

# TITLES OF ARTICLES OR BOOKS VERSUS REFERENCES. A SURVEY AMONG STUDENTS

Gheorghe Săvoiu<sup>1</sup>, Tudorița Răbigan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Pitesti, Faculty of Economic Sciences and Law, 1<sup>st</sup> Targul din Vale, Pitești, Argeș, Romania,

<sup>2</sup>Library of University of Pitesti, 1<sup>st</sup> Targul din Vale, Pitești, Argeș, Romania,

<sup>1</sup>e-mail: gsavoiu@yahoo.com; <sup>2</sup>e-mail: cora\_tud@yahoo.com

**Abstract.** *The theme of the article is an apparently conflict-oriented one, describing a state of antinomy between titles of book or articles and references, in accordance with a survey conducted on a sample of 60 students, a guided or subjective sampling technique based on volunteering. The article begins with the structure of classical references and some expected trends in the dynamics of the references of some modern researches, emphasizing a number of its peculiar traits that delineate trans-, inter-, cross- and multidisciplinary research. The first section, which is predominantly methodological, is dedicated to sampling and questionnaires, in an attempt to anticipate some conceptual ambiguities, but also some nuanced differences between graduating students and MA students. The major section, whose content explores the results and generates significant discussion, reveals a diminution in the importance of titles within the broader content of the references. Some final remarks on the future of titles of articles and books in bibliographic references lists, optimistically close the paper, and assess the tendency to diversify the typology of bibliographic sources.*

**Keywords:** *standardization, e-book, wikipedia, title, abstract, keywords, references, survey, ambiguity, scientific research.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The structure of an article or book is becoming more and more standardized in modern scientific research. From the elements of an article, initially those defining the title, the abstract, the keywords, continuing with the sections that are usually part of the standard, such as the introduction, literature review, methodology, results and discussion, conclusions, references, acknowledgements, etc. – everything has become a repetitive pattern of writing, a template at first glance.

The process of standardizing a modern article continues inside the sections to gradually achieve a final drafting of the research, in a standard manner that facilitates quick access to results, and especially the possibility of generating easy-to-process databases for prospective researchers. The standardization process has also created virtual books, which seem to have a separate, well-defined future, by the name of e-books, already able to take over the place held by classical books, primarily thanks to the ease of accessing and archiving, complete reading, and subsequent selective re-reading, which gives it a nomadic character, in the profound sense that Jacques Attali foresaw in the future [1].

The new e-book has been renamed continuously in multiple forms since its emergence, after some as a *device* in 1949 (which was the presentation made to the *Enciclopedia Mecánica*, the work of Angela Ruiz Robles), after other

authors as an indexing system (in the *Index Thomisticus*, the paper to Roberto Busa, which appeared in late 1949, and completed as late as 1970), or as *designing complex editing and access-through-reading systems* (Doug Engelbart and Andries van Dam during the 1960s), and more notably as an invention [2,3], made by Michael Hart (1971); the proof of that multiplication of meanings was the very forms of editing, e-book, to ebook, eBook, Ebook, e-Book, e-journal, e-edition, or digital book, whence, by extension, the reading devices, too, have more and more distinctive or specific names: e-readers, ebook device or eReaders. [4] After nearly half a century, E-books benefit from a specific conceptualization, which manages to highlight the universality of access, and increases its importance as well as the novelty of this type of book, “*composed in or converted to digital format for display on a computer screen or handheld device*” [5], thus defining a major conflict with the classical book, and even “*the possibility of the disappearance of print books, dominated by fetishism, fears about the end of humanism and ideas of techno-fundamentalist progress*” [6,7].

The classical type of references, very much like a number of trends in the dynamics of the references of modern research, along with the title, abstract, keywords and even the wikipaedia (wikipaedia, hmolpaedia, etc.), emphasize some of the peculiarities of the published research, and therefore limit the trans-, inter-, cross- and multidisciplinary researches from isolated or uni-disciplinary investigation. References, which have become integrated and integrative living archives, are subsequently turned, from the last element of an article or book, into the first element in the pursuit of a future research, along with the title and keywords, which have in the meantime become access-keys to referential archives. The abstract always represents more than a useful summary, and becomes the main element of selecting or removing an article, or books, from an initial list of theoretical research resources. The wikipedias, through their inter-woven fabric of words, which act as a network node of related meanings or inter- and transdisciplinary intersections, generate a necessary background in multidisciplinary research, and tend to transform, in the future, into the complex solution of maximum access to bibliographic resources or active references.

## 2. TITLES VS REFERENCES: A SURVEY AMONG STUDENTS

In this article, the question that triggered the investigation is related to the perception of the importance of the title of an article or book, and its potential confusion with the bibliographic reference in the undergraduate student’s, doctoral student’s, or researcher’s thinking. In order to investigate the actual beginning of the activity of any

potential researcher it is then normal to target the quality of a student first, and the general question (concretely nuanced by means of several questions, detailed in a minimal questionnaire in an inquiry) can only be put into the library: *Is there a real conflict or ambiguity between the title of the article or that of the book and the concept of the reference generated by them, in the thinking of the students who undertake their specific research (papers, bachelor theses, MA dissertations)?*

The first problem in starting the investigation is a predominantly methodological one, which is devoted to sampling and questioning, in an attempt to anticipate and quantify the dimensions of a possible conceptual conflict, or a conceptual ambiguity, and also a few more or less significant differences that are structurally nuanced.

In the category of references in modern research, the titles of articles and books increasingly give up some of the share they traditionally had, in classical researches, but especially in trans-, inter-, cross- and multidisciplinary research, in favour of a general category called *other types of reference sources*. This initial class extends both quantitatively and qualitatively, generating ever new positions generated by the technological and instrumental change of scientific research. In particular, the other-types-of-references class includes: printed versions or electronic versions of Parliament's deeds, legislation (official documents, codes of good practice) and government and institutional publications, annual reports, archive materials, standards, papers presented at conferences, reports organizations, theses and dissertations, course materials and lectures, interviews, press releases, whether printed or online, dictionary references, computer software, use of electronic sources, website, publications available on websites, blogs, social networks, youtube, etc. [8].

In the context of an investigation on the conflicting state holding between the title of a classical reference and an extended modern reference, within the dynamic and also ambiguous environment of overlapping traditional sources (article, book) and other modern sources (increasing significantly, in both number and weight, within the overall context of references), a selective research was planned for a period of only three days in the library space of the university [9,10,11]. The sampling was conducted in keeping with a guided selection method focused on the technique of volunteering, which eventually led to a sample of 60 students (including those in the master's degree programme), who formulated some interesting opinions for a large population; the research was clearly a preliminary one, which can vie with some hypotheses, worthy to be tested in larger researches, including their necessary representativeness. The main questions determine the importance of the bibliographic references, quantitating the titles or works quoted, the quotations extracted, the optimal percentage of citations (figure 1)

1. How important are references / bibliographies, according with a 1 to 10 scale, in the writing of the paper (report, project, graduation thesis, dissertation, article/paper)?
2. How many titles do you quote or use on average in the bibliography of a:
a) report or essay; b) project; c) graduation thesis; d) dissertation; e) article/paper
3. Are you accustomed to quoting passages extracted from

other papers or bibliographic references in your work? YES NO
4. How many citations do you use from the bibliographic references in your paper?
a) report or essay; b) project; c) graduation thesis; d) dissertation; e) article/paper.
5. Can one write a paper without using references / bibliography? YES/NO
6. What is the optimal percentage of citations in scientific papers?
a) Less than 10%; b) 10-20%; c) 20-30%; d) 30-40%; e) 40-50%.

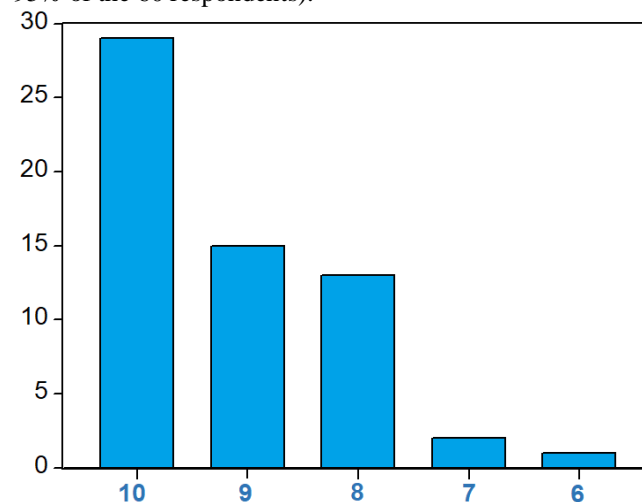
Source: questionnaire made by authors

**Fig. 1** Synthetic summary of the main questions asked in the survey questionnaire

Note there are also two questions (3 and 5) intended to filter respondents and identify extreme behaviour.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

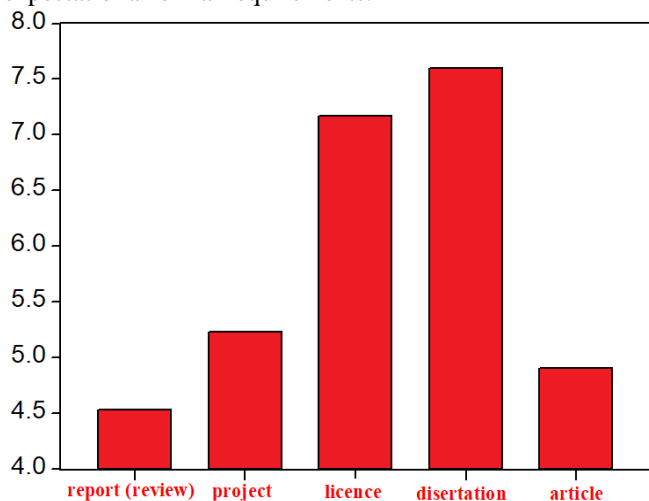
The major section of this article, perceived through the views of the respondents, and then processed and presented through indicators or represented through graphs, explores the results and generates some relevant discussions. Thus, the structure of the respondents – which is relatively homogeneous, and slightly dominated by the female gender (58.33%), and there is a much more pronounced domination of students at their first faculty (68.33%, and 93.33%, respectively), including the students attending the second faculty – quantifies the importance of references/bibliographies according to an average grade of 9.15 on a scale of 1 to 10. As can be seen in Figure 2, there is a consensus as to the major role of references / bibliographies in the full realization, and up to writing the results of a research, being structured in a decreasing manner, as nearly half of the respondents noted with 10, i.e. gave maximum assessment (48,33%), a quarter decreasing by one point, and a little over one fifth went down two points (totalling almost 95% of the 60 respondents).



**Fig. 2** Distribution of respondents according to the importance given to references / bibliographies

Identifying the hierarchy of the main types of papers written by students in terms of the number of titles cited according to

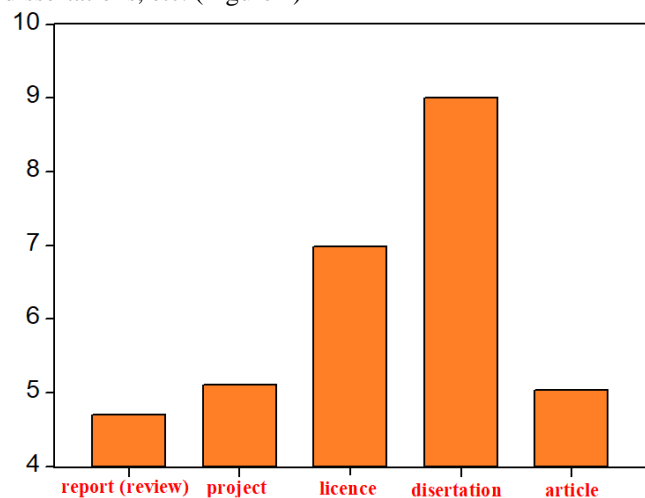
the opinions in Figure 3 is relevant, yet the average number of citations per category of papers is below the expectations/normal requirements.



**Fig. 3.** The average number of titles cited in the students' usual papers

Except for a slight distortion in favour of projects in relation to the articles, the hierarchy described by the respondent students can be easily validated, but the average number per type of research opens the hypothesis of a conflict or ambiguity of meanings between the classically cited titles of papers (articles, books) and references in the modern sense, including the ever-expanding category of *other types of reference sources*. Regardless of whether the conflict is more true in relation to the ambiguity of meanings, or vice versa, a diminution is virtually certified of the importance of classically cited titles as part of the extended content of the references.

The habit of quoting passages extracted from other papers or bibliographic references in the papers written by students covers 95% of the respondents. In terms of the number of citations used in bibliographical references in the text of a research paper, the students maintain the hierarchies, except in dissertations, where values relatively increase, including the average ones, yet they do not cover the minimum requirements in the guides for graduation theses, dissertations, etc. (Figure 4)

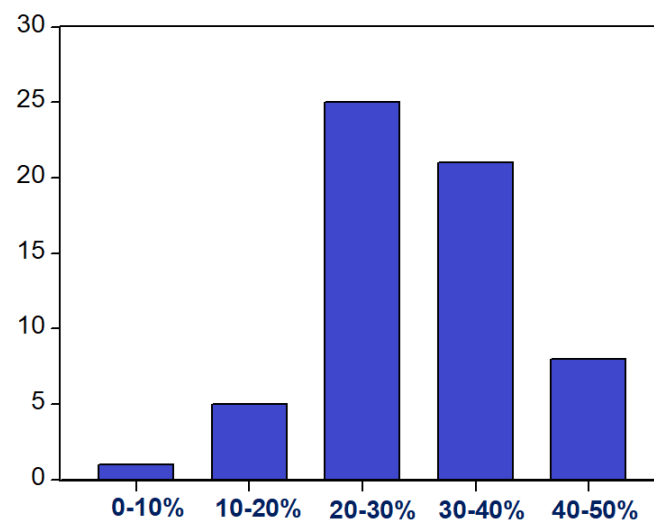


**Fig. 4** The average number of citations used in bibliographic references in the texts of student research papers

The students' views concerning the existence of research papers or work involving a self-directed investigation without the contribution of citations describe a slightly more pronounced optimum than the classical Paretian one, i.e. 15/85 instead of 20/80 (meaning that 15% believe that research can also be done without having recourse to references). In the evaluation of the optimal percentage of citations (Figure 5), the structure of respondents remains equally balanced, and dominated by the intervals of 20-30% (41.67%) and 30-40% (35%). This broader spectrum shows that the faculties and study programmes the students belong to also cover a larger space, which is in fact between 20 and 40%, the average being placed slightly below 30%, although a punctual inference is not true in this case, but rather one focused on a well-defined range of values.

An analysis of extreme trends shows that the number of those who believe that the optimal percentage of citations relative to the full text of the paper should be within the 40-50% area is 8 times that of those who place it in the minimum range 0-10%.

Relatively homogeneous, the sample taken candidly conveys, through its opinions, an uneasy, painful reality, i.e. the underestimation of cited titles, and even citations or references, as proof of the fact that some references related to their presence on the Internet remain unclear and uncited.



**Fig. 5.** The distribution of options per percentage intervals of citations in relation to the full text of the students' papers

#### 4. SOME FINAL REMARKS

Some final remarks regarding the future of titles of articles and books as part of the bibliographic references lists optimistically close the present article, and appreciate the tendency to diversify the typology of bibliographic sources, while nevertheless finding remarking a number of issues that require further research on the subject:

- there is not yet a potential conflict between the concepts of titles cited and references, but it appears as ominously possible in the near future, in the absence of clearer explanations given by teachers, bachelor tutors, dissertation coordinators, etc. ;

- one can evidently identify an ambiguity between the titles cited and the references, in parallel with a clear ignorance of

how to use, and especially how to cite, other sources other than the classical ones (articles/papers and books);

- there is a clear similarity between the citation and the work cited in references/bibliography, although a graduating thesis or a dissertation makes it possible to mention, at the end, papers (articles or books) that were not cited, but contributed to the authors' opinions;

- there is a certain *decrease in the importance of the titles cited in the extended content of the references / bibliographies*;

Finally, it can be remarked, as a suitable solution to a comparatively worrying conflict situation, which can be possibly due to ambiguities of the meanings or conceptual significations of the research, introducing, in the compulsory disciplines, a study discipline devoted to scientific documentation, organizing and realizing, implicitly writing the results of a scientific applied research, without ignoring the sincerity of students' answers, which demonstrates their lack of information in the field of scientific documentation for the bachelor and dissertation examinations, as well as in the elaboration of any type of scientific paper.

## 5. REFERENCES

[1] Attali, J., (2010). Une brève histoire de l'avenir - Nouvelle édition 2010, Paris: LGF/Livre de Poche.

[2] Grimes, W. (2011). Michael Hart, a Pioneer of E-Books, Dies at 64. *The New York Times*. [online] Available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/09/business/michael-hart-a-pioneer-of-e-books-dies-at-64.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/09/business/michael-hart-a-pioneer-of-e-books-dies-at-64.html?pagewanted=all&_r=2) [Accessed November 2, 2017].

[3] Flood, A. (2011). [Michael Hart, inventor of the ebook, dies aged 64](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/sep/13/michael-hart-obituary). *The Guardian*. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/sep/13/michael-hart-obituary> [Accessed November 2, 2017].

[4] *E-book*. From *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, (2017). [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-book> [Accessed November 1, 2017].

[5] *Meaning of e-book in Merriam Webster Dictionary*, (2017). [online] Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/e-book> [Accessed November 3, 2017].

[6] Ballatore, A. (2014). The myth of the Digital Earth between fragmentation and wholeness. *Journal of Mobile Media*, 8(2), 1–20.

[7] Ballatore, A., & Natale, S. (2015). E-readers and the death of the book: Or, new media and the myth of the disappearing medium. *New Media & Society*. [online] Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1461444815586984?journalCode=nmsa> [Accessed November 4, 2017].

[8] Dinu, V., Săvoiu, G., Dabija, C. (2016). *A concepe, a redacta și publica un articol științific. O abordare în contextul cercetării economice*, București: Editura ASE.

[9] Săvoiu, G. (2012). *Statistică generală cu aplicații în contabilitate*, București: Editura Universitară.

[10] Săvoiu, G., (2013). *Modelarea economico-financiară: Gândirea econometrică aplicată în domeniul financiar* București: Editura Universitară.

[11] Săvoiu, G., (2011). *Econometrie*, București: Editura Universitară.