International Journal of Information Science and Management
Vol. 23, No. 3, 2025, I-IV
Editorial

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22034/ijism.2025.725543

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The Visibility Imperative in Information Science and Management Research

As we enter another era of rapid transformation in how information is created, shared, and consumed, the information science and management community faces a critical question that extends beyond our research subjects to our scholarly practices: In an era of information overload, does visibility trump quality in determining research impact?

The traditional academic axiom "publish or perish" suggests that quality research will naturally find its audience through established channels, such as peer review, reputable journals, and professional networks (Olubiyi, 2025). However, the exponential growth in research output, particularly in information science, management, and related fields, has fundamentally altered this landscape. Today, over 2.5 million scientific papers are published annually, with research in information systems, data science, and digital transformation making significant contributions to this vast body of work.

The Information Management Paradox

Our field faces a unique paradox. As information science and management scholars, we study the phenomena that affect the dissemination of our research, including information overload, search algorithms, network effects, and user behavior in digital environments. Yet we often fail to apply these insights to maximize the impact of our work.

Recent bibliometric analyses reveal that approximately 32% of published papers receive zero citations within five years, while another 40% receive fewer than five citations (Golosovsky & Larivière, 2021). In information science and management, where practical applications and industry relevance are particularly valued, this invisibility problem is especially acute. Research that could inform critical decisions about data governance, digital transformation, or information security may never reach the practitioners who could benefit most from these insights.

Consider the career implications for researchers in our field. Two scholars may produce equally rigorous work on knowledge management systems or data privacy frameworks. However, the researcher whose work achieves visibility through strategic use of professional networks, social media, or industry partnerships will likely experience superior career outcomes, regardless of the underlying quality differential.

The Changing Landscape of Information Dissemination

Information science and management have witnessed dramatic changes in how research achieves visibility and impact. While traditional pathways through established journals are still critical, they now compete with preprint servers, professional blogs, industry white papers, and social media platforms. LinkedIn articles on data governance often reach a broader audience of practitioners than peer-reviewed papers, which are usually hidden behind paywalls.

The rise of altmetrics, including social media mentions, policy citations, and industry downloads, has led to the development of new measures of research impact that often correlate with real-world influence (Costas, Zahedi & Wouters, 2015; Bornmann, 2014). Research in information science and management that informs industry best practices, influences policy decisions, or shapes public discourse may have a greater societal impact than work that circulates only within academic circles.

This shift has democratizing potential. Researchers from less prestigious institutions can now achieve global visibility through platforms like ResearchGate, GitHub, or professional networks. An innovative approach to managing big data or a novel framework for information governance can gain international attention regardless of its institutional origin.

Quality Concerns in the Visibility Era

The emphasis on visibility raises legitimate concerns about the quality and rigor of research. The pressure for immediate impact may incentivize researchers to prioritize trending topics over fundamental questions, to oversimplify complex findings for broader consumption, or to publish preliminary results to maintain visibility.

In information science and management, where research findings often have direct practical applications, the premature or oversimplified dissemination of research can have significant consequences. Recommendations about cybersecurity practices, data management policies, or system implementations based on incomplete research may lead to poor organizational decisions.

The replication crisis affecting psychology and other fields serves as a cautionary tale (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2025). When visibility becomes the primary goal, researchers may be incentivized to prioritize novel or surprising results over methodological rigor and conservative interpretation of findings.

Toward a Balanced Approach

Rather than viewing quality and visibility as competing priorities, the information science and management community should adopt frameworks that recognize their synergistic relationship. High-quality research in our field deserves visibility because it can inform better organizational practices, policy decisions, and technological implementations.

Several strategies can help achieve this balance.

1- Multi-channel Dissemination: Researchers should complement traditional academic publication with practitioner-focused outputs, policy briefs, and industry presentations. A rigorous study of data governance frameworks should be shared with scholarly peers and chief information officers.

2- Enhanced Collaboration: Information science and management researchers should actively engage with industry partners, government agencies, and technology companies. These collaborations can ensure that quality research addresses real-world needs while achieving appropriate visibility among relevant stakeholders.

3- Digital Scholarship Skills: The information science and management community should lead by example in leveraging digital tools for research dissemination. Understanding information systems, user experience, and digital communication should inform how we share our research.

4- Holistic Evaluation Criteria: Academic institutions and funding agencies should recognize that information science and management research often achieve impact through nontraditional channels. Citation counts should be supplemented with evidence of policy influence, industry adoption, and practical implementation.

The Future of Information Science and Management Research Impact

As information science and management scholars, we are uniquely positioned to address the visibility-quality challenge (Majhi, Sahu, & Kabita, 2023). Our expertise in information architecture, user behavior, and system design provides tools for ensuring that quality research achieves appropriate visibility without compromising rigor.

Emerging technologies present new opportunities for disseminating research. Interactive data visualizations can make complex findings more accessible and understandable. Virtual reality environments could enable immersive exploration of information systems research. Artificial intelligence could help match research outputs with relevant audiences, reducing the burden on individual researchers while ensuring valuable work reaches those who can benefit from it.

Information science and management must also grapple with ethical considerations around research visibility. How can we ensure that essential but less sensational research receives the attention it deserves? How do we prevent the amplification of preliminary or flawed findings? How do we maintain the integrity of peer review while embracing new forms of scholarly communication?

A Call for Leadership

As editors, reviewers, and researchers in information science and management, we have an opportunity to lead by example. We can develop evaluation criteria that value methodological

rigor and real-world impact. We can create dissemination strategies that reach both academic and practitioner communities. We can leverage our expertise in information systems to solve the problems we study.

The phrase "publish or perish" may need updating for our field. "Research, dissemination, and impact" better captures the modern imperative for information science and management scholars (Bee, Brooks, Callaghan, and Lovell, 2018). Success requires producing quality research and ensuring it influences the organizations, policies, and practices it aims to improve.

The goal should not be to choose between quality and visibility, but to achieve both. Information science and management research that combines methodological rigor with strategic dissemination will likely define the future of our field's influence and relevance.

In a world drowning in information, the most brilliant insights about information science and management are worthless if they remain invisible to those who could implement them. Our challenge- and our opportunity to ensure that quality research in information science and management achieves the visibility it deserves and the impact it can enable

The editorial board welcomes submissions demonstrating scholarly rigor and practical relevance. We encourage authors to consider how their research can reach and influence the broader information science and management community while maintaining the highest standards of academic quality.

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