The development of the Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index

An account of the development and use of the first Chinese social sciences citation index, which has helped to fill a gap in the field of Chinese social science research, becoming a useful database for information retrieval and an important tool for evaluating research work and social science journals.

Historical background
Lists of bibliographical references at the ends of published papers make a connection between an author’s work and the prior works of others. Through citation indexing, the conceptual relationships between these citing and cited academic documents can be illustrated. The concept of citation indexing was put forward early in 1955 by Eugene Garfield, a scholar and one of the founders of the well-known United States information agency, the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI). The theory was very well received within the information industry and, in the early 1960s, Science Citation Index, a product embodying ISI’s citation index theory, came into being. This was the first in its set of three citation indexes, which also included the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI). During the subsequent half-century, ISI’s citation-based products have developed from one title to a series, from paper to several electronic formats, and from purely bibliographical information to full-text services with extensive links. These products, including Web of Science, launched in 1997, have won large numbers of users worldwide and have become very important information databases and useful tools for research and assessment in scientific and other scholarly disciplines.

The first Chinese citation indexes
The development of the first Chinese citation index was undertaken by the Documentation Centre of the Chinese Academy of Science in 1995. The first CD-ROM edition of Chinese Science Citation Index was published in 1996, covering 582 core journals and including 60,000 source papers. Its successful development made an important addition to the range of information tools for China’s scientific work.

To meet the urgent needs in Chinese social science research and the requirements of the Chinese information resource infrastructure, the Library and Information Management Department of Nanjing University outlined the idea of developing a Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index (CSSCI) at the end of 1997. The proposal was accepted and approved by the Nanjing University Authority in 1998, and the presidents of Nanjing University and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology signed an agreement in Hong Kong on 23 April 1999, under which the two organizations would carry out the project jointly. On 20 August 1999, the Chinese Education Ministry put CSSCI onto its list of important approved projects.

The first CD-ROM edition of CSSCI, covering 1998, was published on 23 April 1999 and the web edition came into use soon afterwards. CSSCI has bridged a gap in the field of Chinese social science research and has become a useful database for information retrieval and an important tool for evaluating research work and social science journals.

Selection principles for source journals
When a new database begins, the most important issue for the designers to consider is the original data selection. For CSSCI’s source data, the selection of source journals was the initial step. The selection principles are related directly to the scope, coverage and authorization of the CSSCI database. It was decided to adopt the following selection criteria.

- Chinese-language journals.
- Research fields limited mostly to humanities and social sciences.
- Journals published in the mainland of China at the first stage of database development; the geographical area of coverage to be subsequently enlarged to include Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and some overseas social science journals in Chinese.
- Journal types or formats to be primary documents with original articles or papers, but not indexes, abstracts, or bibliographies.
- Journals having the status of formal publications, with ISSN’s and Chinese Book Numbers.
- Journals in which most of the articles have bibliographical references.
- Disciplines covered to be from the macro-social sciences, including not only the social sciences proper, but also the humanities and some mixed disciplines. They include archaeology, arts, culture, demography, economics, education, environmental science, ethnology, geography, history, journalism and dissemination, labour, language and linguistics, law, library and information sciences,
literature, management, military studies, philosophy, politics, psychology, religion, sociology, sports, and statistics.

Following these principles, and after considerable effort in selecting the journals to be covered, involving much discussion with experts from all the research fields and a large-scale survey with questionnaires to 1000 experts and scholars all over the country (with a response rate of 71 percent), 496 journals were eventually chosen for the first year’s CSSCI (Table 1). The next step involves a quantitative review of the chosen journals, to make decisions for the next year’s work.

Functions of the system

The system serves two purposes: to assist in searching for information and to provide quantitative statistics for scientific assessment.

Information searching

Two aspects of information searching are described here: source article searching and citation searching. As part of the search process, the history of each search is recorded and can be used for another search before the end of the session.

Source article searching This capability can be used to search for source articles or original articles according to:

- author
- words in title
- keywords
- classification code
- subject

There are some auxiliary searching points, such as first author, author affiliation area, organization type, publication year or volume of a journal, document type, and so on. Boolean searching is available, using equations with the symbols +, *, and –. The truncation symbol ($) may be used at any place to search a word, at the beginning, at the end, or in the middle.

Citation searching Through citation searching, users can search for both citing papers and cited papers (‘source papers’). This technique can be used to identify citations or cited articles according to:

- Cited authors
- Titles of cited articles
- Cited publications

Some auxiliary searching points (such as year of publication) are also available.

Scientific statistics

The database is intended to provide statistics and research information in the following areas:

- Individual publications: The contributions of individuals can be counted for both source articles and citations. Both of these can be qualified with subdivisions, such as a subject field, or a publication year.
- Organization publications
- Area publications
- Subject (or research field) publications
- Cited paper statistics
- Cited journal statistics
- Core authors in each research field permutation
- Core journal permutation

Conclusion

To ensure that the whole system works smoothly and successfully, we have been authorized to establish a special institute, the Center for the Assessment of Chinese Social Sciences Research, in Nanjing University. We are making efforts to have the CSSCI database recognized as one of the most important Chinese indexing systems, promoting the dissemination of social sciences information and participation in the international academic communication.

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