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Global Research Trends in Public Libraries: A bibliometric evaluation of “Public Library Quarterly”

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ABSTRACT

Objectives of the study: The paper is about evaluating the bibliometric parameters of the documents published in the prominent journal, “Public Library Quarterly” (PLQ) from 1979 to 2021.

Research Design: The dataset for this retrospective study was retrieved from the Scopus database. The bibliographic information of all kinds of documents was downloaded in the Comma Separated Value (CSV) file, further converted into Microsoft Excel for analysis. The bibliometric indicators of publications and citations by years, authorship pattern, most contributing countries, productive authors, frequently used keywords and salient appearances of highly cited were examined. Microsoft Excel, VOSviewer and Biblioshiny software were applied to visualize the data. The dataset is limited to papers of PLQ that were indexed in the Scopus data.

Key Findings: A total of 1151 documents were found and about 78% were contributed by a single author pattern. The multi-author papers gained a higher citation impact. The analysis of data witnessed that a visible shift from single-author to multi-author was observed and the number of papers was also increased from 2011 to 2021. The majority of papers was fall in the category of articles, followed by editorials. Waters R. L. and United States were found to be the most productive author and the most contributing country, respectively. The “public libraries” and “public library” were the most used keywords. More than one-fifth of the citations were gained by the 15 highly-cited papers.

Conclusion: PLQ has been playing a leadership in the research of public libraries around the world. The public library system in the United States has been the role model for the rest of the world because more than three-fourth of the literature of PLQ was contributed by the United States.

Keywords: Public Libraries, Bibliometric, Research Trends, Public Library Quarterly.

Introduction

A public library is one of the fundamental components of the democratic society, usually supported by the government, accessible to the general public regardless of their gender, caste, social rank and religious faith (Warraich 2013; Rubin, 2010; Haq & Ahmad, 2012). These libraries not only serve as information or knowledge hubs but also as custodian of local as well as national culture. Their role in the provision of lifelong learning, provision of educational and recreational resources is inevitable. The basic and fundamentals of human rights, such as freedom, prosperity, access to

information and sustainable development of the society as well as individuals, will be achieved through well-educated and well-informed citizens in the democratic set-up (Mahmood, 2008). This is possible only through accurate, quick and relevant access to the information.

UNESCO's Public Library Manifesto provides the primary responsibilities of public libraries in the society, such as strengthening the reading habits, providing support informal and non-formal education, enhancing creative development, arousing innovative imagination, custodian of culture, art and scholarship, fostering cultural diversity, promoting oral traditions, provision of community information, information literacy, and support the local enterprises in the provision of information, etc. (UNESCO, 2004). Kabit (1990) argued that the importance of libraries could not be denied, especially the effective system of public libraries is to play an essential part in the socio-economic development of the country as well as to improve the quality of citizen's life. Oyeronke (2012) discussed the concept of information as an economic resource and the role of public libraries in this regard. He highlighted the barriers faced by the Nigerian public libraries to fulfill the information needs of their users, e.g., lack of adequate funding, absence of public awareness, lack of up-to-date reading/learning materials, and deficiency of dedicated professional staff.

The earliest record of the concept of free access to knowledge to the general public was found during the reign of Fatimid Caliph Al-Hakim bi Amr Allah (996-1021). He established and patronized libraries through public money, and these libraries were open to all citizens, they could read as well as copies from the book without any fee. (Assad, 1971). The first public library operated by a community in Europe, named "Malatestiana Library" was commenced in 1447 at Cesena, Italy (Vais, 2012). At the start of the 18th Century, lending services of libraries were started in England (Kelly, 1966, p.94). The initial record of the public library in the Americas showed that Juan de Palafox y Mendoza established Biblioteca Palafoxiana at Puebla City, Mexico in 1646. This library contained 45,000 manuscripts. Nowadays, public libraries are being operated all around the world. According to the statistics of American Library Association (2019), there are 9,057 administrative units of public libraries in the United States, and a total number of buildings consisted of 16,568. In British India, the first notable public library in the modern sense was established at Calcutta in 1835 and Imperial Library Act was passed in 1902 and this library was transformed into Imperial Library in 1906, later it became the National Library of India (Wani, 2008).

The continuous research in the field of public libraries is not only identifies the problems but also provides suitable solutions. This intellectual exercise assists to improve library services and sharing the findings would be beneficial to the rest of the world (Mandel et al., 2010). Journals are the important sources for sharing scholarly communication, and provide up-to-date information, current theories and innovative findings to solve the problems (Warriach & Ahmad, 2016). More than 42,000 journals are indexed in Scopus database, and 235 journals are indexed in the category of Library and Information Sciences and *Public Library Quarterly (PLQ)*, the prestigious journal devoted to the research area of public libraries stands on 104 ranks with the CiteScore of 1.2 in the Scopus database (Scopus, 2021).

PLQ is a pioneer journal in the research area of public libraries, started its publication in 1979. *PLQ* is a peer-reviewed journal with ISSN 0161-6846 (Print), 1541-1540 (Online) and published by renowned publishing house Taylor & Francis, Inc. It's indexed in all the well-known databases. It is mentioned in the aim and mission statement of *PLQ* that, "*PLQ is addressed to leaders-directors, managers, staff, trustees, and friends-who believe that change is imperative if public libraries are to fulfill their service missions in the twenty-first century.*"

In the editorial of the opening issue of *PLQ*, Anne E. Prentice wrote, "*Its intent is not only to inform those concerned with public libraries but also to provide a focus for discussion of the problems and issues which the public library supporter must address. . . The public librarian and the trustees*

of the public library are front line politicians and planners. They do not have the buffer of a university structure, an industrial complex or a school district administrationthe public librarian is conditioned to be client centered to a much greater degree than most other information professionals are. It is the experience of the marketplace that public librarians can contribute to the development of a nationally linked information system” (Prentice, 1979).

Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals have been conducting bibliometric studies frequently; rather it became the sub-specialty of LIS. The assessment of publications helps to understand the research trends, and other bibliometric indicators such as publications growth, citation impact, authorship and collaboration patterns etc. (Naseer & Mahmood, 2009; Haq & Tanveer, 2020; Siddiqui et al, 2021). The findings of bibliometric studies help to gauge the research output, revisit the research policy and support managerial decisions (Haq & Alfouzan, 2017). *PLQ* has successfully completed the journey of four decades, no bibliometric studies on *PLQ* were found. This paper intended to fill this knowledge gap and the aim of this study is to evaluate the papers published in *PLQ* from 1979 to 2021 as seen in the Scopus database.

Literature Review

Every single research document that is produced today, will be beneficial for future researchers and considered as the recorded history of the development of the LIS profession. The analysis of publications assists to identify the research patterns and the science of data analysis is known as bibliometric. The bibliographic control or the systematic documentation of publication data are the important steps before conducting bibliometric studies (Naseer & Mahmood, 2009). In the present times, PubMed is one of the popular and open-accessed database that documented the biomedical literature, likewise, Google Scholar also indexed global literature and its citation records. There are two commercial databases, Scopus and Web of Science, that provide comprehensive and specialized bibliographic information of scientific and scholarly materials (Kokol & Vošner, 2018).

The researchers of public libraries conducted valuable research to highlight the problems faced by libraries and librarians, recommended practicable solutions, carried out users’ and quality surveys. Warriach (2013) analyzed the resources and services of 176 public libraries geographically located in the Punjab province of Pakistan, unfortunately, 39 (22%) were closed and considered as non-functional. Twenty-one (n=21) libraries were established during the British colonial period. A majority of libraries (n=73; 41%) were managed by Tehsil Municipal Administration, followed by District Government (n=36; 20.5%), Welfare organization (n=24; 13.6%) and personal libraries (n=11; 6.2%). More than three-fourth (77%) of libraries were run by non-professional staff, and 56% of the libraries provided circulation services.

Some bibliometric studies assessed the growth of LIS research at the country-level and the subject dispersion quantifies the share of public libraries. Garg and Sharma (2017) assessed the 2,428 LIS papers contributed by India from 2004 to 2015, merely 77 (3.2%) papers were found on public libraries. Khan et al., (1998) reviewed the LIS research in Bangladesh from 1966 to 1997. A total of 308 papers were found and 27 (8.77%) papers were written in public libraries. Siddiqui et al., (2021) examined the 1,305 research papers on LIS produced by Pakistan from 1957 to 2018, only 55 (4.21%) papers were written on the subject area of public libraries.

Two recent but significant bibliometric studies on public libraries were found, based on the dataset retrieved from the Scopus database. In the first study, Heshmati et al., (2020) analysis of literature on public libraries published in 50 years from 1968 to 2017. A total of 2,242 documents were found and 24% (n=534) of the literature on public libraries were published in the first 25 years from 1968 to 1992. A promising growth (n=1,708; 76%) was observed from 1993 to 2017. The highest number

of papers (n=115 in each year) were published in 2015 and 2016, The top two authors, Bertot and Jaeger contributed 28 and 25 papers, respectively, and these both researchers belonged to University of Maryland, United States. The analysis of prolific institutions showed that Loughborough University occupied the first rank with 44 papers followed by Florida State University (n=35), and University of Maryland (n=32). More than half (54%) of the literature on Public Libraries was produced by two countries, the United States (n=41.70%) and United Kingdom (n=12.22). *PLQ* emerged as the most preferred source of publications.

The second study conducted by Vaggi, Parameshwar and Goutami (2020) reviewed the 4,428 papers on public libraries that were published between 1971 and 2019. This study was also applied the Scopus database to retrieve the required dataset. These papers were contributed by 5,764 authors and cited 17,567 times, with an average of 1.30 authors and 3.97 citations per paper. A majority of papers (n=1854; 42%) were published from 2011 to 2019 whereas the highest citation impact, 6.52 citations per paper, was gained by the papers published from 2001 to 2010. The highest number of papers (n=539; 12.17%) were published in *PLQ*, followed by *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* (n=192; 4.34%), and *Library Management* (n=152; 3.43%). The maximum amount of papers was contributed by the authors affiliated with the United States, United Kingdom and Canada.

Bibliometric studies on LIS journals also measure the papers on public libraries as Hussain, Fatima and Kumar (2011) reported that out of 578 articles published in the journal "*Electronic Library*" from 2000 to 2010, only twelve (2.07%) papers were written on public libraries. Haq & Alfouzan (2019) evaluated the 369 papers published in the *Pakistan Library and Information Science Journal* from 2008 to 2017 and seven papers were published on public libraries. Tella and Olabooye (2014) examined the 218 articles published in the *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science* from 2000-2012 and only 12 articles were written on public libraries.

Swain, Swain and Rautary (2013) presented a bibliometric analysis of 275 papers published in "*Library Review*" from 2007 to 2011. These papers gained 515 citations with an average of 1.87 citations per paper. Slightly less than two-thirds (n=175; 64%) of the papers were contributed by a single author. The highest number of papers were written by the authors affiliated with the United Kingdom, followed by United States, Nigeria and Malaysia. Singh and Chander (2014) carried out a bibliometric study on 336 articles published in "*Library Management*" from 2006 to 2012. More than half (57%) of the articles were contributed by a single author pattern. The United States was found the most contributing country, followed by Australia, United Kingdom and China. The author affiliated to the University sector performed 80% of the research and only 4 articles were contributed by the authors affiliated to the public libraries. Haq, Faridi and Tanveer (2021) analyzed the papers published in *Pakistan Journal of Information Management and Libraries* from 2010 to 2019 and 62% of the papers were written by multi-author pattern.

Ahmed, Ming and Rafi (2018) assessed the 4,206 papers on digital libraries that were published from 2002 to 2016. The highest amount of papers (10.15%) was published in "*Electronic Library*" and 39% of the papers were produced by the United States.

Research Design

The retrospective research method was used on the bibliometric indicators of the papers published in *PLQ* from 1979 to 2021. The data for the present study was extracted from the Scopus database of Elsevier. The bibliographic information of all kinds of documents was downloaded in the Comma Separated Value (CSV) file, further converted into Microsoft Excel for analysis. The

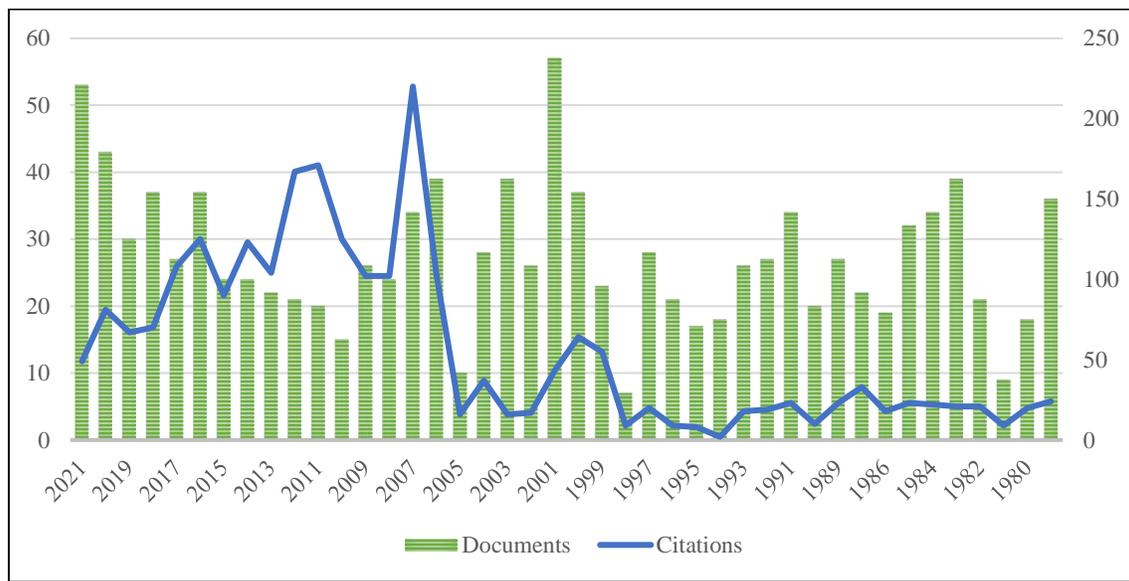
bibliometric indicators of publications and citations by years, authorship pattern, most contributing countries, productive authors, frequently used keywords and salient appearances of highly cited were examined. Microsoft Excel, VOSviewer and Biblioshiny software were used to visualize and analyze the publications. The findings of the dataset are limited to papers indexed in the Scopus data.

Results:

Chronological distribution of papers and citations

A total of 1,151 papers were found in the Scopus database that was published in *PLQ* from 1979 to 2021. Except for one year 1987, *PLQ* has been publishing consecutively and undoubtedly, playing a leadership role in public libraries research at the global level. Thirty-six papers were published in *PLQ* in 1979, the first year of its publication. In the next year, the frequency of published papers was decreased up to 50% (n=18). The fluctuation in the frequency of papers was explicated in figure-1. The minimum number of papers (n=7) were found in 1998 and the highest number of papers (n=57) were published in 2001. The green bars show the number of papers while the blue line shows the amount of citations by year. The citation impact was observed low in the papers published from 1979 to 2005, while the highest peak depicted in 2007, demonstrated the remarkable citation impact, then the level of citation suddenly decreased. The second peak appeared during the years 2011 and 2012.

Figure 1, Distribution of papers and citations by years generated by Excel



Authorship Pattern versus Citation Analysis

Table 1 presented the detail of various authorship patterns used in *PLQ* during the last 43 years. More than three-fourth (n=895; 77.75%) of the total papers were contributed by a single-author pattern, followed by a two-author (n=171; 14.85%) and three-author patterns (n=43; 3.73%). The average of citable papers was higher in the papers written by multi-author pattern as compared to single-author. About 60% of the single-author papers didn’t receive any citation and an overall citation impact was also reported low, 1.55 citations per paper, as compared to other authorship patterns. Only 10 papers were found in a five-author pattern and these papers gained the highest

citation impact, 16.40 citations per paper followed by four-author and two-author patterns with an average of 5.94 and 3.45 citations per paper, respectively.

Table 1, Authorship Pattern versus Citation Analysis

Authorship Pattern	Documents (%)	Citable Documents (%)	Citations	Citation Impact
Without Author's	7 (0.60%)	0	0	0
Single Author	895 (77.75%)	364 (40.67%)	1389	1.55
Two-Author	171 (14.85%)	119 (69.59%)	590	3.45
Three-Author	43 (3.73%)	30 (69.77%)	123	2.86
Four-Author	18 (1.56%)	10 (55.56%)	107	5.94
Five-Author	10 (0.86%)	7 (70%)	164	16.40
Six-Author	5 (0.43%)	3 (60%)	11	2.20
Seven-Author	2 (0.17%)	1 (50%)	3	1.50

Comparison of papers, citations and authorship by intervals

Table 2 describes the distribution of papers by intervals. The publication period of *PLQ* has been divided into four intervals to assess the total number of papers, citations and authorship pattern. A total of 277 (24.06%) documents were published in the first interval from 1979 to 1990 and these papers gained 224 (9.38%) citations with an average of 0.81 citation per document. The number of papers was a little bit decreased (n=238; 20.67%) in the second interval from 1991 to 2000 and the average number of citations per document was also less than one. A slight increase (n=298; 25.89%) of documents was reported in the third interval from 2001 to 2010 and the citation impact was also observed better than the first two intervals. A remarkable growth (n=338; 29.36%) of papers were recorded in the last interval from 2011 to 2021 and these papers also gained the highest citation impact. The ratio of a single author’s papers was higher in the first three intervals while the ratio of multi-author was increased significantly in the last interval. The proportion of citation impact was also found higher in multi-author papers as compared to single-author papers.

Table 2, Total papers (TP), total citations (TC), & average citation per paper (ACPP) by intervals

Intervals	TP	TC	ACPP	Single Author documents	TC	ACPP	Multi-author documents	TC	ACPP
1979-1990	277	224	0.81	237 (86%)	168	0.71	38 (14%)	56	1.47
1991-2000	238	227	0.95	213 (89%)	146	0.69	25 (11%)	81	3.24
2001-2010	298	781	2.62	249 (84%)	526	2.11	48 (16%)	255	5.31
2011-2021	338	1155	3.42	196 (58%)	549	2.80	138 (42%)	606	4.39
Total/Average	1151	2387	2.07	895	1389	1.55	249	998	4.01

Document’s type and accessibility models

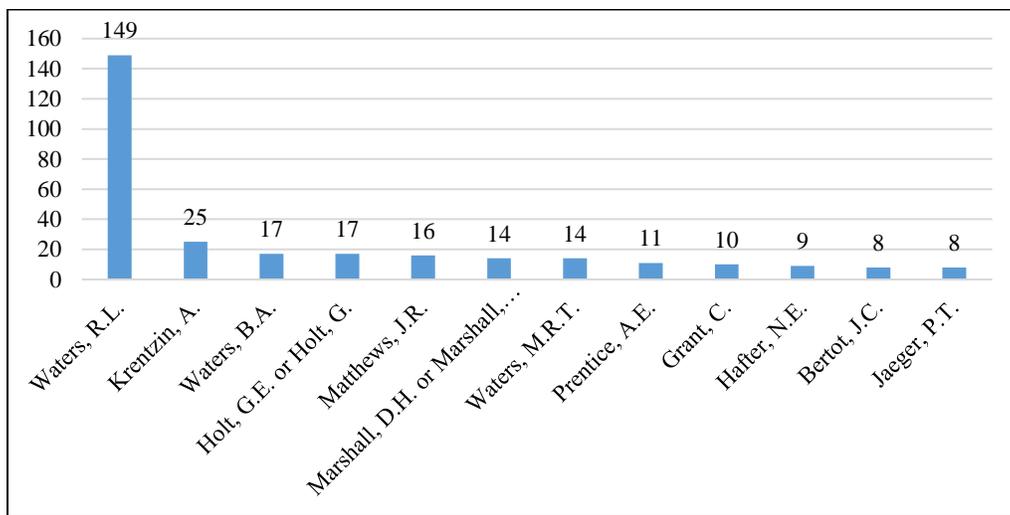
The analysis of the document’s type shows that the majority of papers were published as an article (n=1049; 91%), followed by editorial (n=78; 6.77%). A little amount of documents consisted of notes, reviews, letters, and erratum. Out of 1049 articles, 30 articles were published as articles in the press or ahead to print, eight of them were open accessed. A total of 55 (4.77%) papers were identified as open-accessed and these papers gained 219 citations with an average of 3.98 citations

per paper while 1,096 (95.23%) papers were subscription-based and these papers gained 2,168 citations with an average of 1.97 citations per paper.

Productive authors

A total of 1532 authors including multiple counts contributed to 1151 papers with an average of 1.33 authors per paper. As a separate name a total of 1016 authors were identified, 864 (85%) of the authors contributed in single papers each, while 97 and 55 authors contributed in two and three papers each, respectively. Figure 2 exposed the top 12 authors that contributed a minimum of eight papers. Waters, R.L. was found to be the most productive author with 149 papers followed by Krentzin, A. and Waters, B. A. with 25 and 17 papers, respectively. Only nine authors contributed in ten or more than ten papers each.

Figure 2, Most productive authors generated by Excel



Influential countries

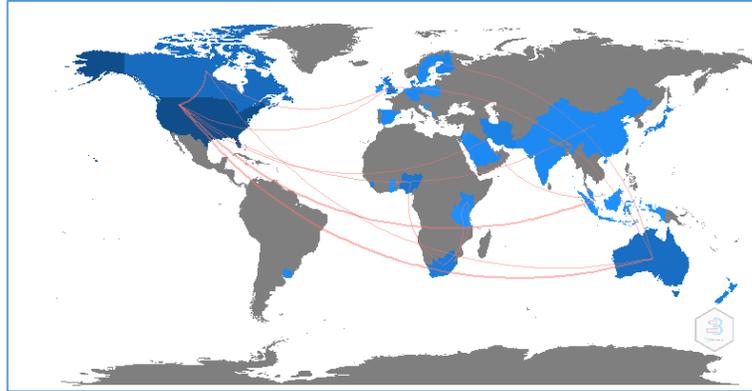
A list of the top 15 most contributing countries with a number of papers, citations and an average number of citations per paper has been given the Table 3. More than three-fourth (n=892; 77.49%) of the total papers were contributed by the authors affiliated with the United States, followed by Canada, Australia, United Kingdom and Nigeria with 39, 29, 14 and 13 papers, respectively. Although, Kuwait contributed four papers but these papers gained the highest citation impact, followed by Australia and Japan. The lowest citation impact was observed in Nigeria. VOSviewer software generated the co-occurrence network of countries contributed in *PLQ* as shown in Figure 3, generated by the Biblioshiny software.

Table 3, Influential countries

Serial No.	Country	Total Papers	Total Citations	Citation Impact
1.	United States	892	1977	2.22
2.	Canada	39	141	3.62
3.	Australia	29	152	5.24
4.	United Kingdom	14	25	1.79
5.	Nigeria	13	14	1.08
6.	Israel	8	19	2.38

7.	South Africa	7	13	1.86
8.	New Zealand	6	20	3.33
9.	Japan	5	19	3.80
10.	Sierra Leone	5	7	1.40
11.	Denmark	4	6	1.50
12.	Iran	4	7	1.75
13.	Kuwait	4	22	5.50
14.	Singapore	4	10	2.50
15.	Finland	3	5	1.67

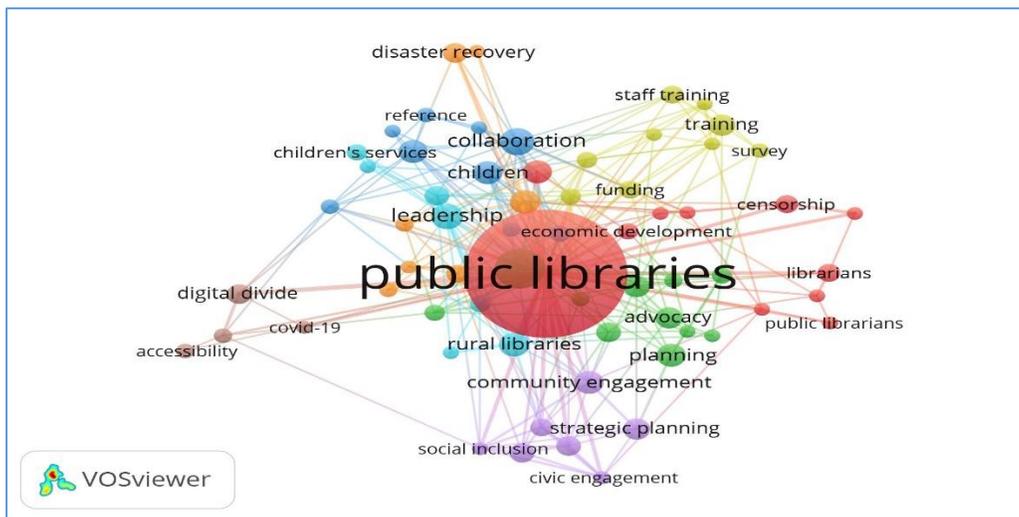
Figure 3, Co-occurrence network of countries generated by Biblioshiny



Frequently used keywords

A total of 2,300 keywords were used in 1,151 papers. The keyword of “public libraries” has been used 121 times, followed by “public library”, “collaboration”, “leadership”, and “libraries” with 24, 14, 13, and 12 times, respectively. Only 15 keywords were used ten or more than ten times each. VOSviewer software generated the co-occurrence network of 63 keywords that was used a minimum of 5 times, shown in Figure-4. The option of wordcloud applied in the Biblioshiny software to generated the most frequent author-used keywords shown in Figure-5.

Figure 4, Co-occurrence network of keywords generated by VOSviewer



6.	Brady, T., Salas, C., Nuriddin, A., Rodgers, W., & Subramaniam, M. (2014). MakeAbility: Creating accessible makerspace events in a public library. <i>Public Library Quarterly</i> , 33(4), 330-347.	37
7.	Bishop, B. W., & Veil, S. R. (2013). Public libraries as post-crisis information hubs. <i>Public Library Quarterly</i> , 32(1), 33-45.	30
8.	Gehner, J. (2010). Libraries, low-income people, and social exclusion. <i>Public Library Quarterly</i> , 29(1), 39-47.	28
9.	Willingham, T. L. (2008). Libraries as civic agents. <i>Public Library Quarterly</i> , 27(2), 97-110.	28
10.	Buschman, J. (2005). Libraries and the decline of public purposes. <i>Public Library Quarterly</i> , 24(1), 1-12.	24
11.	Taylor, N. G., Jaeger, P. T., McDermott, A. J., Kodama, C. M., & Bertot, J. C. (2012). Public libraries in the new economy: Twenty-first-century skills, the Internet, and community needs. <i>Public Library Quarterly</i> , 31(3), 191-219.	22
12.	Wang, T., & Lund, B. (2020). Announcement information provided by United States’ public libraries during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. <i>Public Library Quarterly</i> , 39(4), 283-294.	21
13.	Bennett-Kapusniak, R. (2013). Older adults and the public library: The impact of the boomer generation. <i>Public Library Quarterly</i> , 32(3), 204-222.	21
14.	Hall, R. (2010). Public praxis: A vision for critical information literacy in public libraries. <i>Public Library Quarterly</i> , 29(2), 162-175.	20
15.	Barnes, G. (2009). Guess who's coming to work: Generation Y. Are you ready for them?. <i>Public Library Quarterly</i> , 28(1), 58-63.	20

Three plots co-relation network

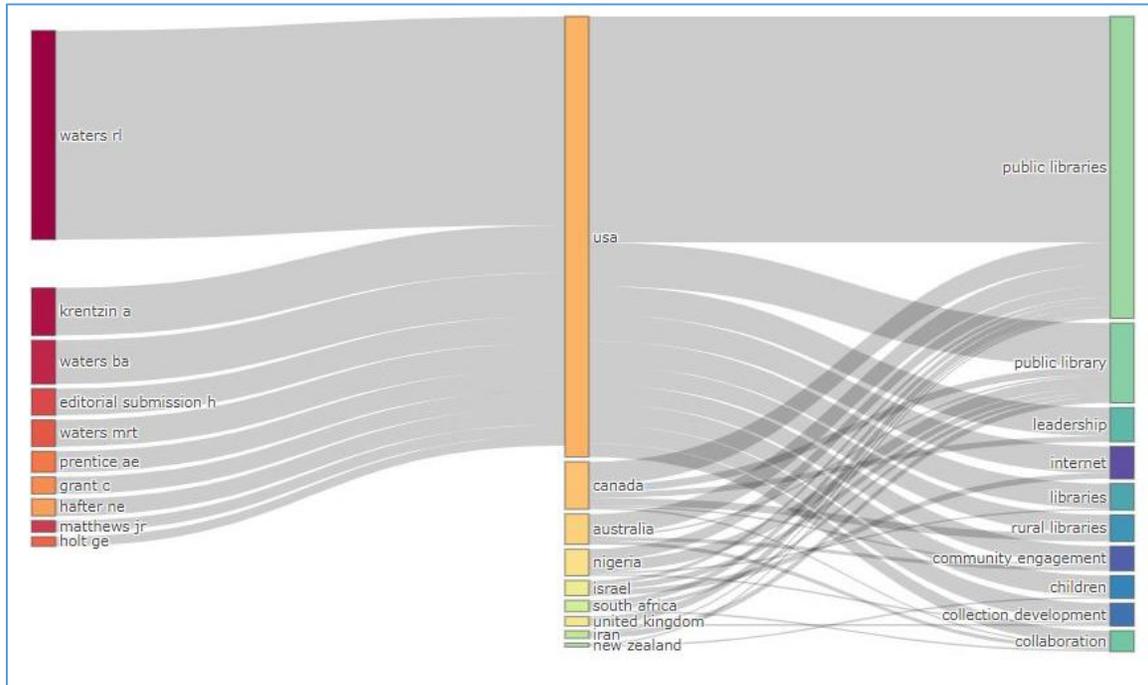
The three factors co-relation network generated by Biblioshiny that indicated the top authors as the first column, countries in the middle and keywords placed in the last column. The co-occurrence of these items limited to ten entries each. In authors plot, Waters, R. L dominated while in the countries plot, the United States outshined the rest of the world. All the productive authors affiliated with the organizations of the United States and these authors contributed in all top ten sub-areas public libraries significantly. The first part “public libraries” of the last plot identified that about 70% of the literature was contributed by the United States while about 30% was produced by the rest of the world, likewise, the share of the United States was found substantial in other nine parts (keywords). The authors affiliated with Canada, Australia and Nigeria also contributed miniature literature against top keywords.

Discussion

The present study used the retrospective method to quantify the research trends in public library literature, which was based on the papers published in *PLQ* from 1979 to 2021. The application of the bibliometric technique is noticeably encouraged by the requirement to examine the scholarly communication and produce statistical findings for researchers and other stake-holders. The growth of publications reflects the importance of the subject area (Ahmad, Ming & Rafi, 2018). Journals are the popular formats for sharing the original findings of experiments, innovative ideas, and research outcomes to the rest of the world (Haq & Alfouzan, 2019; Tanveer et al., 2020). The quality and quantity of research help to determine the standing of any genre of knowledge as well as a profession (Blagus, Leskošek, & Stare 2015). The bibliometric method supports to evaluation

of the publication output and various features of research. The bibliometric studies on single LIS journals support understanding the research trends and publication patterns (Haq & Alfouzan, 2019; Jena et al., 2012). Journals are vital sources of scholarly communication in an academic arena (Ali & Naveed, 2020).

Figure 5, Three plot co-relation network generated by Biblioshiny



LIS is a service-oriented profession and the role of public libraries in the community is inevitable. The resources and services of public libraries are improving through continuous research in the developed world (Donnelly, 2014). Value-added services, and state of the art resources in the public libraries, enrich the surrounding communities in terms of knowledge, information, pleasure, lifelong learning and maintaining the cultural identity in the global village (Varheim 2007; Soroya, Munir & Soroya 2014). Bhui and Sahoo (2018) examined the trends in public libraries research in India. The findings showed that low research was conducted on public libraries and only 71 theses were found in the period of fifty years (1977 to 2016). Karnatak University produced the highest number (n=6) and 7 theses were written in 2013. Warrach, Haq and Ameen (2016) analyzed the status of eleven public libraries located in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. These libraries kept 208,310 books other than magazines and newspapers collection. Only three libraries had professional staff and their collection of books were more than 30,000 each.

PLQ is the leading journal in the research field of public libraries. The current study comprised the papers published in *PLQ* from 1979 to 2021. A total of 1,151 papers were identified in the Scopus database with an average of 26.76 papers per year. More than three-four (78%) of the papers were contributed by a single author pattern while the collaborative research gained the higher citation impact. A total of 2,387 citations were received by 1,151 papers with an average of 2.07 citations per paper. Forty-six percent of the total papers were counted as citable documents, while the majority of the papers (56%) were cited. The scrutiny of authorship pattern over time revealed that a visible shift was observed from a single-author to multi-author, and it was confirmed that multi-author papers gained more attention in terms of citations. The quantity of papers was increased

from 2011 to 2021 and the citation impact of these papers was also enhanced as compared to earlier papers and citation impact. Although, a small quantity of papers was published as open-accessed their citation impact was higher than the subscription-based papers. The authors affiliated to the organizations of the United States outclassed the rest of the world in research productivity in *PLQ*, they contributed 77.49% of the total literature. Canada, Australia, United Kingdom and Nigeria also contributed significant literature. The analysis of top-cited 15 papers showed that 23% of the citations were gained by these papers.

The two significant bibliometric studies on public libraries identified that *PLQ* has been found the most preferred source of publications (Heshmati et al., 2020; Vaggi, Parameshwar & Goutami, 2020). The bibliometric studies of other LIS journals showed that a small amount of papers on public libraries were contributed (Hussain, Fatima & Kumar 2011; Haq & Alfouzan, 2019; Tella & Olabooye, 2014). Some studies highlighted the issues faced by public libraries of developing countries (Warraich, 2013)

The research on public libraries supports improving the services, infrastructure and professional development of the staff. The library schools and library associations should come forward and provide their able assistance to the LIS professionals working in public libraries as well as involve them in a productive research process. The improvement of public libraries develops healthy reading habits and this thing would directly influence the quality of life among the communities.

Developed countries have a sufficient number of libraries and competent staff members are offering state of the art services to their respective communities. But the situation of public libraries is very dismal in the third world and developing countries. The government of these countries should allocate adequate funds, provide proper services structure for the staff, and offer learning opportunities to the staff of public libraries to develop their innovative research skill. The proper legislation and its implementation in the true sense could bring positive changes in grooming the public library services and the impact of these efforts must be recorded in the scholarly communication. The world should learn lessons and follow the footsteps of the stakeholder, librarians and trustees serving in the public libraries of the United States. Developed countries should come forward to build a strong network of public libraries in developing countries.

Conclusion

The present study analyzed the global research trends on public libraries, which is based on the noteworthy international peer-reviewed journal, i.e., *Public Library Quarterly* for the span of 1979 to 2021. This journal is playing a leading role in public libraries' research and its contents covering the abundant aspects of public libraries. The authors affiliated with the United States contributed the maximum number of papers. The policy-makers of developing countries could develop the system of public libraries in their countries by reading the rich experiences of the researchers, who contributed significant literature in the *PLQ* over more than four decades.

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