

Citation Errors in 'Libres: Library and Information Science Research e-Journal'

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Abstract

This research was conducted to measure the citation errors in the research articles published in the *Libres: Library and Information Science Research e-Journal*, volume 26, issue 2, December, 2016. Sixty two journal citations were verified in details by classifying them into seven elements, viz. Author(s) Name, Article Title, Journal Name, Year, Volume No., Issue No., and Pages (both first and last page) and they were matched with the original articles. Non-journal citations were excluded from the study. Simple percentage analysis was employed by using percentage and frequency. Findings reveal that 63% (39) citations in *Libres* were inaccurate, while only 37% (23) citations were accurate. In 62 citations, a total of 50 errors were detected, out of which 18 were minor and 32 were major. A healthy mechanism is needed to maintain the reference accuracy as well as quality of the scholarly articles published in the *Libres* journal.

Keywords: Citation Errors; Reference Accuracy; Reference Lists; Libres: Library and Information Science Research e-Journal.

Introduction

The accurate summarizing of references is crucial in all kinds of scholarly communication. Inaccurate references can have severe aftermath, such as showing badly on the publishing journal, creating disbeliefs about the credibility of researchers, and impeding the retrieval of papers (Faunce & Job, 2001; Gupta, 2017a; Onwuegbuzie, Frels, & Slate, 2010; Spivey & Wilks, 2004).

Errors in reference lists create hurdles in various fields of research. One such hurdle described by Fenton et al. (2000) is that inaccurate references create distrust on the "capability and trustworthiness" of the author (p. 43). The best way to assure reference accuracy is to verify each and every reference from the original sources.

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Unquestionably, the "Reference list" which is embedded to a scholarly communication, is made from the previous studies, directly or indirectly consulted and referred by the researchers. It may also be considered as a yardstick for judging subject knowledge, reading habits and scholarship of the researchers. As an important segment of a scholarly communication, *Reference list* requires a top level accuracy along with its comprehensiveness. Preparation of *Reference list* and/or *Bibliography* is an art and demands perseverance and patience. The errors in such list act as a villain to further retrieval process of information sources. The technological developments, such as reference management tools and services, Citeseer, etc. have made convenient and easy to capture the details for compilation of a *Reference list*. The high level of reference accuracy, undoubtedly, makes the scholarly communication more reliable as well as useful and leads towards the high quality scholarship (Gupta, 2017b).

Due to citation errors, indexing of authors as well as journals in citation databases becomes complicated (Garfield, 1990). Garfield (1991) emphasized that "acknowledging prior research and intellectual debts is of crucial ethical importance" and invoked for the necessity preventively to teach young scholars on the research ethics incorporated in entire referencing (p. 14).

The *Libres: Library and Information Science Research e-Journal* is an international blind peer reviewed and refereed e-journal, which is being indexed in various indexing and abstracting databases, for example- ISA, LISA, EBSCO, Scopus & Cabells, and devoted to scholarly articles and research in Library and Information Science/Service (LIS). It appears twice a year in June and in December, and now jointly published by Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information and NTU Libraries, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. The journal was earlier published by the Department of Information Studies, Curtin University Perth, Western Australia. In this journal, all articles are blind reviewed by at least 2 referees and the copyright of each *Libres* article is held by the author (s) of the article. *Libres* publishes mainly three types of articles, i.e. research paper reporting a completed study that advances the field or profession; synthesis paper that surveys an area of LIS to synthesize a new or better understanding; and opinion/perspectives paper that explores a new conception of an aspect of LIS in a scholarly way. The *Libres* follows the *American Psychological Association Publication Manual* for in-line citations and references. *Libres* journal does not accept the plagiarised articles.

So far there is no such study could be traced regarding the citation errors in references in *Libres* journal. Hence, this study was conducted to measure the citation errors in references in research articles published in *Libres* journal.

Review of Related Literature

Referencing correctly according to a given citation style guide is a prime responsibility of authors, since it protects them from charges of academic theft and plagiarism as well as it enhances the quality and maintains the credibility of both authors and articles. At all times, there is space for betterment in all human endeavours. Scholarly articles in the all field of knowledge are no exception. As expressed by Asai and Vickers (1995) "humans are born to make mistakes, but should never give up the attempt to conquer this tendency" (p. 1063).

Perhaps the citation errors in scholarly references have occurred since the scholars have begun quoting works of other scholars. When Frank Place, Jr. (1916) wrote about citation error as a very old problem almost hundred years ago. In his signature study, he critically pointed out that several esteemed scholars take "a reference from another's bibliography as though it were thereby Gospel truth itself" (p. 699).

Goodrich and Roland (1977), in their signature study, found that "among 2,195 reference citations published during 1975 in 10 major U.S. medical journals, 634 (29%) were found to be erroneous on direct checking of the original source." This work is considered as the earliest research in the reference accuracy field.

Boyce and Banning (1979) assessed the citation accuracy of 487 citations of the 1976 issues of the *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* and the *Personnel and Guidance Journal* and found 13.6% and 10.7% total errors, respectively. They categorized citation errors as incorrect author name, book/article title, journal title, wrong entry, and omission errors.

MacRoberts and MacRoberts (1986) determined overlooked research by investigating 15 papers on the "history of genetics," and showed that these 15 papers needed 719 references for sufficient coverage of earlier research; however, only 216 (30%) among these 719 were genuinely cited in their sample. Individual papers cited between zero and 64% of relevant references.

Accuracy of citations is necessary to the development of scholarly communications. Several other factor such as bibliometrics studies, citation analyses, document delivery services (DDS), interlibrary loan (ILL), evaluation of an author's work, database management, etc. may suffer by citation errors (Pandit, 1993). Accurate citations make easier all of these activities. Errors in citations squarely influence the output of citation and bibliometric studies. Yankauer (1990) defined citation error as, "errors of commission or omission in the printing of the reference" (p. 38). Pandit (1993), in a study entitled "*Citation Errors in Library Literature*," indicates that "errors focus on the citations themselves and exclude the extent to which authors correctly quoted a text or acknowledged an intellectual debt" (p. 185). According to Doms (1989), a correct or accurate reference is "one in which all included elements are identical to the source" (p. 442).

The citation errors of the journal *Canadian Journal of Anaesthesia* were reduced by 50% from 1990 to 1994 by demanding the contributors the photocopies of the only first page of each and every reference cited in 'Reference lists' (Asano, Mikawa, Nishina, Maekawa, & Obara, 1995).

Prakash Adhikari (2010) conducted a study to investigate the accuracy of 63 randomly selected references appended in papers published in the two different issues of *Indian Journal of Otolaryngology and Head & Neck Surgery* (IJOHNS), viz. December

2009, Volume 61 No. 4 and January 2010, Volume 62 No. 1. By splitting up references into 6 components, they were verified pin-pointedly, and compared with the original sources for accuracy. The references, which cited in the indexing journals, were considered for verification. About 70% references in IJOHNS were accurate, while rests (30%) were inaccurate. Errors in author's name were found in 11.1% references, whereas errors in journal's name were accounted in 6.3% of references.

Lee and Lin (2013) study on "citation errors in the masters' theses of the library and information science and information engineering," employed a small sample of references appended in 125 masters' level dissertations of the Tamkang University's Department of Computer Science and Information Engineering (DCSIE) and the Department of Information and Library Science (DILS) to compare citation errors in two different subjects. These masters' dissertations were submitted in the years 2007 and 2011. They also compared their citation error rates to the previous studies and found that their error rates were lower than others. This study indicated that out of 3564 citations verified, 70.8% (2527) citations were correct while 22.8% (813) were incorrect, and remaining 6.4% (224) citations were not verifiable by any sources.

Gupta (2017c) recently verified the accuracy of 118 citations appended in two Indian library and information science journals, viz. *Annals of Library and Information Studies* and *DESIDOC Journal of Library and Information Technology*. In this study, the average number of errors was 1.28. Out of 118 article's citations checked, only 33% (39) were correct while 67% (79) were incorrect. Among 79 inaccurate citations, there were 151 errors detected in which 53% (80) were minor errors and 47% (71) errors were major. Accurate citations enhance the credibility of the authors, manuscripts, and the journal. The bibliographical references are a major element of any scholarly publication. Reference accuracy is absolutely necessary for giving credit to the article, scholars and journal. This investigation revealed very low reference accuracy (i.e. 33%) in the two Indian library and information science journals. Total 19 errors were traced in citing author's name, out of which 8 were in ALIS and 11 in DJLIT. Eleven errors (2 in ALIS and 9 in DJLIT) in the titles were found in both the journals. Referencing errors in journal name were almost equal in both the journals, i.e. 8 errors in ALIS and 7 in DJLIT. The lists of errors in name of author (s), title, and journal are also provided. Errors in year and page number were accounting 4 and 5 in ALIS; and 2 and 15 in DJLIT, respectively. ALIS had

more punctuation errors (48) compared to DJLIT (6). Inaccuracies in volume number were 2 in ALIS while DJLIT contained no error in volume number. Inaccuracies in issue number were 19 and 5 in ALIS and DJLIT, respectively. Honest efforts are needed to improve the quality of references by the researchers, reviewers and editors of the journals. They should follow the referencing instructions given by both the journals.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the present study are:

1. To evaluate the number of errors in citations;
2. To evaluate the major and minor errors in citations;
3. To find out the accuracy level of citations;
4. To evaluate the errors in citing name of authors;
5. To evaluate the errors in article titles;
6. To evaluate the errors in journal name;
7. To evaluate the errors in year and page number; and
8. To evaluate the errors in volume and issue numbers.

Materials and Methods

This investigation was carried out to check the citation errors in the research articles published in the *Libres: Library and Information Science Research e-Journal*, volume 26, issue 2, December, 2016. A total of 62 journal citations were verified in details by classifying them into seven bibliographic elements, viz. Author (s) Name, Article Title, Journal Name, Year, Volume No., Issue No., and Pages (both first and last page) and they were matched with the original articles.

Non-journal citations, such as books, conference proceedings, patents, reports etc. were excluded from the study.

Cited journal articles were obtained from the Central Library of Banasthali University. Some articles were downloaded in PDF, html and other formats from the journal websites, online databases, and other aggregators' websites.

Doms' (1989) method was applied to categorize and analyze the errors in citations. He made two broad categories of all references as "correct or

incorrect." He defined both of them as "A correct reference was a reference that was identical to the source. An incorrect reference was a reference that deviated from the source" (p. 442). In his analytical study of five peer reviewed dental journals, errors "involved names or initials of authors, title of article, name of journal, volume number, year of publication, page numbers, punctuation, [and] spelling" (p. 442).

Journal citations which included a single error or more errors in one bibliographic element were treated as having one error; those which had errors in more than one bibliographic element were considered to have more than one error.

The major errors included the missing author(s) name, wrong/missing article title, wrong/missing journal name, wrong/missing year, wrong/missing volume number and issue number, and wrong/missing first page. The minor errors included errors in author name's initials, minor spelling errors in article title, minor errors in journal name, wrong/missing last page, and errors in punctuation marks.

Results

Simple percentage analysis was employed by using percentage and frequency. As shown in table 1 to 4, results reveal that out of 62 citations verified, 37% (23) citations were accurate while 63% (39) citations in *Libres* journal were inaccurate, which contained a total of 50 errors. Among these 50 errors, 18 were minor while 32 were major errors. Accuracy level of citations is 37.09%, while average number of errors in citations is 0.8. Highest errors were found in issue number 36% (18), followed by article title 22% (11). Issue number were found missing in 18 citations. Article titles were found to be incorrect in 11 citations while both author(s) name and journal name (either missing author(s)/initials or wrong initials or spelling errors or punctuation errors) were detected in 12% citations each. Citations with wrong year, wrong volume and wrong pages were accounted 4% (2), 4% (2), and 10% (5) respectively. Least common errors in citations were year (4%), and volume number (4%). A list of top 25 erroneous citations, for example are given in Table 5.

Table 1: Errors in citations

Journal	Total number of citations verified	Number of errors	Average number of errors
Libres	62	50	0.8

Table 2: Major and minor errors in citations

Journal	Total number of citations verified	Total number of errors	Major errors	Minor errors
Libres	62	50	32 (64%)	18 (36%)

Table 3: Accuracy level of citations

Journal	Total Number of Citations Verified	Correct citations	Incorrect citations	Reference accuracy
Libres	62	23 (37%)	39 (63%)	37.09%

Table 4: Frequency of citation errors in Libres

Citation elements	Type of errors	Frequency	Percentage
Author(s) name	Missing author(s)/initials	3	
	Extra author(s)/initials	1	
	Spelling errors	1	
	Wrong initial	1	
	Total citations with author errors	6	12%
Article title	Word(s) addition/omission	2	
	Spelling errors	3	
	Punctuation errors	6	
	Total citations with title errors	11	22%
Journal name	Missing name	0	
	Incomplete name	4	
	Wrong name	1	
	Punctuation errors	1	
	Total citations with Journal errors	6	12%

Year	Missing	0	
	Wrong	2	
	Total citations with Year errors	2	4%
Volume no.	Missing	0	
	Wrong	2	
	Total citations with Volume errors	2	4%
Issue no.	Missing	18	
	Wrong	0	
	Total citations with Issue errors	18	36%
Pages	First Page- wrong	2	
	First Page- missing	0	
	Last Page- wrong	3	
	Last Page- missing	0	
	Total citations with page errors	5	10%
Total errors		50	100%

Average number of errors in citations is 50/62= 0.8

Table 5: Some important 25 examples of citation errors in Libres

1. Awan, M. R., & Mahmood, K. (2009). Relationship among leadership style, organizational culture and employee commitment in university libraries. *Library Management*, 34(4/5), 253-266.
2. Awan, M. R., & Mahmood, K. (2010). Relationship among leadership style, organizational culture and employee commitment in university libraries. *Library Management*, 31(4/5), 253-266. [Year and volume error]
1. Grant, D., & Michelson, G. (2005). Guest editorial: Discourse and organizational change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 18(1), 6-15.
2. Grant, D., Michelson, G., Oswick, C., & Wailes, N. (2005). Guest editorial: Discourse and organizational change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 18(1), 6-15. [Two authors missing]
1. Kaarst-Brown, M. L., Nicholson, S., Von Dran, G. M., & Stanton, J. M. (2004). Organizational culture of libraries as a strategic resource. *Library Trends*, 53(1), 33-53.
2. Kaarst-Brown, M. L., Nicholson, S., Von Dran, G. M., & Stanton, J. M. (2004). Organizational cultures of libraries as a strategic resource. *Library Trends*, 53(1), 33-53. [Spelling error in article title]
1. Kamenskaya, I. N. (2010). Organizational culture as a basis for the competitiveness of a library. *Scientific and Technical Information Processing*, 38(1), 27-33.
2. Kamenskaya, I. N. (2011). Organizational culture as a basis for the competitiveness of a library. *Scientific and Technical Information Processing*, 38(1), 27-33. [Year error]
1. Kumaresan, S. C., & Swarooprani, B. S. (2013). Measurement of organizational culture of higher educational libraries in Qatar using the competing values framework. *Journal of the Madras School of Social Work*, 7(2), 93-111.
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1. Lakos, A., & Phipps, S. (2004). Creating a culture of assessment: A catalyst for organizational change. *Libraries and Academy*, 4(3), 345-361.
2. Lakos, A., & Phipps, S. (2004). Creating a culture of assessment: A catalyst for organizational change. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 4(3), 345-361. [Journal title error]
1. Linn, M. (2008). Organizational culture: An important factor to consider. *The Bottom Line*, 2(3), 88-93.
2. Linn, M. (2008). Organizational culture: An important factor to consider. *The Bottom Line: Managing Library Finances*, 2(3), 88-93. [Journal title error]
1. Oberg, D. (2009). Libraries in school: Essential contexts for studying organizational change and culture. *Library Trends*, 58(1), 9-25.
2. Oberg, D. (2009). Libraries in schools: Essential contexts for studying organizational change and culture. *Library Trends*, 58(1), 9-25. [Spelling error in article title]
1. Porumbeanu, O. (2010). Implementing knowledge management in Romanian academic libraries: Identifying the elements that characterize their organizational culture. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 36(6), 549-552.
2. Porumbeanu, O.-L. (2010). Implementing knowledge management in Romanian academic libraries: Identifying the elements that characterize their organizational culture. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 36(6), 549-552. [Author initial missing]
1. Shepstone, C., & Lyn, C. (2008). Transforming the academic library: Creating an organizational culture that fosters staff success. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 34(4), 358-368.
2. Shepstone, C., & Currie, L. (2008). Transforming the academic library: Creating an organizational culture that fosters staff success. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 34(4), 358-368. [Author name wrong]

1. Allen, M., Jacobs, S. K., & Levy, J. R. (2006). Mapping the literature of nursing 1996-2000. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 94(2) 206-220.
2. Allen, M., Jacobs, S. K., & Levy, J. R. (2006). Mapping the literature of nursing: 1996-2000. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 94(2) 206-220. [Punctuation error]
1. Assefa, S., & Rorissa, A. (2013). A bibliometric mapping on the structure of STEM education using co-word analysis. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 64(12), 2513-2536.
2. Assefa, S., & Rorissa, A. (2013). A bibliometric mapping on the structure of STEM education using co-word analysis. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 64(12), 2513-2536. [Author initial missing]
1. Barabási, A.-L., & Albert, R. (1999). The emergence of scaling in random networks. *Science*, 286, 797-817.
2. Barabási, A.-L., & Albert, R. (1999). Emergence of scaling in random networks. *Science*, 286 (5439), 509-512. [Punctuation, word addition in title, issue no., first and last page errors]
1. Belter, C. W., & Seidel, D. J. (2013). A bibliometric analysis of climate engineering research. *WIREs Climate Change*, 4, 417-427.
2. Belter, C. W., & Seidel, D. J. (2013). A bibliometric analysis of climate engineering research. *WIREs Climate Change*, 4(5), 417-427. [Issue missing]
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1. Garcia-Escartin, J. C., & Chamorro-Posada, P. (2013). Scouting the spectrum for interstellar travelers. *Acta Astronautica*, 85, 2-18.
2. Garcia-Escartin, J. C., & Chamorro-Posada, P. (2013). Scouting the spectrum for interstellar travellers. *Acta Astronautica*, 85, 12-18. [Spelling error in article title and first page error]
1. Hu, C.-P., Hu, J. H., Deng, S.-L., & Liu, Y. (2013). A co-word analysis of library and information science in China. *Scientometrics*, 97, 369-382.
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1. Jarrett, A. (2014). Reviews of science for science librarians: Ebola virus disease. *Science & Technology Libraries*, 33(4), 303-32.
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1. Milgram, S. (1967). The small world problem. *Psychology Today*, 1(1), 61-67.
2. Milgram, S. (1967). The small-world problem. *Psychology Today*, 1(1), 61-67. [Punctuation error]
1. Price, D. J. D. S. (1965). Networks of scientific papers. *Science* 149(3683) 510-515.
2. Price, D. J. D. S. (1965). Networks of scientific papers: The pattern of bibliographic references indicates the nature of the scientific research front. *Science*, 149(3683) 510-515. [Sub-title missing and punctuation error]
1. Watts, D. J., & Strogatz, S. H. (1998). Collective dynamics of "small-world" networks. *Nature*, 393(6684), 440-442.
2. Watts, D. J., & Strogatz, S. H. (1998). Collective dynamics of 'small-world' networks. *Nature*, 393(6684), 440-442. [Punctuation error]
1. Kianifar, H., Sadeghi, R., & Zarifmahmoudi, L. (2014). Comparison between impact factor, Eigenfactor metrics, and SCImago Journal Rank indicator of pediatric neurology journals. *Acta Informatica Medica*, 22, 103-108.
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The corrected element is underlined [1- uncorrected element, and 2- corrected element]

Conclusion

Needless to say, citations are an inevitable part of all kinds of scholarly communication. The goodwill of the scholars as well as the goodwill of the journals may negatively affect when scientific articles reporting citation errors are published. The authors are primarily responsible for citation errors, albeit their responsibilities are genuinely obvious. They read the original articles, cite them accurately in context, and report the references correctly.

The authors may send a cover letter along with the article manuscript assuring that all the references have been checked completely and verified with the original sources. The references should also be verified by the peer reviewers. The editors as well as the peer reviewers should not be treated citation errors lightly since they may push the reader to doubt the overall quality of research. A healthy mechanism is needed to maintain the reference accuracy as well as quality of the scholarly articles published in the *Libres* journal.

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