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Amy Hardin & Tony Stankus

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The 2016 Rankings: The Top 25 U.S. Universities Publishing Articles that Advanced Subject Specialized Librarianship 2011–2015

Amy Hardin and Tony Stankus

University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, Arkansas

ABSTRACT

Rankings of U.S. universities by the number of publications by their librarians has often been based on examining assortments of wider interest library journals. In 2011, the authors developed rankings for a top 50 U.S. universities list based on the author affiliations of an eleven year span (2000–2010), using fourteen journals representing ten major types of subject specialized librarianship: Agriculture, Archives, Art, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Business, Law, Medicine, Music, Rare Books and Manuscripts, and Science. This study has now been updated for 2016 using the same methodology and sources from 2011–2015, and a top 25 list is presented.



KEYWORDS

Publishing by academic librarians; subject specialty library journals; U.S. college and university librarians

Introduction

Hardin and Stankus (2011a) noted that when U.S. universities were competitively ranked by counting the publications of their librarians most of the sources of qualifying articles were general library journals. In preparing a presentation for the 101st Annual International Conference of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) in Philadelphia, PA the authors decided to focus on publications for library subject specialists. The authors ranked U.S. universities solely by counting articles published from 2000 through 2010, in fourteen long-established (median age 24 years) and highly regarded journals specifically devoted to ten key fields within subject specialized librarianship. They followed conventional practices in counting, requiring that articles: span four pages or more and be devoted to professional research or commentary. Book reviews were excluded. These specialized areas and the library journals (listed in parentheses and in italics) representing them were as follows:

- (1) Rare book and manuscripts librarianship (*RBM: Rare Books, Manuscripts and Cultural Heritage*)
- (2) Art librarianship (*Art Documentation*)
- (3) Music librarianship (*Notes, Music Reference Services Quarterly*)

CONTACT Tony Stankus  tstankus@uark.edu  Life Sciences Librarian, University of Arkansas Libraries, MULN 223 East, 365 North McIlroy Avenue, Fayetteville, AR 72701-4002, USA.

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- (4) Archives (*American Archivist*)
- (5) Behavioral and social sciences librarianship (*Behavioral and Social Sciences Librarian*)
- (6) Law librarianship (*Law Library Journal*, *Legal Reference Services Quarterly*)
- (7) Business librarianship (*Journal of Business and Finance Librarianship*)
- (8) Medical librarianship (*JMLA: the Journal of the Medical Library Association*, *Medical Reference Services Quarterly*)
- (9) Agricultural librarianship (*Journal of Agricultural and Food Information*)
- (10) Science librarianship (*Science & Technology Libraries*, *Issues in Science & Technology Librarianship*).

Their study of the eleven years of publications, 2000–2010, reported that 484 U.S. four-year academic institutions contributed 2,247 qualifying articles, with more detailed analysis within given subject fields published later (Hardin and Stankus 2011b; Hardin and Stankus 2012).

Overall rankings 2011–2015

This study has now been updated for the 106th Annual International Convention of SLA, held once again in Philadelphia, PA this year. It counts university article output from 2011–2015 using the same specialty journals and counting rules. Because only five years were covered, the authors opted to emphasize only the top 25 institutions. In this analysis, 278 four-year institutions of higher learning in the U.S. published 1,255 qualifying papers. Table 1 indicates the current rankings when all papers coming from an institution were added together. Thirty-two institutions are listed owing to a large number of ties. The first column indicates current rank; the second, the name of the institution; the third, the actual number of qualifying papers published. This 12 percent subset of all the U.S. universities that published accounted for 567 articles, 45 percent of the overall contribution to the literature from the community of America's academic subject specialists.

Excellent schools with continuing high productivity

Twenty-seven schools of the 32 schools that made it into the 2011–2015 top 25, came from the ranks of the 2000–2010 top 50 universities. All of the five remaining universities in the 2011–2015 top 25, had indeed published qualifying papers in the 2000–2010 study, but simply too few to rank in the top 50.

The quality of the schools continued to be high in the 2011–2015 study (21 of the 32 ranked in the top 100 National Research Universities in the 2016 *US News & World Report*) and the division of sponsorship (80 percent public vs. 20 percent private) also remained the same. Librarians in the public institutions

Table 1. Rank by Total Articles from All Included Subject Specialty Journals.

| Rank 2011-2015 | Institution | Number of Articles |
|----------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1st | U Washington* | 52 |
| 2nd | CUNY* | 39 |
| 3rd | San Jose State U* | 36 |
| 4th | U Arkansas* | 35 |
| 5th | Indiana U | 23 |
| 5th | U Michigan | 23 |
| 5th | U North Carolina Chapel Hill | 23 |
| 8th | U Miami* | 20 |
| 9th | U New Mexico* | 19 |
| 9th | UCLA | 19 |
| 10th | U Minnesota | 18 |
| 11th | Rutgers U | 17 |
| 11th | Texas A & M | 17 |
| 12th | U Illinois Urbana Champaign | 16 |
| 13th | Harvard U | 15 |
| 13th | Yale U | 15 |
| 15th | LSU | 14 |
| 15th | U Florida | 14 |
| 17th | Duke | 13 |
| 17th | U Alabama | 13 |
| 18th | Ohio State U | 12 |
| 18th | U Kentucky | 12 |
| 18th | U Pittsburgh | 12 |
| 21st | Northern Illinois U | 11 |
| 21st | U Albany* | 11 |
| 21st | U South Dakota* | 11 |
| 24th | Stanford U* | 10 |
| 24th | U Maryland | 10 |
| 24th | U Nebraska | 10 |
| 25th | Cornell U | 9 |
| 25th | Purdue U | 9 |
| 25th | U Tennessee | 9 |

* denotes schools which have published more articles in the last 5 years than the previous 11

more often than not held some form of faculty status and were expected to contribute to the scholarly literature of their subject specialties for reasons of tenure and promotion. At private schools such as Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Duke, and more recently Stanford and the University of Miami, special librarians more often lack full faculty status and/or tenure, but are still encouraged to publish.

Schools on the fast-track to significantly surpass their previous performance

Eight schools, indicated by an asterisk in Table 1, have already surpassed their previous eleven year outputs in only five years. Alphabetically, these are: City University of New York, San Jose State University, the University at Albany, and the Universities of Arkansas, Miami, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Washington.

Table 2. Leaders in Number of Articles Devoted to a Subject Specialty.

| Specialty | "Best-in-Nation" 2016 | National Share of Papers | "Best in Nation" 2011 |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Agriculture | U Arkansas | 18% | Michigan State U |
| Archives | U Michigan | 5% | U Michigan |
| Art | Indiana U | 8% | Yale U |
| Behavioral & Social Sciences | San Jose State U | 26% | Northern Illinois U |
| Business | San Jose State U | 28% | Penn State U |
| Law | U Washington | 16% | U Arizona |
| Medicine | U Miami | 7% | U Illinois Urbana- Champaign |
| Music | UCLA | 11% | U Buffalo |
| Rare Books & Manuscripts | Harvard U | 11% | Harvard U |
| Science | U Arkansas | 12% | U Illinois Urbana- Champaign |

Universities that are "best in the nation" in ten major specialties

Table 2 lists the ten major categories of academic special librarianship that were the focus of this study and its predecessor, and the U.S. universities which published the most qualifying papers in the specialty journals covering those areas [in 2016 and 2011], along with the "market share" enjoyed by the more recent leaders. Two universities retained their national leadership: Harvard University in rare books and manuscripts and the University of Michigan in archives. Eight of the ten specialties have new national leaders. The University of Arkansas supplanted Michigan State University in agriculture and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in science. San Jose State University overtook Northern Illinois University in behavioral and social sciences and Penn State University in business. Law is now led by the University of Washington in Seattle, the University of Arizona having relinquished its lead. The University of Miami overtook the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in medical librarianship. In Music, UCLA moved ahead of the University at Buffalo.

Another way of expressing relative dominance in a field asks: what percentage of total U.S. university output came from the leading school. The University of Michigan accounted for 5 percent of the American archives literature. The University of Miami is responsible for 7 percent of the U.S. medical output. Indiana University produced 8 percent of American art librarian articles. Harvard University has an 11 percent national share of rare books and manuscripts, as does UCLA in music. The University of Arkansas was responsible for 12 percent of the nation's papers in science librarianship and 18 percent in agriculture. The University of Washington was the affiliation noted for 16 percent of the U.S. articles in Law Librarianship. San Jose State University dominated American output of behavioral and social sciences at 26 percent, with a 28 percent share for business.

A closing note

As was the case with the 2000–2010 study, more detailed analyses will be published later.

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