

Thomson Scientific finds new opportunities in Open Access

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The trend toward open access (OA) to scholarly resources grows stronger by the day. As it does, Thomson Scientific is helping customers take advantage of the opportunities it affords to expand scholarly communications. We are carefully reviewing our journal coverage, building new full-text links, and undertaking product development efforts designed around the new information needs created by this trend.

Covering a growing number of Open Access journals

Our approach began with a re-assessment of journal coverage policies in the ISI® citation databases. We determined that the researchers who use these databases in such products as *Web of Science*® continue to value the principles of selectivity that we have always applied. These principles focus on quality of content, not business model, so they apply just as well to OA as traditional modes of access.

Early this year, our journal-level metrics - such as the journal impact factor and immediacy index - assumed importance in public discussions of OA. So, to help ground this discussion in factual evidence, we began publishing the results of our internal studies for use by the scholarly community. The first, published in April 2004, found 192 journals in our databases that conformed to the most rigorous definition of OA—that the most recent content is freely available online.

We are pleased to announce that the second study, based on data from the 2003 *Journal Citation Reports*®, is now available as a PDF (<http://www.isinet.com/media/presentrep/essayspdf/openaccesscitations2.pdf>). The new study shows that the number of OA journals in our databases has grown to 239 by June 2004.

Global Open Access coverage

Over half of the OA journals Thomson Scientific covers are published outside Western Europe and North America (See Figure 1).

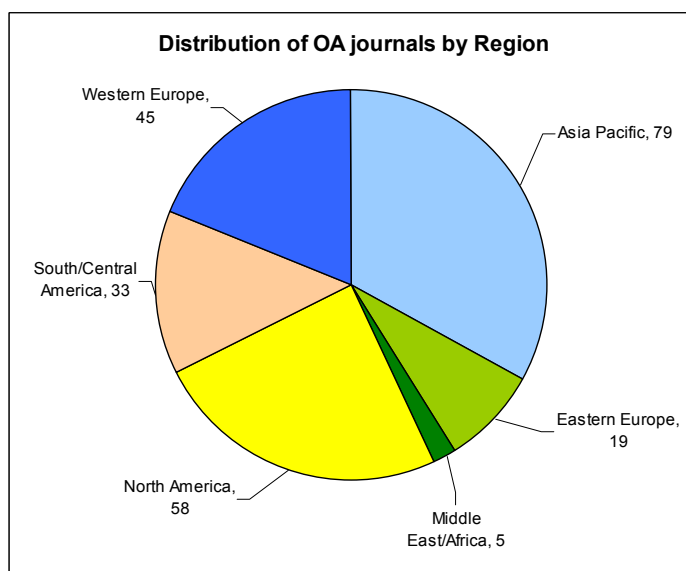


Figure 1: Distribution of OA journals in the ISI databases

For many journals, providing free content online expands their access to an international readership. Coverage of OA journals in the ISI databases varies per region (see Table 1). While the total number of OA journals is small in comparison to the nearly 9,000 total journals, it is significant in terms of the number of OA journals, and a testament to the progress of this movement. We estimate that about 1,200 OA journals are available around the world. Over 20% of these have met our rigorous criteria for inclusion and are indexed in our databases today.

Region	Percentage of total journals that are open access
Asia Pacific	15%
Central/South America	40% +
North America	1.5%
Western Europe	1.1%

Table 1: Percentage of total journals covered by ISI databases that are open access

Enhancing access to vital information

Reporting on these trends is not our main goal—enhancing our information services is the real focus. One of the greatest opportunities afforded by OA is the ability to increase the number of full-text links available to all of our customers. We have launched a major initiative to assure that OA journals are linked to *ISI Web of Knowledge*SM resources, using all of the tools in our hybrid linking toolkit to create the most dependable and accurate links. We leverage such identifiers as the DOI where available, but do not rely solely on it, because a significant number of these journals do not deposit DOIs. To date, we link to 70 OA journals, and over the coming months we will continue to add new ones until we have linked to all open access journals. In addition, we are focusing on freely available journal archives, including the HighWire archive, which we will link by the end of 2004.

Our work on open access is not limited to journals. Increasingly, researchers post pre-prints, working papers, and even final versions of scholarly articles to the Web, either to personal home pages or in institutional repositories. Last spring, Thomson Scientific announced a collaboration with NEC to conduct a pilot study of the integration of NEC's CiteSeer® technology with *ISI Web of Knowledge*. The pilot, which currently involves seven major institutions, is proceeding well, and we will have substantial progress to report in future issues of this newsletter.