Web metrics for library and information professionals

David Stuart, at present, a Bibliometrics Officer at the University of St. Andrews and an experienced cybermetrician, has published the second edition of his book on measuring the web for library and information professionals, revising and adapting his earlier text (Stuart, 2014) to reflect changes in information and communication technologies, the data available today, and the tools that help capture and exploit these new possibilities. A second edition is always a sign of a book's success and the demand for it from the reading public, which is certainly true in this case.

The structure of the book is only marginally different from the previous edition; however, the content of the chapters has been significantly updated, and their internal structure has been revised accordingly. In the preface, the author explains the reason for revising the previous text and releasing the new edition: the rising interest in metrics and their widening use, the increased significance of altmetrics, and the library and information science community's growing interest in programming, which increases the availability of new metrics and possibilities.

In my opinion, one of the advantages of this book is the connection between the classical library and information science approach and the growing innovative application of datasets and tools for their analytical processing, synthesis, visualization, and more creative, diversified uses. The classical approach ensures professional responsibility in setting socially important goals for web and other metrics, preventing the tendency to measure and innovate merely for the sake of it. This is also reflected in the use of the most recent research and studies, building a useful bridge between research findings and practical applications for professional purposes.

Another advantage is the introduction of terminology that reflects differences in the phenomena explored (ch. 2) and their representation in various data derived from multiple sources. By applying technological tools and research perspectives, the book explains and integrates these diverse elements into a coherent whole (ch. 3).

The book consists of nine chapters, with considerable attention given to evaluating the impact of the web (ch. 4) and social media (ch. 5), as well as more traditional bibliometric evaluation (ch. 7) using data and sources that have migrated to or been created on the web. This part was the most interesting to me because I have used bibliometrics in some of my projects and because this type of metric directly affects the work of researchers and authors. I belong to both categories, and my personal interest has likely influenced my focus.

Another area of application, namely, social network analysis and the more general relationships between online actors, is presented and explained in Chapter 6. It was one of the most interesting chapters; unfortunately, it seemed too short. I made a note to look for further readings on these issues and to consult several of our doctoral students who are already applying clustering algorithms and R programming.

A brief introduction to code metrics also seemed insufficient. The entire Chapter 8, on measuring the impact of data and code on the web using available statistics or creating one's own tools, was presented as a problem area still awaiting resolution, mainly in terms of data comparability and the reliability of analytic results.

The author also explores the possibilities of artificial intelligence tools in the area of web metrics, which is currently a major focus of public interest. As far as I recall, some of these tools were in use before the widespread accessibility and ease of use of generic AI caused such significant disruptions. Nevertheless, this is one of the developmental avenues with great potential that the author highlights in the chapter on the future of metrics (ch. 9). This chapter also reflects the author's concern about the ubiquity of various metrics permeating different areas of our lives.

This development demands special caution and responsibility, not only from library and information science professionals but also from managers who believe that measurements reflect reality. Although this is not always the case, web metrics can be very useful in the hands of knowledgeable professionals. Therefore, the closing paragraphs, which outline the initial steps to build this knowledge in library and information science, are not only useful but also highly symbolic.

Librarians and information professionals should respond to this symbolic invitation by acquiring and using this book as a first step in the right direction, both in their work and in educating the next generation pursuing this vocation.

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Reference

Stuart, D. (2014). *Web metrics for library and information professionals*. London: Facet, 2014.