

How to increase your impact factor

Summary of August 3, 2010 Workshop by
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1. Retain rights to your publications and post in an open access repository.

UIC has an open access digital repository (INDIGO; see below for more information) into which faculty can upload their publications to enable wider access of articles. Provost Tanner created a form (see end of this document for a copy) for faculty to use to enable them to retain rights to publications. Typically journals retain rights which limits faculty's options for widening the impact of their works (note: some journal contracts say that the only version you can post in open access repositories is the pre-press manuscript version, thus it's important to read the contracts and see what your posting/distribution rights are). Putting articles in open access repositories not only makes them freely available to anyone who wishes to access them, it also enables search engines such as google scholar (which is more and more widely used for searches) to link to them.

As journals get more and more expensive, University Libraries are winnowing their collections, which may make electronic access to journals difficult. Further, some journals are either not yet on-line or have embargoes that make obtaining recent articles difficult. Moreover, for clinicians without university affiliations, access to journal articles is challenging and they may be reliant on open-access journals and repositories.

INDIGO. INDIGO is an on-line repository for scholarship by the UIC community and enables the free access of articles, videos, posters, etc. of faculty, staff, and students. You can find it at indigo.lib.uic.edu. As noted above, one benefit of INDIGO is that search engines like google scholar will "harvest" the content and make it available. INDIGO also gives you a constant URL for linking from your own site or the department's website and it preserves your works.

2. Publish in open access journals

Although this would make your work widely available, open access journals tend to not have as high of impact factors and thus are not as respected. However, open access journals may be more utilized than restricted journals and as noted above, may be more useful to private practice clinicians.

3. Publish in high impact factor journals

Impact factors for journals measures the number of times that particular journal's articles were cited – the more often a journal's articles are cited, the higher the impact factor. Web of science is one of the best tools for determining the impact factor for journals. It's helpful to search by topic (rather than journal name) so that you can get a good idea of the range of impact factors within a given discipline. For example, within OB/Gyn the journal Obstetrics and Gynecology (the green journal) has an impact factor of 4.357 (5-year impact factor of 4.735). This is one of the highest within our field. The New England Journal of Medicine, for comparison purposes, has an impact factor of 47.050 (5-year impact score of 51.410). Thus understanding a subject field's range can be extremely helpful.

Note: impact factors have been criticized for showing only the impact of the journal, not of any one particular article. Thus an impact factor is an aggregate score for all articles within a given time frame. Impact factors may be higher for journals that tend to publish more review articles (and less original research) as those tend to be more highly cited. De Groot also cautioned that the 80/20 rule may be at play – 20% of the articles may account for 80% of the impact factor. In determining your own impact, citation reports may be of more use.

Eigenfactors. Eigenfactors were designed to overcome some of the issues with impact factors by using an algorithm that takes into account multiple factors to represent how widely used a journal is. Going back to our comparison on the Green Journal to NEJM, their eigenvalues are 0.05860 vs. 0.67401, respectively.

Measuring your own impact

Citation reports

The first step is to look into how many times your work has been cited. There are multiple ways of doing this, and no one way is perfect. Google scholar has citation information in its search engine and web of science can give citation reports by author name. Other options are science direct and pubmed. It is recommended to not rely on one source, and instead to search a couple of databases to get a range of potential citations. Unfortunately, citation reports focus on the number of times your work has been cited in journal articles – there is no easy way to check to see if your work has been cited in books, book chapters, presentations, etc. In web of science, you can also set up a citation alert to allow you to get an email each time your work has been cited (other search engines have similar features).

H Index

The H index was designed to measure an individual's impact by counting the number of highly cited articles and the number of citations. I've gotten a software program that is supposed to enable the determination of H factors, and as I learn more I will make the information available.

If you have questions about anything in this or want help looking up impact factors or citation reports, contact Cindy for help.

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