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The social and cognitive structure of library and information science: an historical overview

Introduction. Empirical studies of library and information science have so far focused mostly on identification of research subfields using citation and co-citation analysis with the intention to describe and define the field. The few studies examining social structure of the field are focused on institutions and not individuals. Cognitive structure analyses using title words are also not common.

Method. The study is based on the analysis of 10,344 research and review articles published in 16 leading library and information science journals in the period from 1988 to 2007.

Analysis. This study examines the library and information science by analyzing its social structure using social network analysis of coauthorship networks and mapping the cognitive structures using co-word and word frequency analysis and following how these changes over time.

Results. The study demonstrates that library and information science is not a socially or cognitively cohesive field. However, there are indications that the core is being developed in a more recent period (last 10 years). The study finds that the cognitive structure of LIS is divided into three main branches: library-related topics, information-related topics and bibliometrics/informetrics. The LIS journals are also clearly profiled. Title word frequency analysis shows the main focus of LIS articles over the last 20 years.