

### Organized Session Information

This is a proposal for a (check one):  symposium;  workshop;  
 tutorial;  colloquium;  other (specify)  
\_\_\_\_\_.

This is a proposal for a (check one):  1.5 hour session;  3 hour session

**Session Title** \_The impact of linguistics journal rankings and citations\_\_\_\_\_

---

### Areas Addressed by Session

To ensure that your proposal receives proper review, please list (1) the primary area of linguistics addressed by this organized session, and optionally (2) the subfield.

(1) \_\_\_professional issues\_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_journals and publication\_\_\_\_\_

If this session proposal is being submitted on behalf of an LSA committee, please indicate which committee: \_\_\_Ad hoc Committee of Editors of Linguistics Journals\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please check here if this session is about an endangered language.

### Audiovisual Requests

All meeting rooms will be equipped with microphones, an LCD projector, and a screen.

## **The impact of linguistics journal rankings and citations**

In recent years, issues concerning venues of publication, ranking of journals, and impact factors have come increasingly to the fore across the world of academia. In at least some institutions and some countries, considerable weight in tenure and promotion decisions, funding decisions, library acquisitions, and the like is being placed on instruments that evaluate journals in terms of their being listed by certain publishing-related companies or agencies. Moreover, some scholars seem to be making decisions about venues to consider for publications based on pressure to publish in listed journals.

A number of different organizations generate impact factors, rank journals, and provide quantitative citation information, including Thompson ISI, the European Science Foundation, and Google Scholar. These assume the value of evaluating impact, partially accomplished through the ranking of journals. Some statements from the Thompson ISI website are helpful in understanding the role that they see journal evaluation playing. This first quotation suggests that there are quantifiable, objective ways of evaluating journals and their impact.

The recognized authority for evaluating journals, Journal Citation Reports, presents quantifiable statistical data that provides a systematic, objective way to evaluate the world's leading journals and their impact and influence in the global research community.

This second one suggests that such rankings are broadly useful, to librarians, publishers, editors, authors, and information analysts.

- Librarians - can manage and maintain journal collections and budget for subscriptions. Journal Use Reports, the new analytical tool used in conjunction with JCR, provides librarians and administrators with a better way to measure journal usage - with a complete picture of journal performance, use and research activity at their institution
- Publishers - can monitor their competitors, identify new publishing opportunities, and make decisions regarding current publications
- Editors - can assess the effectiveness of editorial policies and objectives and tracking the standing of their journals
- Authors - can identify journals in which to publish, confirm the status of journals in which they have published, and identify journals relevant to their research
- Information Analysts - can track bibliometric trends, study the sociology of scholarly and technical publications, and study citation patterns within and between disciplines.

Google Scholar is one alternative to Thompson ISI, and it “aims to sort articles the way researchers do, weighing the full text of each article, the author, the publication in which the article appears, and how often the piece has been cited in other scholarly literature.”

The uses of such measures have been an ongoing topic for the Committee of Editors of Linguistics Journals (CELJ), a large group of linguistics journal editors that meets every year during the annual meeting of the LSA and maintains discussion throughout the year via an e-mail listserv. CELJ has raised a number of concerns about the possible negative effects of rankings on the existence of many of the smaller yet influential linguistics journals and about the influence that such rankings might have on research in the field overall.

In this symposium we propose to investigate several major issues surrounding journal rankings, asking questions about the philosophical underpinnings of rankings, the practicalities of rankings, and the impact of journal rankings on the field at large, as follows.

### **1. Philosophical**

- Why is the 'objective' ranking of journals considered to be important?
- Why have organizations such as Thompson ISI and Google Scholar become important within the academic world?
- What are the arguments for rankings and impact factors? What are the arguments against them?

### **2. Practical**

- Are there meaningful ways to evaluate impact and to rank journals?
- Are there ways in which this is being done that are valuable in the field of linguistics?
- Are there ways in which it is being done that are potentially threatening to the vitality of research in linguistics?

### **3. Professional**

- What role does the assessment of impact and the rating of journals actually play in the field in terms of success at grants, decisions concerning promotion and tenure, library acquisitions, and so on?

### **Participants**

We will invite 6 people to participate in the symposium through presentations. In addition, a representative from CELJ will open the discussion and another representative will close it. The planned invitees include individuals representing the following groups:

- 2 journal editors to address the advantages and disadvantages of instruments such as Thompson ISI and Google Scholar on journal publication. Editors will represent different types of journals.
- 1 dean, provost, or other appropriate person from a university to discuss the role of Thompson ISI and the like in evaluation for promotion and tenure, funding, etc.
- 1 junior scholar (assistant professor or graduate student) to discuss the impact of journal rankings on their decisions about where to submit, as well as the pressures, if any, created by journal rankings.
- 1 person involved with bibliometrics, and particularly able to assess impact factors in the social sciences and humanities.

- 1 person from Google Scholar or Thompson ISI to discuss the industry perspective.

While the organizers have discussed participants, particular individuals are yet to be identified, and will be invited if the symposium is accepted.

In addition, journal editors will discuss with relevant administrators within their university (e.g., chairs, deans) the role that journal rankings play with respect to decisions around hiring, tenure, and promotion, with an eye to putting together an informal survey of the impact of instruments such as Google Scholar and Thompson ISI on the profession. The (informal) results will be presented as part of the opening remarks, and a summary will be made available through the LSA website.

### **Time required**

There will be a ten-minute introduction and five-minute wrap-up (total: 15 minutes)

Each speaker will be allocated fifteen minutes ( $15 \times 6 = 90$  minutes).

Discussion: 45 minutes

Total time requested: 150 minutes (2.5 hours)

### **Organizers**

Brian Joseph, Editor, *Language*. [bjoseph@ling.ohio-state.edu](mailto:bjoseph@ling.ohio-state.edu)

Martha Ratliff, Associate Editor, *Diachronica*. [ac6000@mail.wayne.edu](mailto:ac6000@mail.wayne.edu)

Keren Rice, Editor, *International Journal of American Linguistics*.

[rice@chass.utoronto.ca](mailto:rice@chass.utoronto.ca)

Joe Salmons, Editor, *Diachronica*. [jsalmons@wisc.edu](mailto:jsalmons@wisc.edu)