

all paper copies of the literature in the field around the world, etc. I believe it is now unprofessional (even negligent) to submit a paper if you have not spend five minutes doing an electronic search of the literature. The five minutes might lead to five hours, or a decision not to submit the paper if the results turn out badly, and you discover what you thought was new in fact was the subject of detailed investigation by other groups recently, or even in the distant past. So, what should you do in these five minutes?

My favorite Web search engine is Google Scholar, because it is quite comprehensive and it gives citation statistics, but feel free to use another, as I agree citation statistics are not the only issue. So, my instruction is:

1. Type in www.google.com
2. In the search line, enter the keywords you propose to use for your paper.
3. Google Scholar will give some of the highest-cited papers and books first. Look at the first 10-15 papers in the list.
4. Ask yourself the question, "Have I cited this reference in my paper?" If "yes," then look at the next paper on the Google list. If "no," get a copy of the paper and rationalize to yourself and your coauthors why this paper has not been referenced, and/or include this reference in your paper.

5. If your reference list is too large, then maybe you have to look for the most important (oldest? founding? exemplar?) papers in the field, and include them, rather than the others you originally included.

With my new-found knowledge and interest in this issue brought to me by my students, I plan to use this technique when I review papers from now on. Don't be surprised if your paper is returned with a comment relating to inadequate refereeing of the literature.

If you have comments or suggestions, Randy and I would be interested to hear from you: I'm sure Randy would love some additional inputs to his column. Happy writing and happy reviewing!

References

1. R. Clarke, "Ethical Issues in the Preparation and Submission of Research Papers in the I.S. Discipline," Xamax Consultancy, ANU, available at <http://www.anu.edu.au/people/Roger.Clarke/SOS/ResPubEth.html>, December 6, 2000.
2. Anonymous, "Ethics & Values," APS Guidelines for Professional Conduct, available at http://www.aps.org/policy/statements/02_2.cfm, November 2002. 