English or Vietnamese

Ho Manh Toan

Phenikaa University

Hanoi, Vietnam

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I extracted articles in development economics from the SSHPA database [1] and then used it as the main weapon for my master's thesis [2]. The final result was a 71-page long manuscript, perhaps the size of a small book, that provides an overview of this critically important research field in Vietnam. I hope you will find that book interesting (double wink)!

I have worked on the SSHPA database since December 2017 [3]. We used Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) as our standard for collecting data. It fits the mood of the community at the time. However, there is an inherent weakness. We had little knowledge about good preprints or scientific papers in Vietnamese. Preprints are un-peer-reviewed results uploaded by authors (and others) to some repositories for fast communication of new findings and for comments from research peers. Thus, it is understandable that they have been left out. However, Scopus has recognized this weakness, and they have now included preprints from well-regarded repositories (such as arXiv) to the author's profile.

Meanwhile, the situation with non-English papers is harder to comprehend. A recent study found that up to 5,725,894 documents on Scopus and WoS are in

English [4]. For comparison, the second place belongs to the Chinese, with only 94,052 documents [4]. Articles in Vietnamese will not appear on the SSHPA database anytime soon.

It is a tragic situation. Influential works [5,6] can be in any shape or form. Even though there is no viable way to include everything, the lack of a systematic process to keep track of important works is quite concerning. When the goals are accuracy, quality, and sophistication, there must be standards to adhere to. Thus, even though a preprint is extremely useful to students or a book is a landmark of history [7,8], they are still left out.

The situation leaves us a clear distinction between databases like Scopus/WoS and others like Google Scholar. The former is for academic research, while the latter is for users. In the future, a system of notifying documents that have more than 100 citations (or any suitable threshold to each field) can be beneficial, especially when the number of scientific articles is constantly rising.

References

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