

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Indian scientific literature and Scopus database

History of science being one of my favourite areas of research, the article by Patra and Muchie¹ attracted my attention. The study based on Scopus database shows that for the period 1807 to 1947, only 6,008 records were retrieved. It also shows that the oldest article found belongs to 1807. It is to be noted that scholarly articles on science from India started appearing from 1788 when *Asiatick Researches* was founded in Calcutta. The periodical continued till 1839, and published 350 scholarly articles of which 219 were devoted to various branches of science². *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (f. 1832) published around 730 articles (including catalogues, meteorological registers, etc) pertaining to various branches of science till 1850. Just these two periodicals published around 950 articles till 1850 on various domains of science². It can be seen that apart from *Asiatick Researches*, and *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* other periodicals published around 130 volumes. If on a conservative estimate we take that each of the 130 volumes has published on average 20 articles, then the total touches 2600. Thus, we see that at least 3500 scientific articles were published till 1858. Of which only 99 were captured by Scopus database, just around three percent, which is not at all a good sample for generating reliable bibliometric indicators.

The span of scientific literature produced in India during 1788 to 1947, i.e., 160 years is pretty long, and the scientific output from India is quite large. Even on conservative estimate the output will not be not less

than 100,000. Scopus database has captured just 4899 articles of the period, which is not even five percent of the scholarly scientific literature that pre-independent India had produced. The database is not to be blamed inasmuch as Scopus was started in 1995. By now the coverage has gone back up to 1966³. As such, the database is not at all fit for conducting bibliometric studies with pre-1947 literature.

With highly inadequate data the ranked lists of top 20 journals (Table 1) and 10 most productive authors (Table 2) the article has produced are not reliable.

While conducting any bibliometric study with Indian scientific literature of pre-independent India, it is not advisable to use Scopus or Web of Science.

References

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2. Sen BK, Growth of scientific periodicals in India (1788–1900). Delhi: INSA, 2002.
3. Scopus. Wikipedia. Web, <en.wikipedia.org>. 4 Sept 2017

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