Global ranking of knowledge management and intellectual capital academic journals

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Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to develop a global ranking of knowledge management and intellectual capital academic journals.*

Design/methodology/approach – *An online questionnaire was completed by 233 active knowledge management and intellectual capital researchers from 41 countries. Two different approaches: journal rank-order and journal scoring method were utilized and produced similar results.*

Findings – *It was found that the top five academic journals in the field are:* Journal of Knowledge Management, Journal of Intellectual Capital, Knowledge Management Research and Practice, International Journal of Knowledge Management, *and* The Learning Organization. *It was also concluded that the major factors affecting perceptions of quality of academic journals are editor and review board reputation, inclusion in citation indexes, opinion of leading researchers, appearance in ranking lists, and citation impact.*

Research limitations/implications – *This study was the first of its kind to develop a ranking system for academic journals in the field. Such a list will be very useful for academic recruitment, as well as tenure and promotion decisions.*

Practical implications – *The findings from this study may be utilized by various practitioners including knowledge management professionals, university administrators, review committees and corporate librarians.*

Originality/value – *This paper represents the first documented attempt to develop a ranking of knowledge management and intellectual capital academic journals through a survey of field contributors.*

Keywords *Knowledge management, Intellectual capital, Serials*

Paper type *Research paper*

Introduction

The major purpose of this study is to develop a ranking of knowledge management and intellectual capital (KM/IC) academic journals. This was achieved through a survey of 233 active KM/IC researchers from 41 countries. To develop a ranking, two different methods were employed, such as rank-order and scoring methods, which generated comparable results. The secondary objective is to investigate the importance of factors that researchers consider when they form their perceptions of journal quality.

The academic field of KM/IC is relatively young but growing at an accelerated rate (Serenko and Bontis, 2004). Unfortunately, the few academic journals that do currently exist do not have a long legacy, which would support their recognition in general management-wide rankings. Currently, there are various challenges that KM/IC researchers face. Among them, perhaps the most crucial is the recognition of KM/IC as an academic discipline by the scientific community. Only when KM/IC is acknowledged as a distinct and reputable field of science can KM/IC researchers be recognized by their peers and institutions for their scholarly contributions. For this, a discipline identity should be clearly established. As a first step towards identity development, a reflective analysis may serve as a fruitful approach

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because it helps form an understanding of the field from a descriptive perspective (Hirschheim and Klein, 2003; Neufeld *et al.*, 2007). Specifically, the evaluation of outlets in which KM/IC researchers publish their works is a vital part of a reflective analysis (Lowry *et al.*, 2007b).

Scientometrics is a scientific discipline that studies the process of science. It is often referred to as a science about science (Price, 1963). The objective is to investigate scientific processes, features, attributes and specific characteristics of science by using accepted statistical and mathematical techniques. For example, there exists an academic journal ''Scientometrics'' totally devoted to this topic. Examples of scientometric works include meta-analyses of investigated topics and employed methodologies, identifications of most productive individuals and institutions, citation impact projects, co-citation analyses, research collaboration studies, opinion surveys, and publication outlet rankings.

The purpose of this project is to develop a global ranking of KM/IC journals by employing scientometric principles. It is believed that the establishment of a valid journal ranking may help academia form an understanding of the discipline itself. Up until this study, no ranking of KM/IC journals specifically had been published. Instead, a select few KM/IC journals were included in the rankings of journals from other disciplines. They would often be integrated within the lists of related fields such as management information systems, strategic management, and human resources management. However, it is impossible to compare KM/IC journals across other disciplines objectively given their different objectives, topics, and readerships. For example, a recent ranking of information systems journals presented by the Australian Council of Professors and Heads of Information Systems (www.acphis.org.au) (see Fisher *et al.*, 2007) includes several KM/IC outlets whose ranking is relatively low. A major flaw of this approach is an inappropriate comparison of entirely different outlets. As such, *Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management* and *Journal of Knowledge Management*, among other pure-KM/IC outlets are ranked against pure-technology journals, for instance, *Journal of Software Maintenance & Evolution* or *International Journal of Intelligent Information Technologies*. On the one hand, MIS journals often publish KM/IC-related articles. On the other hand, journal ranking lists should be discipline-specific and cover only one particular area, otherwise, ranking validity may be dramatically compromised. It is for this reason that the present investigation offers a ranking of 20 KM/IC outlets that is achieved through a survey of active researchers in the field.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. The following section outlines prior scientometric journal ranking studies. Next, the methodology is described and results are offered. The last section presents concluding remarks, limitations, and directions for future research.

Literature review

Valid rankings of academic journals are of primary importance for the scientific communities (Lowry *et al.*, 2004, 2007a; Lewis *et al.*, 2007). First, researchers tend to publish their manuscripts in the most highly ranked journals available for each topic. Works appearing in leading journals receive more exposure, get recognition and generate high citation impact. Second, scholars, especially those in earlier stages of their academic careers, such as doctoral students, need to know where to search for commonly accepted, popular and rigorous theories, methodologies, and findings. In fact, many researchers assume that works published in more prestigious outlets are generally of higher quality. Third, educational institutions need to be aware of an overall prestige and reputation of KM/IC journals. For example, many business schools require an academic to demonstrate a strong record of publication in ''A'' journals to receive tenure, especially, promotion to the rank of a full professor (Starbuck, 2005). By having evidence of journal quality, schools may evaluate their faculty fairly and make better decisions on their careers. Fourth, government and private funding agencies generally consider an applicant's previous publication record making a decision of grant allocations. The lack of a comprehensive KM/IC journal ranking puts KM/IC scholars at disadvantage. Fifth, journal editors and publishers may want to know about a relative standing of their journals to develop promotion strategies. Sixth, by having a

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journal ranking, institutional libraries as well as private and public sector organizations may better allocate their journal subscription resources.

Overall, the exclusion from general business journal rankings or inappropriate rankings of KM/IC journals is regrettable. As a result, scholars striving to convey their findings face two options. First, they may submit their manuscripts to one of the KM/IC-specific outlets that will give their works the best exposure to a target audience. Regrettably, if the rankings of these journals are low or non-existent, which is a present situation with KM/IC journals, the quality of this research may be questioned by colleagues, promotion committees and granting agencies. Second, KM/IC scholars may submit their papers to well-ranked non-KM specific outlets. However, despite the recognition of research quality and impact on a future academic career, this work may potentially remain unnoticed by the general KM/IC community that may tend to read mostly KM/IC-specific outlets.

Therefore, it is vital to develop a valid ranking of KM/IC academic journals given a variety of stakeholders involved. Currently, all recognized academic disciplines may boast their own journal rankings developed through two methods: citation analyses or expert surveys (Franke *et al.*, 1990; Vokurka, 1996; Walstrom and Hardgrave, 2001; Theoharakis and Hirst, 2002; Manning and Barrette, 2005; Oltheten *et al.*, 2005).

Citation analysis dates back to 1961 when the Science Citation Index was first published (Garfield, 1979; MacRoberts and MacRoberts, 1989). In terms of journal ranking, this method assumes a positive relationship between an outlet ranking and a number of times each article is cited within a certain timeframe (Garfield, 1972). To develop a ranking, representative articles are selected from each journal, and their citations in other works are counted. As a result, each journal is assigned a citation score that is employed in a final ranking. After Thomson Scientific introduced Citation Impact Factors, impact scores have become available online for select journals that are indexed by Thomson. In fact, Citation Impact Factors have become a popular tool to assess journal quality. However, a major problem with Citation Impact Factors is that only a fraction of all business journals is indexed to Thomson. As a result, many journals from new and niche disciplines are underrepresented in citation analysis rankings (Lowry *et al.*, 2007a). With respect to KM/IC journals, none of them was indexed by Thomson as of 2008. This automatically excludes them from citation analysis rankings generated through the Thomson ISI Web of Science (see www.isiknowledge.com).

Expert surveys of journal quality are the most frequently utilized method because it employs a professional judgment of active field researchers. In contrast to citation analysis, journal ranking is obtained through various perceptual measures of survey respondents corresponding to outlet quality, impact, and contribution (e.g. see Hsieh *et al.*, 2001; Bharati and Tarasewich, 2002). An underlying premise of this approach is that the journal's target audience is qualified enough to report on a ranking of each outlet relative to other competing journals. It is assumed that perceptions of discipline representatives may accurately reflect the outlet's contribution to the advancement of both theory and practice. In fact, when judging one's scholarly contribution, tenure and promotion committees or funding agency representatives utilize their personal opinions when analyzing the quality of the applicant's publication outlets. As such, journal rankings are constructed by discipline representatives and reflect their overall perceptions of the target outlets. Another major advantage of expert surveys is their ability to collect demographic data and to develop rankings for several categories of respondents, for example, based on their current

occupation (e.g. academic vs practitioner) or geographic location (e.g. North America, Europe, Australasia, World, etc.) (e.g. see Mylonopoulos and Theoharakis, 2001). A major limitation of this method is a low response rate, potential abuses (e.g. multiple submissions by the same respondent), and sample selection (Lowry *et al.*, 2007a). If not addressed properly, these issues may affect ranking validity (Cooper *et al.*, 1993). Nevertheless, journal quality expert surveys are a recognized and well-established method of inquiry that has been employed in almost all business domains. Therefore, this method was utilized in the present project.

During expert surveys, respondents employ various factors to determine the overall quality of each journal. By building on a recent work of Rogers *et al.* (2007), nine criteria that apply to the KM/IC domain were identified. Opinion of leading researchers in the area is an influential factor; it is generally assumed that the key field experts are familiar with major works, authors and outlets in a specific domain. Senior scholars are also respected members of tenure and promotion committees and funding agencies. Opinion of colleagues corresponds to the viewpoints of individuals that surround the respondent since they often express their thoughts on the quality of particular outlets. On the one hand, opinion of senior scholars and colleagues may be affected by their personal biases, research interests and perceptions (Tahai and Meyer, 1999). For example, they may often overstate the quality of the journals in which they publish. On the other hand, views they express may still dramatically influence other academics, particularly, doctoral students and junior faculty.

Inclusion in citation indexes is important since it demonstrates the impact of each scientific publication over time. For example, Thomson publishes citation impact factors that are frequently used to create journal rankings. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many researchers tend to submit their manuscripts to indexed journals to trace and demonstrate the impact of their publications in future. Some schools tend to reward the faculty for publishing in journals appearing in specific indexes. Even though inclusion in particular indexes may not necessarily reflect a journal's quality, this factor is often considered. Citation impact factor is a consequence of journal inclusion in specific indexes. It is a numerical measure that is generally believed to reflect a contribution of each work to the overall body of knowledge, thereby affecting journal quality perceptions.

Acceptance/rejection rates may affect journal quality perceptions since it is generally assumed that leading journals have more diligent review processes, report lower acceptance rates, and, as a result, publish higher quality papers. Even though this fact is often taken for granted in academic circles, there is evidence to suggest that this measure of journal quality is very unreliable. For example, top journals often publish manuscripts of questionable quality, and non-prestigious outlets present novel and ground-breaking works (Starbuck, 2005). Even the most rigorous review process has deficiencies. For example, personal preferences of reviewers and editors may affect a review process outcome (Bedeian, 2003), reviewers tend to disagree among themselves (Starbuck, 2003), and the same paper as was accepted by a journal in the past is likely to be rejected later (Peters and Ceci, 1982).

Inclusion in ranking lists may affect journal quality perceptions since this allows authors to observe and demonstrate their research achievements as soon as a paper is accepted. In fact, many institutions rely on various ranking lists for internal decision making (van Fleet *et al.*, 2000). If a particular outlet is missing in a ranking system adopted by a researcher's organization, publications in this journal may be perceived negatively. If a journal appears in international global lists, it is more likely to be included in an institution-specific ranking system. Journal longevity affects quality perceptions since outlets with long history are more likely to be noticed, read and cited than their relatively new counterparts. In fact, journals that have been in press longer usually attract more citations. Circulation corresponds to the number of readers a journal has. A greater circulation increases the likelihood of good articles being noticed and associated with a specific outlet. On the one hand, circulation measures a current popularity of a journal rather than its quality or contribution. On the other hand, a journal that has few, if any, readers is totally impractical (Lowry *et al.*, 2007a). Reputation of editors and review board members is probably the most subjective measure of journal prestige. Outlets, which employ leading scholars, may be perceived as highly

influential. At the same time, the contribution of each board member to a review process and journal promotion is usually unknown that makes this measure totally subjective.

The journal quality factors discussed above are very controversial and many arguments can be raised about their validity. The main question, however, is the degree of importance of these characteristics for KM/IC academics. In other words, it is critical to know how much weight KM/IC researchers place on each of them when they form their perceptions of journal quality. Knowing this may improve researchers' understanding of journal ranking systems. Therefore, the primary purpose of this project is to develop a ranking of KM/IC academic journals. The secondary objective is to investigate the importance of the nine factors discussed above in terms of their impact on journal quality perceptions. The following section outlines the project's methodology.

Methodology

Journal selection

An initial list of KM/IC journals was developed by the authors and 15 active KM/IC academics, including journal editors, reviewed and appended this list. The objective was two-fold. The first goal was to select only academic KM/IC journals. Therefore, all practitioner-focused publications, for example, KM World Magazine, were excluded. It is believed that a different ranking should be developed for practitioner publications. The second purpose was to select journals focusing on managerial issues. Therefore, pure technology-centered journals or trade journals were excluded. To determine whether a journal was management or technology focused, its policy and articles were reviewed. For example, it was determined that the following outlets should be included in information systems journal rankings: *Knowledge and Information Systems*, *Knowledge-Based Systems, Data and Knowledge Engineering*, *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Intelligent Engineering Systems*, *IEEE Transactions on Knowledge and Data Engineering*, and *Information Knowledge Systems Management*. *International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society*, and *Knowledge, Technology and Policy* were also omitted because they may better fit general management journal lists. As such, 20 academic KM/IC management journals were selected.

Sample

Sampling is the most critical issue of expert surveys of journal quality. It was critically important to select a random sample of active KM/IC scholars. Prior projects often recruited respondents that belong to a specific association or subscribe to a certain online group. There are three problems with this method that may lead to very biased results. First, online forums or communities of practice may attract people interested in only a few specific topics that may more frequently appear only in select journals. As a result, these outlets will be assigned higher scores that do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the entire research community. Second, non-active researchers who never published in a field under investigation may participate in the study thereby distorting the ranking. Third, members of a particular association may rank higher the outlets that it endorses.

To avoid these factors that may confound the ranking, the authors of this paper randomly selected names and e-mails of 50 individuals from each of 20 journals who published an article between 2003 to 2007. No discrimination criteria for name selection were used. The total number of authors targeted from each journal was calculated based on the total number of papers published over the four-year period. A list of all the authors was then generated,

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from which every nth author was selected. For example, if a journal had 200 authors over the four-year period, every 4th author on the list was selected, yielding a sample of 50 authors. It is noted that in several journals almost all of the authors were selected, and fewer than 50 names were chosen from *International Journal of Applied Knowledge Management*, and from *Knowledge and Innovation: Journal of the KMCI*. The former is a new journal, and the latter has been discontinued. Therefore, it is acknowledged that these two outlets were underrepresented in the sample. All duplicate records (i.e. some authors published in more than one target journal) were identified and replaced with new names. In total, 925 unique active KM/IC researchers were selected.

Instrument

There are two primary approaches that are used to obtain journal ranking scores: rank-order and scoring method. According to the rank-order technique, respondents are presented with a list of outlets and are asked to rank-order them based on specific criteria. With respect to the scoring method, subjects are supposed to score on a Likert-type scale each journal in terms of a number of factors. Both approaches are valid, reliable and popular in journal ranking projects. Given that this is the first global ranking of academic KM/IC outlets, and its results may have dramatic implications for the future of the discipline, it was decided to employ both approaches simultaneously.

As such, the online research instrument consisted of four parts (http://foba.lakeheadu.ca/serenko/JournalRankingSampleSurvey.pdf). In the first section, respondents were given a list of 20 journals and were asked to rank-order at least five of them (up to 20). In the second part, similar to prior projects, for each of 20 journals, respondents were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale their opinion regarding:

- their degree of overall familiarity with the journal;
- the journal's overall contribution to KM/IC theory;
- the journal's overall contribution to KM/IC practice;
- how frequently they read articles in this journal;
- how frequently they cite articles in this journal; and
- likelihood of publishing articles in this journal.

Respondents were also asked whether they previously published or reviewed articles in this journal. In the third section, on a seven-point scale subjects were asked to indicate the importance of the nine journal quality factors outlined in literature review in their assessment of the overall quality of any academic journal, including KM/IC journals. In the fourth section, demographic information was solicited, such as geographic location, gender, highest degree earned, major field for the highest degree earned, years of full-time academic and non-academic work experience, current primary position, and primary and secondary research area.

To avoid order bias, the order of journals in parts one and two of the questionnaire was randomized so that 20 different questionnaire versions were developed and posted online. The order of journal quality factors (part three) was also randomized in each version. Each respondent was sent an e-mail invitation followed by two follow-up reminders. An IP address of each subject was captured to identify and remove multiple submissions by the same person.

Results

Out of 925 initial e-mail invitations, 114 bounced back, and 235 responses were obtained. Two submissions with a duplicate IP address were removed. Overall, 233 valid responses were obtained, yielding a response rate of 29 percent, which is considered satisfactory for this type of research.

The survey respondents were from 41 different countries (see Table I). The results are consistent with those reported by Serenko and Bontis (2004) who demonstrated that USA,

Table I Geographic location

Region (most representative countries)	*Total (%)*
Europe (UK – 10.8%, Italy – 6.5%, Spain – 5.9%, Finland – 5.4%, Greece – 4.3%, Netherlands – 3.8%)	48.7
North America (USA – 16.8%, Canada 2.8%)	19.6
Australasia (Australia – 8.6%)	21.7
Other	10.0
Total	100.00

UK and Australia are the most productive KM/IC contributors. A total 70 percent of participants were male; 83 percent, 16 percent and 1 percent had a doctoral, master's and bachelor's degree. On average, 80 percent of respondents were academics and 14 percent were practitioners (the remaining 6 percent are assumed to be retired or unemployed at the day of the survey). Respondents also stated that they had an average of 11 years of academic experience and ten years of industry work experience. Figure 1 and Figure 2 outline primary and secondary research areas of the subjects. As expected, KM/IC was a

Figure 1 Primary research area

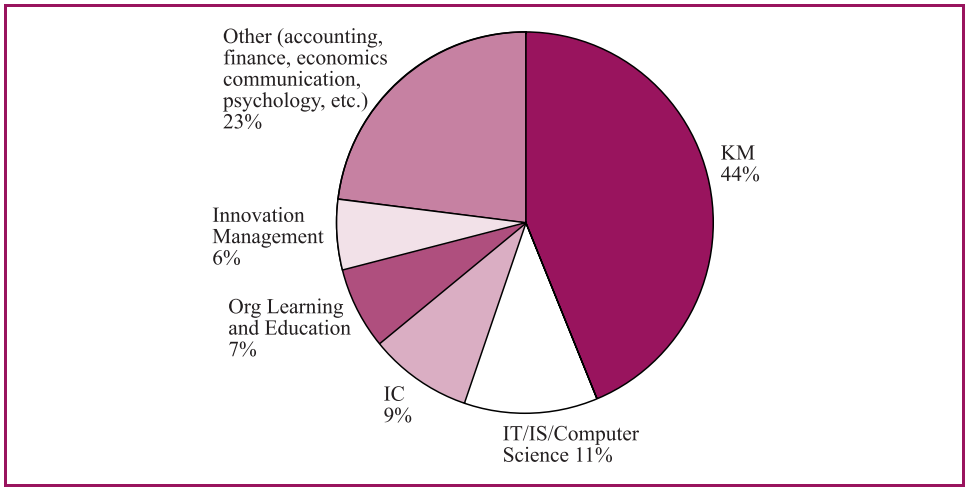
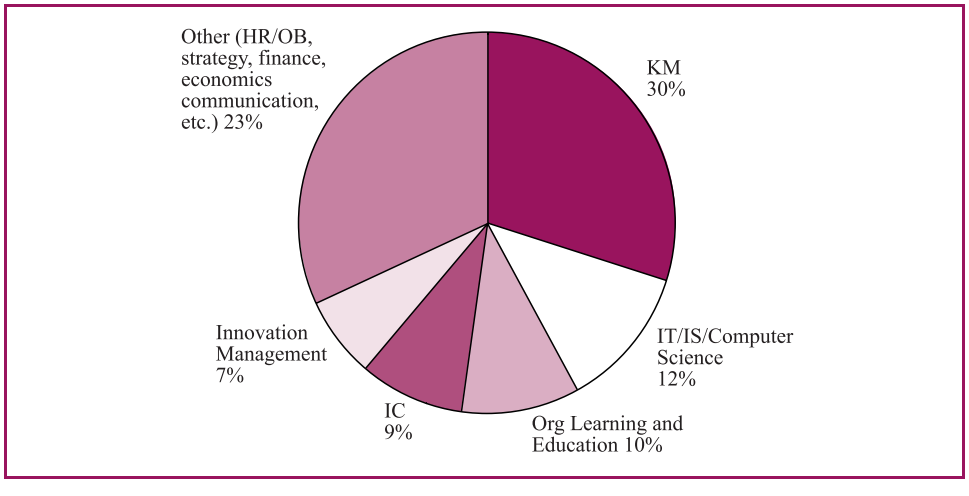


Figure 2 Secondary research area



leading field, followed by a variety of reference or supporting disciplines, such as information systems, innovation management, education, accounting, finance, etc.

To analyze rank-order items, each journal's position was converted to a score. For example, a journal that was ranked number 1 was given a score of 20, a second outlet was assigned 19, and the last one was given 1 point. Each journal's scores were aggregated and converted to a ranking list (see Table II). With respect to a scoring method employing a seven-point Likert-type scale, each journal's scores were summarized for each ranking factor (see Table III).

Note that both methods produced the same list for top six journals, and only minor discrepancies were observed. To obtain a final ranking list, scores from both methods (rank-order and scoring method) were combined together (see Table IV).

One-way ANOVA was employed to compare the importance of the journal quality perception characteristics, and statistically significant mean differences were observed ($F_{(8,1844)} = 21.706$, $p < 0.000$). Three types of factors appeared:

1. highly significant, such as editor and review board reputation, inclusion in citation indexes, opinion of leading researchers, inclusion in ranking lists, and citation impact;
2. moderate, such as opinion of colleagues and journal longevity; and
3. less significant, such as acceptance/rejection rates and circulation (i.e. number of subscribers).

Figure 3 outlines the results.

Discussion and conclusions

The purpose of this project was two-fold. The first was to develop a global ranking of KM/IC academic journals that was achieved by surveying 233 active discipline researchers from 41 countries. The second objective was to investigate the importance of a number of journal quality factors based on perceptions of field contributors. Based on the findings, several insights are offered.

First, rank-order and factor scoring methods produced very similar results. Specifically, no discrepancies were found in the list of top six journals. Even though several journals slightly changed their position depending on the approach, no dramatic differences were observed. A major advantage of the rank-order method is its simplicity since it allows researchers to

Table II Journal ranking – rank-order method

Rank	*Title*	*Score*
1	*J. of Knowledge Management*	3,184
2	*J. of Intellectual Capital*	2,246
3	*Knowledge Management Research & Practice*	2,056
4	*Intl. J. of Knowledge Management*	1,962
5	*The Learning Organization*	1,593
6	*Knowledge and Process Management*	1,584
7	*J. of Information and Knowledge Management*	1,571
8	*J. of Knowledge Management Practice*	1,524
9	*Intl. J. of Learning and Intellectual Capital*	1,411
10	*Intl. J. of Knowledge and Learning*	1,268
11	*Electronic J. of Knowledge Management*	1,260
12	*Intl. J. of Knowledge Management Studies*	1,195
13	*Intl. J. of Knowledge, Culture and Change Mng.*	1,066
14	*VINE: The J. of Information and KM Systems*	989
15	*Knowledge and Innovation: J. of the KMCI*	906
16	*Intl. J. of Applied Knowledge Management*	712
17	*Knowledge Management for Development J.*	666
18	*The Icfai J. of Knowledge Management*	584
19	*Intl. J. of Nuclear Knowledge Management*	504
20	*J. of Universal Knowledge Management*	486

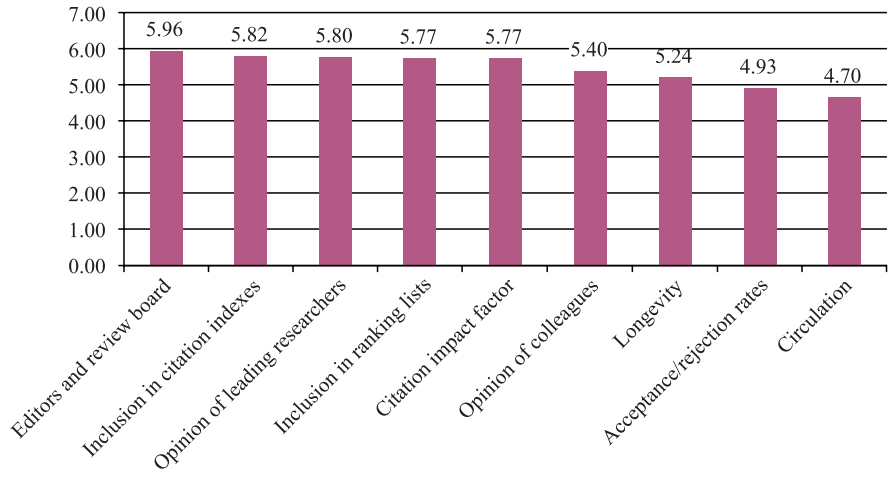
Table III Journal ranking – scoring method

Rank	Title	Familiarity	Theory contribution	Practice contribution	Read frequency	Cite frequency	Likelihood of publishing	Total
1	*J. of Knowledge Management*	829	802	785	669	591	829	4,505
2	*J. of Intellectual Capital*	614	587	544	448	388	570	3,151
3	*Knowledge Management Research & Practice*	546	476	456	392	316	526	2,712
4	*Intl. J. of Knowledge Management*	522	486	474	378	298	507	2,665
5	*The Learning Organization*	456	385	375	329	264	436	2,245
6	*Knowledge and Process Management*	453	384	386	313	269	417	2,222
7	*J. of Knowledge Management Practice*	428	363	379	303	235	430	2,138
8	*Electronic J. of Knowledge Management*	454	380	363	315	244	378	2,134
9	*J. of Information and Knowledge Management*	414	374	363	297	243	418	2,109
10	*Intl. J. of Learning and Intellectual Capital*	391	363	327	275	230	409	1,995
11	*Intl. J. of Knowledge Management Studies*	366	316	303	253	205	357	1,800
12	*Intl. J. of Knowledge and Learning*	358	312	296	237	188	328	1,719
13	*Intl. J. of Knowledge, Culture & Change Mng.*	330	265	264	215	180	316	1,570
14	*VINE: The J. of Information & KM Systems*	310	240	249	200	170	278	1447
15	*Knowledge and Innovation: J. of the KMCI*	289	218	210	184	140	254	1295
16	*Intl. J. of Applied Knowledge Management*	271	209	230	187	136	256	1289
17	*Knowledge Management for Development J.*	221	171	174	146	103	196	1011
18	*The Icfai J. of Knowledge Management*	195	134	136	114	92	179	850
19	*J. of Universal Knowledge Management*	175	110	112	101	71	158	727
20	*Intl. J. of Nuclear Knowledge Management*	151	99	107	84	68	133	642

Table IV Final KM/IC academic journal ranking – rank-order and scoring methods combined

Rank	Title	Score
1	*J. of Knowledge Management*	7,689
2	*J. of Intellectual Capital*	5,397
3	*Knowledge Management Research & Practice*	4,768
4	*Intl. J. of Knowledge Management*	4,627
5	*The Learning Organization*	3,838
6	*Knowledge and Process Management*	3,806
7	*J. of Information and Knowledge Management*	3,680
8	*J. of Knowledge Management Practice*	3,662
9	*Intl. J. of Learning and Intellectual Capital*	3,406
10	*Electronic J. of Knowledge Management*	3,394
11	*Intl. J. of Knowledge Management Studies*	2,995
12	*Intl. J. of Knowledge and Learning*	2,987
13	*Intl. J. of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management*	2,636
14	*VINE: The J. of Information and KM Systems*	2,436
15	*Knowledge and Innovation: J. of the KMCI*	2,201
16	*Intl. J. of Applied Knowledge Management*	2,001
17	*Knowledge Management for Development J.*	1,677
18	*The Icfai J. of Knowledge Management*	1,434
19	*J. of Universal Knowledge Management*	1,213
20	*Intl. J. of Nuclear Knowledge Management*	1,146

Figure 3 Importance of journal quality perception factors (seven-point scale)



keep the questionnaire very short and reduce a cognitive load on respondents. In contrast, the journal scoring approach requires subjects to rank each journal based on specific criteria that is more time consuming. Therefore, it is suggested that future investigations may employ only the rank-order method.

Second, the *Journal of Knowledge Management* was consistently ranked as a leading outlet along with its sister publication, the *Journal of Intellectual Capital*. Both of these journals are published by Emerald and have been around since 1997 and 2000 respectively. The difference between *The Learning Organization* and *Knowledge and Process Management* was trivial which suggests that researchers perceive the quality difference between these two outlets as minor.

Third, it was concluded that the major factors affecting journal quality perceptions are the reputation of the editor and review board members, inclusion in citation indexes, opinion of leading researchers, inclusion in ranking lists and citation impact. This offers journal editors and publishers valuable insights on how to improve the rankings of their journals. For example, they may invite leading KM/IC scholars to join their editorial boards. At the same time, the journal acceptance/rejection rates factor was ranked low. It is possible that some scholars subconsciously form negative perceptions of journals with unreasonably high rejection rates. Journal circulation was of the lowest importance. This demonstrates that researchers value higher an impact of their scientific works, measured through citation impact indexes, than the distribution of their publication to the potential readership.

Overall, the results of this project contradict the findings by Rogers *et al.* (2007) whose survey respondents ranked editor's reputation and review board affiliations as the least important criteria. At the same time, journal acceptance rates were ranked as one of top three factors. It is concluded that more research is needed to understand the rationale academics use to form their perceptions of outlet quality. Future investigators may wish to interview active field scholars to better understand this phenomenon.

It is suggested that the reader keeps in mind that only journals published in the English language were included in this project's ranking. Although the majority of pre-eminent academic journals are published in English, there could still be a case for considering a KM/IC journal appearing in a language other than English. However, it is difficult to include journals published in different languages in a unified global ranking system. To address this issue, country or language-specific journal lists should be developed.

In conclusion, part of the long-term vitality of the field of KM/IC rests with the attraction of new academic researchers. Historically, doctoral candidates who wanted to pursue this field may

have been counselled otherwise owing to the lack of evidence surrounding the quality of KM/IC journals. The phenomenological focus of KM/IC also makes the subject difficult to pursue given that it encompasses a multi-disciplinary approach (Bontis, 1999). Furthermore, early tenure-track researchers may have been pressured to consider alternative outlets given that none of the top 20 journals in this field is currently ISI indexed. This study helps understand the identity of the discipline, bolster its momentum, and shape its development by identifying its top outlets. As the field soldiers on, many of its premier journals will have developed a longer legacy, which would make them potential candidates for ISI inclusion. In the meantime, the journal rankings established in this study, signal a range of quality within the field itself that is impossible to ignore.

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