

Accuracy of references in two Indian library and information science journals

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The study examines the reference accuracy of two prominent Indian library and information science journals, viz. *Annals of Library and Information Studies* and *DESIDOC Journal of Library and Information Technology*. In all, one hundred and eighteen references were considered for verification. Only 39 (33%) references were correct. Among 79 incorrect references, there were total 151 errors of which 71 (47%) errors were major and 80 (53%) were minor errors. The average number of errors (ratio of number of errors) was 1.28. A proper mechanism is needed in both the journals to maintain the quality of references in terms of errors.

Keywords: Reference accuracy; Citation errors; LIS journals

Introduction

In a scientific paper, list of references, which is also called as “cited references” is an essential component that allows the users trace the concerned information sources if needed. A list of references in a paper gives details of information sources used and consulted directly or indirectly during the research work, and shows that the author has investigated the paper’s topic thoroughly.

References in a scientific paper may be divided into two parts. First part is the quotation, which appears in the text; and second is the citation, which occurs at the end of the paper. In the first necessary part, each section of article that is either quoted from or based on an external information source is marked as such with an inline citation. The inline citation can be in the form of a footnote, parenthetical reference, or a shortened version of the citation known as short citation. An inline citation is any citation written and associated near to the words or idea it supports, for instance after the paragraph or sentence, generally a superscripted footnote numeral. The second part of the reference or citation is the list of all the references that appears at the end of the paper in a “References” section, which gives full formatted details related to the information source, so that any individual who reads the paper can retrieve it and check it. This part

is arranged according to a specific order, which may be numerically by superscripted numbers as presented in the text, or alphabetically by surnames of authors, editors, translators, and/or by initial words of titles.

References undoubtedly play a major role in scholarly communications in identification, searching and retrieval of previous studies. In any condition, the accuracy of references in scientific papers cannot be ignored. Reference accuracy is an important aspect of scholarly communication and scientific progress. Notwithstanding, it is unfortunate that authors do not pay sufficient attention in compilation of the references embedded in their paper. It is the authors(s), whose onus is of examining the references accurately.

Mis-citation is a crucial problem in scholarly communications, especially in scientific papers. Errors in references misguide the readers. The quantity of reference errors occurred is inversely related to the diligence of the authors and scholars and the time span consumed by them in compiling and rectifying the bibliographical references. The variations in the name of authors, use of special symbols and characters in standard citation styles are some genuine factors affecting the verification process of the reference errors.

Due to variety of reasons, errors in references can occur in scientific papers. So many referencing standards and guidelines are available; some of them are *MLA Referencing Style*, *APA Referencing Style*, *Chicago Manual of Style*, *Turabian Style*, *Harvard Style*, *Vancouver Style*, etc.; anyone of these is to be followed by researchers while writing paper or any piece of research work. Main reason behind reference errors is that authors fail to follow such standard styles and guidelines.

Needless to say, perfection is the highest quality. When a scholarly communication in the form of scientific paper has inaccurate references, the overall quality of the research paper and also the editors of the journal, which published the paper, are questioned.

Review of literature

About a century ago in 1916, Frank Place, Jr. pointed out that bibliographical references are frequently "called upon to locate papers"¹ not yet indexed. He critically indicated that many esteemed scholars take "a reference from another's bibliography as though it was thereby Gospel truth itself."¹ Foreman and Kirchhoff stated that references "provide a method of evaluating the article; [and] assist in assessing an author's credibility."² In fact, various scholars don't examine the original information sources before citing them. However, thoroughly checking all published references with original sources is not possible. Because of the scholars' libraries not having the cited sources, they acquire the cited sources by interlibrary loan facility or by any other way³.

According to Pandit⁴, accuracy of bibliographical references is necessary to the success of scholarly communications, citation analysis, bibliometrics studies, interlibrary loan (ILL), document delivery services (DDS), database management, and evaluation of an author's work. Correct references make easier all of these works and activities. Errors in references directly influence the results of bibliometrics and citation studies. Citation error is defined by Yankauer as, "errors of commission or omission in the printing of the reference."⁵ Pandit indicated that "errors focus on the citations themselves and exclude the extent to which authors correctly quoted a text or acknowledged an intellectual debt."⁴ On the basis of the ranked list of journals in ISI's Journal Citation

Reports and selected studies that have identified core journals, Pandit chose the five library science journals including the *Library Trends* for analysis. The author also successfully compared the published references in articles against the original documents. Doms also defined an accurate, or correct reference as "one in which all included elements are identical to the source."⁶

Raja and Cooper⁷ carefully determined the reference accuracy of all 2724 citations appended to 254 articles published in *Emergency Medicine Journal* during 2003 by using authentic electronic and print sources. In this study, total errors were found in 19% of all 2561 citations checked, and in 8% were major errors and clearly reduced the quality of the citation. Jiao, Onwuegbuzie and Waytowich⁸ investigated the psychological link between library anxiety and citation error rate, along with quality of references listed in 93 Ph.D. proposals in the field of education. They found that 31.81% of references were inaccurate in education doctoral proposals. This research was one of the first to determine the psychological traits of education research scholars who commit such errors. The main result of the study advised that library anxiety plays a key role in scholars' ability to compile flawless and error free reference lists.

Harinarayana, Chikkamanju and Vasantha Raju⁹ examined the accuracy of citations in five psychology theses shelved in the Library of University of Mysore, India. They examined the 923 citations from the multiple sources, including journal's website, Google scholar, Library of Congress databases, and other sources. In this research, they found that 39.54% references had major errors, and also suggested for conducting training programs for new research scholars so that they can follow a single citation standard to maintain the reference accuracy.

According to Azadeh and Vaez¹⁰, wrong citations create dilemma, mistrust in the accuracy of a research, wastage of time and unwanted financial charges for information centres, libraries and researchers. The objective of their research was to measure the journal article's reference accuracy in PhD theses in Farsi that were awarded in the two Universities of Medical Sciences located at Tehran and Tabriz during 2007-2008. They verified a total of 704 article references, out of which 357 were from the Tehran and 347 from the Tabriz. Fifty three percent of article references in

the Tabriz and 62% in the Tehran were inaccurate. One hundred thirty six references in the Tabriz and 164 in the Tehran were completely accurate. Out of 357 references in the Tehran, 9.8% (34) were following the Vancouver referencing style, and none found in the Tabriz. Reference accuracy had no difference between the two universities, but compliance with the Vancouver style was significantly better in the Tehran. The level of reference accuracy was unsatisfactory in both universities. Lanning¹¹ strongly felt the need for a modernized and simplified citation style (SCS), one that includes technological aspects and goes forward from the traditionally print bibliographic style. According to him, citation guidelines are hard to follow accurately.

Most probably, the errors in citations and bibliographical references have appeared since the authors have started citing other authors. Generally, omissions and wrong transcriptions of various elements of citation in reference lists, viz., names of author(s) and/or editor(s), book title, journal title, article's name, volume number, year, pagination etc., can cause serious bibliographical problems, and such errors often exist in published reports, indexing and abstracting sources for a long time.

The world famous example of such a citation error is the case of Prof. Jaroslav Hlava (1855-1924). In the annual volume 26 no. 5, 29 January 1887, *Journal of the Czech Physicians* published from Prague, a paper was written by Dr. Jaroslav Hlava. This widely cited paper originally authored by Prof. Hlava, Czech Professor of Pathological Anatomy at Prague, entitled "O Uplavici" which means "About Dysentery", got incorrectly attributed to a Dr. O. Uplavici¹². This happened due to translation error from Czech (Bohemian) to German and English language. The author's name was written in small letters, and the translator by mistake wrote it as "O Úplavici" (About dysentery in Czech) in place of the author's name and "PŘEDBĚŽNÁ SDELENÍ" (Preliminary communication in Czech) for the title "About Dysentery." This mistake was repeated in many forms for more than 50 years until Clifford Dobell wrote about the truth of this noted atrocity¹³⁻¹⁴. This disgraceful, and also comical, instance of citation error explains two points. First is, any error in citation happens, albeit paper's writer is a well known scholar. It is a very common phenomenon that has existed in

scholarly communications. Second, citation error can create problems in scholarly communications, self-perpetuates, and later can lead to embarrassments. As such, mis-citations or citation errors not only raise questions and create doubts about the credibility and integrity of the author; they also badly influence both the validity of the important research outputs and the trustworthiness of the cited documents¹⁵⁻¹⁷.

Objective of the study

- To examine errors in references, both major and minor in two leading Indian LIS journals.

Methodology

One hundred and eighteen article references were chosen, out of which 70 were from the Volume 63(4), December 2016 issue of *Annals of Library and Information Studies* (ALIS) and 48 references were from Volume 36(6), November 2016 issue of *DESIDOC Journal of Library and Information Technology* (DJLIT). Each and every article reference was thoroughly checked either from the original article, or from other sources, such as- indexing and abstracting sources and Google scholar, if the original source was not available. In this study, Doms⁶ approach was applied to make the categories of errors in references with a little bit change by adding the missing issue number as major error. Non-journal references, for example, references of books, conference proceedings, theses and dissertations, websites, and reports were excluded from the study.

The references were, first of all, divided into two groups: correct and incorrect reference. A correct reference was a reference that was completely identical to the original source. An incorrect reference was a reference that deviated and different from the original source. The number of incorrect references was calculated and subdivided into two groups as major and minor errors. The errors were categorized into seven components by types of error such as- author's name, article title, journal name, volume, issue, year, and page. Group of minor errors contained the minor author name's initial errors, minor article title errors, inaccurate last page number, and punctuation errors. Group of major errors contained the incorrect or missing author(s) name, incorrect article title, incorrect or missing journal name, missing or wrong volume and issue, missing or wrong year, missing or wrong first page number.

Table 1—Errors in references

Journal	Total number of references verified = a	Number of errors = b	Average number of errors $c = b/a$	Percentage of errors $D = (b/\sum b)*100$
ALIS	70	96	1.37	63.58
DJLIT	48	55	1.14	36.42
	$\sum a = 118$	$\sum b = 151$	1.28	100

Table 2—Major errors in references

Journal	Total number of references verified = a	Major errors = b	Percentage of major errors $c = (b/\sum b)*100$
ALIS	70	36	50.7
DJLIT	48	35	49.3
	$\sum a = 118$	$\sum b = 71$	100

Table 3—Minor errors in references

Journal	Total number of references verified = a	Minor errors = b	Percentage of minor errors $c = (b/\sum b)*100$
ALIS	70	60	75
DJLIT	48	20	25
	$\sum a = 118$	$\sum b = 80$	100

References which contained an error or more than one error in only a single component (i.e. author's name, title of article, journal name, volume, issue, year, and page) were considered as containing one error; those which consisted errors in two or more components were regarded to have two or more errors.

Analysis

Number of errors

In the present information and communication technology era, references in scholarly communication are more important than ever before due to online bibliographic and citation databases, such as Google Scholar, Clarivate Analytics' Web of Science, Index Copernicus, ERIC, and Elsevier's Scopus and so on. Citations are, obviously, crucial and useful in discovering and measuring the impact of an author.

Table 1 presents the quantity of errors committed by the library professionals in the two Indian LIS journals. It is found that the average number of errors (ratio of number of errors) is 1.28. It reflects that every article citation in the journals considered in the study had minimum one error.

Major errors

Table 2 gives the details of major errors in references. Among 118 article references from the two LIS journals, 71 major errors were found. Major errors in citations are the serious errors. They prevent the readers to search and retrieve the cited information sources. There should be very negligible or lesser level of such kinds of errors in references. Both the journals show a high level of major errors.

Minor errors

Punctuation errors, formatting errors, and minor addition or omission, error in last page number are some examples of minor errors. Although, minor errors cannot influence the searching and retrieval of cited information source, but they deform the uniformity and consistency of the referencing format. In electronic databases and indexing and abstracting tools, minor errors may, sometimes, create disturbances in extraction of information. Table 3 depicts the distribution of minor errors in references. In total 118 article references, 80 minor errors were detected. ALIS contributed more minor errors than DJLIT. These errors can be minimized easily by following their referencing styles provided by both the journals.

Accuracy level of references

Table 4 presents the accuracy level of references in the two Indian LIS journals. Accuracy is an important yardstick of measuring quality. Out of total 118 (ALIS-70 & DJLIT-48) references verified from the original sources and other online indexing and abstracting tools, only 39 (33%) (ALIS-22 &

DJLIT-17) references were correct while 79 (67%) (ALIS-48 & DJLIT-31) were incorrect. Accuracy level of references is 33.05%. This indicates that out of 3 article references only 1 reference is correct and 2 are incorrect. The authors are mainly responsible for erroneous citations. The editors of the journals are also equally responsible.

Errors in citing name of the authors

Errors in citing name of the author include spelling errors, omission of initials, and punctuation errors. Table 5 shows the errors in citing name of author. Highest errors are addition/spelling errors (47.37%), followed by omission errors (36.84%) and punctuation errors (15.79%). Lists of the errors in citing name of the author in ALIS and DJLIT journals are also given in two tables (Tables 6 & 7).

Errors in the Title

Being a major element of a bibliographic reference, title of an article shows, in most cases, the whole theme of the paper. Table 8 depicts the referencing errors in article title. ALIS was more aware of title errors than DJLIT. Lists of the errors in title in ALIS and DJLIT journals are also mentioned in Tables 9 & 10.

Errors in the journal name

Table 11 presents the errors in name of the journal. Highest errors (80%) were committed in wrong and incomplete name of journal. Spelling and punctuation errors were 13.33% and 6.67%, respectively. The errors in journal name in ALIS and DJLIT journals are listed in Tables 12 & 13.

Errors in year and page number

Year and page number errors in article references impede in the searching and retrieving of original article. So, both kinds of errors are considered as major errors. Both the components of reference have been taken together in this article because of their numerical nature. The results revealed that almost 23% of the references in two LIS journals had contained wrong year of publication of the article. Almost 77% of the references had inaccurate page numbers of the article (Table 14). Doms⁶ considered both year and page number errors as major errors. It is assumed that the accuracy in scholarly communication in the form of journal articles should be high and even slight errors are unacceptable.

Errors in punctuation marks, volume and issue numbers

Readers trust on volume and issue number of the journal to get their cited article with comfort and in minimum time. Volume and issue number of the journal and punctuations are equally important parts of a citation. Punctuations are helpful in dividing citation components and clear the meaning of every component to maintain the uniformity of the citations. Table 15 presents the errors found in punctuation marks, volume and issue number. Wrong and missing volume and issue number are grouped in major errors, while punctuation errors are considered as minor errors. Table 15 shows that ALIS contained highest number (48) of punctuation errors. As a whole, 67.5% of the references checked in two Indian LIS journals

Table 4—Accuracy level of references

Journal	Total number of references verified = a	Correct references = b	Incorrect references = c	Reference accuracy percentage d = (b/a)*100
ALIS	70	22	48	31.43
DJLIT	48	17	31	35.42
Total	$\sum a = 118$	$\sum b = 39$	$\sum c = 79$	33.05

Table 5—Errors in citing authors' name

Errors in Citing Authors' Name	ALIS	DJLIT	Total	Percentage
Omission Errors	5	2	7	36.84
Addition/Spelling Errors	1	8	9	47.37
Punctuation Errors	2	1	3	15.79
Total	8	11	19	100

Table 6—Errors in citing the authors' names in ALIS (correct parts are underlined)

Sl. no.	Name of the Author(s) as cited in the Journal	Missing author(s)/Initial(s)/ Correct Spellings with punctuations	Types of errors
1	Fagan J C Mandernach M A Nelson C S Paulo J R and Saunders G	Fagan J C, Mandernach <u>M</u> , Nelson C S, Paulo J R and Saunders G	Initial addition and punctuation errors (Minor errors)
2	Niu X Zhang T and Chen H	Niu X, Zhang T and Chen H	Punctuation error (Minor error)
3	Nichols A Billey A Spitzform P Stokes A and Tran C	Nichols A, Billey A, Spitzform P, Stokes A and Tran C	Punctuation error (Minor error)
4	Brian R Evans B L P and Demark-Wahnefried W	<u>Evans B R</u> , <u>Peterson B L</u> and Demark-Wahnefried W	Author's name missing, initials and punctuation errors (Major error)
5	Lwehabura M	Lwehabura <u>M J F</u>	Initials missing (Minor error)
6	Steffy C	<u>Buck S</u> and Steffy C	Author's name missing (Major error)
7	Hoover L	Hoover <u>L L</u>	Initials missing (Minor error)
8	Golder S and Huberman B A	Golder <u>S A</u> and Huberman B A	Initials missing (Minor error)

Table 7—Errors in citing the authors' names in DJLIT (correct parts are underlined)

Sl. no.	Name of the Author(s) as cited in the Journal	Missing author(s)/Initial(s)/ Correct spellings with punctuations	Types of errors
1	Golnessa Galyani Moghaddam	Moghaddam, Golnessa Galyani	Author's name in running style (Major error)
2	Kandpal, K.N.; Rawat, S.S. & Vital, K.S.R	Kandpal, K.N.; Rawat, S.S. & <u>Vithal</u> , K.S.R.	Author's name error (Major error)
3	Tiemo, P.A.; Island, W.; State, B.; Ateboh, B.A.; Island, W. & State, B.	Tiemo, P.A. & Ateboh, B.A.	Four extra authors added (Major error)
4	Tyler, K. (Joint S.O.U.; Hastings, N.	Tyler, K. & Hastings, <u>N. B.</u>	Unwanted words are added and initial missing (Major error)
5	Lumley, R.; Newman, E.; Brown, H.T. & Bernardino, S.	Lumley, R.; Newman, E. & Brown, H.T.	One extra author added (Major error)
6	Hashim, L. & Mokhar, W.	Hashim, <u>L. B.</u> & <u>Mokhtar, W.N. H.W.</u>	Author's name error and initials missing (Major error)
7	Boyd & Ellison	Boyd, <u>D. M.</u> & Ellison, <u>N. B.</u>	Initials missing (Minor error)
8	Englander F.; Terregrossa RA, and Wang, Z.	Englander F.; Terregrossa R.A., & Wang, Z.	Punctuation error (Minor error)
9	Mazer, J.; Murphy R. & Simonds C.	Mazer, <u>J. P.</u> ; Murphy <u>R. E.</u> & Simonds <u>C. J.</u>	Initials missing (Minor error)
10	Hrastinski, S.; Edman, A.; Andersson, F.; Kawnine, T. & Soames, C.A.	Hrastinski, S.; Edman, A.; Andersson, F.; Kawnine, T. & Soames, <u>C.</u>	Initial added in Soames, C. (Minor error)
11	Fung-yin, K.S.	Simpson, Fung-yin K.	Author's name error (Major error)

Table 8—Referencing errors in titles

Referencing errors in titles	ALIS	DJLIT	Total	Percentage
Wrong/Missing title	1	6	7	63.64
Addition/Spelling errors	1	3	4	36.36
Total	2	9	11	100

had punctuation errors and 30% contained issue number errors. No inaccuracy in volume number was

found in DJLIT. Inaccuracies in issue number were higher in ALIS compared to DJLIT.

Table 9—Referencing errors in titles in ALIS (correct parts are underlined)

Sl. no.	Title as found in the journal	Correct title	Type of error(s)
1	No Difference in Response Rate to a Mailed Survey among versus Prostate Cancer Survivors Using Conditional Unconditional Incentives	No difference in response rate to a mailed survey among prostate cancer survivors using conditional <u>versus</u> unconditional incentives	Spelling error and capitalization error (Minor errors)
2	Information Literacy: assessing the readiness of Ghanaian universities	Electronic resources: access and usage at Ashesi University College	Wrong title (Major error)

Table 10—Referencing errors in titles in DJLIT (correct parts are underlined)

Sl. no.	Title as found in the journal	Correct title	Type of error(s)
1	Resources collection organization and management- An overview (CEC Media Library- As an example)	<u>Media</u> resources collection organization and management- An overview (CEC Media Library- As an example)	Word missing (Major error)
2	Users satisfaction with library information resources and services: A case study	Users' satisfaction with library information resources and services: A case study <u>College of Health Sciences Library Niger Delta University, Amassoma, Nigeria</u>	Subtitle missing and punctuation error (Major error)
3	University of W.F. Factors influencing virtual patron satisfaction with online library resources and services)	Factors influencing virtual patron satisfaction with online library resources and services	Unwanted words added (Major error)
4	SNS: Definition, history and scholarship	<u>Social Network Sites</u> : Definition, history, and scholarship	Title error and punctuation error (Major error)
5	The use of SNS among the undergraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nssuka	The use of <u>Social Networking Sites</u> among the undergraduate students of University of Nigeria, <u>Nsukka</u>	Title words error (Minor error)
6	No title in Reference [Englander, F.; Terregrossa RA, & Wang, Z. <i>Educational Review.</i> , 2010, 62(1), 86-96]	Internet use among college students: tool or toy?	Title missing (Major error)
7	Quality of Korean cataloguing records in shared databases	Quality of Korean <u>cataloging</u> records in shared databases	Spelling error (Minor error)
8	Comparison of cataloguing in publication (CIP) with cataloguing after publication (OPAC) of Iran national library bibliographic center	Comparison of <u>Cataloging in Publication</u> (CIP) with <u>Cataloging-after-Publication</u> (Opac) of Iran National Library bibliographic center	Spelling errors and capitalization errors (Minor error)
9	A catalog quality audit tool	A <u>catalogue</u> quality audit tool	Spelling error (Minor error)

Table 11—Referencing errors in journal names

Referencing errors in journal names	ALIS	DJLIT	Total	Percentage
Wrong/Incomplete Name	5	7	12	80
Addition/Spelling Errors	2	0	2	13.33
Punctuation Errors	1	0	1	6.67
Total	8	7	15	100

Conclusion

ALIS and DJLIT are two leading LIS journals published from India. While the responsibility of

providing accurate references rests primarily with authors, the Editors of the two journals also have to pay more attention to ensure the accuracy of the references.

Table 12—Errors in journal name in ALIS (correct parts are underlined)

Sl. no.	Journal name as found in the journal	Correct journal name	Type of error(s)
1	J. Libr. Metadata	Journal of Library Metadata	ALIS allows full journal name (Minor error)
2	Journal of Web Librariansh	Journal of Web <u>Librarianship</u>	Journal name wrong (Major error)
3	Journal of Web Librariansh	Journal of Web <u>Librarianship</u>	Journal name wrong (Major error)
4	Journal of Web Librariansh	Journal of Web <u>Librarianship</u>	Journal name wrong (Major error)
5	Biomarkers & Prevention	<u>Cancer Epidemiology</u> , Biomarkers & Prevention	Journal name wrong (Major error)
6	Library Philosophy and Practice	Library Philosophy and Practice (<u>e-journal</u>)	Incomplete name (Major error)
7	African Journal of Library Archives and Information Science	African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science	Punctuation error (Minor error)
8	South African of Journal of Library and Information Science	South African Journal of <u>Libraries</u> and Information Science	Spelling error (Major error)

Table 13—Errors in journal name in DJLIT (correct parts are underlined)

Sl. no.	Journal name as found in the journal	Correct journal name	Type of error(s)
1	Coll. of Health Sci. Lib. Niger	<u>Journal of Education and Practice</u>	Journal name wrong (Major error)
2	No journal name in Reference [Lumley, R.; Newman, E.; Brown, H.T. & Bernardino, S. Hispanic college students library experience, 2015, 8(1), 49-55.]	<u>Contemporary Issues In Education Research</u>	Journal name missing (Major error)
3	No journal name in Reference [Ali, S. & King, A. Study spaces and environments: Recognizing the needs of students in Africa, 2015, 6(23), 99-108.]	<u>Journal of Education and Practice</u>	Journal name missing (Major error)
4	The Information Manager- Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	The Information Manager	Journal name wrong (Major error)
5	J. of Inf. Tech. Edu. Res.	Journal of Information Technology Education: Research	Punctuation error (Minor error)
6	Library Philosophy and Practice	Library Philosophy and Practice (<u>e-journal</u>)	Incomplete name (Major error)
7	Lib. and Inf. Res.	<u>Library Management</u>	Journal name wrong (Major error)

Table 14—Referencing errors in year and page number

Referencing errors in year and page number	ALIS	DJLIT	Total	Percentage
Year	4	2	6	23.08
Page Numbers	5	15	20	76.92
Total	9	17	26	100

Table 15—Errors in punctuation marks, volume and issue numbers

Type of error	ALIS	DJLIT	Total	Percentage
Punctuation Error	48	6	54	67.5
Wrong/Missing Volume	2	0	2	2.5
Wrong/Missing Issue	19	5	24	30
Total	69	11	80	100

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