



Lietuvos
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LIETUVOS MOKSLO TARYBA
Projektas „Duomenų bazė Lituanistika“
Nr. VP1-3.1- ŠMM-02-V-02-003

THE RESEARCH COUNCIL OF LITHUANIA
Project „Database Lituanistika“
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Report
on the database „Lituanistika“
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General description

Lituanistika is a thematically defined database of scholarly works representing research in the social sciences and humanities (SSH) about the past and present of the Lithuanian state, society, culture, nation, and language. It covers the research literature in general since 2000 (doctoral theses since 1991) with bibliographic references, abstracts and full text when available. Contents are quality assured, open to the public and searchable with advanced technologies. Electronic documents may be downloaded.

User statistics show that *Lituanistika* is already widely used for literature search and access, but there are several additional aims: reinforcement and further development of Lithuanian studies, improved international visibility of SSH research in Lithuania, documentation of the research literature in the SSH that is not covered by commercial citation indexing services, Open Access to scholarly publications, and development and organization of research evaluation in the SSH.

Special features

Probably because of the multitude of aims, *Lituanistika* has some special features in that only partly can be found in similar databases abroad:

- *Internationality*: Research in the thematic domain of Lithuanian studies is performed both within Lithuania and abroad. *Lituanistika* covers both by making extensive use of databases and information sources, as well as contacts, in the library world abroad. The database is published in both *English and Lithuanian*. It covers the research literature in several other languages as well.
- *Open Access*: The function as a searchable repository for *free access to full text* is developed quite far, both technically and with regard to comprehensiveness, compared to similar solutions in the social sciences and humanities (SSH) in other countries.
- *Citation indexing*: Advanced in the context of SSH is also the recent experiment with *citation indexing*: linking the references in documents of the database as *citations*.
- *Research evaluation*: Entries in the database are subject to a *peer review* procedure in which research publications are distinguished from other types of publications. In addition, the research publications are rated by peers with regard to originality, novelty, quality, etc. Accordingly, *research evaluation* is integrated in the procedures of *Lituanistika*.
- *Presentation of researchers*: The database links authors names with information about persons: a short biography, significant achievements, and the most important scientific works. This feature brings the database close to a *current research information system*.

My general impression is that *Lituanistika* performs well in relation to its broad range of aims, but I see *three questions* that can be discussed in connection to the continuation. In order of decreasing importance, these questions are:

- 1) A wide range of SSH disciplines at Lithuanian research institutions are contributing to Lithuanian studies, but probably also to other thematic areas. Should *Lituanistika* be expanded to cover both Lithuanian studies (internationally) and SSH research in general (at Lithuanian research institutions)?
- 2) Research is normally evaluated by assessing manuscripts *before* publication or in other contexts where the research as such is evaluated and the publications are *only part of* the information given to the evaluators. In *Lituanistika*, evaluation takes place in connection to the *registration* of already published

material, but the evaluation is at the same time limited in scope to the publication itself. Should research evaluation instead take place separately from the registration in the database?

- 3) To what degree does *citation indexing* in the SSH improve information retrieval and create valid indicators representing the impact of research? Does a full text database provide better mechanisms for information retrieval than citation indexing does?

The rest of this report will deal shortly with these three questions.

A complete representation of Lithuanian research in the SSH?

At its core, *Lituanistika* is a thematically defined bibliographical database with international and multidisciplinary coverage of the literature. Similar international bibliographic databases tend to be discipline oriented, e.g. ECONIS (Germany) in economics, ERIC (USA) in educational research, and the Project Muse (USA) in the humanities, or they are interdisciplinary, but covering a limited set of journals (Web of Knowledge, Scopus). The wider scope of *Lituanistika* is probably possible because Lithuanian studies represents a limited research effort worldwide with the core of the research performed in Lithuania. As a typical parallel, I can mention the role of the humanities and social sciences in Norway: A large part of the research in e.g. law, history, linguistics, political science, literature research, and archaeology is focused on themes with special relevance to the Norwegian or Nordic culture and society. But not all. Some of the research will be contributions to international research in e.g. EU law, the history of the fisheries of the Atlantic, African languages, international relations, Polish literature, and classical archaeology. I have noticed that *Lituanistika* in some instances also represents Lithuanian researchers' contributions to international domains, and that it is *difficult in practice to delimit Lithuanian studies*, even within the publication lists of individual researchers.

Considering that *Lituanistika*

- partly functions as an advanced form of registration and promotion of Lithuanian research that is not covered by international commercial citation databases,
- represents Lithuanian researchers in person,
- includes evaluation procedures and results that might be used for external purposes,

I would consider the *completion* of *Lituanistika* as a full scale current research information system for the research institutions in Lithuania. If this is not done, there is a danger that SSH research in other domains than in Lithuanian studies will be disadvantaged. The ambition could instead be to:

- Continue to cover the research literature of the thematic domain of Lithuanian studies internationally and comprehensively
- Cover the scholarly publication output in the SSH at Lithuanian research institutions completely by using the same structure of the database, but with an organized and active engagement from the institutions in providing the input to the database and in retrieving information and statistics in return.

Flanders (Belgium) is an example of a country that has established a complete database (VABB-SHW) representing the SSH at its universities as a *supplement* to the commercial citation databases. Several other countries, such as my own, run Current Research Information Systems with complete coverage of all research publications (not limited to the SSH). These systems may be connected to full text availability and evaluation or funding procedures. They are all based on input from – and collaboration between – the research institutions, and this collaboration is facilitated and funded by the government.

Should research evaluation be included in the database?

The procedures for the evaluation of each entry to the database of approved scholarly works are well-organized, but may become laborious in the long run. Lately, a more automatized evaluation procedure that relies on the peer review process in certain indexed journals and publishers has been developed. I would encourage further development in this direction, not only because it will save resources, but also because, in the end, scholarly publication channels should be made reliable and accountable for good peer review processes. Dynamic lists of approved scholarly publication channels exist in several countries (including Denmark, Norway, Finland and Belgium). There is a plan to make the ERIH lists (of the European Science Foundation) dynamic in the same manner and to expand them to the social sciences.

If my advice given under the first question above is followed, there will be need for evaluation expertise across all disciplines of the SSH. Perhaps it is better, in that case, to organize the routines of research evaluation of Lithuanian research more separately from the database. The consequence would then be that publications are only assessed with regard to scholarliness (yes/no) as the bibliographical records are entered into the database. After that, and at any time, information from Lituanistika can be used along with other types information for evaluation procedures where the research itself, its organization, development, resources and outcome, not just the publications, is evaluated.

What is gained from citation indexing in the social sciences and humanities?

According to earlier studies of citation practices in the social sciences and humanities that have been based on the relatively limited output included in Web of Science, the chance that a reference in one publication of the database can be linked to another publication in the same database as the *cited publication* is relatively low, but varying between the disciplines. Since citation indexing has recently been introduced in Lituanistika, the database can soon be used to answer this research question in a novel and more comprehensive way (I advise to write a scholarly publication on the theme). It will then be possible to consider two other questions:

1. Is citation frequency (among publications within Lituanistika) a reliable and valid indicator of research impact, or should you instead warn against using it as a tool for evaluation?
2. Is citation indexing efficient as a tool for information retrieval (which is the original purpose of citation indexing)?

Citation indexing was introduced by Eugene Garfield in the 1950's when electronic full text databases were still far ahead. Was citation indexing more useful for information retrieval at that time then it is now? This question is relevant because there are so many other possibilities now for text mining and for searching and retrieving relevant documents.

Conclusion

Although I regard all of these three questions, especially the first one, as important to discuss in relation to the continuation of *Lituanistika*, none of them represent a negative evaluation of the database itself.

Also, 18 Oct 2013
Eugenius G. Garfield