and gender-related journals, how does the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* fare? Not badly. The tabled journals with the highest IF are *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, *Hormones and Behavior*, *International Journal of Impotence Research*, and *Evolution and Human Behavior*. Note that for these four journals the scope is probably broader than a journal like the *Archives*.

The remaining periodicals listed in the table, including the *Archives*, are largely social science journals. It can be seen that the *Archives* is in first place by a respectable margin. Indeed, the IF showed a sharp increase from previous years (2000 = 1.27, 2001 = 1.08; 2002 = 1.03). The Editor is pleased with this result, as it includes his first year as Editor (2002), along with the final year (2001) of the Founding Editor, Richard Green. Indeed, for the year 2002 alone, the IF of *Archives* "soared" to 1.91.

Inspection of the rest of the list reveals some interesting patterns. The IF for *Journal of Sex Research*, which pretty well ran neck-to-neck with the *Archives* in the 1990s, has plummeted for three consecutive years (2001 = 0.67; 2002 = 0.70; 2003 = 0.76). In contrast, the *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* has shown more fluctuation (2001 = 0.95; 2002 = 1.55; 2003 = 1.10).

With the exception of *Signs*, the journals with a clear feminist focus have a very low IF. One is struck by the relatively low IF of *Sex Roles* and *Journal of Homosexuality*, both of which began publishing shortly after the *Archives* in the early 1970s. Another journal that began publishing in 1990, the *Journal of the History*

of *Sexuality*, has also shown a sharp drop over the past two years (e.g., 2000 = 1.00; 2002 = 0.32; 2003 = 0.12).

It can be seen in Table I that the II for the *Archives* also did quite well in the year 2003. It ranked fourth among all of the journals listed in the table. Compared to the other core sexology journals, such as *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* and *Journal of Sex Research*, the II of *Archives* was notably higher.

Although the respectable rise in the IF of *Archives* is satisfying, one swallow does not make a summer, so we will have to see whether there is any stability to this notable jump.

Moreover, it remains unclear how to account for it. The quality of articles published in *Archives* has always been strong, as judged, for example, by the II and CHL, which has typically been >10.0. The *Journal* has also always had a very strong Editorial Board. Perhaps the increase reflects greater accessibility via the publisher's emphasis on electronic access and the relative ease this affords in downloading articles. In any case, if one wants

to use the IF as a crude marker of a journal's success, the data suggest that, if one is interested in disseminating one's sexological research, the *Archives* is now as good as it gets. To paraphrase from the Timmins, Ontario-raised singer/diva, Shania Twain, the IF of the *Archives* is "goin' up."

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to thank Pamela Blazick of the Institute for Scientific Information for providing some of the data used in this editorial.

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