

# Global ranking of knowledge management and intellectual capital academic journals: 2013 update

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this study is to update a global ranking of knowledge management and intellectual capital (KM/IC) academic journals.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Two different approaches were utilized: a survey of 379 active KM/IC researchers; and the journal citation impact method. Scores produced by the application of these methods were combined to develop the final ranking.

**Findings** – Twenty-five KM/IC-centric journals were identified and ranked. The top six journals are: Journal of Knowledge Management, Journal of Intellectual Capital, The Learning Organization, Knowledge Management Research & Practice, Knowledge and Process Management and International Journal of Knowledge Management. Knowledge Management Research & Practice has substantially improved its reputation. The Learning Organization and Journal of Intellectual Capital retained their previous positions due to their strong citation impact. The number of KM/IC-centric and KM/IC-relevant journals has been growing at the pace of one new journal launch per year. This demonstrates that KM/IC is not a scientific fad; instead, the discipline is progressing towards academic maturity and recognition.

**Practical implications** – The developed ranking may be used by various stakeholders, including journal editors, publishers, reviewers, researchers, new scholars, students, policymakers, university administrators, librarians and practitioners. It is a useful tool to further promote the KM/IC discipline and develop its unique identity. It is important for all KM/IC journals to become included in Thomson Reuters' Journal Citation Reports.

**Originality/value** – This is the most up-to-date ranking of KM/IC journals.

**Keywords** Journal ranking, Knowledge management, Intellectual capital, Expert survey, Citation analysis, Scientometrics, Serials, Knowledge sharing

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction and purpose of the study

In order to be officially recognized as a distinct field of science, each discipline has to possess a number of important attributes of academic maturity that cumulatively form its unique identity. For example, each scholarly discipline is expected to focus on distinct subject matter, develop networking channels, occupy a unique academic niche, boast well-respected scholars, deliver its own curriculum, demonstrate theoretical and/or practical impact, and accumulate a body of knowledge, which mostly exists in the form of peer-reviewed publications (Baskerville and Myers, 2002; Jennex and Croasdell, 2005; Katerattanakul *et al.*, 2006). There exist numerous possible publication outlets for management researchers (e.g. books, trade magazines, online communities). However, peer-reviewed academic journals occupy a leading position in terms of credibility, acceptance, influence, and impact on authors' careers. As a result, scientometric inquiries into the quality of peer-reviewed journals have become very common in academia.

Knowledge management and intellectual capital (KM/IC) is considered among the youngest management disciplines that has gained acceptance in the scientific community. The overall direction of KM/IC is encouraging. Evidence suggests that it is a very attractive domain welcoming contributions from both academics and practitioners. Its body of knowledge has

been continuously growing (Grant, 2011). It does not exhibit a problematic superstar effect because journal editors do not express bias towards a small group of highly productive researchers in their paper acceptance decisions (Serenko *et al.*, 2011b). KM/IC had an initial thrust as a discipline in the 1990s, but its historical roots date back to the 1950s and even further, and provide a solid yet unexplored theoretical base (Lambe, 2011). KM/IC researchers do not have a dominant school of thought; instead, they employ a combination of positivist, empirical, conceptual, descriptive, and multi-method approaches (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2011). Case studies are frequently used (Serenko *et al.*, 2009; Serenko *et al.*, 2010), which is consistent with the mandate of KM/IC as an applied discipline. KM/IC is not a fashionable topic; it is “a loose collection of ideas that is still developing its scientific paradigm” (Rodríguez-Ruiz and Fernández-Menéndez, 2009, p. 203). During the past decade, there has been sustained academic interest in KM/IC topics (Hislop, 2010).

One of the key attributes defining the identity of the KM/IC discipline is the set of KM/IC-centric journals. Peer-reviewed journals have played several important roles in the development of science since the seventeenth century (Merton and Sztompka, 1996; Greco *et al.*, 2006; de Vaujany *et al.*, 2011). First, they are the most effective and efficient tool for the dissemination of academic discoveries. Peer-reviewed journals are usually published faster than books, and they are more rigorous than conference proceedings[1], technical reports and working papers. Second, they ensure high quality by means of a peer-review process, which actually pre-dates the emergence of academic journals. Third, knowledge existing in peer-reviewed journals is delivered not only to other academics but also to practitioners and students (i.e. future practitioners) by means of various knowledge translation mechanisms (Serenko *et al.*, 2011a; Serenko *et al.*, 2012). Fourth, peer-reviewed journals allow authors to retain intellectual rights and receive credit for their work. Fifth, journal editors, board members, and reviewers, who decide what topics, ideas and methods to publish, establish the direction of the entire scholarly domain. Sixth, a discipline-centric set of peer-reviewed journals confirms the very existence of a specific scientific field. As such, “one of the important knowledge bases for an emerging research field is peer-reviewed journals, which introduce and report work done regarding the research field” (Nie *et al.*, 2009, p. 630).

The first KM/IC-centric peer-reviewed journal, *The Learning Organization*, was launched in 1994. In 1997, the inaugural issue of *Journal of Knowledge Management* was published, and *Knowledge and Process Management* changed its name from *Business Change and Re-engineering*. Ten years later, 20 KM/IC-centric peer-reviewed journals were in existence, and their number continued to grow.

In 2009, the first comprehensive ranking of the KM/IC-centric journals was published in *Journal of Knowledge Management* (Bontis and Serenko, 2009; Serenko and Bontis, 2009b). As an extension of that particular publication and evidence of its impact, the authors have been informed that their KM/IC journal ranking was used in the following cases:

- Master’s and doctoral students used the ranking to familiarize themselves with the KM/IC field;
- librarians consulted the list to make subscription decisions;
- due to the officially published KM/IC ranking list, KM/IC-centric journals were included and ranked in other comprehensive or institutional ranking lists of academic journals;
- job, tenure, promotion and salary bonus seekers successfully used the ranking to demonstrate the quality of their publications;
- researchers used the ranking to identify and target specific journals for future studies;
- KM/IC journal editors used the ranking for promotional purposes;
- the ranking was used in scientometric studies exploring various aspects of the KM/IC discipline; and
- the ranking was employed to demonstrate the maturity and recognition of KM/IC as a distinct scholarly discipline.

The purpose of the present investigation is to update the 2009 ranking list. There are several reasons for this. First, this ranking is over four years old, which limits its objectivity and validity[2]. Second, new journals have appeared since this ranking's publication. Third, several of the ranked journals have become temporary or permanently inactive. Fourth, perceptions of journal quality and their citation impact change over time (Althouse *et al.*, 2009). Fifth, it is necessary to further validate the previous ranking by following acceptable scientometric approaches. The following section discusses these ranking methods in detail.

## 2. Journal ranking methods

The debate of the methodological issues associated with journal rankings is as old as ranking studies themselves (see, for example, Boor, 1973). The two major ranking approaches are expert surveys and journal citation impact measures. Based on the expert survey method, a representative group of active researchers is selected who classify each outlet based on their perceptions of its quality (see, for example, Mylonopoulos and Theoharakis, 2001; Bharati and Tarasewich, 2002). According to the citation impact technique, the ranking is constructed based on the citation impact measures of each outlet (Holsapple *et al.*, 1994). A key assumption is that there exist a strong positive relationship between the number of citations attracted by a journal and its overall quality. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages (see Tables I and II).

Therefore, the most valid ranking may be obtained when the results produced by both methods are combined into a single ranking list. This triangulation process capitalizes on the unique strengths of each approach and compensates for their shortcomings.

## 3. Methodology

The key objective of the methodology employed in this study was to capitalize on the strengths of each ranking approach discussed above and to minimize its disadvantages to ensure the best validity of the final ranking list.

**Table I** Expert survey journal ranking method

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
<p>Suitability for the development of national and regional rankings</p> <p>Wide acceptance</p> <p>Reflection of the cumulative opinion of a representative group of scholars familiar with the research domain (Lowry <i>et al.</i>, 2004)</p> <p>Suitability for rankings of new journals and journals in new disciplines</p> <p>Difficulty of perceptual measures manipulation in the short-term</p>	<p>Subjectivity of the ranking process. For example, respondents are dramatically influenced by the opinion of leading academics (Rogers <i>et al.</i>, 2007) and their personal research interests (Serenko and Dohan, 2011)</p> <p>Familiarity bias – respondents may assign higher scores to journals they are familiar with, instead of objectively reflecting on each journal's quality (Walstrom <i>et al.</i>, 1995; Serenko and Bontis, 2011)</p> <p>Identity concerns – to protect themselves against potential identity threats or to promote their social identity, respondents rate more highly journals in which they published or have editorial memberships (Peters <i>et al.</i>, 2012)</p> <p>Problematic for the development of large, comprehensive ranking lists because of rater fatigue</p> <p>Intra-institutional politics – ranking decisions may be affected when respondents favor outlets appearing in their own institutional ranking lists (Adler and Harzing, 2009)</p> <p>The “path dependency” phenomenon appears if previous ranking lists are utilized to develop a new ranking without considering new outlets (Truex <i>et al.</i>, 2009)</p> <p>Practitioner under-representation – industry professionals often represent a minority of survey respondents yet they are an important stakeholder group (Saha <i>et al.</i>, 2003)</p> <p>Order bias – the order in which journals are presented to the raters may have a confounding effect on the findings</p>

**Table II** Citation impact measures journal ranking method

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
<p>High objectivity of measures – it avoids subjectivity inherent in self-reported survey scores</p> <p>Multiple measures – the ranking may be based on the combination of several citation indices to improve overall reliability (Serenko, 2010)</p> <p>Wide acceptance – it has been a popular method of journal quality assessment for over 85 years (Gross and Gross, 1927)</p>	<p>Occasional mistakes, omissions and inconsistencies existing in all journal databases that affect bibliometric indices (Rossner <i>et al.</i>, 2007; Elkins <i>et al.</i>, 2010)</p> <p>Interdisciplinary differences – citation indices differ dramatically among disciplines (Seglen, 1997) making it difficult to develop multi-disciplinary journal rankings (Althouse <i>et al.</i>, 2009)</p> <p>Skewness of citation data (Seglen, 1992)</p> <p>Data manipulation by journal editors, publishers, and article database owners (e.g. Thomson) by means of forced citations, self-citations, and arbitrary adjustments (Rousseau, 1999; Sevinc, 2004; Bjørn-Andersen and Sarker, 2009). For example, in extreme cases, self-citations constitute up to 85 percent of all of a journal's citations (Monastersky, 2005)</p> <p>Impact of journal longevity – citation impact factors are usually lower for new and niche journals</p> <p>Retracted article problems – citations to retracted articles are often mistakenly included in total citation count (Liu, 2007)</p> <p>The "path dependency" phenomenon (Truex <i>et al.</i>, 2009)</p> <p>Limited Thomson's coverage – many journals are excluded from Thomson's Journal Impact Factor (JIF) reports</p> <p>Equality of all citations – the method assumes equal impact of all citations whereas the role of citations within a single paper differs</p> <p>Arbitrary selection of the type of an impact factor – ranking positions depend on the type of the citation impact factor</p>

### 3.1 Expert survey

The list developed in previous KM/IC journal rankings was used as an initial journal set. To avoid the "path dependency" effect, a comprehensive search of Google Scholar, the internet, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, the classification scheme of the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Initiative (the 2012 list[3]), John Lamp's Index of IS Journals (see <http://lamp.infosys.deakin.edu.au/journals/index.php>), and the major publishers was conducted. To be included in the ranking list, the journal had to:

- be peer-reviewed;
- concentrate on various KM, IC and/or organizational learning issues as evident in its mission and topics of published papers;
- analyze these issues from the managerial, business, policy, or economic perspective;
- be currently active (i.e. in print); and
- avoid manuscript processing and publication charges[4].

In some cases, journal editors and/or editorial board members were contacted for clarification, and published articles were analyzed. As a result, 25 journals were identified and used in ranking development. In addition, many journals that have KM/IC topics as part of their objective or analyze KM/IC from a very narrow, non-managerial (e.g. IT) perspective were identified (e.g. *Knowledge-Based Systems*, *Data and Knowledge Engineering*, *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Intelligent Engineering Systems*, *International Journal of Human Capital and Information Technology Professionals*, *Journal of Human Capital*, etc.) Such journals, however, should be included in other rankings, for instance information technology/systems, human resources, or general management. These journals were listed as non-ranked outlets since they are still of interest to KM/IC researchers. The ranking list developed within this study included KM/IC-centric peer-reviewed journals only.

In order to ensure that each journal was equally represented during the data collection phase, 50 authors from each journal were randomly selected. In the previous ranking study, Serenko and Bontis (2009b) recruited authors whose papers appeared up to 2007 inclusive.

To avoid overlap, the present study considered research papers from 2008 to 2011 (inclusive). To identify potential survey participants, a three-stage process was followed. First, a list of all unique authors in each journal was generated. Second, from each journal, every  $n$ th author was selected to ensure that 50 unique names were obtained. For instance, if a journal had 150 unique authors, every third name was selected. Third, the overall list of participants was analyzed to identify any authors who were listed more than once (i.e. those who published in two or more journals), and their duplicate names were replaced with the names of randomly chosen authors from the same journal. The procedure was repeated until each journal was represented by 50 unique authors, and each name appeared only once in the overall dataset. No discrimination criteria (e.g. authorship order, affiliation, position, etc.) were applied. In some journals, almost all authors were selected. In two cases, fewer than 50 names were identified because these journals had not published enough issues – *actKM: Online Journal of Knowledge Management* (25 authors) and *Open Journal of Knowledge Management* (20 authors). Overall, the survey included 1,195 respondents, who were active KM/IC researchers.

The instrument by Serenko and Bontis (2009b) was adapted. Respondents were asked to rank each journal's overall contribution to the KM/IC field on a seven-point Likert-type scale. The responses were converted to the quantitative format as follows:

- none – 0;
- marginal – 1;
- some – 2;
- average – 3;
- good – 4;
- very good – 5; and
- outstanding – 6.

Basic demographic data was also collected. To eliminate the confounding effect of the order in which journals were presented, five versions of the survey with randomized journal orders were created. A survey version was assigned to each respondent in a random manner. Each respondent was invited to participate in the study over e-mail followed by two reminders. IP addresses were identified and used to exclude duplicate submissions.

### 3.2 Journal citation impact

Citation data were collected for each journal individually on June 1, 2012 from Google Scholar by using Harzing's Publish or Perish tool (version 3.6) by following the method of Bontis and Serenko (2009) (see [www.harzing.com/pop.htm](http://www.harzing.com/pop.htm) for further information). The title of each journal was entered into the "Journal title" field. No exclusion words were used, no restrictions were placed on publication year, and all disciplines were included (i.e. all boxes that restrict the results to particular scholarly disciplines were checked). The "Lookup Direct" function was employed to retrieve the latest results directly from Google Scholar.

Each journal was ranked based on its  $h$ -index and  $g$ -index. The  $h$ -index suggests that a journal has index  $h$  if  $h$  of its  $N_p$  published articles have at least  $h$  citations each and the other  $(N_p - h)$  published articles have fewer than  $h$  citations each (Hirsch, 2005). The  $g$ -index is obtained when all articles published by a particular journal are "ranked in decreasing order of the number of citations that they received, the  $g$ -index is the (unique) largest number such that the top  $g$  articles received (together) at least  $g^2$  citations" (Egghe, 2006, p. 131). Each of these indices, or their combination, is a popular measure in journal ranking development (Harzing and van der Wal, 2008; Rosenstreicha and Wooliscroft, 2009; Serenko and Bontis, 2009a; Moussa and Touzani, 2010). Because all article databases, including Google Scholar, contain errors, incorrect entries, and duplicate records, all results were copied to MS Excel and analyzed manually. A number of adjustments to the indices were made.

### 3.3 Final ranking

The final journal ranking was constructed based on the combination of the results of the expert survey and journal citation impact methods. For this the following steps were completed:

1. the scores provided by survey respondents were standardized for each journal individually;
2. the *h*- and *g*-index scores were standardized and averaged (i.e. mean) for each journal individually;
3. the scores obtained from steps 1 and 2 above were averaged for each journal;
4. the scores from step 3 above were standardized for each journal;
5. because the mean of standardized scores is zero, the score of 1 (one) was added to each journal's resulting score to avoid negative numbers; and
6. a new ranking was constructed.

### 4. Note of caution

There are several critical issues that the reader should be informed about up front. First, as described in the previous section, all ranking methods have limitations. Even the combination of two most popular approaches cannot guarantee the validity of the obtained ranking list. Second, there are other journal ranking approaches, for example, the Publication Power Approach (Holsapple, 2008; Serenko and Jiao, 2012), Uncitedness Factor (Egghe, 2010), and Author Affiliation Index (Cronin and Meho, 2008), which may produce different results. Third, even highly ranked journals often publish papers of questionable quality that attract no citations (Rousseuw, 1991). In contrast, many exemplar articles appear in less prestigious journals. Fourth, the current ranking includes four categories of journals:

1. KM;
2. IC;
3. organizational learning; and
4. knowledge-based development.

Ideally, a distinct journal ranking should be constructed for each of these sub-groups[5]. Unfortunately, the number of IC, organizational learning, and KBD journals is presently very low and insufficient for this purpose. However, the authors believe that including these journals in this study's ranking may improve their reputation, increase recognition, and help journal stakeholders benchmark a relative position of their outlets. Evidence also suggests that each KM/IC journal is unique, favors particular topics, and occupies a unique academic niche (Harp *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, it is difficult to compare objectively the quality of journals that somewhat differ from one another.

Unfortunately, many users of journal rankings have little understanding of advantages and disadvantages of ranking methods. As a result, they take the validity of journal rankings for granted and consider the proposed lists virtually indisputable. Accordingly, the authors of this study warn that tenure and promotion (as well as merit pay, hiring, etc.) committees should not base their judgment solely on the ranking of journals in which a candidate published his or her papers. Instead, they should consider the quality and impact of each work independently of the ranking of the journal where it appeared. Even though publications in top-tier journals have traditionally been considered a *de facto* proof of scientific contribution, there are other ways to advance science. Examples include securing research funding, mentoring junior colleagues, supervising graduate students, serving on institutional research committees, developing curriculum, performing editorial duties, participating in peer-reviews, translating research to practice, and organizing conferences.

Overall, the reader should interpret the suggested ranking list with caution. This ranking does not imply that the scientific prestige, recognition and contribution of a particular journal are high or low. Instead, this study simply presents a KM/IC journal ranking list based on the methodology recognized in scientometric circles. Despite the various advantages of journal ranking lists, the consequences of their misuse, abuse and misinterpretation may be devastating for individual researchers and even entire scientific disciplines. As stated by Parker *et al.* (1998, p. 397), "it seems to us that society in general, and academia in particular risks (and arguably is already) paying a high price for its current obsession with economy, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability".

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Expert survey

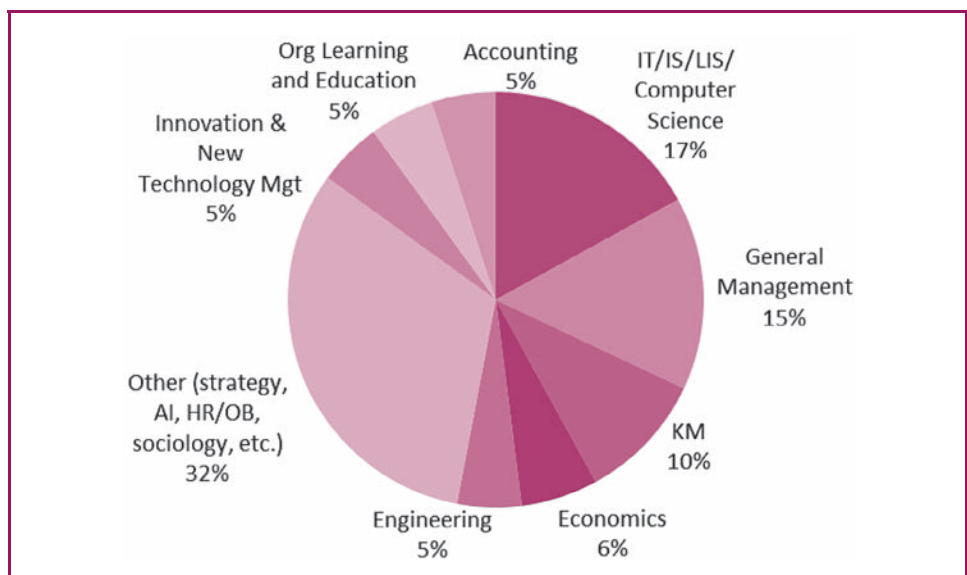
Out of 1,195 invitations, 112 bounced back. All responses were reviewed manually. Several incomplete or duplicate submissions were removed. Overall, 379 usable surveys were retained for analysis, at a response rate of 35 percent.

The respondents resided in 67 different countries (see Table III). No single country dominated the sample. Within the final sample, 35 percent of the respondents were female; 84 percent, 15 percent and 1 percent had a doctoral, Master's and Bachelor's degree, respectively; 83 percent were academics, 9 percent were practitioners, 3 percent were students, and 5 percent were retired or unemployed at the day of the survey. On average, the respondents had 12 and seven years of full-time academic and non-academic

**Table III** Geographic location

Region (Most representative countries)	Total percentage
Europe (Italy 7.7 percent, Spain 6.4 percent, Germany 5.5 percent, UK 5.5 percent, Finland 4.7 percent, The Netherlands 3.0 percent, Greece 2.5 percent, etc.)	46.1
North America (USA 10.5 percent, Canada 6.4 percent)	16.9
Australasia (Australia 6.6 percent, New Zealand 2.2 percent, etc.)	9.1
Other (India 3.9 percent, Malaysia 3.9 percent, Mexico 1.9 percent, etc.)	27.9
Total	100.00

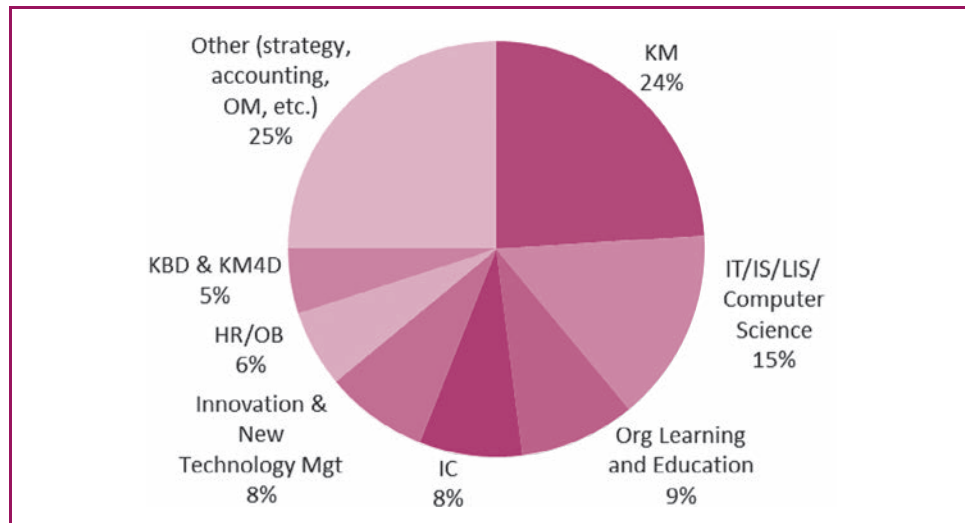
**Figure 1** Area of concentration for highest degree earned



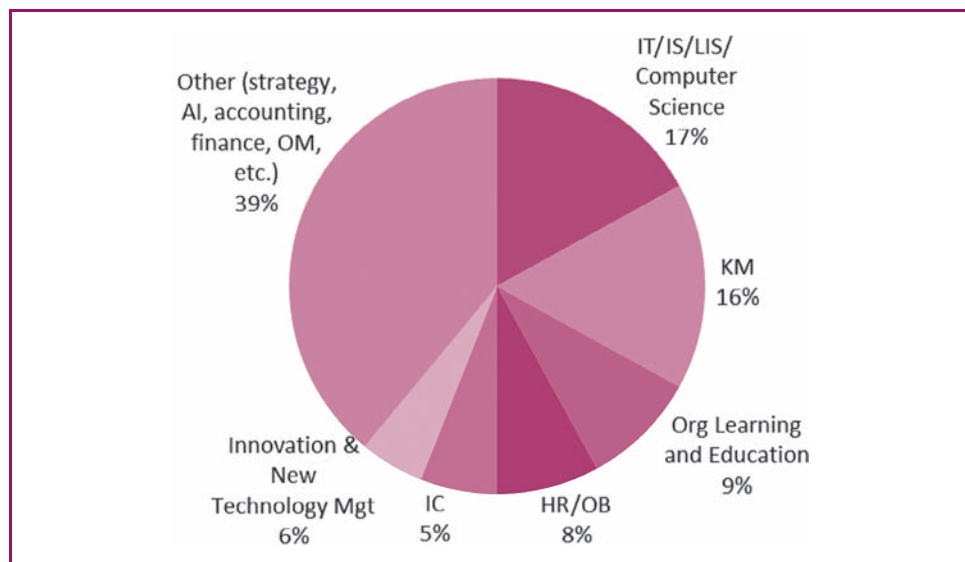
experience, respectively. Figure 1 presents the respondents' areas of concentration for highest degree earned. It reflects both the hard (e.g. IT, IS, computer science, engineering) and soft (e.g. general management, economics, education, accounting, strategy) educational backgrounds of KM researchers, which is consistent with hard and soft approaches used in the KM discipline (Örtenblad, 2007; Nie *et al.*, 2009). A small percentage of researchers switched to KM and IC from social sciences.

Figures 2 and 3 outline the primary and secondary research areas of active KM/IC researchers, respectively. Two important findings emerged. First, knowledge-based development (KBD) and knowledge management for development (KM4D) emerged as distinct sub-fields within the overall KM/IC domain. Second, only 46 percent of them identified KM/IC, organizational learning, KBD and KM4D as their primary research area. This number is even lower for the secondary research area (30 percent).

**Figure 2** Primary research area



**Figure 3** Secondary research area





**Table IV** Journal ranking – expert survey method

Rank	Title	Score	2008 rank
1	<i>Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	1,284	1
2	<i>Knowledge Management Research &amp; Practice</i>	962	3
3	<i>International Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	880	4
4	<i>Journal of Intellectual Capital</i>	846	2
5	<i>Journal of Information and Knowledge Management</i>	769	9
6	<i>The Learning Organization</i>	717	5
7	<i>Journal of Knowledge Management Practice</i>	651	7
8	<i>Knowledge and Process Management: The Journal of Corporate Transformation</i>	625	6
9	<i>International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital</i>	578	10
10	<i>Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	573	8
11	<i>VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems</i>	568	14
12	<i>International Journal of Knowledge and Learning</i>	503	12
13	<i>International Journal of Knowledge Management Studies</i>	497	11
14	<i>International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management</i>	460	13
15	<i>International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development</i>	447	N/A
16	<i>International Journal of Knowledge-Based Organizations</i>	443	N/A
17	<i>Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge and Management</i>	424	N/A
18	<i>Knowledge Management &amp; E-Learning: An International Journal</i>	411	N/A
19	<i>Knowledge Management for Development Journal</i>	390	17
20	<i>International Journal of Knowledge Society Research</i>	359	N/A
21	<i>Open Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	349	N/A
22	<i>International Journal of Knowledge and Systems Science</i>	338	N/A
23	<i>actKM: Online Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	329	N/A
24	<i>The IUP Journal of Knowledge Management (formerly The ICFAI Journal of Knowledge Management)</i>	328	18
25	<i>Intangible Capital</i>	304	N/A

Table IV presents the ranking list based on the expert survey approach. Compared to the previous ranking (see Serenko and Bontis, 2009b, Table III), several highlights were observed[6]. First, *Journal of Knowledge Management* was again recognized as the top journal. Second, *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* and *International Journal of Knowledge Management* have improved their position by outscoring *Journal of Intellectual Capital*. Third, *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management* has jumped from the ninth to the fifth place. Fourth, *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development* (launched in 2010) has outperformed *Knowledge Management for Development Journal* (launched in 2005), which did not improve its position. Fifth, the *IUP Journal of Knowledge Management* (formerly *The ICFAI Journal of Knowledge Management*), despite being in print since 2003, remained at the bottom of the list. Sixth, several journals kept their position relative to the other outlets.

### 5.2 Journal citation impact

The journals were also ranked based on their *h*-index, followed by their *g*-index (Table V). Compared to the previous ranking (see Bontis and Serenko, 2009, Table II), the position of the top five journals (i.e. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, *The Learning Organization*, *Knowledge and Process Management*, and *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*) did not change. *International Journal of Knowledge and Learning* has improved its position by increasing its *h*- and *g*-indices by 157 percent and 180 percent, respectively. Overall, all journals increased their citation scores. Please note that the difficulty of improving the *h*- and *g*-indices increases exponentially. For example, it is much easier to increase the *h*-index from 10 to 20 than from 20 to 30.

**Table V** Journal ranking – citation impact method

Rank	Title	h-index 2012	g-index 2012	h-index 2008	g-index 2008	h-index percentage increase	g-index percentage increase
1	<i>Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	84	134	47	70	79	91
2	<i>Journal of Intellectual Capital</i>	63	103	36	56	75	84
3	<i>The Learning Organization</i>	51	71	28	39	82	82
4	<i>Knowledge and Process Management: The Journal of Corporate Transformation</i>	41	67	26	38	58	76
5	<i>Knowledge Management Research &amp; Practice</i>	24	42	13	25	85	68
6	<i>International Journal of Knowledge and Learning</i>	18	28	7	10	157	180
7	<i>Journal of Knowledge Management Practice</i>	18	23	10	13	80	77
8	<i>Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	16	25	8	12	100	108
9	<i>Journal of Information and Knowledge Management</i>	15	22	7	10	114	120
10	<i>International Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	13	19	6	8	117	138
11	<i>International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital</i>	13	18	5	7	160	157
12	<i>VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems</i>	13	17	8	11	63	55
13	<i>Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge and Management</i>	10	18	3	5	233	260
14	<i>Knowledge Management for Development Journal</i>	7	10	2	2	250	400
15	<i>Intangible Capital</i>	7	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
15	<i>International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management</i>	7	9	3	3	133	200
15	<i>International Journal of Knowledge Management Studies</i>	7	9	2	2	250	350
18	<i>The IUP Journal of Knowledge Management (formerly The ICFAI Journal of Knowledge Management)</i>	6	8	2	2	200	300
19	<i>Knowledge Management &amp; E-Learning: An International Journal</i>	5	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
20	<i>International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development</i>	4	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
21	<i>International Journal of Knowledge Society Research</i>	3	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
22	<i>actKM: Online Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	3	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
23	<i>International Journal of Knowledge-Based Organizations</i>	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
24	<i>International Journal of Knowledge and Systems Science</i>	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
24	<i>Open Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Table VI** Spearman correlations for survey scores, *h*-indices, and *g*-indices

Metrics	Survey scores (2012)	Survey scores (2008)	h-index (2012)	g-index (2012)	h-index (2008)
Survey scores (2012)	1.000				
Survey scores (2008)	0.932	1.000			
<i>h</i> -index (2012)	0.839	0.833	1.000		
<i>g</i> -index (2012)	0.829	0.839	0.994	1.000	
<i>h</i> -index (2008)	0.791	0.805	0.965	0.924	1.000
<i>g</i> -index (2008)	0.790	0.813	0.970	0.935	0.999

Note: All values are significant at  $p < 0.001$

Table VI reveals non-parametric correlations for survey scores and citation indices. Non-parametric statistics was used because of small sample size and non-normal distribution of all scores. First, as expected, the *h*- and *g*-index correlated almost perfectly. Second, survey scores and citation indices also exhibited very strong correlations.

### 5.3 Final ranking

Based on the approach outlined in the methodology section, the results of the expert survey and citation impact measures were combined to develop the final ranking list (see Table VII). It contains approximately 5 percent of A+, 20 percent of A, 50 percent of B, and 25 percent of C level journals, as recommended by Gillenson and Stafford (2008). This limits the number of top-tier journals to a small yet reasonable number. It also allows most scholars to publish in journals of reasonable quality (i.e. B).

Several interesting factors were observed. First, *Journal of Knowledge Management* retained its leading position in both rankings. Second, *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* outperformed *Knowledge and Process Management* and moved up from fifth to fourth position, which was due to improved perceptions of its overall quality and impact. Third, *Journal of Intellectual Capital* again occupied second place. This, however, resulted from its high citation impact, whereas its perceptual scores decreased relative to the closest competitors. Fourth, *The Learning Organization* retained third place, but it only slightly outperformed *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, which has become its major competitor. *The Learning Organization* still benefits from its very high citation impact indices, but it is possible that *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* will outperform it in several years. Fifth, *Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge and Management* improved its position. Even though it was established only in 2006, it already published a number of well-cited articles and gained recognition within the research community. Sixth, *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development* was ranked higher than *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*. This finding is somewhat unexpected, since older

**Table VII** Final KM/IC academic journal ranking list – expert survey (i.e., stated preference) and citation impact (i.e., revealed preference) methods combined

Rank	Tier	Title	Year launched	Score	2008 rank
1	A +	<i>Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	1997	4.274	1
2	A +	<i>Journal of Intellectual Capital</i>	2000	2.804	2
3	A	<i>The Learning Organization</i>	1994	2.118	3
4	A	<i>Knowledge Management Research &amp; Practice</i>	2003	2.089	5
5	A	<i>Knowledge and Process Management: The Journal of Corporate Transformation</i>	1997	1.759	4
6	A	<i>International Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	2005	1.590	6
7	B	<i>Journal of Information and Knowledge Management</i>	2002	1.395	8
8	B	<i>Journal of Knowledge Management Practice</i>	1998	1.181	7
9	B	<i>Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	2003	1.000	9
10	B	<i>International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital</i>	2004	0.918	10
11	B	<i>International Journal of Knowledge and Learning</i>	2005	0.895	11
12	B	<i>VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems</i>	2003	0.889	12
13	B	<i>International Journal of Knowledge Management Studies</i>	2006	0.594	13
14	B	<i>Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge and Management</i>	2006	0.542	16
15	B	<i>International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management</i>	2001	0.513	14
16	B	<i>International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development</i>	2010	0.415	N/A
17	B	<i>Knowledge Management for Development Journal</i>	2005	0.367	18
18	B	<i>International Journal of Knowledge-Based Organizations</i>	2011	0.358	N/A
19	B	<i>Knowledge Management &amp; E-Learning: An International Journal</i>	2009	0.356	N/A
20	C	<i>International Journal of Knowledge Society Research</i> <i>The IUP Journal of Knowledge Management (formerly The ICFAI Journal of Knowledge Management)</i>	2010	0.209	N/A
21	C	<i>Intangible Capital</i>	2003	0.202	20
22	C	<i>Open Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	2004	0.170	N/A
23	C	<i>actKM: Online Journal of Knowledge Management</i>	2010	0.131	N/A
24	C	<i>International Journal of Knowledge and Systems Science</i>	2004	0.127	N/A
25	C		2010	0.106	N/A

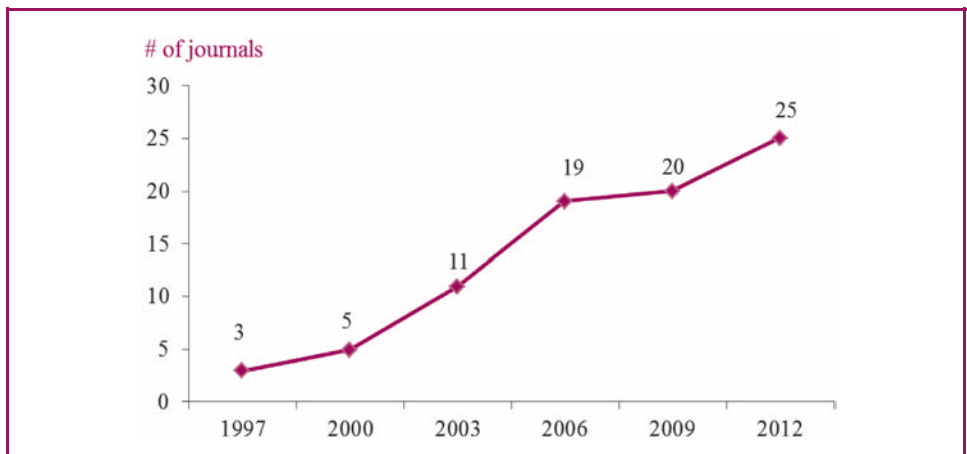
journals tend to have more readers, attract better quality manuscripts, receive more citations, and obtain higher ranking scores. These results, however, show that a relatively new journal launched in 2010 outperformed a journal that has been in print since 2005. Seventh, the relative position of many journals remained the same.

Table VIII presents a list of 26 academic journals that publish KM/IC-relevant works. On the one hand, these journals are not KM/IC-centric and, therefore cannot be ranked together with the KM/IC-centric journals. On the other hand, KM/IC researchers should be familiar with these journals since they occasionally publish very relevant, thought-provoking KM/IC articles. For instance, an interesting scientometric analysis of the intellectual structure of the KM discipline recently appeared in *Knowledge-Based Systems* (Lee and Chen, 2012).

**Table VIII** KM/IC-relevant academic journals – not ranked

Title	Year launched
<i>Data &amp; Knowledge Engineering</i>	1985
<i>Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery</i>	1997
<i>Expert Systems: The Journal of Knowledge Engineering</i>	1984
<i>IEEE Transactions on Knowledge and Data Engineering</i>	1989
<i>Information, Knowledge, Systems Management</i>	1999
<i>International Journal of Applied Knowledge Management</i> (out of print)	2007
<i>International Journal of Human Capital and Information Technology Professionals</i>	2010
<i>International Journal of Information Technology and Knowledge Management</i>	2008
<i>International Journal of Knowledge-Based and Intelligent Engineering Systems</i>	1997
<i>International Journal of Nuclear Knowledge Management</i>	2004
<i>International Journal of Software Engineering and Knowledge Engineering</i>	1991
<i>International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society</i>	2005
<i>Journal of Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery</i>	2010
<i>Journal of e-Learning and Knowledge Society</i>	2005
<i>Journal of Human Capital</i>	2007
<i>Journal of Human Resource Costing &amp; Accounting</i>	1996
<i>Journal of Knowledge-Based Innovation in China</i>	2009
<i>Journal of Knowledge Management, Economics and Information Technology</i>	2010
<i>Journal of Universal Knowledge Management</i> (out of print)	2005
<i>Knowledge and Information Systems: An International Journal</i>	1999
<i>Knowledge and Innovation: Journal of the KMCI</i> (out of print)	2000
<i>Knowledge-Based Systems</i>	1987
<i>Knowledge, Technology &amp; Policy</i>	1988
<i>Management Learning: The Journal for Managerial and Organizational Learning</i>	1970
<i>Social Epistemology: A Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Policy</i>	1987
<i>The Knowledge Engineering Review</i>	1984

**Figure 4** The growth of KM/IC-centric peer-reviewed journals



**Figure 5** The growth of KM/IC-relevant peer-reviewed journals (excluding out-of-print journals)



#### 5.4 Importance of KM/IC journals

Figures 4 and 5 visualize the growth of KM/IC-centric and KM/IC-relevant journals, respectively (excluding inactive journals). On average, one new journal has been launched every year in each category, which shows that the body of KM/IC knowledge has been continuously growing for the previous two decades. The oldest journals, *Management Learning* (1970), *Expert Systems* (1984), and *The Knowledge Engineering Review* (1984) were launched long before the KM and IC disciplines were officially recognized as scientific fields. Therefore, the KM/IC discipline has a deep intellectual core documented in early journals that focused on KM issues, from both the hard and soft perspectives.

The authors of this study also observed changes in the attitude among survey respondents towards the importance of KM/IC journal rankings and the development of KM/IC as a distinct scholarly discipline. This was evident in a higher response rate (35 percent in 2012 versus 29 percent in 2008). Over 90 percent of respondents also contacted the researchers and asked for a copy of the final ranking. Many were very enthusiastic about this study as a way to further establish KM/IC as a recognized discipline. For example, some respondents stated:

I greatly appreciate your efforts in the form of various research and publications to project the much needed status for KM/IC as an independent academic discipline.

Thank you for your work in advancing [the] knowledge management field.

I completed the survey. Thanks for this study, [I] think it is extremely relevant!

I would be happy to receive the results. This is important work you are doing – also from the Finnish perspective as journal rankings are given nowadays more and more attention.

I have completed the questionnaire. I just want to say that I am grateful to you because of your efforts in affirmation of KM/IC as an academic discipline.

I'm letting you know that I responded to the survey. I'm glad you're executing this very worthwhile poll once more and [I] am looking forward to the results.

I have completed the survey. Yes, I would like to see this report – this is very important work.

Both authors can hardly recall similar comments during the previous study in 2008. Overall, this suggests that many active KM/IC researchers are concerned about establishing their chosen field as a reputable, recognized scholarly discipline.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this study was to update the ranking list of KM/IC journals published several years ago (Bontis and Serenko, 2009; Serenko and Bontis, 2009b). For this, 379 active KM/IC researchers were surveyed, and citation analysis of journals was done. The final

ranking of 25 KM/IC-centric journals was developed based on the combination of two approaches.

First, *Journal of Knowledge Management* again received the highest survey and citation scores. It dramatically outperformed its nearest competitors and is clearly recognized as a leading journal. *Journal of Intellectual Capital* again achieved the A + ranking. However, it dropped in the survey-based ranking from second (see Serenko and Bontis, 2009b, Table III) to fourth place. At the same time, its citation impact is very strong and growing, which helped it occupy the second place in the final, combined ranking. *Knowledge Management Research and Practice* has improved perceptions of its quality and impact within the research community and, as a result, not only moved up the ranking but also became a major competitor of *The Learning Organization* and, possibly, *Journal of Intellectual Capital*.

This observation highlights the value of inclusion of KM/IC journals in Thomson Reuters' *Journal Citation Reports*. Out of all 25 KM/IC journals ranked in this study, only two were indexed by Thomson: *Journal of Knowledge Management* (JIF 2011 = 1.248) and *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* (JIF 2010 = 0.855 and JIF 2011 = 0.414). In many schools, administration encourages or even requires faculty to publish exclusively in journals covered by Thomson. Generally, these journals attract more submissions, publish higher-quality papers, enjoy better reputation, have more rigorous acceptance criteria, and employ reputable board members. Inclusion in *Journal Citation Reports* is a necessary condition for a journal to achieve and maintain a high position in a ranking list. This explains why *Journal of Knowledge Management* maintained its leading position and *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* improved its ranking, especially in an expert survey-based list. In contrast, *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, which was excluded from the Thomson's *Journal Citation Reports* at the day of the study, decreased its survey-based ranking position. In order for *Journal of Intellectual Capital* to maintain its A + place, it is strongly recommended that it become included in *Journal Citation Reports*.

Second, *The Learning Organization* has retained a high overall ranking due to its impressive citation impact, but its perceptual scores decreased slightly. The "learning organization" term, which initially meant organized learning activities, first appeared in the educational science and pedagogy literature in the 1960s (Örtenblad, 2007). The term developed along four perspectives:

1. "organizational learning";
2. "learning at work";
3. "learning climate"; and
4. "learning structure" (Örtenblad, 2002).

It was well-documented in the books of Garratt (1987) and Hayes *et al.* (1988), and gained recognition after Senge's (1990) seminal publication. On the one hand, the body of knowledge on the learning organization perspective has grown. On the other hand, the theoretical and practical impact of learning organization research has been somewhat limited; subsequently, the use of the learning organization term and the positioning of *The Learning Organization* journal was re-considered by the Editor (Eijkman, 2011a, b). This probably affected the journal's reputation in the research community, resulting in a lower survey-based ranking. Recently, *The Learning Organization* revised its positioning by inviting authors to submit innovative articles on work-integrated action learning, role of culture, and critical analysis to develop a unique edge. It also entered the knowledge management sphere by publishing a special issue on "Knowledge to Manage the Knowledge Society" (Minati, 2012).

Third, it is recommended that the editorial team of *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development* analyze the reasons for the earlier success of their journal and capitalize on this strategy in the future. One can hypothesize that an aggressive marketing strategy supported by its international editorial team (Associate Editors are from Mexico, Australia, and Greece) and by luminary editorial board members (e.g. Leif Edvinsson) has positively impacted this journal's appeal. The superstar effect (Rosen, 1981), also referred to as the

Matthew effect (Merton, 1968, 1988), suggests that a small initial advantage may result in disproportionate levels of success later on. This phenomenon has been observed in most categories of human activities, including science (Price, 1963; Zuckerman, 1977). When a new scholarly journal quickly gains recognition within the scientific community, it receives more attention in the media, attracts best papers, employs high-caliber editorial board members and reviewers, receives more citations, and enjoys better reputation. As a result, the journal's initial success paves the way for its further success.

Fourth, as indicated in Table VI, the 2008 and 2012 non-parametric correlations for both survey scores and citation metrics were over 0.9. Despite some changes in the ranking positions of several journals, the new ranking list is consistent with that obtained four years ago. The current ranking, however, includes a number of new KM/IC journals, which may be of interest to the research community.

Fifth, many active KM/IC researchers have become concerned with the development and future of their chosen domain. One of their key concerns is the lack of clear identity and external recognition of KM/IC as a distinct scientific field. A ranking list of discipline-specific academic journals based on the application of a rigorous scientometric technique is an important step towards establishing a long-term validity of KM/IC research, attracting new scholars, and retaining prominent academics.

Sixth, there is a debate whether KM/IC is a healthy scholarly discipline progressing well towards academic maturity and recognition, or it is just a scientific fad. A scientific fad (Abrahamson, 2009), also referred to as management fad or management fashion (Abrahamson, 1991), is a short-lived school of thought that quickly gains popularity, becomes dominant, grows exponentially, but suddenly vanishes (Starbuck, 2009). It makes little, if any, impact on the state of theory and practice. Classic examples of scientific fads include business process re-engineering and quality circles (Dale *et al.*, 2001). With respect to KM/IC, Wilson (2002), Scarbrough *et al.* (1999), Scarbrough (2003), and Scarbrough *et al.* (2005) claim that it is merely a scientific fad. Holsapple and Wu (2008), Ponzi and Koenig (2002) and Koenig and Neverosk (2008) disagree, and Wallace *et al.* (2011) demonstrate empirically that the distribution of KM/IC publications follows the acceptable norms of the scientific literature.

In this study, it was observed that the number of KM/IC-centric and KM/IC-relevant journals has been continuously growing at the pace of one new journal launch per year. This trend reveals high interest in the KM/IC research area, which further demonstrates that KM/IC is not a scientific fad; instead, the field is progressing towards academic maturity and recognition.

At the same time, the KM/IC research community is relatively small and 25 discipline-specific journals is a reasonable number. It is unlikely that launching new KM/IC-centric journals will serve the discipline well in the long run. Instead, the KM/IC stakeholders should do their best to strengthen the internal and external reputation of their currently existing peer-reviewed journals.

Seventh, the importance of longitudinal KM/IC journal rankings cannot be understated. Many of the initial academic researchers who commenced their careers during the early years of the discipline's evolution are now becoming senior scholars. These researchers are slowly building capacity within their own institutions by mentoring junior faculty and recruiting newly minted doctoral candidates. The results of this study will aid in the development and evaluation of KM/IC research programs.

Last, as the price of journal subscriptions rises, it is imperative for librarians to more explicitly understand which journals are worth investing in. The results of this study can aid in the optimal allocation of limited resources.

The academic world is often referred to as the "prestige economy" because scholars are mostly motivated by intrinsic rewards – they are looking for recognition of their scientific merit within their own domain of expertise (Blackmore and Kandiko, 2011). Among various ways to contribute to science, perhaps the most widely accepted is an impressive record of

publications in top-tier journals. In many schools, this is a (debatable) requirement for obtaining tenure or promotion to the rank of a full professor. In some extreme cases, only articles appearing in the *Financial Times* list of top 45 management journals count. Despite its criticism (e.g. see Starbuck, 2005), this practice is unlikely to change in the near future, and journal ranking lists will continue serving as a lens of research quality assessment. Unfortunately, most KM/IC journals rarely appeared in previous rankings of management journals; when they did, their classification and ranking were usually misplaced. For example, the notorious and presently discontinued ERA ranking list positioned most KM/IC journals under the "C" category of Library and Information Studies. Only a few were granted the "B" ranking, and none was placed in the A or A\* category.

It is very challenging and sometimes even discouraging to devote an academic career to an emerging, insufficiently recognized field. The establishment and maintenance of journal ranking lists creates a momentum for promoting and strengthening the discipline as a distinct academic field. The authors hope that the present study will help the KM/IC discipline progress towards academic maturity and gain external recognition. The short-term objective is to facilitate the coverage of more KM/IC journals by Thomson. An ultimate goal is to place at least one of the major KM/IC journals, perhaps *Journal of Knowledge Management*, in the list of *Financial Times* top management outlets.

## Notes

1. In several academic disciplines, for example in computer science, conference proceedings play a more important role than peer-reviewed journals. Those, however, are exceptions to the generally accepted idea of the high rigor and impact of peer-reviewed journals.
2. The previous rankings were published in *Journal of Knowledge Management* in 2009. The data, however, were collected in 2008.
3. See [www.arc.gov.au/era/era\\_2012/era\\_journal\\_list.htm](http://www.arc.gov.au/era/era_2012/era_journal_list.htm)
4. Even though manuscript processing and publication charges may be considered acceptable and justifiable in exceptional cases, both authors believe that academic publishing should be free for those who voluntarily share their knowledge with society. Publication charges may discourage authors from paper submission, especially those residing in developing countries or lacking financial support. This practice also creates the perception that authors simply "buy" journal space, which may not serve science well in the long-run. It is for these reasons *Journal of Organizational Knowledge Management* (IBIMA Publishing), which charged authors \$295 per paper at the day of this study, was excluded from the ranking.
5. The authors are grateful to Dr Laxmi Prasad Pant for this idea.
6. Note that due to differences in the number of journals, number of respondents and measurement instrument, journal scores reported in these two studies are not directly comparable.

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