Institute for Advanced Study

Dr. Robbert Dijkgraaf Director and Leon Levy Professor

December 9, 2013

Alexey Parshin
Steklov Mathematical Institute
Russian Academy of Sciences
Gubkina str 8
Moscow 119991
Russia

Dear Professor Parshin,

Professor Langlands asked me to answer your following questions:

> Does your institute use the bibliometric data (such as number of publications, citation index,
> h-index, impact factor for journals) in the following cases:
> 1)when you hire permanent members,
> 2)when you consider applications for the visiting positions,
> 3)when you present annual report of the institute,
> 4)when an external commission evaluate your activity for some period of time ?

Indeed, as you suggested, the Institute for Advanced Study does not use bibliometric indicators such as h-index and impact factors in evaluations of academic positions, in particularly for the recruitment of permanent Faculty and temporary Members. In general the IAS tries not to "count" but to "weigh" excellence. The opinion of peers, who are widely consulted inside and outside the Institute, plays an important role in these qualitative assessments. The Institute will highlight important research in its annual reports, but again will not try to measure the impact in any quantitative fashion.

Please let me know if this information suffices. I am happy to expand it further.

Most sincerely,

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Professor A N Parshin
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18th October 2013

Dear Professor Parshin

You have asked me, in my capacity as Director of the Isaac Newton Institute, what use we make of bibliometric data (such as citation index, h-index, impact factor for journals). The answer is none: we make no use whatsoever of bibliometric data in our decision-making processes. Indeed it is generally accepted in the UK that bibliometric data, for the evaluation of mathematicians and the quality of mathematical research, is unreliable. I will explain more after I have answered your specific questions on the practices of this Institute.

I will begin by explaining that this is the UK's national research institute that is responsible for all the mathematical sciences. Therefore, in addition to covering the traditional areas of pure and applied mathematics, probability and statistics, it also accepts proposal in all areas of science, social science and technology where there is a significant mathematical challenge. This includes: physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, earth sciences, astronomy, environmental science, climate science, financial mathematics, forensic science, cryptography, computer science, and much more.

You asked if we use bibliometric data in the following circumstances:

1) when you hire permanent members:
   This question is not applicable because our Institute has no permanent staff. It is a research institute and its rolling programme means that the researchers never spend more than six months here. We have more than 1000 participants each year and we collect no bibliographic data on any of them.

2) when you consider applications for the visiting positions:
   We never use any form of bibliometric data when deciding who to invite to our research programme. Nor do we use bibliometric data when deciding which programmes to run or who should organise them.
3) when you present annual reports of the Institute's activity:
   Bibliometric data is never mentioned in our annual reports which are available on the web http://www.newton.ac.uk/reports/
4) when an external commission evaluate Institute's activity for some period of time:

No, the Institute is evaluated every two years by external bodies and when it make substantial grant applications to support its researchers. However bibliometric data is not used at any stage.

The UK has a long-established practice in which, every seven years each individual working in any subjects and all universities is asked to submit their best four research papers for evaluation by panels of experts. After the evaluations the resulting league tables of departments are published. (The evaluations of individuals, which leads to the department evaluation, remain confidential.)

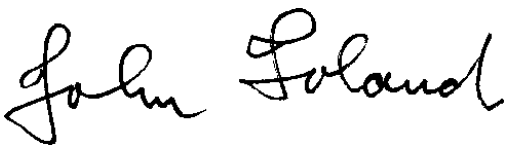
I am the chairman of the Mathematical Sciences panel for the next exercise, which will take place in 2014, based research papers published between 2007 and 2013. A very thorough description of the methodology of the assessment of different subjects is given in http://www.ref.ac.uk/

In Mathematics the panels will assess each research publication on its own merits. This is a very big task (> 8000 papers in mathematics - pure, applied, statistics - to be assessed in six months). It is easy to think that there may be a quicker way but at the moment biometric data is not considered suitable and it is not allowed in the assessment of the mathematical sciences. Each submitted paper is judged separately by the panel without any external influences. This process has been in use since 1992.

I hope this helps explain how things are done in the UK.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Professor J F Toland FRS FRSE
Director, Isaac newton Institute
Chair of Mathematical Sciences Panel REF 2014

MSRI
Mathematical Sciences Research Institute

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October 17, 2013

Alexey Parshin
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Dear Professor Parshin,

You ask: Does you institute use the bibliometric data (such as citation index, h-index, impact factor for journals) in the following cases:

1) when you hire permanent members,
2) when you consider applications for the visiting positions,
3) when you present annual report of the institute,
4) when an external commission evaluate your activity for some period of time ?

These questions are easy to answer: neither the math department at Berkeley, nor MSRI, ever uses bibliometric data of this sort in such evaluations.

Cordially,

David Eisenbud

David Eisenbud
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David Eisenbud
Director, Mathematical Sciences Research Institute; and
Professor of Mathematics, University of California, Berkeley
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Max-Planck-Institut für Mathematik

Max Planck Institute for Mathematics

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October 18, 2013

Dear Professor Parshin,

The Max Planck Institute does not use bibliometrical data in its hiring and invitation decisions. We consider it irresponsible to rely on bibliometrical data for any kind of important evaluation of the quality of research or researchers. Instead, our decisions are based on the traditional peer reviews and our own experience as researchers in the concerned fields.

Our reports to external evaluation committees are not based on bibliometrical data, but discuss our research achievements as such. Of course we include lists of publications in such reports, but citation index, h-index, impact factors, and the like do not play a role.

Bibliometric data are a dangerous weapon (all the more so in the hands of non-experts) and are completely unreliable measures of the quality of research. This has been made clear in a number of investigations, for example by the IMU, which seem conclusive to us.

With best regards,

Werner Ballmann
Director and Scientific Member of the Max Planck Institute for Mathematics

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Institut Henri Poincaré

Paris, November 18th, 2013

Cédric Villani

Professeur de l'Université de Lyon
Directeur de l'Institut Henri Poincaré
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villani@ihp.fr

À Professor Alexey Parshin
Steklov Mathematical Institute
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RUSSIA

Dear Professor Parshin,

Thank you for your message dated August 27th about the evaluation of scientific activities. You are very right to be suspicious about the use of bibliometric data. Notice however that in some fields of science, they are more relevant than others. For instance, in biology, the community is so large and the number of publications so enormous, that the use of bibliometric data can be understood in this field, where a case-by-case study in extremely hard.

In mathematics however, since our communities are smaller and our appreciation is mainly based on reputation, bibliometric data are not really necessary. The positions expressed by IMU and EMS in this respect are certainly right.

About your question :
Does the Institute Henri Poincare use the bibliometric data (such as citation index, h-index, impact factor for journals) in the following cases:

1) when you hire permanent members,
2) when you consider applications for the visiting positions,
3) when you present annual reports of the Institute activity,
4) when an external commission evaluate Institute's activity for some period of time ?

the answer, for all, is NO.

We always perform all these tasks using evaluation of high achievements, mention of the best publications in top journals (and the evaluation of which journal is "top" is made by reputation, not by statistics), etc.

Sincerely yours,

Cédric Villani

INSTITUT
MITTAG-LEFFLER
THE ROYAL SWEDISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Institut Mittag-Leffler is an international center for research and postdoctoral training in the mathematical sciences

October 21, 2013

Professor Alexey Parshin
Steklov Mathematical Institute
Russian Academy of Sciences
Gubkina str 8
Moscow 119991
Russia

Dear Professor Parshin,

This is to confirm that when the Institut Mittag-Leffler

- considers applications for the visiting positions,
- presents annual reports of the Institute's activity,
- externals commission evaluate Institute's activity for some period of time

we never use the bibliometric data such as citation index, h-index, impact factor for journals, etc.

The Institute does not have permanent academic staff. The director is usually appointed by the King of Sweden for a three years period with a possibility to continue after that for at least another three years period.

The programme applications, postdoctoral positions applications for the visiting positions are evaluated by our international advisory board and by experts in respective fields.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Ari Laptev
Director
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नाभिकीय विज्ञान एवं गणित के लिए भारत सरकार का राष्ट्रीय केन्द्र
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TFR:SM:

October 18, 2013

Dear Professor Parshin,

Thank you for your email. I am happy to provide input on scientific evaluation process at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.

All appointments, tenured or temporary, and all promotions, and all approvals on the Ph.D degree at the Tata Institute are solely based on expert reviews of the case under consideration, and the Bibliometric data play no role in the decision making. In particular, low Bibliometric data is no indication of low scientific value of the work.

Warmest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Ravi A. Rao

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