SCHOLARLY PUBLISHERS' INDICATORS: PRESTIGE, SPECIALIZATION, AND REVIEW SYSTEMS OF SCHOLARLY BOOK PUBLISHERS

Scholarly Publishers Indicators: prestigio, especialización y sistemas de revisión de editoriales científicas

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Abstract

This work presents the updated version of the public information system *SPI* (*Scholarly Publishers' Indicators*), developed by *ÍLIA* (research group on scholarly books), which belongs to the *Spanish National Research Council*. *SPI* contains three types of indicators about book publishers: prestige according to expert opinions; thematic specialization according to *Dilve* (information on Spanish books for sale) classification; and manuscript selection procedures according to each publisher's answers to a survey. *SPI Expanded* is also described as an information system which provides information about each scholarly publisher's indexation in four international information systems. The methodological specifications for the design of *SPI Expanded* in each of the dimensions are presented. Finally, the functionalities and current use as a reference in the assessment process of scholarly publishers' output are detailed.

Keywords

Book assessment; Scholarly publishers; Scientific monographs; Thematic specialization; Publishers' prestige; Humanities; Social sciences; Scientific assessment; *SPI*; *Scholarly Publishers' Indicators*.

Resumen

Se presenta la versión más actualizada del sistema público de información *SPI* (*Scholarly Publishers Indicators*), desarrollado por el *Grupo de Investigación sobre el Libro Académico* (*ÍLIA*) del *CSIC*. *SPI* aúna ya tres tipos de indicadores para editoriales académicas: prestigio editorial a partir de la opinión de los investigadores; especialización temática según la clasificación de libros en *Dilve* (*Distribuidor de información del libro español en venta*); y procesos de selección de originales a partir de la información declarada por las propias editoriales mediante encuestas. Se describe también *SPI Expanded*, un análisis de la presencia de editoriales académicas en cuatro sistemas de información internacionales. Por otra parte, se facilitan las especificaciones metodológicas que han conducido al diseño de *SPI Expanded* en cada una de sus dimensiones, así como las funciones presentes en el mismo y su actual utilización como referencia en los procesos de evaluación.

Palabras clave

Evaluación de libros; Editoriales académicas; Monografías científicas; Especialización temática; Prestigio editorial; Humanidades; Ciencias sociales; Evaluación científica; *SPI*; *Scholarly Publishers Indicators*.

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1. Introduction

The relevance of using books for assessing outputs in social sciences, and more specifically in the humanities, is rooted in solid evidence (**Hicks**, 2004; **Engels**; **Ossenbklok**; **Spruyt**, 2012). Nevertheless, the systems developed by the companies which commercialize bibliometric indicators (*Thomson Reuters*, *Scopus*) (**Adams**; **Testa,** 2011) present relevant weaknesses which limit their possible use, including the indicator on which they are based: citations. The problems associated with citation-based metrics are well known (in some cases by researchers foreign to the discipline of library and information science), despite their continuous use (**Wilcox**, 2008; **Kumar**, 2010; **Adler**; **Ewing**; **Taylor**, 2009). Criticism of citation-based metrics goes far beyond their inappropriate usage by evaluators; some of these criticisms do, in fact, compromise the mathematical validity as information sources (**Adler**, **Ewing** and **Taylor**, 2009). In recent years, research has shown there are other possible and solid approaches for the analysis of books, book publishers, and book collections. These other approaches have generated indicators and information which can be useful for scientific assessment. Some of the approaches relate to the study of scholarly book publishers and are integrated into the information system *Scholarly Publishers' Indicators* (*SPI*).

2. *SPI* objectives

The necessity of a proper assessment of scientific output (**Frølich**, 2011); the lack of information about systems that are susceptible of being used with evaluative aims in the social sciences and the humanities (including its main communication channel: the book); and the need for knowing the book publishers' core relevant to Spanish scholars (as a basic research aim) are the main reasons for the development of the *SPI* information system.

3. *SPI* Contents

SPI is comprised of three categories and each includes information and indicators: 1) Publishers' prestige rankings (both for Spanish and non-Spanish book publishers). This ranking is the result of a large scale survey sent to researchers in 16 knowledge fields in two waves. 2) Information regarding the publishers' thematic specialization, and 3) Information regarding the assessment systems (peer review, etc.) which the publishers declare they use.

3.1. Book publishers' rankings

A survey was designed to identify the most prestigious book publishers in different disciplines. Among some other questions, the respondents were asked to point to the 10 most

Figura 1. *http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI*

The processing of this information resulted in the general book publishers' prestige rankings (both for Spanish and non-Spanish publishers), and the homologous calculation, taking into account the discipline each respondent is affiliated with, allowed the development of the various discipline rankings which are available at *SPI*. *http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI/prestigio_sectores_2014.php*

The disciplines for these rankings include: fine arts, anthropology, archaeology and prehistory, library and information science, communication, economics, education, hebrew and arabic studies, law, philosophy, geography, history, linguistics, literature and philology, political science, psychology, and sociology.

prestigious book publishers according to their relevance. The survey was sent to over 11,000 lecturers with a six year research period and positively evaluated by one of the two main Spanish assessment agencies (*Cneai*) or counting with a positive assessment by *Aneca* (tenure). The response rate was approximately 20% (2,400 usable answers). The survey data made it possible to design an indicator (ICEE = Indicador de Calidad de Editoriales según los Expertos, Publishers quality indicator according to experts) which reveals the perceived prestige for each publisher. Its formulation is as follows:

$$\text{ICEE} = \sum_{i=1}^{i=10} n_i \frac{N_i}{N_j}$$

Where:

N_i= Is the number of votes received by the publisher in the position i (from 1 to 10)

N_j= Is the number of votes received by all publishers in all positions

$$\frac{N_i}{N_j} = W_j$$

W_j= Is the weight assigned to the number of votes received by each publisher.

In all cases the condition $W_1 > W_2 > W_K... > W_{10}$ is fulfilled. This condition is needed in order to guarantee that the weights assigned to each position correspond to their sense (a higher weight attached to those publishers considered the most prestigious). This weighting system is distribution-dependent; this excludes any possibility of arbitrariness in assigning the weights by the researchers (**Giménez-Toledo**; **Tejada-Artigas**; **Mañana-Rodríguez**, 2013).

General rankings have been transformed into interactive charts which allow the ascending or descending visualization of the indicator for each discipline. I.e., see non-Spanish publishers: *http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI/grafico4_extr.html*

3.2. Specialization profiles of Spanish scholarly book publishers

Thematic specialization of book publishers is one element taken into account by assessment agencies (*España*, 2014). Also, it is useful information for audiences that are involved

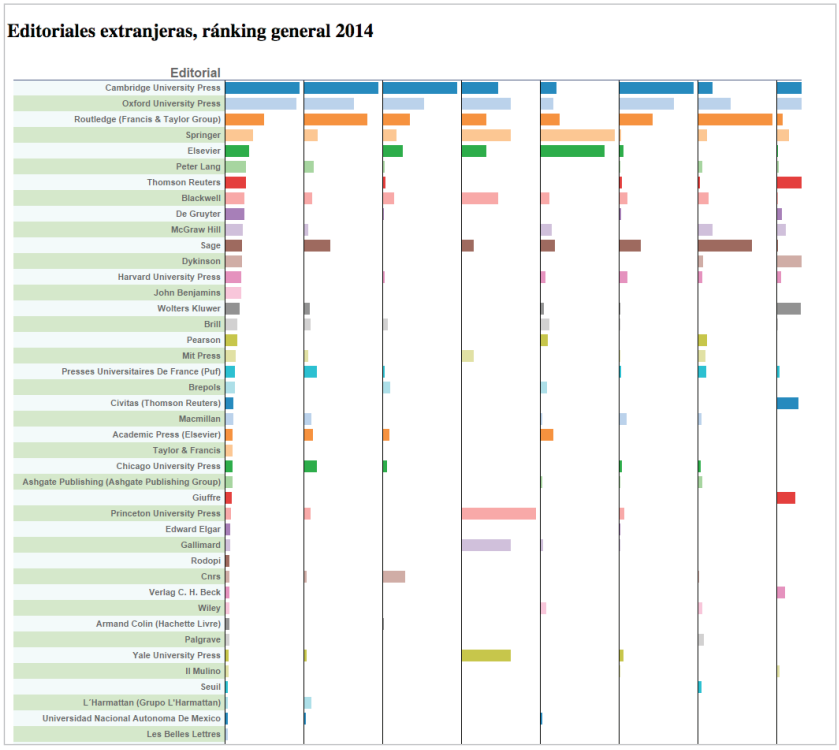

Chart 1. Interactive chart screenshot. Non-Spanish book publishers' prestige.

in assessment processes and in research and publication(authors, publishers and reviewers). Specialization is also important for any information system.

The *Dilve* (*Distribuidor de Información del Libro Español en Venta*) database was used as the source of information for the analysis of the specialization profiles of the various book publishers. *Dilve* provides numerous fields including a book publisher-title-field. This information allows the aggregation of the titles published by a given publisher according to the frequency of publication in a given discipline. Also, it permits the analysis of the percentage of titles published by each publisher in each discipline and, transposing the data matrix, the number of publishers who publish in a given discipline. In order to calculate these percentages, over 500,000 individual registers have been analyzed.

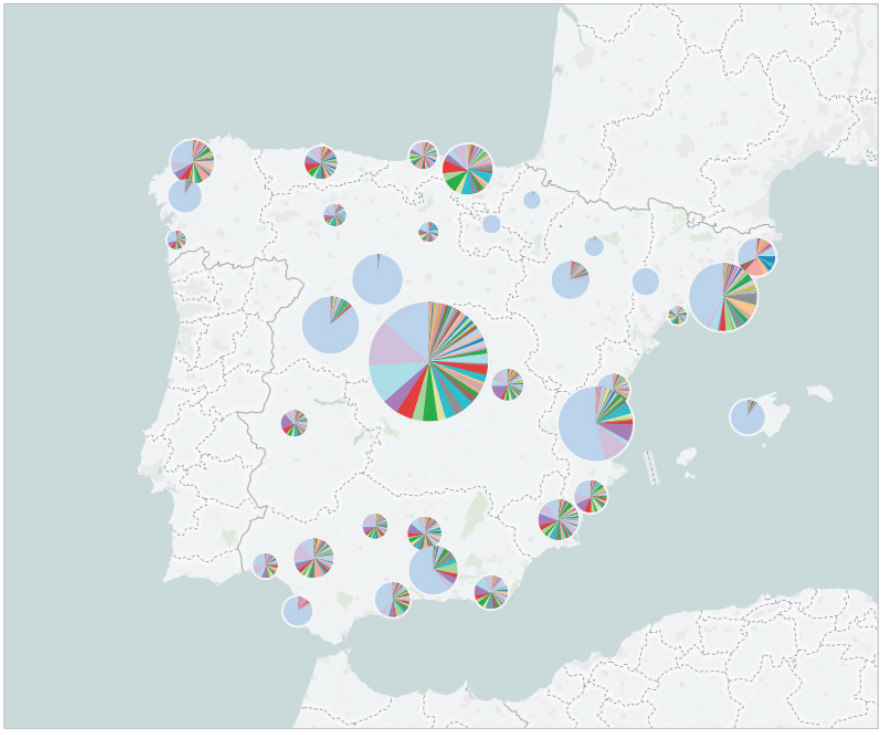

Chart 2. Screenshot of the interactive chart. Titles by discipline for the *Spanish University Presses* (*UNE*)
http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI/grafico5.html

The dimension 'titles by subject for each publisher' allows users to view the specialization profile of a given publisher, the reverse dimension, that is, publishers who have published a certain percentage of titles in a given field, is especially interesting if these data are compared among publishers.

This information is of particular interest when data are compared within a segment of publishers. Consequently, dimensions have been analyzed for segments of publishers: those in *SPI*, *UNE* publishers, and all the publishers contained in *Dilve*. In the case of *Dilve*, an interactive chart has also been developed in order to better reflect the activity of the *Spanish University Presses* by fields *http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI/une_ccaa.html*

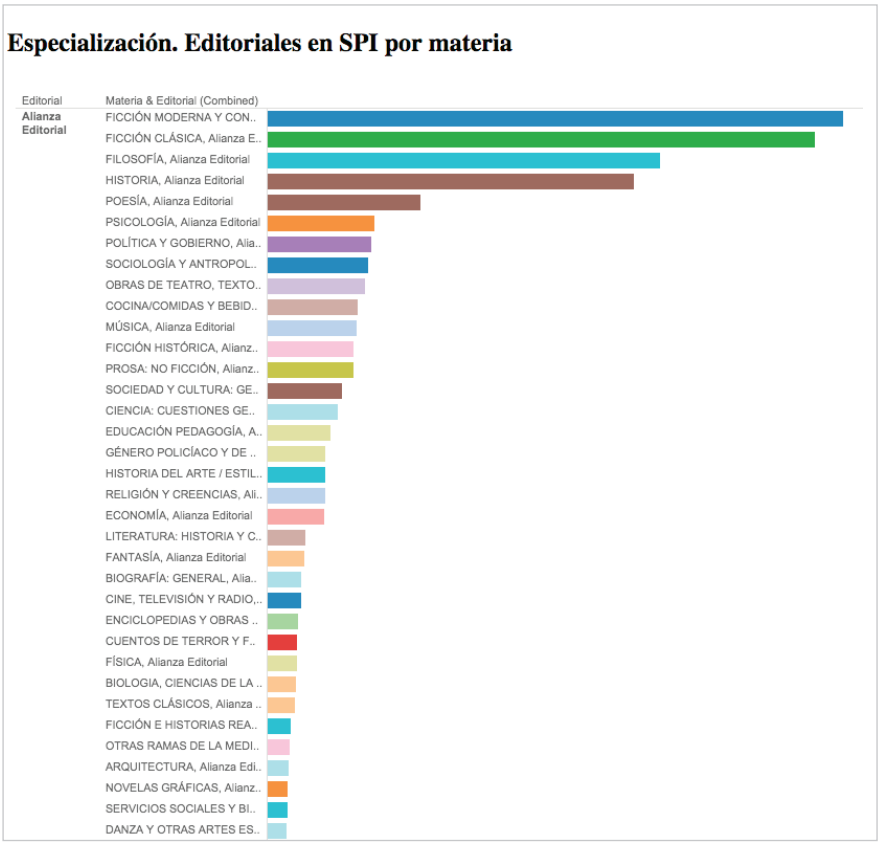

Chart 3. Specialization of book publishers by discipline
http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI/grafico8.html

3.3. Assessment systems declared by publishers

There is not yet a consensus among the research community regarding the most appropriate model for the assessment of books by book publishers (which is not the case regarding scientific journals). Nevertheless, a better understanding of how procedures are carried out by book publishers provides useful information about the quality of what is published. Book publishers offer almost no publicly available information regarding their procedures (**Giménez-Toledo** *et al.*, 2014). Given this situation, two surveys were

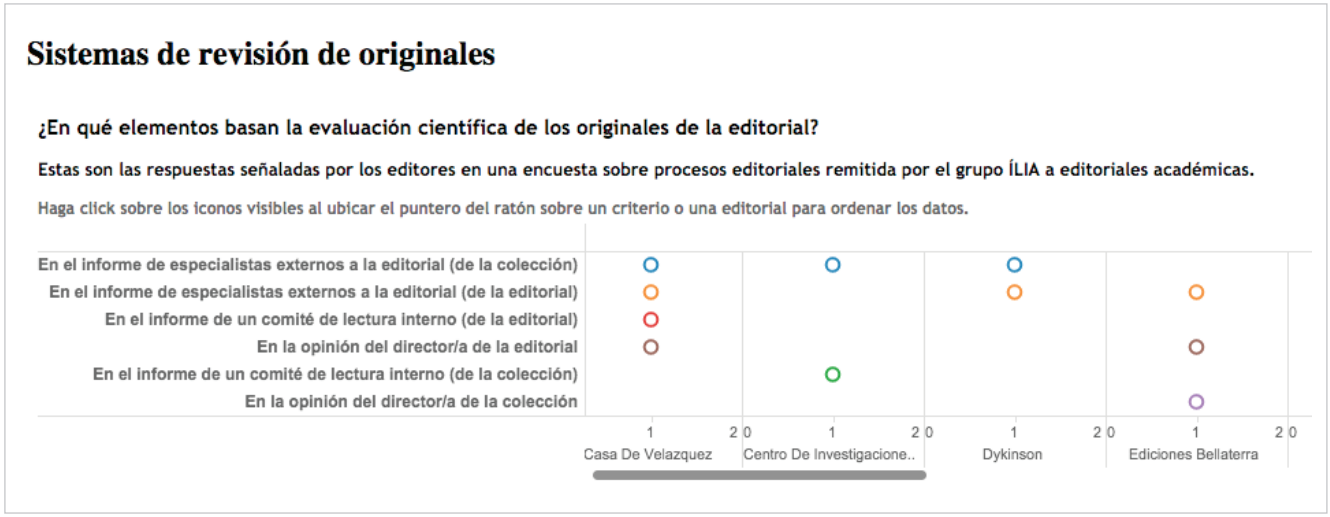

Chart 4. Screenshot of the interactive chart reflecting the assessment systems surveyed publishers use.

sent to Spanish and Latin American book publishers requesting information related to their selection procedures. The respondents were able to provide information about review procedures and publication types. The results to date (113 book publishers) can be found on:
http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI/revision_originales.html

This study is ongoing and book publishers are encouraged to fill out the survey.

Interactive charts were developed for press procedures that allow users to order the publishers according to various criteria.

4. *SPI Expanded*

SPI Expanded is the most recent addition included in *SPI* and analyzes the presence of over 2,700 book publishers in four international information systems: *Book Citation Index*, *Scopus*, the *Norwegian Lists*, and *SPI*. The information provided for each publisher facilitates a better understanding of publishers visibility and international recognition; and *SPI Expanded* also provides information about commercial databases showing a different coverage pattern with respect to public information systems. The latter seem to be more closely aligned with the needs of institutions, are less restrictive, and provide an answer to the diversity of book publishers operating in the humanities and the social sciences while also taking into account book publishers which publish in languages other than English.

This product can be found at:
http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI/expanded_index.html

5. Search options in *SPI*

Besides the information accessible through the various tables and specific interactive graphics, *SPI* searchable database is available at:
http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI/buscador_spi.php

The search options include book publishers' prestige (ICEE, relative position, and number of publishers in the ranking), specialization (first and second specialization fields, number of titles in each discipline, and percentage they represent of all the titles published in that discipline), manuscript review system used by book publishers, and publisher presence or absence in international information systems.

6. Final remarks on the use of *SPI*

SPI was developed for two reasons: to provide information and indicators for the scientific assessment of publishers and as a tool for authors, libraries, and scholarly publishers.

SPI has a section that describes the proper use of the information system; it includes limitations as well as precautions.

The first published results of *SPI* were the prestige rankings and are considered as orientations for the criteria developed by *Cneai* (*Cneai*, 2014) for the fields 10 (history, geography and arts) from 2013, and 11 (philosophy, philology and linguistics) from 2014. In addition, the rest of the information available at the information system has been included in order to provide a more complete view of each of the publishers. In the future the system will become more complete and rich with information through the continuous work carried out at *ILIA*; we expect the continued support and collaboration of book publishers and publishers associations such as *UNE* (the *Union of Spanish University Presses*), *AEM* (*Association of Publishers from Madrid*), *Eulac* (*Association of Latin American and the Caribean University Presses*), and the *FGEE* (*Federation of Publishers' Guilds of Spain*). Since the aim of the research group is *the study of book publishers with the book publishers*, we wish to thank all them for the progress achieved through *SPI*.

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