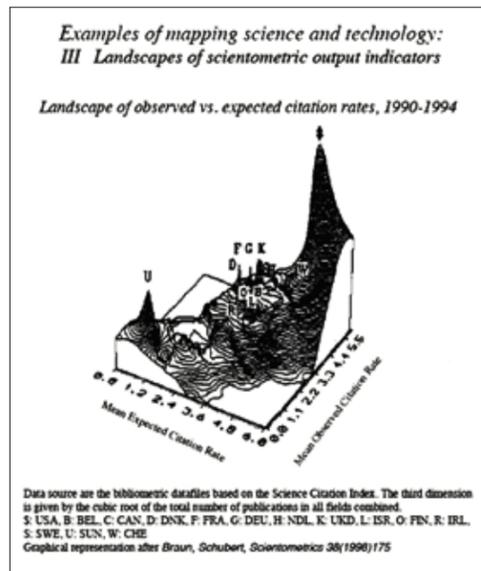


Tibor Braun —gatekeeper of scientometrics— an appraisal from a distance



Reproduction of a figure from Braun T., Schubert A.: Dimensions of scientometric indicator datafiles. World Science in 1990–1994. *Scientometrics* 38 (1) (1997) 175–204, as reproduced in: Scharnhorst, A.: Evolution in Adaptive Landscapes—Examples of Science and Technology Development. *Discussion Paper FS II 00–302*, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung 2000. 17 pages + figures. Later published in: *Collaboration in Science*. Ed. by F Havemann, H. Kretschmer. Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftsforschung, Berlin 2000, pp. 118–142

The journal *Scientometrics* is an institution and indispensable for the field of quantitative studies of science, and its name is closely knitted with its founder Tibor Braun. Actually, I have to admit that I don't recall meeting Tibor in person. At any such possible encounter, which we could have had many years ago, I probably would not even have dared approach him. But even so, he figures as one of the most prominent and influential scientists through my past and current scientific journey.

I hope and wish, Tibor, that you will continue in this role long into the future, and I would like to take the opportunity of this *Festschrift* to describe your “invisible”

yet important influence in more detail.

The journal *Scientometrics* belonged to my most favored sources for literature search, when I first started to read bibliometrics papers in the context of my PhD. Quantitative studies of science was a new field for me as a physicist. I remember going to the Academy library in Berlin, located in a side building of the *Staatsbibliothek* at the Boulevard *Unter den Linden*. There, I was reading and excerpting through volumes of the *Journal of Documentation*, the *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*—and, of course, *Scientometrics*. Later, when I started to collaborate with

Manfred Bonitz, I was almost jealous to see all the volumes of this journal, for which Manfred acted many years as editorial advisor, in his living and working room. Imagine, here they were, at his personal disposal at all times! No wonder then, that when I became employed as a young scientist at the Institute for Theory, History and Organization of the Sciences, a research institute of the Academy of the Sciences of the GDR, I was deeply impressed to find myself in a research group with Hildrun Kretschmer. The fact that she already had several publications in *Scientometrics* made her in my eyes a star and ultimate expert in the field of scientometrics. To get

a publication accepted in the journal was like a *Ritterschlag* (knighthood). For my first *Scientometrics* publication in 1990¹ Jan Vlachy, who for many years was also a member of the editorial board, acted as a kind of midwife. More diagrams, more graphs was his advice, “nobody from an outside physics audience will understand which scenarios can be explored with the mathematical model if you only present the equations, Andrea!” These were more or less his words and I learned my first lesson about the need to explain, visualize, and “translate”—clearly, patiently and modestly—whenever traveling between different fields. Eventually, the paper got accepted. However, some time after that, Eugene Garfield, with his sharp mind and mountain-high experience of editing, asked me over dinner if it should not have been titled “Evolutionary models ...”—that almost made me blush—O, the curse of the non-native speaker. But this anecdote also sheds light on the fact that *Scientometrics* never was just a “technical” journal. It is, as much as other journals in the field, a journal at the interface between many fields: mathematics, physics, social sciences and even humanities (philosophy and history). As such, text is not only an addendum, it becomes the core of scholarship.

Also the journal always was and is a field of experimentation. While remaining representative for the changing waves in the mainstream, there was place and space for new innovative, as well as possibly sometimes odd, side streams—if only their presentations would show scholarship on a high professional level. Following the

idea of the “invisible college of journal gatekeepers”², who else deserves the tribute for that if not its founder and editor-in-chief Tibor Braun!

But Tibor Braun has done more for scientometrics than “just” successfully editing one of its major journals—as if that would not have been enough. Tibor Braun—this is also the *Budapest Group* as we used to call the triumvirate of András, Wolfgang and Tibor. The Information Science and Scientometrics Research Unit at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest was (is) an *institution* as a research group as much as “their” journal. On this point is there something to be said about academies. Having worked at academies myself across time and countries, I can honestly say that at different places in the world, academies—and here I mean an academy as a host of research institutes and not the society of scholars—are seen and esteemed differently. Some nations are proud of their academies and see them as the crown of their research; others close them by a simple administrative act; and yet again others seem not to know exactly what to do with them ... In the midst of ongoing debates on what to do with an institution as old as an Academy—a debate which sometimes coincides with the debate on what to do with a Library, an equally old institution—academies sometimes offer a niche for unusual enterprises. The *Budapest Group* produces front-research in many areas in scientometrics and informetrics. They published early on sophisticated mathematical models about dynamic processes in science (flows of citation, publication dynamics)³. Their Relative Citation Charts (see Figure) belong to the first “landscape maps” of science. They thought about empirics around Merton's Matthew effect. There is no fundamental question in scientometrics that this group has not reflected on. I continue to find their work highly inspirational for my own research. And even from a distance I can honestly say that this would not have been possible without a *spiritus rector* such as Tibor Braun.

Through the journal *Scientometrics*, this group also took unusual steps to make raw data (though pre-processed) available for a larger audience. One could almost say that by publishing *The Bible*, as Manfred calls this special volume of *Scientometrics*⁴, they were pioneers of the spirit of open access and

re-usability of data prior to the emergence of the web. In an era where access to digital data from big bibliographic databases were probably even more restricted than they are nowadays, this brave step allowed others who were without such privileged access to test ideas, to apply indicators and certainly triggered a lot of studies.

Tibor Braun's activities are not restricted to the field of scientometrics, but it is for others to shed light on this. But just by looking from the scientometrics angle, his journey shows the importance and the impact of continuity and endless effort. The variety and maturity of topics he has worked on are impressive and remain an important source of reference for any new generation of scientometricians. What comes to mind is a quotation from Goethe's *Faust* “*Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, Den können wir erlösen.*” (Goethe, *Faust*, Second part) (engl translation: Who strives always to the utmost, For him there is salvation)

What else is there for me to say other than a deeply felt thank you. Thank you for the intellectual inspirations, for providing such an excellent platform of communication, for shaping a lively community, for making it possible for me to be part of it in so many different ways. Maybe one selfish wish – I would really like to meet Tibor in person and then I would like to ask him how he manages work and family, how he is able to keep collaborations going over such a long time, and what is his vision of science in the future, and writing this, many more questions come to my mind—as well as one for which I already know the answer: Tibor, you must really deeply enjoy your work, otherwise you would never have been able to have kept it on such an intense level for such a long time! And so my wish for you is that this joy lasts forever.

¹ E. Bruckner, W. Ebeling, A. Scharnhorst: The Application of Evolution Models in Scientometrics. *Scientometrics* 18 (1–2) (1990) 21–41.

² Braun T., Dióspatonyi I.: Counting the Gatekeepers of International Science Journals a Worthwhile Science Indicator. *Current Science* 89 (2005) 9, pp. 1548–1551. See also Braun T.: Keeping the Gates of Science Journals. In: *Handbook of Quantitative Science and Technology Research*. Ed. by H. Moed, W. Glänzel, and U. Schmoch. Springer, Berlin et al., 2004, pp. 95–114.

³ Schubert A., Glänzel W.: A Dynamic Look at a Class of Skew Distributions. A Model with Scientometric Applications. *Scientometrics* 6 (3) (1984) 149–167.

⁴ Schubert A., Glänzel W., Braun T.: Bibliometric datafiles. A comprehensive set of indicators on 2649 journals and 96 countries in all major science fields and subfields, 1981–1985. *Scientometrics* 16 (1989) 3–478.