Learning from Citations: Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)

Social Science Citation Index is a citation database from ISI Web of Science (http://www.isinet.com) that covers bibliography or reference information of articles from multidisciplinary social sciences journals. Its scope encompasses both domestic and international publications. This database incorporates the advantages of multidisciplinary indexes and is very comprehensive and authoritative in its content. Further, it provides access from 1956 to the present, which is a significant period of coverage for research. For this paper, the author had access to social sciences citation index from 1994 to the present. SSCI currently has more than 1,784 journals indexed in its database. It is important to note however, that articles indexed from journals are added selectively i.e. every article from an issue of a journal may not be indexed in the SSCI. The database is updated often and on a timely basis; approximately 2900 records are updated every week of which, 60,900 cited references are new and contains over 3.15 million records.

More than 50 subjects in the social sciences are covered in SSCI. Broadly, these include: Anthropology, Political Science, History, Public Health, Psychiatry, Industrial Relations, Social Issues, Information Science & Library Science, Social Work, Law, Sociology, Linguistics, Substance Abuse, Philosophy, Urban Studies, Psychology, and Women's Studies. In order to get a clearer picture of the coverage within these subject areas, the author examined the distribution of number of journals in the 50 subject areas within social sciences. The journal titles included in the subject categories were not unique to each category, i.e. some of the titles may have been included in more than one of the fifty categories. The largest coverage is in the area of Economics with 173 journals, followed by Law and Psychology with 104 journals each and Sociology and Education with 94 journals each. This distribution gives a general sense of coverage of social science journals in the SSCI. Further, distribution of number of social sciences journals indexed by country indicated that more than 50% of the journals indexed in social sciences were from the United States, followed by England and the Netherlands. This indicates that there is stronger emphasis on journals published domestically as compared to other countries.

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1 Citation databases can help analyze the use of citations (in bibliographies) to determine the development and influence of a particular research topic or area.
2 Other countries covered in this index include Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, North Korea, Norway, Peoples Republic of China, Portugal, Russia, Scotland, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, and Turkey.
Searching the SSCI via *ISI Web of Science*

Figure 1: Introductory database selection screen for SSCI

Clicking on *Web of Science* shows the options to choose one or more subject citation databases. SSCI can be searched individually or along with the other citation databases (if available). First a citation database has to be selected and then a choice between the two search options, Full Search and Easy Search has to be made. Advanced searching techniques using Boolean operators such as AND, NOT, OR, and SAME, and Truncation and Wildcards can be conveniently used in both these search options for performing more powerful searches. Easy Search option limits the results to a set of 100. The Full search option offers several search modes such as General, Cited Reference, and Advanced search. The Cited Reference search option being the unique feature of this database is discussed further.
Figure 2: Cited Reference Search Page

![Cited Reference Search Page Image]

**STEP 1: CITED REFERENCE LOOKUP**

Enter terms or phrases separated by OR. Then press LOOKUP.

- **CITED AUTHOR**: Enter the cited author name(s) as O'BRIAN C* OR O'BRIAN C
- **CITED WORK**: Enter abbreviated title as J COMPUT APPL MATH* using the list as a guide
- **CITED YEAR**: Enter year Cited Work was published as 1946 OR 1947

![Cited Reference Search Page Image]

**STEP 2: CITED REFERENCE SELECTION**

The table lists all of the cited references that match your search request and the number of times each variation has been cited. Select all desired references (including variants) by clicking the checkboxes or SELECT PAGE. Then press SEARCH. The search is added to the Search History.

**Set language and document type limits.**

- SELECT PAGE
- or select specific references from list.
- SEARCH
- to find articles that cite selected references.

**References 1 – 20**

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Figure 3: Selecting Cited References from the results list

![Selecting Cited References Image]
Cited Reference search includes choices of searching by Cited Author, Cited Work and Cited Year. In the Cited Author search box, the author’s last name with initials can be used. For the Cited Work option, the title of the journal or book can be typed in to find information from this publication. Journal titles have to be abbreviated as per the journal title list available from ISI. For e.g. use J SOCI S W for Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare. Even though a link to this list is readily available near the search box, locating abbreviations to journal titles before searching seems to be an archaic feature. This feature is being carried over from the traditional print indexes counterparts where a user had to find out the full title of the journal from an abbreviated titles list. Eliminating this two-step process of finding the abbreviated title of a journal before searching would make Cited Work search more efficient. With the many strides made in search technologies, providing intuitive and convenient access for the user is much easier today. Furthermore, convenience is crucial for increased use and popularity of a database. For the Cited Year search, the year as a four-digit number is used. Multiple years can be searched by adding an or (or a comma) in between the years. These Cited Reference search options provide ways to study the influence of a particular work on other research in that area or across other subject areas.

Figure 4: Search History (From Advanced Search Window)

A search history table (viewed only through advanced search or cited reference search) presents a Set number column, Results column, Search History column and options to delete sets. The size of a set is limited to 100,000 records. It is important to note that in order to build a set with Cited Reference Search results, a search has to be performed in
the cited reference search mode first and then citations have to be marked and selected. Even though this is the only way a search history for Cited Reference search can be incorporated into the search history table, a quick explanation is not adequately provided on the Web site.

Interpreting the search results

A summary of search results contains a brief citation that includes the Author, Title of the article, an abbreviated name for Journal, Volume, and Dates. A full record is displayed by clicking on the title link of the brief display. It contains Title of the article, Author(s), Journal Name, Volume, Issue, Date, Document type, Language, Abstract, Keywords, Addresses, Publisher, ISSN, Related records, Cited references, and Times cited.

Figure 5: Brief Display of Cited Reference search results
Important links can be established by looking at Related records for a particular citation. These records share cited references with the article that is displayed. Cited references show the articles from the references that the displayed article cited in its bibliography. Times cited shows the number of times the article displayed has been cited.
Figure 7: Related records list

Related Records—Summary
The records below are related to this parent record and are sorted by the most shared references:

Zajicek A. Strategies of resistance to stigmatization among white middle-class singles

Results Page 1 (Articles 1 -- 10):

- Rimmen CK
  - *Stigma and everyday resistance practices: Childless women in South India*

- Lewis KG, Moon S
  - *Always single and single again: Women’s qualitative study*
  - J MARITAL FAM THER 23 (2): 115-134 APR 1997

- Bonni S
  - *Death becomes us: Negotiating consumer identities through funerary products in Ghana*

- Ferguson SJ
  - *Challenging traditional marriage: Never married Chinese American and Japanese American women*
  - GENDER SOC 14 (1): 136-159 FEB 2000

- Ellis C

Figure 8: Cited References

Cited References

Strategies of resistance to stigmatization among white middle-class singles
Zajicek A, Koski FR
SOCIOLOGICAL SPECTRUM
23 (3): 377-403 JUL-SEP 2003

Clear the checkbox to the left of an item if you do not want to search for articles that cite the item when looking at Related Records.

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Surprisingly on the cited references screen, the total number of hits for a search is barely visible and displayed at the bottom of the screen instead of at the top where a user intuitively expects to find them. Search results can be browsed through a list and marked. They can be sorted by *Latest date, Times cited, Relevance, Source Title, First Author*, etc. In order to pull together a list of titles, each page with the selected titles have to be submitted first before moving on to the next page of titles, which is inconvenient users to remember while reading the titles. This list of selected titles can be printed, emailed, saved to a file, exported to bibliographic management tools such as EndNote, ProCite or Reference Manager or formatted for document delivery requests.

The social sciences citation index is an exceptional database and is imperative for a researcher or student to keep up to date in their field of research. Cited references can be used to gain knowledge of how other research articles have influenced a particular article and to study how this article has shaped others’ research.

*Triveni Kuchi*  
*February 2003*