

Use of Archives and Manuscripts By Historians

A Citation Analysis of Four History Journals for the Period 2006-2010

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Overview

Citation analysis has been used widely by librarians to study the scholarship of various disciplines and as an aid for library collection development. While the archives literature features several surveys asking historians what sources they use for research and in the classroom (Case, 1991; Tibbo, 2003; Malkmus, 2007), there is very little empirical evidence documenting what historians actually use.

Citation analysis of archives and manuscripts has been conducted previously, by Frederic Miller in *American Archivist* in 1986 and Marion Hirsch in a Master's thesis in 1991. According to Google Scholar, Miller's article has been cited forty-three times, however there has not been a published study of this nature in over twenty years.

Part of the reason there have been no subsequent citation studies is that the work is time-consuming. The aim of the present study is to both analyze the use of archives and manuscripts by historians as well to propose refinements to Miller's methodology.

Methodology

There are two types of citation studies, one method counts citations and the other counts references. In a reference study, a book is only counted the first time it is cited. In a citation study, a book is counted every time it is cited. Miller's aim was to create a system for conducting reference studies for archives and manuscripts. This study examines both citations and references, in order to compare findings with Miller and Hirsch and demonstrate a different approach.

Miller's methodology, focuses on the following variables:

- Journal; time period; subject; references; repository type; collection type; series type; and intensity of use.

This research project is a citation and reference analysis of 218 articles from four journals (*Journal of American History*, *Environmental History*, *History of Education Quarterly*, and the *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*). The articles are all on American history and were published between 2006-2010.

Findings

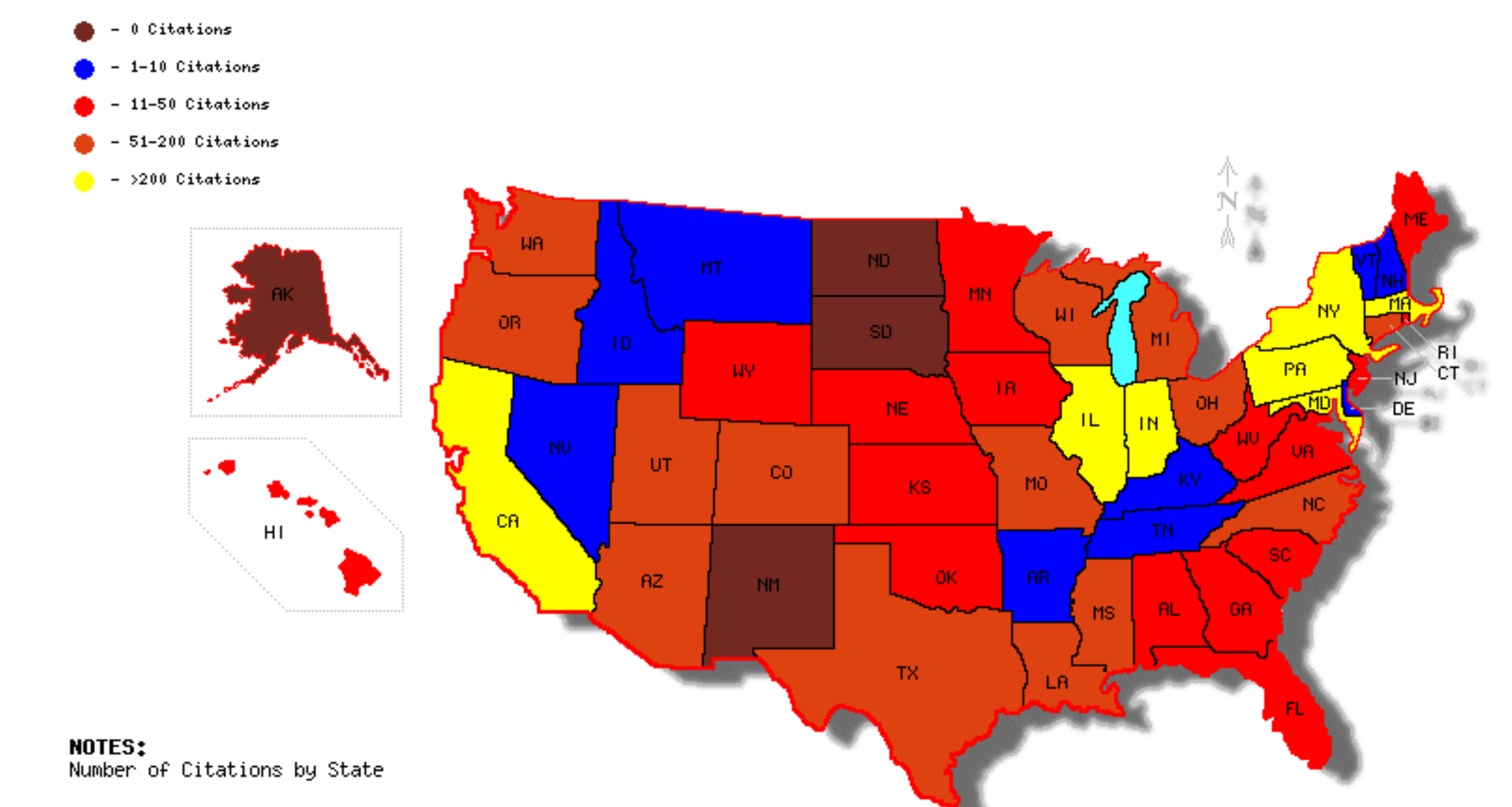
	Number of Articles	Avg. # of References	Avg. # of Repositories	Avg. # of Citations
Journal of American History (JAH)	70	9.8	5.3	38.9
Environmental History (EH)	55	5.3	3.2	25
History of Education Quarterly (HEQ)	59	6.2	3.85	26.5
Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences (JHMAS)	34	3.7	2.18	26.3
Total	218	6.75	3.89	30.1
Miller (1981-1985)	214	4.3	2.2	
Hirsch (1986-1990)	200	2.9	1.78	

The table above shows an increase in the number of references and the number of repositories used. The increase may be due to greater use of archival materials, to the subjectivity involved in determining what a reference is, or to the different subject matter examined by the three studies. Miller's study focused on social history articles, while Hirsch looked at southern history.

The table below details the percentage of references and citations by type of repository, using Miller's methodology. The high use of the National Archives in Miller's study was primarily census material, which can now be found online. The rise in the use of institutional archives can be attributed to articles in HEQ and JHMAS, which relied more heavily on university and hospital archives.

	Total References	Total Citations	Hirsch (1986-1990)	Miller (1981-1985)
Private Collections	8%	9%	9%	4%
Public Offices	4%	5%	5%	5%
National Archives	8%	12%	10%	20%
Institutional Archives	15%	19%	5.4%	6%
State and Local Archives	5%	4%	13%	9%
Academic Research Collections	28%	26%	25%	30%
Public Libraries	4%	4%	1%	3%
Historical Societies, Historical Libraries, and Museums	26%	20%	24%	22%
Foreign Repositories	3%	2%	7.9%	n/a

In the 218 articles analyzed, repositories in 45 states and the District of Columbia were cited, demonstrating how researchers utilized a wide variety of institutions and locations. The places with the highest number of citations are where you might expect them to be: the District of Columbia; New York; Maryland; California; Massachusetts; and Pennsylvania. However, 13 states had at least 100 citations to repositories in their area.



Conclusions

The findings of this study show that a large number of repositories and collections are used, and that many historians use archives and manuscripts extensively. 42% of the articles contained 26 or more citations to archives and manuscripts.

The methodology used for this type of study, Miller's reference analysis, is subjective and time-consuming and needs to be modified. For example, comparing the findings from this study with Hirsch and Miller, the results for intensity of use varied too much to be considered reliable data. Counting citations rather than references would be a less subjective and faster method. A citation study would not answer the same questions, but the conclusions drawn from it would be based on more reliable data.

This poster presents some of the findings from this study, the larger study will explore use by record type, the use of visual and published material, the use of digitized resources, and point toward a more streamlined and repeatable approach to capturing this data.