Google Scholar Citations is now open to everyone. It shows great promise as a free, reliable way to track and compare academic impact over time.

by admin

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Google is once again making progress in organising the world’s information, this time by systematising the way scholarly citations are noted. Professor Patrick Dunleavy creates his Google Scholar profile and finds the process intuitive, helpful, and a welcome alternative to traditional measures of academic influence.

After a ‘quiet launch’ over the summer Google has opened up its Google Scholar Citations capability to everyone. The LSE Impact of Social Sciences project’s initial assessment was that the system is easy to use and personalise, equipped with helpful graphs, and lays out not only total citations but a personal h-score and a new i-10 index (the number of publications with at least 10 citations).

It is early days but the added value so far seems to be Google’s inclusion of books, conference papers and even blog posts that are not captured by the traditional citation tracking systems but are now crucial outputs in the social sciences.

Google’s instructions make the process of building a profile as painless as possible. The first step is a prompt that asks for your name, discipline, and institutional email.

I was then asked to verify a list of my publications, a process which was incredibly quick and easy, taking only a few minutes (some academics with more common names may find the process takes slightly longer). I added a photo and within a few moments was looking at my highest cited publications over the last forty-odd years in academia.
Clicking on an individual article brings up more detailed information including the number of citations per year, the abstract (if available) and more specific publisher information such as volume and page numbers. An export button lets you capture the bibliographic information using endnote, BibTeX and Reference Manager, and gives you the option of exporting the bibliographic data for all articles by the author. Google very handily allows authors to correct any details which have been recorded wrongly. Titles and author details can be corrected immediately and the changes are also saved to wider Google searches, improving the accuracy tremendously.
By making my profile public (which is optional) others can find it by running a normal Google Scholar search. Profiles appear third or fourth in the Google Scholar list as **Author profiles** and will include your total citations for all publications.
Potentially one of the greatest benefits of Google Scholar Citations is that you can easily link through to various co-authors if he or she has a public profile (see Jane Tinkler for example). If you are signed in to Scholar you can search for authors directly from your profile page.

I have previously argued that using a combination of Google citations and the easy to use and free to download ‘Publish or Perish’ software developed by Anne-Wil Harzing has the potential to capture and compare the academic impact of a scholar’s (or department’s, or university’s) work at a fraction of the cost it will take for the UK’s Research Excellence Framework (each of the panel members will have to read (= eyeball) 700 pieces of work in order to “evaluate” them).

I would encourage as many academics as possible to create public profiles. Cataloguing our work online and creating links between authors has the potential to multiply the effect of our academic work across the board, and make it far more available and accessible to the public.

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