

Don't be misled by citation figures! (20)

The Far East – Get to Know the Unknown

Chen Yang was actually very pleased. Compared to other research nations, Chinese science had substantially caught up in recent years. This wasn't exactly a surprise since, after all, a lot had been invested – especially in biomedicine: new cutting-edge research centres were established, ambitious projects were successfully accomplished and, particularly in genomics, China had meanwhile occupied a top position.

In Western countries, this was already being recognised: much new collaboration was established, and, increasingly, Chinese scientists were invited to speak at international conferences or sit on the editorial boards of US and European research journals. Thus, it seemed only logical that, at the same time, more and more “Chinese” papers were being published in “Western” journals.



Things were running very smoothly. However, there was one particular exception, an especially bitter issue which left Chen Yang with a nasty taste in his mouth: the citation rates of Chinese researchers and the impact factors of Chinese journals. One would think that at least the Chinese articles in international journals ought to be cited properly. But no! When “in doubt”, the Europeans and Americans always found one of “their own” to include in their reference lists. Chen Yang had already published a correspondence letter in *Nature* about this issue, including concrete examples, but he knew that it was unlikely to change anything. After all, he couldn't dictate to anyone whom they should quote.

However, Yang was even more annoyed by the way the Chinese journals were treated. In the meantime, there were many publications around and many Chinese researchers published absolute top results. This, of course, was fully intended because the rise of Chinese research should also be reflected in the quality of their journals. As a medium-term goal, some Chinese journals should even establish themselves among the top international journals.

Sure, the language was a problem. The logical attempt to circumvent this had been to present an additional “English edition” of the most important journals. However, what then happened as a direct result, caused Chen Yang to hit the roof: not only the fact that many Chinese journals weren't even included in the US-European publication and citation databases – no, but in the case of the “select” few, the Chinese and the English versions of one and the same journal were almost always treated as two separate magazines! The consequence was clear: the “real” impact factors of these journals were falsely split into two considerably lower figures.

A particularly blatant example was the *Chinese Journal of Geophysics*. For historical reasons, the Chinese version still appeared under the name *Diqiu Wuli Xuebao*. Furthermore, before adopting the current name, the English version had been published as *Acta Geophysica Sinica* for a considerable length of time. The “database people” didn't recognise any of these facts – the result being that last year they attributed only 13 citations to the *Chinese Journal of Geophysics*. Chen Yang decided to check this and his team finally tracked a total of more than 2,000 citations – most of them, of course, from other Chinese journals.

The vast majority of other Chinese journals had faced a similar fate, as Yang and his team revealed. With this devastating knowledge, China's next prestigious publication project was already in the pipeline: *The Chinese Journal of Biomedicine*. Of course, as a Chinese and an English edition. But Yang already had his letters to the database managers, as well as to *Nature* and *Science*, in the top drawer...

RALF NEUMANN

Lab Times

Founded 2006. Issue 1, 2010

Lab Times is published bimonthly

ISSN: 1864-2381

Publisher: LJ-Verlag Herfort und Sailer
Kai Herfort, Ralf Neumann, Hubert Rehm

Office: Alte Straße 1, 79249 Merzhausen, Germany
Tel.: +49 (0)761-286869; Fax: +49 (0)761-35738

Management: Kai Herfort, Tel: +49 (0)761-286869

Editors:

Ralf Neumann (Editor-in-chief), Kai Herfort, Kathleen Gransalke (internship), Karin Hollricher (online), Winfried Koepfelle, Hubert Rehm, Harald Zähringer
Tel.: +49 (0)761-2925884, editors@lab-times.org

Reporters:

Susanne Dorn, Rafael Florés, Jeremy Garwood, Andrea Herb, Madhuvanathi Kannan, Rosemarie Marchan, Ralf Schreck

Graphics, Design and Production:

Ulrich Sillmann (Art Director), Kai Herfort, Winfried Koepfelle, Ralf Neumann, Harald Zähringer

Cover Photo: iStockphoto

Sales:

Advertising Manager: Bernd Beutel
Top-Ad Bernd Beutel, Hammelbacherstraße 30,
69469 Weinheim, Germany
Tel: +49 (0)6201-29092-0
Fax: +49 (0)6201-29092-20
info@top-ad-online.de

Recruitment:

Ulrich Sillmann,
Tel: +49 (0)761-2925881, jobs@lab-times.org

Printed at:

Stürtz GmbH,
Alfred-Nobel-Straße 33, 97080 Würzburg, Germany

Web:

www.lab-times.org
Webmaster: Carsten Rees
Tel.: +49 (0)761-1563461, webmaster@lab-times.org

Prices & Subscription rates:

- price per issue: €3,50
- research institutes/units: free of charge
- annual subscriptions for companies and personal subscribers: €20

Subscribe at <http://www.labtimes.org/kontakt/sub.html>, or mail to: subscriptions@lab-times.org

Bank Accounts:

- Volksbank Freiburg
KTO: 319 0 315,
BLZ :680 900 00,
BIC: GENODE61FR1
IBAN: DE24 6809 0000 0003 1903 15

- Basler Kantonalbank
KTO: 16 428.471.36
BIC: BKBBCHBB
IBAN: CH06 0077 0016 0428 4713 6