# Global ranking of knowledge management and intellectual capital academic journals: a 2021 update

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – *The purpose of this study is to update a global ranking list of 28 knowledge management and intellectual capital (KM/IC) academic journals. The list should be periodically updated because the pool of active KM/IC researchers changes, researchers adjust their journal perceptions, citation indices change and new journals appear while others become discontinued.*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *The ranking list was created based on a survey of 463 active KM/IC researchers and journal citation impact metrics (the h-index and the g-index).*

**Findings** – Journal of Knowledge Management *and* Journal of Intellectual Capital *are ranked A+, followed by* The Learning Organization, Knowledge Management Research & Practice, VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems, Knowledge and Process Management *and* International Journal of Knowledge Management *which are ranked A.* VINE, Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management *and* Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management *have shown the most improvement. The recently established* Journal of Innovation & Knowledge *has demonstrated a strong performance.*

**Practical implications** – *KM/IC discipline stakeholders may consult and use the ranking list for various purposes, but they should do so with caution. Highly ranked journals are quite likely to have the Clarivate's Journal Impact Factor or be included in the Clarivate's Emerging Sources Citation Index. A journal's longevity is strongly correlated with its citation metrics and is moderately correlated with expert survey scores. Interdisciplinarity is the natural state of the KM and IC research domains, and it should be embraced by the research community.*

**Originality/value** – *This study presents the most up-to-date ranking list of KM/IC academic journals.*

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

**Paper type** *Research paper*

## 1. Introduction and purpose of the study

Soon after Taylor (1911) developed his principles of scientific management, the young management community witnessed the establishment of its own discipline-specific publication forums. In 1922, *Harvard Business Review* published its inaugural issue, followed by the *Journal of Marketing* in 1936 and *Personnel Psychology* in 1948. In 1959, the Ford and Carnegie reports questioned the scientific rigor of management scholarship (Booker *et al.*, 2008), which accelerated the growth of peer-reviewed management journals. The 1990s witnessed several major changes that further altered the landscape of management publishing: an increase in the number of management scholars, an electronic mode of article delivery, a growth in the average number of articles read by active researchers and a theoretical, methodological and analytical diversity in the content of management publications (Morris *et al.*, 2009). The higher-education system has also become fixated on various quantitative metrics of performance measurement (Muller, 2018), and the ranking lists of management journals have begun to flourish.

The inter-comparison of scholarly publication venues is not a novel phenomenon. Almost a century ago, Gross and Gross (1927) developed a citation-based ranking list of 28 leading scientific periodicals. Immediately, their ranking approach was echoed in other domains, including engineering (McNeely and Crosno, 1930), physics (Hooker, 1935) and biochemistry (Henkle, 1938). From 1937 to 1942, the College Library at Columbia University conducted a series of empirical inquiries into the standard of academic journals based on the quality of their editorial policies and the rigor of their review processes (Fay, 1944). Eventually, a number of journal ranking methodologies were established which pertain to the general categories of stated preference vs. revealed preference approaches (Tahai and Meyer, 1999; Serenko, 2010). Stated preference methods rely on the cumulative opinion of a group of active researchers who assess the relative standing, contribution, quality, etc., of each journal, which is generally done by means of surveys or interviews. In contrast, revealed preference methods rely on the data pertaining to the actual use of articles published in the journals being ranked (Tahai and Meyer, 1999) or the actual behavior of active scholars (Holsapple and Lee-Post, 2010). Presently, all well-established disciplines have their own journal ranking lists.

Journal ranking lists represent a form of strategic signaling (Vidgen et al., 2019). They are constructed by independent researchers (Lowry et al., 2007; Serenko et al., 2017), academic institutions (e.g. discipline, faculty, and university journal lists [Adams and Johnson, 2008]), professional bodies (e.g. the senior scholars' "Journal Basket" by the Association for Information Systems [Currie et al., 2016] and the Chartered Association of Business Schools [ABS] Academic Journal Guide [Hair et al., 2019]) and countries (e.g. the Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers). Through their ranking lists, developers signal to various discipline stakeholders which journals actually matter based on how the active research community perceives and/or uses them. In response, discipline stakeholders adjust their behavior. For example, by considering information presented in journal ranking lists, researchers may identify the best venues available for their research topics, business schools may prioritize their research directions, libraries may allocate their limited journal subscription resources and novice scholars and students may learn about the intricacies of their chosen domain and realize what outlets to read and submit their papers to. By consulting journal ranking lists, knowledge brokers, such as professional associations and consortia (Booker et al., 2012), may find it easier to access the body of scholarly knowledge documented in academic outlets and deliver it to busy practitioners in the most efficient way.

On the one hand, there are methodological challenges surrounding journal ranking lists. The very notion of quality is subjective and difficult to operationalize (Cuellar et al., 2019). Each journal is somewhat unique and targets a niche readership, which often makes their inter-comparison a perplexing challenge (McKercher, 2005; Sangster, 2015). In their ranking decisions, raters favor journals within their own areas of expertise (Serenko and Bontis, 2018), exhibit a familiarity bias (Serenko and Bontis, 2011) and mimic the opinion of leading researchers (Rogers et al., 2007). All citation metrics have inherent problems because they may not account for disciplinary idiosyncrasies (Seglen, 1997), may be manipulated by editorial teams (Sevinc, 2004), are skewed in favor of a small set of select publications (Seglen, 1992) and include erroneous and plagiaristic citations (i.e. when the author copies the reference from another paper without consulting the original work) (Hassan and Serenko, 2019). On the other hand, despite these shortcomings, journal ranking lists have become ingrained into the cultural fabric of contemporary academic life (George, 2019), and their spheres of influence have spread far beyond the academic profession. Presently, all well-established academic disciplines have their own, domain-specific journal ranking lists. Examples include business ethics (Serenko and Bontis, 2009a; Beets et al., 2016), information systems (Fisher et al., 2007), marketing (Moussa and Touzani, 2010) and tourism and hospitality (McKercher et al., 2006) fields. Recently, Cabell Publishing introduced a new term, *Journalytics* [1], to describe its database which contains

more than 11,000 journals from 18 academic disciplines accompanied by various journal quality assessment metrics, including submission and peer-review process criteria. This further confirms a growing interest in journal rankings. When applied appropriately, journal ranking lists offer a useful and informative perspective on the state of the discipline and its journals, which represent the most important knowledge dissemination channel used by the scientific community.

In 2008, we launched a longitudinal project to develop a ranking of knowledge management and intellectual capital (KM/IC) journals and trace the evolution of this ranking list over time (please refer to Bontis and Serenko, 2009; Serenko and Bontis, 2009b; Serenko and Bontis, 2013b; Serenko and Bontis, 2017). This ranking was based on the combination of stated preference (i.e. a survey of active KM/IC researchers or expert survey) and revealed preference (i.e. citation metrics) methods. In each subsequent study, we replicate the previous methodological approach to ensure a longitudinal comparability of the updated ranking lists. During the survey, randomly chosen authors who have previously published at least one article in the set of examined journals rate the overall contribution of each outlet to the KM/IC body of knowledge on a Liker-type scale. The assumption is that these individuals represent a pool of active discipline's researchers who are familiar with these outlets and are qualified to rate them. Their scores are then aggregated for each journal. In addition, we use the $h$-index and the $g$-index which reflect the citation impact of each analyzed journal. The final ranking is constructed based on the combination of both methods. We update this list every four years because 1) the pool of active KM/IC researchers gradually changes (e.g. new scholars enter academia and others retire, move to industry and/or switch to other disciplines); 2) researchers adjust their perceptions of KM/IC journals' quality and contribution (e.g. owing to changes in editorial boards, mission, types of works published); 3) citation measures change (e.g. as more KM/IC journals receive the coveted Clarivate's Journal Impact Factor [JIF], they are likely to attract more citations); and 4) new journals appear while others go out of print (e.g. in the present ranking list, five journals have been added and four have been excluded, for nine changes in total).

We are fully aware of the controversy surrounding the role, impact and unintended consequences of journal ranking lists (Brembs *et al.*, 2013; Cuellar *et al.*, 2019; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2019; Serenko, 2019). Nevertheless, we have received very positive feedback on the value of our ranking lists. For instance, they have helped scholars demonstrate the legitimacy of their research domain, and graduate students have consulted the ranking lists to familiarize themselves with the available publication forums. Having KM/IC journal ranking lists has further strengthened the identity of the knowledge management and intellectual capital disciplines and has allowed KM/IC journals to improve their position within national (i.e. non-KM/IC-centric) journal ranking lists in France, the UK and Australia. As one senior scholar summarized, "It [your ranking list] has helped a lot of people get tenure." Overall, we believe that, if the lists are used appropriately, the pros of the KM/IC journal ranking lists outweigh the cons.

Another reason for the development of a dedicated ranking list of KM/IC journals pertains to the interdisciplinary nature of this domain (Serenko, 2013; Zavaraqi, 2016; Serenko, 2021). Interdisciplinary research refers to a "group of studies undertaken by scholars from two or more distinct scientific disciplines," which is "based upon a conceptual model that links or integrates theoretical frameworks from those disciplines, uses study design and methodology that is not limited to any one field, and requires the use of perspectives and skills of the involved disciplines throughout multiple phases of the research process" (Aboelela *et al.*, 2007, p. 341). On the one hand, interdisciplinarity has become prominent in management research (O'Dwyer and Unerman, 2014), and it is often considered "a mantra of science policy" (Metzger and Zare, 1999, p. 642) as well as a "bridge between academic sophists and the rest of the society" (Frodeman, 2017, p. 7). Interdisciplinary research

offers solutions to complex societal and technological problems, boosts innovativeness, opens new research horizons, fosters creativity and increases research output (Rhoten and Parker, 2004; Wannenmacher, 2020) – all of which bodes well for the nature of KM/IC. On the other hand, the downside of working in interdisciplinary management domains is that interdisciplinary journals are dramatically disadvantaged when they are included in ranking lists comprised of general management and disciplinary journals, which discourages and even suppresses the very notion of interdisciplinarity (Rafols *et al.*, 2012). Thus, we believe that it is critical for KM/IC to possess a dedicated up-to-date journal ranking.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. The following (i.e. second) section outlines this study's methodology, including the journal list development, the expert survey, citation metrics, and the ranking procedure. Section three presents the ranking lists, and section four discusses the findings, cautions the reader about the misuse of journal ranking lists, and concludes the study.

## 2. Methodology

In order to assess the evolution of KM/IC journals over time, we accurately replicated the methodology used in our previous ranking studies (Bontis and Serenko, 2009; Serenko and Bontis, 2009b; Serenko and Bontis, 2013b; Serenko and Bontis, 2017). First, we updated the list of journals. Second, we conducted a survey of 463 active KM/IC researchers. Third, we computed the *h*-index and the *g*-index of the journals being ranked. Fourth, we combined these metrics to develop a final ranking list. The rest of this section discusses these steps in detail.

### 2.1 Journal list development

We used the latest KM/IC journal ranking list as a starting point. To avoid a path-dependency effect when exactly the same set of journals is included in multiple ranking studies (Truex *et al.*, 2009), we updated this list. To be included, the journal had to:

■ implement a rigorous peer-review process;

■ focus on KM, IC, and/or organizational learning topics;

■ approach the topics above from a managerial, business, information systems (excluding pure IT), policy or economics perspective; and

■ not be predatory.

In this study, we relaxed a previous rule on the exclusion of journals with mandatory manuscript submission, processing and publication fees because charging a fee does not necessarily reflect the predatory standing of all journals. We also included open-access journals as the predatory status of a journal is linked to its quality-control system rather than to its article-access mode, and all open-access journals cannot automatically be classified as predatory (Kingsley and Kennan, 2015). To exclude predatory journals, we conducted a comprehensive assessment of all open-access journals and journals with manuscript charges by reviewing their websites, articles, editorial policies, etc.; by consulting the latest updates of the Beall's List of Predatory Publishers and the Directory of Open Access Journals; and/or by contacting their editorial teams directly. To identify all KM/IC-centric journals, we conducted an exhaustive search of Ulrich's Periodicals Directory and Google Scholar. The following journals were removed from the 2017 ranking list:

■ *International Journal of Knowledge Society Research* (IGI) – It has changed its title to *International Journal of Smart Education and Urban Society* and repositioned itself;

■ *Journal of Organizational Knowledge Communication* (IBIMA publishing) – The publisher is listed as predatory;

- *Journal of Technologies in Knowledge Sharing* (Common Ground Publishing) – It has been discontinued; and

- *Knowledge Management: An International Journal* (Common Ground Publishing) – It, too, has been discontinued.

The following journals were added to the ranking list:

- *Intangible Capital* (OmniaScience);

- *Information Impact: Journal of Information and Knowledge Management* (Information Practitioners Network);

- *International Journal of Knowledge Management and Practices* (Publishing India);

- *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge* (Elsevier); and

- *Knowledge and Performance Management* (Business Perspectives).

The final ranking list comprised 28 KM/IC-centric journals.

## 2.2 Expert survey

The stated preference journal ranking approach was implemented by means of an expert survey. The major methodological limitations of an expert survey journal ranking method include the following: 1) the familiarity effect, when researchers rate more highly those journals with which they are more familiar; 2) the influence of personal research interests on ranking decisions; and 3) the order-effect bias, when raters rank more highly those journals presented in the beginning than at the end of the list (Serenko and Bontis, 2011; Serenko and Bontis, 2013a; Serenko and Bontis, 2018). To eliminate the confounding effects of raters' familiarity and their personal research interests, the same number of active KM/IC researchers was selected from each journal. In this case, the raters should be equally familiar with all these journals, on average, and their unique research interests should equally spread among all topics presented in these journals. To reduce the effect of order-effect bias, the order in which the journals were presented was randomized for each rater. From each journal being ranked, 110 unique authors' names were randomly selected from the latest available volumes (i.e. each author was selected only once). No discrimination criteria (e.g. authorship order, seniority, affiliation, country, gender, etc.) were applied. The assumption is that those who have recently published in one of these journals explore KM/IC topics and, therefore, represent a group of active discipline researchers. Note that for five journals, the total number of authors was below 110 even though we selected all their authors: *International Journal of Knowledge, Culture, and Change Management: Annual Review* (86); *International Journal of Knowledge Management and Practices* (101); *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge* (94); *Knowledge and Performance Management* (22); and *Regional Journal of Information and Knowledge Management* (27). Overall, 2,860 unique authors' names and email addresses were selected.

To reduce the raters' cognitive load and help them more efficiently differentiate among the journals, the publisher's name was added after the title of each journal [2]. Consistent with the previous ranking studies, the survey participants rated the overall contribution of each journal to the KM/IC field on the following seven-point Likert-type scale: none (0), marginal (1), some (2), average (3), good (4), very good (5) and outstanding (6). The online survey was hosted on the Qualtrics platform. The survey also included basic demographic questions. Each rater was invited to participate in the study over a personalized email invitation, followed by a reminder. The study was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Boards of the authors' universities.

## 2.3 Journal citation impact

On August 11, 2020, we computed the *h*-index (Hirsch, 2005) and *g*-index (Egghe, 2006) for each of the 28 journals using Harzing's Publish or Perish tool v.7.25 (https://harzing.com/resources/

publish-or-perish) by extracting data from Google Scholar because it is the largest citation database (Harzing and van der Wal, 2008; Harzing, 2013; Harzing, 2014). The "Search Direct" function was applied to extract the latest data. A journal title was entered into the "Publication name" field, and the fields "Authors," "Title," "Keywords," "ISSN" and "Years" were left blank. The "Maximum number of results" field was set at 1,000, which is the largest option. Both American and British spellings were used separately, if needed (e.g. *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Organizations* and *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Organisations*), and the results were manually aggregated. Because *The IUP Journal of Knowledge Management* was previously published as *The ICFAI Journal of Knowledge Management*, data for both titles were collected and manually aggregated. All citation data reported by Publish or Perish were copied into MS Excel, verified and manually adjusted if needed.

## 2.4 Final ranking

The final ranking, based on the combination of the stated preference and revealed preference approaches, was constructed by replicating the procedure in our previous studies (Serenko and Bontis, 2017, p. 679):

- The journal scores from the expert survey method were standardized;

- The *h*-index and the *g*-index scores were standardized and averaged (i.e., mean) for each journal;

- The scores obtained from Steps 1 and 2 above were averaged (i.e., mean) for each journal;

- The scores from Step 3 above were standardized;

- Because the mean of standardized scores is 0, the score of 2 was added to each journal's resulting score to avoid negative numbers; and

- A new ranking was developed.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Expert survey

A total of 2,860 email invitations were sent to the selected journal raters, out of which 292 bounced back. A total of 463 usable responses were received, for a response rate of 18%. The respondents represented 71 different countries (Table 1). Four countries (India, the USA, Italy and Nigeria) generated a larger number of responses, but all the other 67 countries were represented somewhat equally. In total 34% of respondents were women. In terms of their education, 91.5%, 8.2% and 0.3% held a doctoral, a master's and a bachelor's degree, respectively. Regarding their current position, 86.8% were academics, 9.8% were practitioners, 1.2% were students and 2.2% were retired. On average, they had 15 and 8.3 years of academic and industry work experience, respectively.

| Table 1 | Geographic location |
| --- | --- |
| *Region (most representative countries)* | *Total (%)* |
| Europe (Italy = 8.3%, Spain = 4.5%, Portugal = 3.8%, UK = 2.5%, Germany = 1.8%, Poland = 1.3%, Romania = 1.3%, Russia = 1.3%, etc.) | 33.8 |
| Asia (India = 10.1%, Malaysia = 3.8%, Indonesia = 3.3%, Thailand = 1.8%, Pakistan = 1.5%, etc.) | 26.0 |
| North America (USA = 8.6%, Canada = 2.3%) | 10.9 |
| Australasia (Australia = 3.0%, New Zealand = 1.8%) | 4.8 |
| Other (Nigeria = 6.1%, Brazil = 2.3%, South Africa = 2.0%, Turkey = 1.8%, etc.) | 24.5 |
| Total | 100.00 |

Figure 1 presents a breakdown of respondents' concentration for the highest degree earned. Compared to the previous ranking studies, there were more respondents who majored in operations management/management science, general management, economics, and accounting and finance. Figures 2 and 3 outline the respondents' primary and secondary research areas, respectively. Compared to the previous ranking study, fewer responders indicated KM as their primary and secondary research areas, while there was a slight increase in the number of scholars focusing on computer science/information technology/information systems/library and information science (CS/IT/IS/LIS), informatics, accounting and finance and IC. Figure 4 offers a breakdown of areas of concentration for the highest degree earned for those whose primary or secondary research interest is KM. It shows that 71% of active KM researchers completed their highest degree in KM, CS/IT/IS/LIS and general management. Despite some differences, the overall profile of this study's respondents was similar to that observed in the previous ranking project (Serenko and Bontis, 2017). It is likely that the

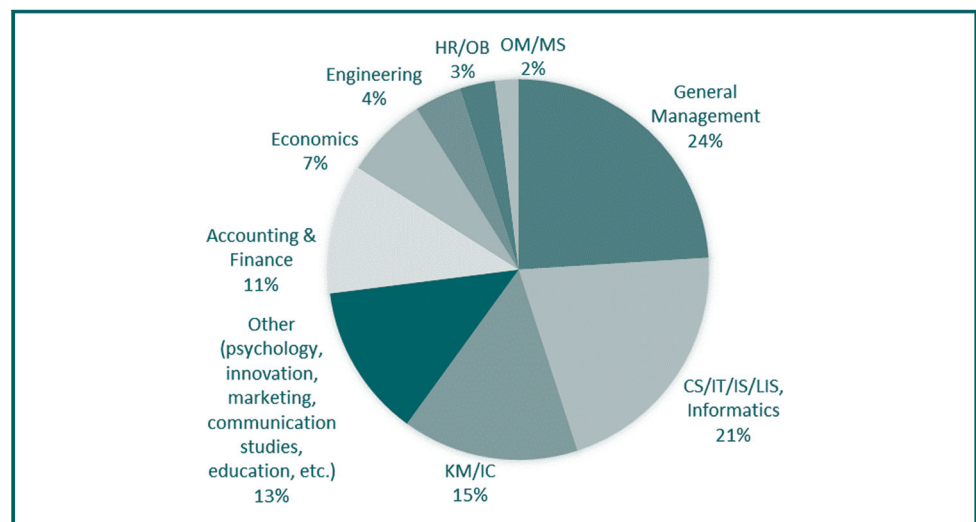| Figure 1 | Areas of concentration for the highest degree earned (all respondents) |


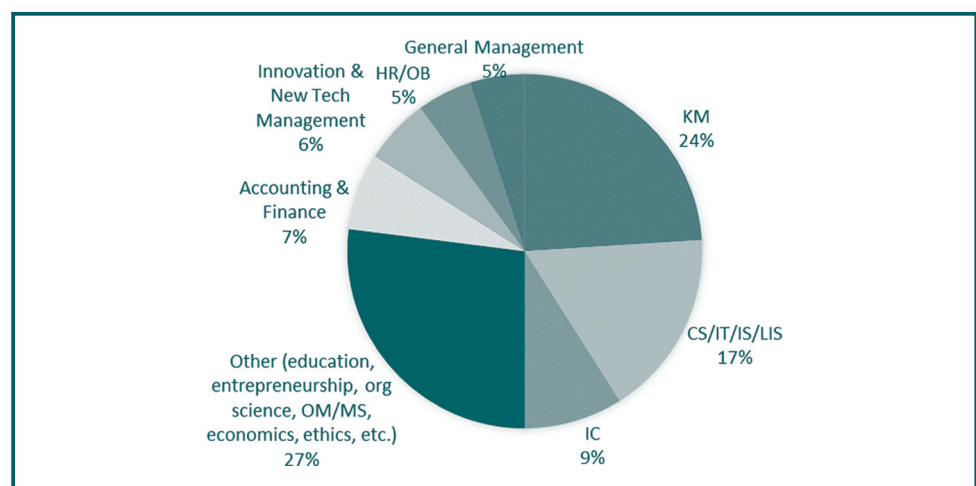
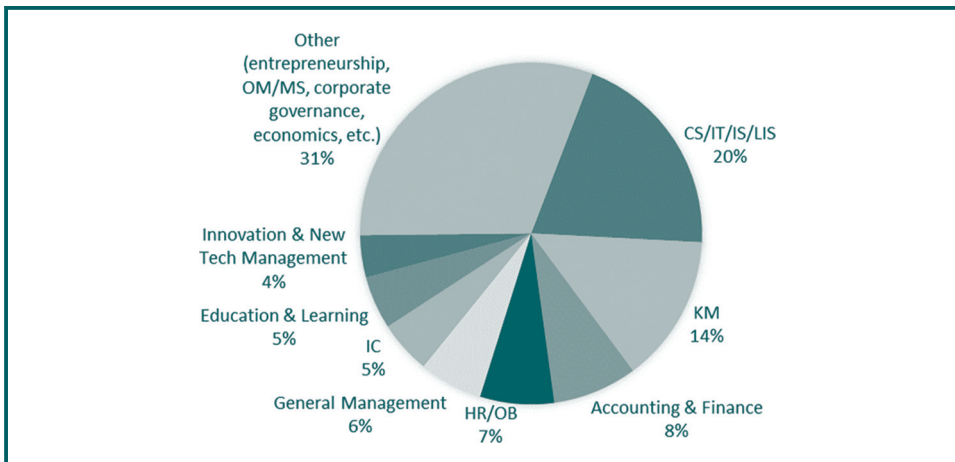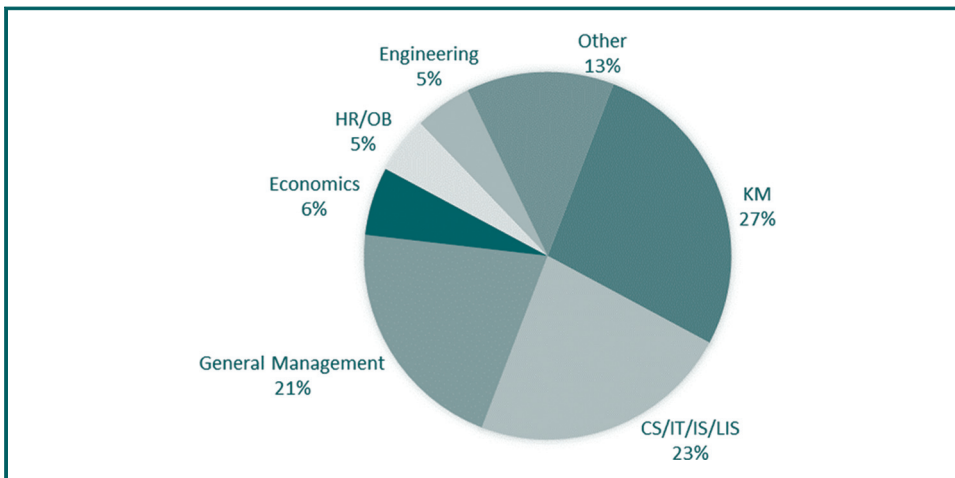| Figure 2 | Primary research area |

**Figure 3** Secondary research area



**Figure 4** Areas of concentration for the highest degree earned for those whose primary or secondary research interest is KM



observed discrepancies between the projects resulted from changes in the journal list because several journals have been added and excluded in this study.

Table 2 shows a ranking list based on the expert survey method and compares it with the 2009, 2013 and 2017 ranking lists. *Journal of Knowledge Management* has strengthened its leading position by dramatically outperforming the other KM-centric journals. *Journal of Intellectual Capital* has retained its second place. *VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems* has continued improving its ranking, reaching third place. In fact, over the years, *VINE* has steadily progressed from 14th to 11th to 6th to 3rd place. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, which was included in the ranking for the first time, came sixth. Over time, two journals – *International Journal of Knowledge, Culture, and Change Management: Annual Review* and *Knowledge Management for Development Journal* – have gradually fallen in their ranking positions. The ranking positions of many journals – e.g. *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, *The Learning Organization* and *International Journal of Knowledge Management Studies* – were consistent with those in 2017. Two newly included journals – *Knowledge and Performance Management* and *Information Impact: Journal of Information and Knowledge Management* – were ranked in the middle of the list.

| Table 2 | Journal ranking – the expert survey method | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rank | Title | Score | 2017 rank | 2013 rank | 2009 rank |
| 1 | *Journal of Knowledge Management* (Emerald) | 2,000 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | *Journal of Intellectual Capital* (Emerald) | 1,642 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| 3 | *VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems* (Emerald) | 1,363 | 6 | 11 | 14 |
| 4 | *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* (The Operational Research Society) | 1,300 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| 5 | *The Learning Organization* (Emerald) | 1,274 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| 6 | *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge* (Elsevier) | 1,252 | NA | NA | NA |
| 7 | *International Journal of Knowledge Management* (IGI) | 1,234 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| 8 | *International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital* (Inderscience) | 1,030 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| 9 | *Knowledge and Process Management: The Journal of Corporate Transformation* (Wiley) | 1,023 | 7 | 8 | 6 |
| 10 | *International Journal of Knowledge Management Studies* (Inderscience) | 1,001 | 10 | 13 | 11 |
| 11 | *Journal of Information & Knowledge Management* (World Scientific) | 982 | 8 | 5 | 7 |
| 12 | *International Journal of Knowledge and Learning* (Inderscience) | 949 | 11 | 12 | 12 |
| 13 | *Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management* (Academic Conferences and Publishing International) | 902 | 12 | 10 | 10 |
| 14 | *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development* (Inderscience) | 875 | 13 | 15 | NA |
| 15 | *Knowledge and Performance Management* (Business Perspectives) | 835 | NA | NA | NA |
| 16 | *Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge, and Management* (Informing Science) | 825 | 16 | 17 | NA |
| 17 | *International Journal of Knowledge and Systems Science* (IGI) | 814 | 15 | 22 | NA |
| 18 | *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Organizations* (IGI) | 802 | 14 | 16 | NA |
| 19 | *Information Impact: Journal of Information and Knowledge Management* (Information Practitioners Network) | 792 | NA | NA | NA |
| 20 | *Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International Journal* (University of Hong Kong) | 769 | 18 | 18 | NA |
| 21 | *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management* (International Institute for Applied KM) | 763 | 22 | NA | NA |
| 22 | *International Journal of Knowledge Management and Practices* (Publishing India) | 714 | NA | NA | NA |
| 23 | *International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning* (ToKnowPress) | 688 | 25 | NA | NA |
| 24 | *The IUP Journal of Knowledge Management* (IUP Publications) (formerly *The ICFAI Journal of Knowledge Management*) | 659 | 23 | 24 | 18 |
| 25 | *International Journal of Knowledge, Culture, and Change Management: Annual Review* (Common Ground) | 658 | 19 | 14 | 13 |
| 26 | *Knowledge Management for Development Journal* (Foundation for the Support of the KM4DJ) | 648 | 21 | 19 | 17 |
| 27 | *Intangible Capital* (OmniaScience) | 598 | NA | 25 | NA |
| 28 | *Regional Journal of Information and Knowledge Management* (Regional Institute of Information and Knowledge Management) | 592 | 26 | NA | NA |

### 3.2 Journal citation impact

Table 3 presents the list in which journals are ranked based on their *h*-index, followed by their *g*-index. Several interesting conclusions emerged. *Journal of Knowledge Management* and *Journal of Intellectual Capital* continued improving their citation metrics by dramatically outperforming the other journals. At the same time, *VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems* showed no improvement and retained its previous seventh position. *Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International Journal* showed the most improvement by approximately doubling its *h*-index and *g*-index and progressing from 13th to 10th position. Two newly added journals – *Intangible Capital* and *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge* – demonstrated a strong citation impact. The other new journals – *Information Impact: Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*, *International Journal of Knowledge Management and Practices*, and *Knowledge and Performance Management* – were ranked at the lower end of the list.

### 3.3 Final ranking

Table 4 offers the final ranking based on the combination of both methods. Consistent with the previous ranking lists, the present list contains approximately 5% of A+, 20% of A, 50% of B and 25% of C journals. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *Journal of Intellectual*

| Rank | Title | 2020 h-index | 2020 g-index | 2017 rank | 2013 rank | 2009 rank | 2017 h-index | 2017 g-index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Journal of Knowledge Management (Emerald) | 197 | 325 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 138 | 226 |
| 2 | Journal of Intellectual Capital (Emerald) | 156 | 277 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 105 | 192 |
| 3 | The Learning Organization (Emerald) | 116 | 176 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 83 | 123 |
| 4 | Knowledge and Process Management: The Journal of Corporate Transformation (Wiley) | 77 | 135 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 58 | 103 |
| 5 | Knowledge Management Research & Practice (The Operational Research Society) | 64 | 99 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 42 | 74 |
| 6 | Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management (Academic Conferences and Publishing International) | 51 | 85 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 34 | 53 |
| 7 | VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems (Emerald) | 51 | 73 | 7 | 12 | 8 | 31 | 43 |
| 8 | Intangible Capital (OmniaScience) | 40 | 58 | NA | 15 | NA | NA | NA |
| 9 | International Journal of Knowledge Management (IGI) | 36 | 66 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 22 | 32 |
| 10 | Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International Journal (University of Hong Kong) | 33 | 52 | 13 | 19 | NA | 18 | 25 |
| 11 | International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital (Inderscience) | 32 | 47 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 21 | 32 |
| 12 | International Journal of Knowledge and Learning (Inderscience) | 31 | 53 | 8 | 6 | 9 | 26 | 42 |
| 13 | Journal of Information & Knowledge Management (World Scientific) | 31 | 47 | 12 | 9 | 9 | 20 | 31 |
| 14 | Journal of Innovation & Knowledge (Elsevier) | 29 | 49 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 15 | The IUP Journal of Knowledge Management (IUP Publications) (formerly The ICFAI Journal of Knowledge Management) | 27 | 37 | 14 | 18 | 17 | 15 | 23 |
| 16 | Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge, and Management (Informing Science) | 26 | 50 | 9 | 13 | 15 | 23 | 38 |
| 17 | International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development (Inderscience) | 24 | 36 | 18 | 20 | NA | 11 | 18 |
| 18 | Knowledge Management for Development Journal (Foundation for the Support of the KM4DJ) | 21 | 33 | 15 | 14 | 17 | 14 | 20 |
| 19 | International Journal of Knowledge Management Studies (Inderscience) | 19 | 28 | 17 | 15 | 17 | 13 | 17 |
| 20 | Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management (International Institute for Applied KM) | 18 | 30 | 21 | NA | NA | 6 | 6 |
| 21 | International Journal of Knowledge, Culture, and Change Management: Annual Review (Common Ground) | 17 | 24 | 16 | 15 | 16 | 14 | 17 |
| 22 | International Journal of Knowledge-Based Organizations (IGI) | 13 | 16 | 19 | 23 | NA | 6 | 9 |
| 23 | International Journal of Knowledge and Systems Science (IGI) | 10 | 18 | 23 | 24 | NA | 4 | 7 |
| 24 | International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning (ToKnowPress) | 10 | 15 | 22 | NA | NA | 5 | 8 |
| 25 | Information Impact: Journal of Information and Knowledge Management (Information Practitioners Network) | 8 | 11 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 26 | International Journal of Knowledge Management and Practices (Publishing India) | 4 | 6 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 27 | Knowledge and Performance Management (Business Perspectives) | 2 | 3 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 28 | Regional Journal of Information and Knowledge Management (Regional Institute of Information and Knowledge Management) | 1 | 1 | 26 | 0 | 0 | NA | NA |

Capital, The Learning Organization and Knowledge Management Research & Practice retained their previous leading positions. VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems moved up from sixth to fifth place because of the raters' increased perceptions of its contribution. International Journal of Knowledge Management retained its seventh spot in the A list. Journal of Innovation & Knowledge, which was included in the ranking for the first time (i.e. because it was launched very recently), unexpectedly emerged as a leader of the B group of journals. Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management progressed from 11th to 9th position owing to a noticeable increase in its citation metrics. Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management moved from the C to the B cluster of

**Table 4** Final KM/IC academic journal ranking list – the expert survey (i.e. stated preference) and the citation impact (i.e. revealed preference) methods combined

| Rank | Tier | Title | Year launched | Score | 2017 rank | 2013 rank | 2009 rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A+ | *Journal of Knowledge Management* (Emerald)* | 1997 | 5.3785 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | A+ | *Journal of Intellectual Capital* (Emerald)* | 2000 | 4.4240 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 3 | A | *The Learning Organization* (Emerald)** | 1994 | 3.2814 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 4 | A | *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* (The Operational Research Society)* | 2003 | 2.7686 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | A | *VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems* (Emerald)** | 1971/ 2003*** | 2.7063 | 6 | 12 | 12 |
| 6 | A | *Knowledge and Process Management: The Journal of Corporate Transformation* (Wiley)** | 1997 | 2.5294 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| 7 | A | *International Journal of Knowledge Management* (IGI)** | 2005 | 2.3956 | 7 | 6 | 6 |
| 8 | B | *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge* (Elsevier)* | 2016 | 2.3270 | NA | NA | NA |
| 9 | B | *Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management* (Academic Conferences and Publishing International) | 2003 | 2.0244 | 11 | 9 | 9 |
| 10 | B | *International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital* (Inderscience) | 2004 | 1.9895 | 9 | 10 | 10 |
| 11 | B | *Journal of Information & Knowledge Management* (World Scientific)** | 2002 | 1.9087 | 8 | 7 | 8 |
| 12 | B | *International Journal of Knowledge and Learning* (Inderscience)** | 2005 | 1.8772 | 10 | 11 | 11 |
| 13 | B | *International Journal of Knowledge Management Studies* (Inderscience) | 2006 | 1.8066 | 12 | 13 | 13 |
| 14 | B | *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development* (Inderscience)** | 2010 | 1.6644 | 14 | 16 | NA |
| 15 | B | *Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge, and Management* (Informing Science) | 2006 | 1.6445 | 13 | 14 | 16 |
| 16 | B | *Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International Journal* (University of Hong Kong)** | 2009 | 1.6032 | 15 | 19 | NA |
| 17 | B | *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management* (International Institute for Applied KM) | 2013 | 1.4348 | 23 | NA | NA |
| 18 | B | *International Journal of Knowledge and Systems Science* (IGI)** | 2010 | 1.4290 | 18 | 25 | NA |
| 19 | B | *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Organizations* (IGI) | 2011 | 1.4205 | 16 | 18 | NA |
| 20 | B | *Intangible Capital* (OmniaScience)** | 2004 | 1.3951 | NA | 22 | NA |
| 21 | C | *Knowledge and Performance Management* (Business Perspectives) | 2017 | 1.3662 | NA | NA | NA |
| 22 | C | *Information Impact: Journal of Information and Knowledge Management* (Information Practitioners Network) | 2011 | 1.3597 | NA | NA | NA |
| 23 | C | *The IUP Journal of Knowledge Management* (IUP Publications) (formerly *The ICFAI Journal of Knowledge Management*) | 2003 | 1.3464 | 21 | 21 | 20 |
| 24 | C | *Knowledge Management for Development Journal* (Foundation for the Support of the KM4DJ) | 2005 | 1.2817 | 19 | 17 | 18 |
| 25 | C | *International Journal of Knowledge, Culture, and Change Management: Annual Review* (Common Ground) | 2001 | 1.2445 | 17 | 15 | 14 |
| 26 | C | *International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning* (ToKnowPress) | 2012 | 1.2216 | 24 | NA | NA |
| 27 | C | *International Journal of Knowledge Management and Practices* (Publishing India) | 2013 | 1.1980 | NA | NA | NA |
| 28 | C | *Regional Journal of Information and Knowledge Management* (Regional Institute of Information and Knowledge Management) | 2015 | 0.9731 | 26 | NA | NA |

**Notes:** *This journal is included in the Clarivate's journal citation reports and has a journal impact factor. **This journal is included in the Clarivate's Emerging Sources Citation Index. ***This journal was founded in 1971 as *VINE*. In 2003, it was renamed as *VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems* and changed its focus to information and KM systems. Therefore, the year 2003 is used for the measurement of citation indices and correlations

**Table 5** Spearman's rank correlations

| | Expert survey scores | h-index | g-index |
|---|---|---|---|
| h-index | 0.69, $p < 0.0005$ | | |
| g-index | 0.69, $p < 0.0005$ | 0.99, $p < 0.0005$ | |
| Longevity (yrs in-print) | 0.46, $p < 0.05$ | 0.80, $p < 0.0005$ | 0.77, $p < 0.0005$ |

journals, from 23rd to 17th position. Of all journals that reduced their competitive position, *International Journal of Knowledge, Culture, and Change Management: Annual Review* stands out because of its loss in both expert survey and citation-based measures.

Table 5 presents the Spearman's rank correlations among the journal metrics. The *h*-index exhibited an almost perfect correlation with the *g*-index ($\rho$ = 0.99, $p$ < 0.0005), and both the *h*-index and the *g*-index were strongly correlated with the expert survey-based scores ($\rho$ = 0.69, $p$ < 0.0005 for both). The journal's age (i.e. years in-print) had a stronger correlation with the journal's *h*-index and *g*-index than with its expert survey scores.

## 4. Discussion, a note of caution and conclusion

### 4.1 Implications

The purpose of this study was to update the ranking of KM/IC journals (Bontis and Serenko, 2009; Serenko and Bontis, 2009b; Serenko and Bontis, 2013b; Serenko and Bontis, 2017). Data were collected by means of a survey of 463 active researchers and by obtaining journal citation data from Google Scholar. The final ranking list is based on the combination of the scores from both methods.

Since 2009, *Journal of Knowledge Management* has been consistently recognized as the leading journal in the KM discipline. This finding is consistent with the previous scientometric studies that concluded that *Journal of Knowledge Management* is the most productive (Breznik, 2018), influential (Teixeira and Oliveira, 2018), geographically inclusive (Handzic and Durmic, 2013) and balanced (Handzic, 2015) publication forum that favors positivist empirical articles (Ngulube, 2015) on various topics (Gaviria-Marin *et al.*, 2018; Chaudhuri *et al.*, 2021). It is ranked A in the 2019 Australian Business Deans Council Journal Quality List [3]. In addition, its 2019 Clarivate's JIF is higher than the JIFs of more than half of journals included in the prestigious Financial Times 50 (FT50) Ranking List [4]. Presently, it receives around 1,000 submissions per year and has a very low acceptance rate of 8% (Del Giudice, 2020) which further puts it on par with many of the FT50 journals.

The good news is that *Journal of Knowledge Management* is not alone: the KM/IC field may also boast several other highly reputable outlets that are well-recognized and cited within the scientific community. These are *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, *The Learning Organization*, *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, *VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems*, *Knowledge and Process Management* and *International Journal of Knowledge Management*. The academic fields of KM and IC had their genesis in the 1990s and have since grown in parallel for the past several decades owing, in large part, to the prominent theoretical lens of the knowledge-based theory of the firm (Grant, 1996). While their functional foundations may differ (i.e. intellectual capital was originally born from accounting, and knowledge management came to prominence from information systems), other management functions – including human resources, strategy and organizational behavior – have provided a multi-disciplinary perspective from which both disciplines have benefitted. As both fields continue to mature, it is expected that their conceptual boundaries will become opaque. The traditional stock-flow metaphor that has guided the IC and KM fields, respectively (Bontis *et al.*, 2002) may soon give way to a new, integrated discipline that focuses primarily on performance outcomes resulting from knowledge-based activities.

In 2016, Rory Chase, the founding editor of *Journal of Knowledge Management* and *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, made a decision to clearly differentiate between these journals so that each would focus on KM and IC topics exclusively [5]. This was reflected in their editorial policies. It seems that this decision has paid off: each of these journals has continued to improve its reputation and attract a significant number of citations under the leadership of its new Editor-in-Chief.

The accumulation of a unique specialist body of knowledge not shared with other domains is one of the necessary attributes of a healthy academic discipline (Krishnan, 2009; Junghans and Olsson, 2014). This body of knowledge is generally documented in a set of academic journals which play several important roles (Merton and Sztompka, 1996; Greco et al., 2006; de Vaujany et al., 2011). Specifically, academic journals disseminate and preserve knowledge for future generations of scholars, ensure and endorse the quality of work through peer-review, transfer scholarly discoveries to practice, allow authors to claim ownership of their intellectual contributions, determine the direction of a scientific domain and establish the identity of a discipline. The presence of a strong cluster of A+ and A KM/IC academic journals shows that KM/IC is a well-established discipline, not just an academic or a managerial fad (Abrahamson, 1991).

This study also confirmed that it is critical to periodically update the ranking list of KM/IC journals because some journals change their position relative to other outlets. The biggest "winners" are *VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems*, *Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management* and *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management* – all of which improved their ranking positions. *VINE* particularly improved its ranking based on the expert survey method, but its citation metrics-based ranking position remained the same. This shows that people's perceptions of journal quality can change quickly while the improvement in citation metrics is a slower, long-term process. Unexpectedly, *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, which was included in this periodic ranking study for the first time, appeared as a top B level outlet. Given that it has been in print for only four years, it is likely that it will further improve its ranking position in the future and join the A group of KM/IC journals. *Intangible Capital* was also included in the B cluster of journals. At the same time, the ranking of the other newly included journals was somewhat low.

This study observed that only 15% of those who publish in KM/IC journals concentrated on KM or IC topics during their highest degree earned. Most KM/IC researchers have a background in information systems, computer science, library and information science, general management, accounting, finance, economics and engineering. KM and IC are not a primary or secondary area of concentration for the vast majority of contributors to KM and IC journals, which echoes the findings of the previous journal ranking studies (Serenko and Bontis, 2009b; Serenko and Bontis, 2013b; Serenko and Bontis, 2017). This further confirms the interdisciplinary nature of KM and IC domains. Previous studies have reported a lack of intradisciplinary consensus, cohesion and communication as well as a lack of common vocabulary, definitions and terminology in KM and IC (Fteimi and Lehner, 2013; Gavrilova and Kubelskiy, 2018; Teixeira and Oliveira, 2018). For instance, there exist more than 100 definitions of KM which are context dependent (Girard and Girard, 2015). Thus, interdisciplinarity is a natural state of the KM and IC research domains, and it should be embraced by the research community.

Recall that a larger number of responses came from four countries: India, the USA, Italy and Nigeria. Whereas a high response rate from researchers located in India, the USA and Italy is not surprising because these countries have traditionally engaged in KM/IC research, the presence of raters from Nigeria is somewhat unexpected.

In addition to contributing to the KM/IC field, this study offers insight for scientometric researchers. A visual inspection of Tables 2 and 3 shows that the ranking of most journals based on the expert survey and citation metrics methods was relatively consistent, which was further confirmed by a strong correlation between the *h*-index and *g*-index and the expert survey-based scores ($\rho = 0.69$, $p < 0.0005$ for both). There are, however, noticeable exceptions. For instance, *Intangible Capital* was ranked 27th by experts, whereas it was ranked eighth according to its *h*-index and *g*-index. This shows that the combination of both ranking methods is more likely to produce accurate results for all journals.

It was also found that all A+ and A journals received a Clarivate's JIF or were included in a Clarivate's Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI). The same applies to about half of the B

ranked journals. None of the C journals, however, could boast a JIF or an ESCI acknowledgement. This shows that highly ranked journals are likely to be included in the Clarivate's indices. The inclusion of a journal in one of the Clarivate's indices increases the chances of this journal's articles being discovered and cited. This, in turn, boosts its citation count. Because Google Scholar considers the number of citations in its search algorithms, it pushes well-cited articles to the top of the search results. This, again, increases their citation count because researchers tend to cite well-cited works (Serenko and Dumay, 2015). This creates the Matthew Effect (Merton, 1968; Merton, 1988), which produces highly skewed citation distributions wherein a small number of papers receive a disproportionate number of citations while the majority of works, especially those that appear in lower-ranked journals, remain unnoticed. In this study, we are not claiming that this phenomenon impedes scientific progress, but we suggest that it should certainly be explored in future research. Nevertheless, it is concluded that highly ranked journals are very likely to have a JIF or an ESCI.

The journal's longevity, operationalized as years-in-print, is strongly correlated with its *h*-index and *g*-index. This finding is consistent with prior scientometric research suggesting that, on average, older journals receive higher rankings (Serenko and Dohan, 2011; Serenko *et al.*, 2017; Cahn and Glass, 2018). This happens because the *h*-index and the *g*-index consider all articles that have been published by a journal, and journals that have been in print longer have a higher chance of publishing more well-cited articles, are read more often and become noticed by the research community. There are, however, exceptions to this rule. For example, *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, despite being in print for only four years, has already been recognized by active KM/IC researchers, has demonstrated strong citation metrics and, as a result, has earned eighth place on the list.

### 4.2 Note of caution

Journal ranking lists are just documents. Great journals with great content can live outside journal lists just as much as not-so-great content can sometimes be found in journals that feature on the lists (Recker, 2020, p. 759).

The quote above by Jan Recker, in his reflection on serving as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, perfectly resonates with our understanding of the role of journal rankings in the contemporary academic environment. On the one hand, journal ranking lists are useful instruments reflecting the cumulative opinion and the actual behavior of active researchers who, through their actions, shape the identity of their chosen scientific domains. As we discussed in the first section of this article, journal ranking lists may be, in fact, quite useful if applied properly. On the other hand, the users of journal ranking lists should realize that all ranking methods, including the ones applied in this study, have limitations. Most importantly, journal lists are not supposed to be used to determine the quality and/or contribution of a particular article (Cuellar *et al.*, 2019; Serenko, 2019), but, as most academics know from their experience with the promotion and tenure process, this rule has been frequently violated. Thus, we strongly recommend that the ranking list presented in this paper be used with caution. In fact, we do not imply the superiority or inferiority of a particular journal: we only offer a ranking list that is constructed by means of a particular scientometric method.

### 4.3 Limitations, future research directions and conclusion

All journal ranking studies have limitations, and the present investigation is no exception. First and foremost, there are other valid methodologies that may be also used to develop KM/IC journal rankings and that may potentially produce different results. Examples include the publication power approach (Holsapple, 2008; Serenko and Jiao, 2012), the power-impact technique (Chen *et al.*, 2017), the author affiliation index (Ferratt *et al.*, 2007; Cronin and Meho,

2008) and the reputation analysis of citation behavior (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Thus, we encourage future researchers to test the generalizability of the ranking list reported in this study by relying on the approaches above. Second, fewer than 110 active researchers were selected from several journals, and it is possible that this negatively affected these journals' expert survey ranking scores. In the future, however, these journals will publish more issues, and it will be possible for future researchers to achieve an equal representation of each journal being ranked. Third, because several countries were over-represented in the sample, it is possible that the national or institutional ranking lists existing in these countries confounded the findings. Therefore, future researchers should consider balancing the list of authors by under-sampling the countries that have been over-represented in the previous ranking studies. Last, this study relied on the *h*-index and the *g*-index which consider citations to all articles ever published by a journal. As a result, newer journals were somewhat disadvantaged. Thus, future scholars may employ the timed *h*-index which includes citations to works published within a certain time window only (Schreiber, 2015).

In conclusion, it is important to provide recommendations that will ensure the continued momentum of the KM/IC field moving forward. First, the proper commencement of any academic researcher begins with a strong doctoral education. It is important that both KM/IC-specific programs and KM/IC-specific doctoral dissertations are supported as it is within these early stages of an academic researcher's career that a long-term passion for the field is developed. Senior researchers who enjoy elevated status within the field must provide mentorship to the next generation of scholars and introduce them to valid resources in order to maintain the field's longevity. For this, the developed ranking list may serve as a useful tool.

Second, the publishers of the top journals ranked in the study (i.e. Emerald, The Operational Research Society, Wiley) must continue to promote their journals for inclusion in the most important global databases, abstracts and journal lists. This feedback loop is self-reinforcing and will allow the KM/IC field to shed its reputation as a niche and relatively young discipline. Ultimately, *Journal of Knowledge Management* should target its eventual placement on the FT50 list as its medium-term objective. That lofty goal would ensure that top quality institutions and world-class scholars continue to conduct research in this area.

Publishers must do a better job promoting the content of their journals to a wider audience using social media tools such as Twitter. At the time of writing, *Journal of Knowledge Management* had 853 followers on its Twitter account and *Journal of Intellectual Capital* had 35 followers. At a minimum, both journals would benefit from regular Tweets updating followers on new publications, research awards and prominent papers with large citation counts. They could even interview authors and provide video and audio clips of summaries and practical implications of their studies. This would be a relatively economical way of ensuring that both journals appeal to a wider audience and transferring academic knowledge to practice. Such a promotional tactic would also attract new researchers, thus ensuring more potential downloads and, by extension, more citations.

Furthermore, the profile of the editorial board should be constantly refreshed and leveraged. Editorial board members can use their digital influence to amplify their journal's promotional efforts (i.e. retweet journal postings or post generic commentary on an innovative study that an editor just accepted). Editorial board members can also participate in live-tweeting activities during academic conferences while tagging the journal's twitter account and using the hashtags #knowledgemanagement and #intellectualcapital. They can also highlight newly published studies by summarizing them with simple language that does not use any academic jargon.

The publisher of *Journal of Knowledge Management* and *Journal of Intellectual Capital* should periodically reach out to all past authors and thank them for their contributions, highlight the journals' recent achievements and invite authors to submit future work. This has the dual outcome of promoting the journal while simultaneously improving the authors' perception of journal quality.

Finally, the publisher must further promote the *Real Impact* [6] initiative of *Journal of Knowledge Management*. This program aims to produce research with impact that goes beyond the confines of academia. This is done through shorter articles written in a fast, contemporary and practical style. These studies can be co-authored with practitioners/ entrepreneurs/managers with relevant engagement in the professional environment.

## Notes

1. www2.cabells.com/about-journalytics

2. The authors are grateful to Dr Murray Jennex for this suggestion.

3. https://abdc.edu.au/research/abdc-journal-list

4. www.ft.com/content/3405a512-5cbb-11e1-8f1f-00144feabdc0

5. Personal communication with Rory Chase, the founding editor of *Journal of Knowledge Management* and *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, 2016.

6. For further information on the *Journal of Knowledge Management's Real Impact* initiative, see www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/journal/jkm/real-impact-editors-and-real-impact-articles

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