

The importance of non-journal resources to the business researcher

ProQuest (August 2011 - March 2013)

A goal of most business researchers throughout the world is to publish articles in scholarly journals, and in turn, scholarly journals have long been a main source for these scholars in their research. However, as the information landscape has diversified, so have the resources in which crucial new ideas are being shared, which now include working papers, dissertations, newspapers, data, e-books, and more.

This white paper builds on the findings of our 2012 white paper, which summarized ProQuest's survey of U.S. business faculty's research needs. This new white paper adds data from our international survey and provides a global perspective on researchers' use of non-journal resources to develop scholarly works.

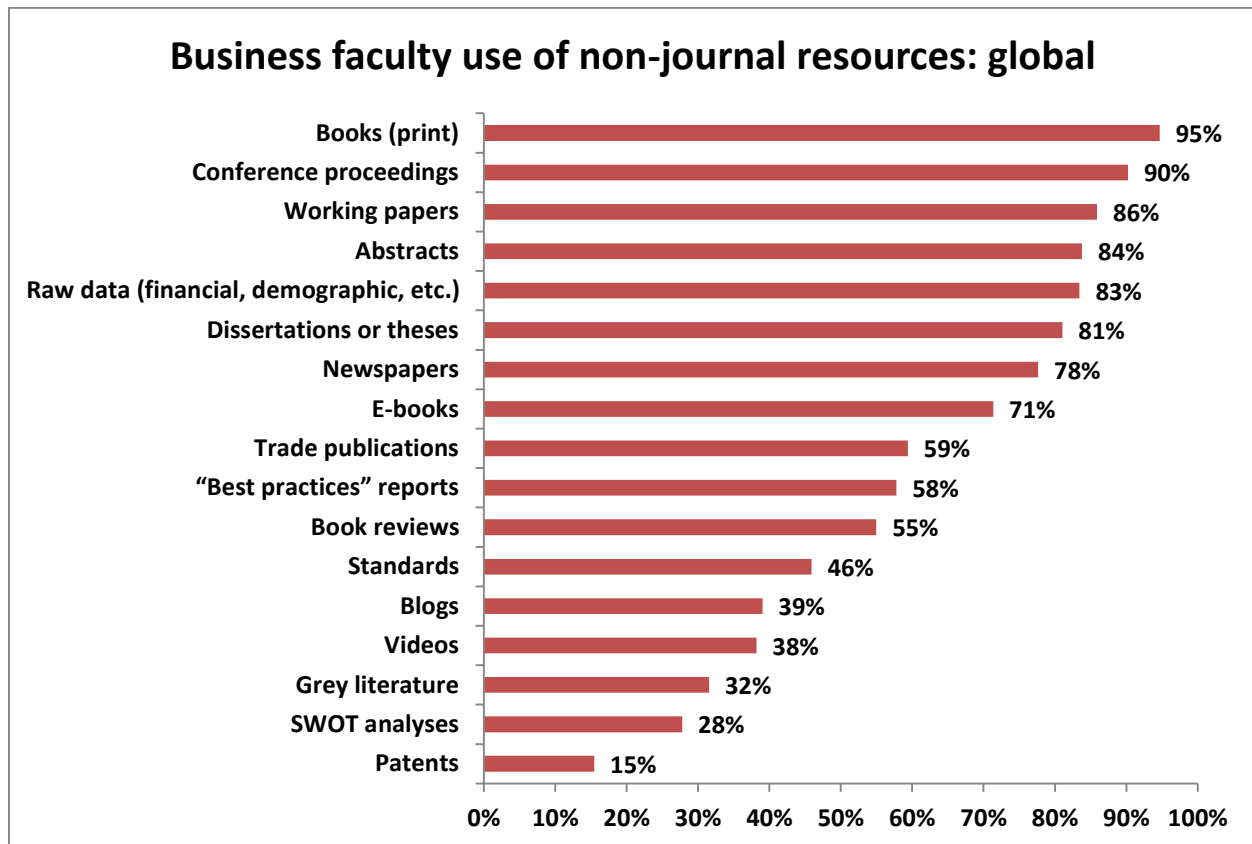
From usage statistics, it has long been clear that business scholars are accessing this non-journal content, often very extensively. However, there was some uncertainty around the specific value and place these resources held within the creation of scholarly materials.

Interviews with business scholars and librarians throughout the world raised the possibility that the answer to this question might vary according to country or region. Whereas U.S. business researchers seemed focused on a few core journals, researchers in the United Kingdom were more inclined to talk about what Professor Nikolaos Tzokas (University of East Anglia) referred to as the "*research journey*." And whereas several Taiwanese librarians suggested that their business faculty evaluated business databases purely on the strength of the journals, business faculty elsewhere appeared to place great value on other kinds of content. Dr. Timothy Devinney (University of Technology, Sydney), for example, said he found working papers even more valuable than the "sanitized" articles that ended up in journals. Working papers are essential, he said, because they tell you "not just *what's* being studied but *how* it's being studied."

In order to understand how business scholars around the world use non-journal content, ProQuest launched a far-reaching survey. Conducted between August 2011 and March 2013, the survey was completed by 564 business scholars from North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia, India, Australia, and New Zealand.

The results from the expanded survey of international scholars are consistent with those results found in the U.S., and the dominant storyline is clear: business scholars *everywhere* use non-journal content not just because it is included in databases, but because they regard it as an important part of their research process. Professor Tzokas emphasized this point specifically, stating "becoming aware and integrating relevant information emanating from different areas and disseminated through different platforms is imperative for the creation and the scientific testing of new knowledge."

The chart below shows the percentage of the business scholars surveyed who use the various content types in their research:



As the chart shows, dissertations, working papers, newspapers, conference proceedings, e-books, trade publications, data, and several other content types are all used in research by a strong majority of business scholars. Other content types such as blogs, videos, grey literature, and SWOT analyses are less used for original scholarly work, although anecdotal evidence suggests that these materials are growing in importance in the classroom and for students. The preference in all regions for print books over e-books shows there is still some way to go in the transition from print to electronic. However, as the number and quality of e-books increase, and the rate of adoption grows, we expect that gap to narrow and eventually reverse itself.

Within the overall pattern of high use of non-journal resources, there was some variation by region and country. For example, U.S. business scholars were the heaviest users of newspapers and data, while researchers from Australia and New Zealand used dissertations and conference proceedings more than anyone else. European researchers were the biggest users of working papers worldwide, while their counterparts in Asia were among the heaviest users of “best practice” reports.



Ultimately, the data from this two-year international survey show that, in addition to scholarly journals, today's business scholars need newspapers, dissertations, e-books, working papers, data, trade publications, conference proceedings, and other non-journal content. This need, combined with a growing demand for "one-stop shopping," means that aggregators can support the business research process most effectively by bringing all these content types into a single, searchable database from which business researchers can tap the full range of new information and ideas in their field.

(Revised 07/06/2013)

If you would like to see a detailed breakdown of this survey data, or if you would like to be notified when we complete our next survey (business researchers in Africa), please send a request to info@proquest.com.