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Trends in Scholarly Publishing

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INDUSTRY UPDATES

Boosting Readership & Citations of Scholarly Publications

Tash Brown, Chief Operating Officer, TrendMD, USA

Engaging relevant content is essential to attract readers, build trust, and ultimately achieve impact and garner citations. Even if you have excellent content, it is still very difficult for you to reach readership and meet citation objectives unless you can get that content in front of the right audience. But how do readers discover content?

A new survey has found that links to related articles are still the most influential feature of scholarly websites. It is also the only feature that is not declining in popularity. Simon Inger and Tracy Gardner from Renew Consultants polled researchers every three years between 2005-2021 with questions about their behavior regarding the discovery of journal articles and video content. The latest survey, "How Readers Discover Content in Scholarly Publications", conducted during January, February, and March of 2021, received over 15K responses from readers worldwide in every academic discipline.

"Related Articles functionality is the most useful feature of those tested and has maintained its position fairly consistently over the period of study," the survey found. Furthermore, Related Articles were the most popular feature in all three areas of scholarly research surveyed: Medicine, Social Sciences/Humanities, and Science/Technology/Engineering.

Related Articles have been a familiar feature on publisher websites for many years. Unlike the "More like this" suggestions that are often associated with a search function, TrendMD's Recommended Articles widget uses an AI technique called Collaborative Filtering to offer recommendations that are most likely to interest the readers. Collaborative Filtering is based on the article that they are reading, on what they have read before, and on what other readers with similar interests have read. This technology has been shown to raise users' overall click-through rate (CTR) on the recommendations feature by nearly 3 times the CTR of a standard "similar article" algorithm.

A piece of strong evidence for citation advantage of TrendMD promoted Open Access articles comes from a randomized trial published in 2019: The Citation Advantage of Promoted Articles in a Cross-Publisher Distribution Platform: A 12-Month Randomized Controlled Trial. We conducted a 12-month randomized controlled trial that included 3,200 articles published in 64 peer-reviewed journals across eight subject areas. At 12 months, TrendMD yielded a statistically significant 50% increase in citations relative to control.

The highest TrendMD augmented citation counts were observed for articles within the subject areas of Health and Medical Sciences with 82% higher than control, Physics and Mathematics with 80%, and Life Sciences and Earth Sciences with 59% higher than the control. Similarly, also Mendeley saves, a sensitive indicator of future citation, were measured at 6 months. TrendMD conferred a 55% increase in mean Mendeley saves relative to control at 6 months, with statistically significant increases across seven out of eight subject areas in the study.

TrendMD can be a powerful channel for publishers to efficiently and effectively reach a targeted audience of researchers and professionals and grow their readership. Currently more than 500 publishers who feature TrendMD's recommendations widget on over 5.2K websites in the TrendMD network benefit from additional page views and readership through our traffic exchange system.

Keywords: Boosting readership & citations, related articles functionality, collaborative filtering, recommendations widget

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