Web of Science Journal Citation Reports: Suppression Policy

Objectivity you can trust

Objectivity you can trust

Publishers, institutions, funders and researchers have relied upon the Web of Science Journal Citation Reports™ (JCR) for over 40 years to identify the world's leading journals in the sciences and social sciences, understand citation impact trends, and inform publishing strategy.

Guided by the legacy of Dr Eugene Garfield, inventor of the world's first citation index, we adapt to respond to technological advances and changes in the publishing landscape.

Quality control is intrinsic to our Journal Citation Reports, as it is the only resource of its kind produced by publisher-neutral experts.

Web of Science Core Collection

Our unique curation process

Journal Citation Reports data are taken from the Web of Science Core Collection™. Our curation process is unique:

Our editorial decisions are conducted by expert in-house editors.

They have no affiliations to publishing houses or research institutes, removing any potential bias or conflict of interest.

Each editor is focused on specific subject categories gaining a deep, nuanced knowledge of the journals in their field.

This level of curation cannot be replicated by purely algorithmic approaches or delegating aspects of editorial decision-making to the research community.

Our selection criteria

Curated with care by an expert team of in-house Web of Science editors

We use a single set of 28 criteria to evaluate journals.

24 quality criteria, designed to select for editorial rigor and best practice at the journal level.

Four impact criteria, designed to select the most influential journals in their respective fields using citation activity as a primary indicator of impact.

Journals that meet the quality criteria enter the Emerging Sources Citation Index™ (ESCI) in the Web of Science Core Collection.

Journals that meet the additional impact criteria enter Science Citation Index Expanded™(SCIE), Social Sciences Citation Index™(SSCI) or Arts & Humanities Citation Index™ (AHCI) depending on their subject area.

Journals in SCIE or SSCI are eligible to receive a Journal Impact Factor™ and other indicators in the Web of Science Journal Citation Reports.

Dynamic collections

A trusted, high-quality collection of journals, books and conference proceedings
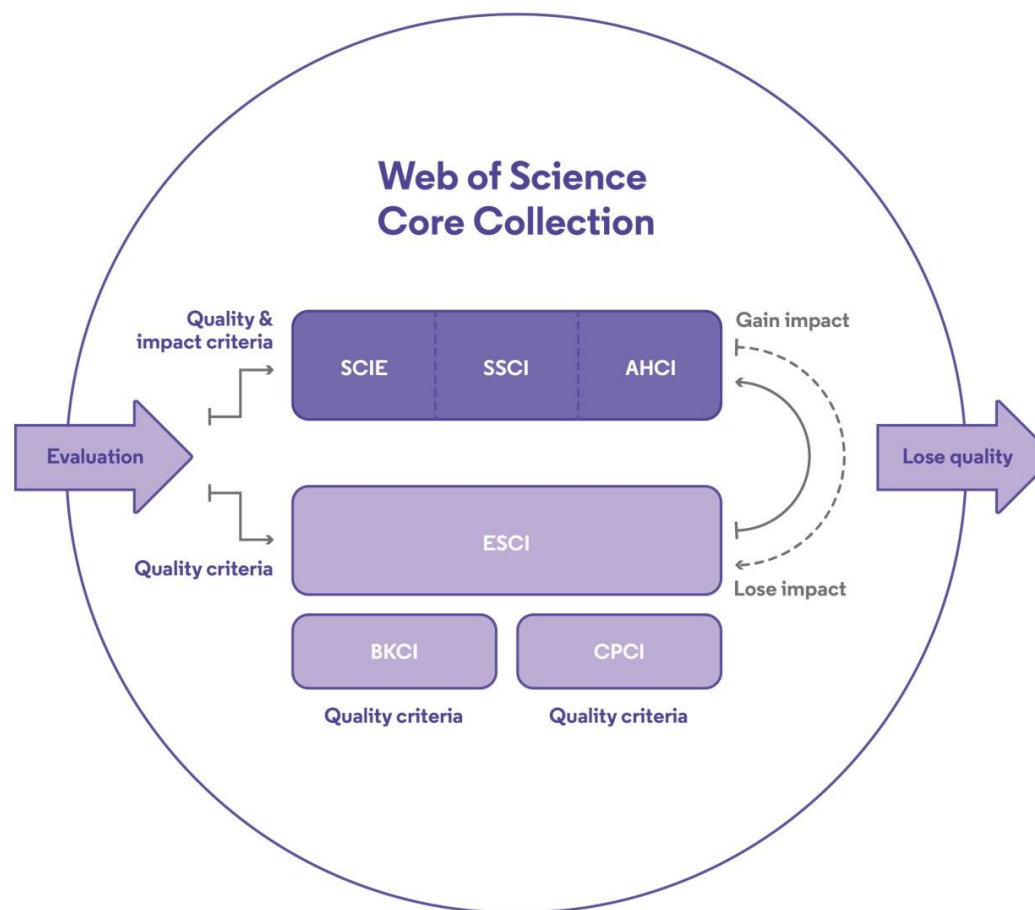
- These are dynamic collections subject to continuous curation to ensure journals are in the appropriate collection.

- ESCI journals that gain impact move to SCIE, SSCI or AHCI.

- SCIE, SSCI and AHCI journals that decrease in impact move to ESCI.

Any journal that fails to meet all 24 quality criteria will be removed from the *Web of Science Core Collection*.

Our principles

Our principles
Suppression of titles in the JCR

Citations analyzed in the JCR come from all indexed content in the Web of Science Core Collection. All document types that contain references contribute to the metrics reported in the JCR.

Distortion of citations, no matter their source, is harmful to the scholarly record. Journal self-citation and citation stacking have the potential to distort the citation network and the Web of Science Journal Impact Factor (JIF).

The JIF provides an important indicator of a journal's contribution to scholarly communication and must not be either inadvertently influenced or purposefully gamed.

Clarivate™

Citation distortion and citation stacking

How do we identify journal self-citation distortion?

In 2020, we updated our methodology and our journal self-citation parameters. We also now make comparisons within each journal's category, rather than edition, to better account for discipline norms.

We look at the following data:

- Total citations (TC)

- Journal Impact Factor (JIF)

- Rank in category

- % of journal self-citations in in-bound (cited) activity, and % of journal self-citations in out-bound (citing) activity

- Proportional increase in the JIF with/without journal self-citations

Suppressed journals represent outliers in citation behavior and exceed normal ranges within their category.

Journals in the lowest quartile by TC or by JIF are not suppressed as they demonstrate little gain in rank or impact.

Adapting to respond to a changing environment

We have updated our methodology and parameters for journal self-citation

-- new, problematic citation networks had surfaced
-- we used to focus on extreme outliers on the assumption that distortion of the citation network by journal self-citation was both rare and extreme

The changes make critical adjustments:
Content: we now include *out-going (citing)* as well as in-coming (cited) activity as part of the analysis
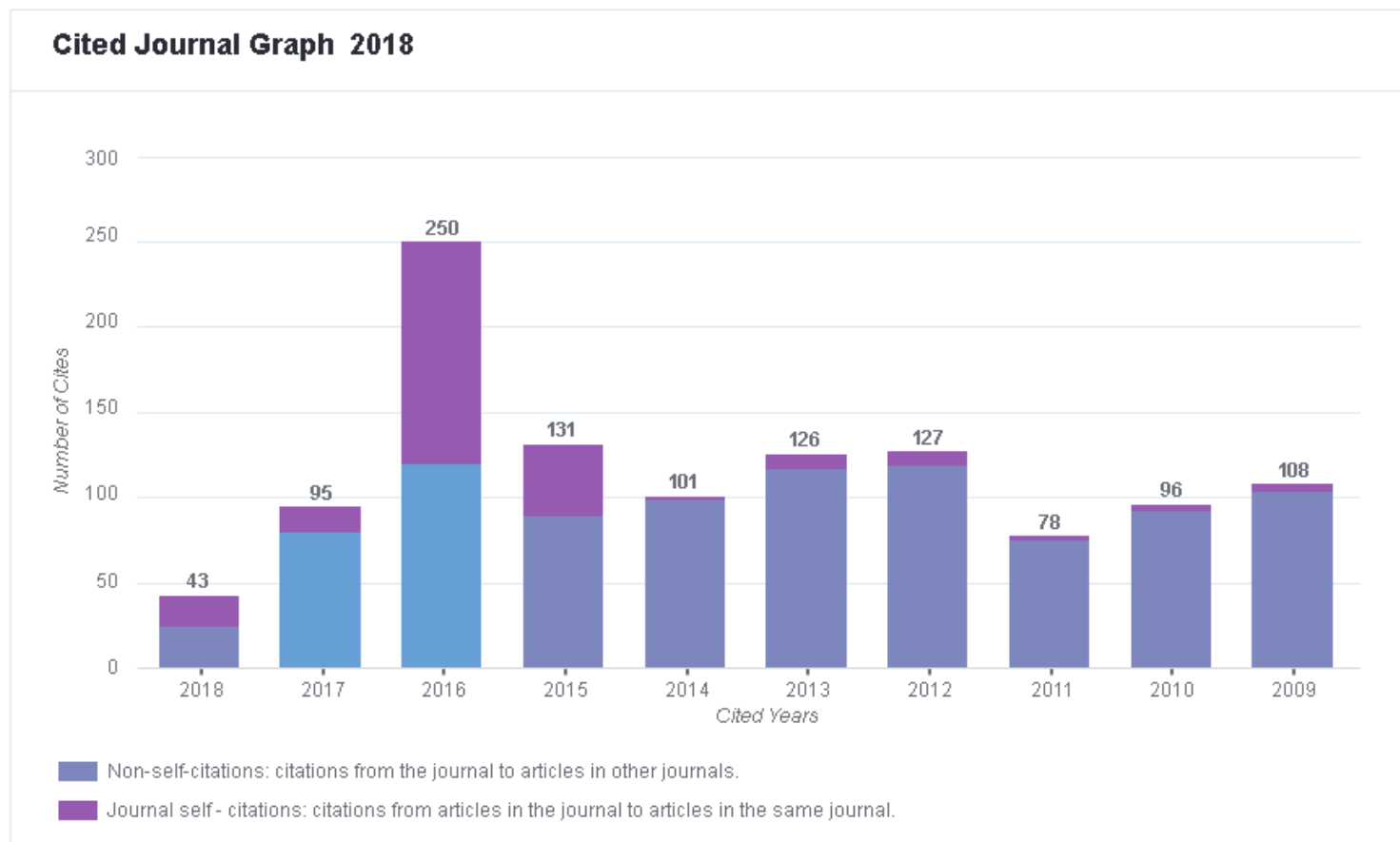
Context: we now look at each journal *within a category,* not the JCR edition, to allow for subject-based differences in the expected behavior

Perspective: we now look at the *level of distortion* of the citation network, not solely at the outcome of that distortion

Example of Journal self-citation

The JIF numerator is represented by the two light-colored columns (2017 and 2016 in this graph). Journal self-citation within the column is represented by the purple section of the stacked columns.

In this example, journal self-citations, particularly to 2016, form a very large proportion of the JIF numerator.

Cited Journal Graph 2018

Number of Cites

- 43 (2018)
- 95 (2017)
- 250 (2016)
- 131 (2015)
- 101 (2014)
- 126 (2013)
- 127 (2012)
- 78 (2011)
- 96 (2010)
- 108 (2009)

Cited Years

■ Non-self-citations: citations from the journal to articles in other journals.
■ Journal self - citations: citations from articles in the journal to articles in the same journal.

How do we identify citation stacking distortion?

We look at the following data:

- Donor as % of Recipient's Total Citations

- Donor as % of Recipient's Journal Impact Factor numerator citations

- Concentration of citations exchanged into Journal Impact Factor numerator

- Identification of individual item(s) in Donor Journal with near-exclusive reference to Recipient journal(s)

Donor and Recipient journals are suppressed for one year and re-evaluated with the next year's data.

New journals, where citations are naturally concentrated to recent years, are not suppressed.

Example of citation stacking

The Cited Journal Data shows all Donor Journals that contributed citations to the JIF of the Recipient Journal.

In this example, the Citing Journal "Donor 2" accounts for nearly 17% of all citations to the Recipient, and nearly 25% of the Recipient's JIF numerator citations. Nearly all citations are concentrated ("stacked") to the years that affect the JIF.

Cited Journal Data 2018

	Citing Journal	All Yrs	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
	ALL Journals	1,982	43	557	686	217	124
1	DONOR 1	525	3	88	298	95	17
2	DONOR 2	336	5	186	118	21	2
	ALL OTHERS (682)	225	9	30	21	28	33
3	JOURNAL SELF	198	13	83	78	8	6
4	DONOR 3	161	3	77	79	2	0
5	DONOR 4	19	0	4	3	1	6
6	DONOR 5	18	0	2	3	3	1

What do we do when we identify citation distortion?

- Titles are suppressed from the Web of Science Journal Citation Reports based on analysis of the last year of citation data.

- We notify the publisher prior to the annual JCR launch.

- Clarivate does not assume motive on behalf of any party. We investigate the citation data.

- Suppressed journals continue to be indexed in the Web of Science but may be re-evaluated for continued coverage.

Clarivate™

Thank you