

FOUR JOURNALISTS, AN ILLUSTRATOR AND AN EDITOR HAVE THREE HOURS TO FIND OUT WHERE THEY ARE AND WHAT IS HAPPENING AROUND THEM. WITH YOUR INFORMATION AND A HAND CRANKED STENCILING MACHINE THEY PRODUCE A PAPER WITH THE REAL NEWS: THE DAILY ISSUE.



**THE DAILY ISSUE**

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## SERENDIPIMETRY

Some of the most valuable scientific outcomes are the result of accidental discoveries. This article explores the possibility of a metrics of serendipity.

Firstly, a clear distinction has to be made between a serendipity indicator and a serendipitous indicator. The latter may only be meaningful in the way it could assist chance events in finding information. More interesting however, it could be to actually measure, or at least estimate, the degree of serendipity that led to a research result. And yet another angle would be the presentation of research, that might facilitate its receivers, e.g. the readers of an article, in making odd detours, living through paradigm shifts et cetera.

### LINGUISTICS

How could this be done? Irina Efimenko, leading research fellow at the higher school of economics in Moscow, has a number of suggestions. She proposes to look at the conceptual distance between hypothesis and conclusion in studies. Also the level of multidisciplinary could be a useful parameter. Efimenko suggests to borrow numerical methods from linguistics that

identify ontological relationships in human language.

At this moment in the story the alert reader identifies another class of serendipitous events: methods developed in one field of science that suddenly find application in another. For example by simply borrowing certain terminology, but this could easily extend into transplanting entire conceptual frameworks. It turns out the aforementioned linguistic methods originated from applying the chemists description of the relations between atoms in a molecule to the functional analysis of words in a text.

Linguistics may now show how metrics could be developed to spot the appearance of 'foreign' terminology in a publication, but also of ontologies that are new to its author or his/her field.

### LEVEL OF ASTONISHMENT

According to Wouter Gerritsma, also present at the conference, an additional feature of a serendipitous discovery is the speed at which it is accepted. Does this suggest that serendipity is to be compared with paradigm shifts, in the sense that a whole field is 'ready' for a new view, that can make more sense? Or can serendipity be equally valu-

able as a strictly personal experience?

More difficult to measure (but no less relevant) seems to be the level of astonishment. Dick Klavans has a suggestion on how to measure this in poster presentations. He proposes setting up cameras at the posters and scoring facial expressions of surprise with the readers.

This leaves us with a final contemplation: Should whatever metrics on serendipity include stochastic elements? A degree of randomness in the algorithms, a level of noise in the measurements... It might just be imperative for a truly serendipitous indicator.

### DISCUSSION

Dear readers, please share with us your view on all this! What more parameters could make for a valuable indicator? Could such an indicator widen the scope of scientometrics, a broadening that Sarah de Rijcke in yesterday's interview deemed crucial to CWTS's long term survival? Has serendipity anything to do with the broader (or even individual) acceptance of a chance insight? Or is it rather about the influence of coincidence in the process of conducting research?

## POSTER SESSIONS 2 - A REVIEW

▼ The galleries' corridor is crowded. As we make our way through the crowd it's clear why: what a sight indeed! Art lovers and -collectors from all over the world have gathered for this thoughtprovoking collection, simply called 'Poster Sessions 2'. It features the work of 7 upcoming artists, showing a selection of their latest contemporary pieces.

While the exhibition seems to be coherent as a whole, when looking closer one, sees the individual pieces are worlds apart.

For instance 'skewness for journal citation curves', by Ronald Rousseau, has a minimalistic approach, using a modest colourpalet which leaves the spectator silently contemplating the state of affairs. It reminds one that less is often more.

How delightfully different is the work of Leydesdorff, DeMoya-Anegon & DeNooy! In 'Scopus' this young art collective takes you on a global journey. Their use of colour is daring, overwhelming even. Startling shapes with subtle hints of pointilism and dada are typical in their work.

It needs to be mentioned that the use of material lacks variation. Most of the pieces are printed on glossy paper, the chosen sizes are very similar. Still 'Poster Sessions 2' is inventive and entertaining, tender yet brutal. A must-see for all those who want to know what the buzz is all about!



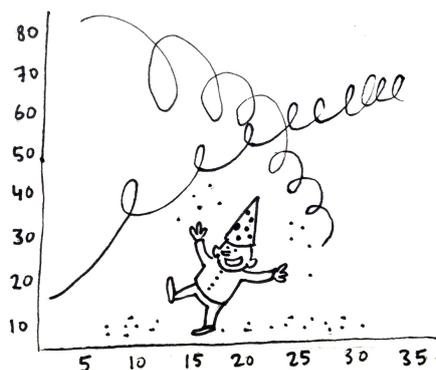
## THE INVENTION OF CHANCE

### BIRTHDAY PRESENT

▼ The editors of the Daily Issue congratulate CWTS with its 25th birthday. CWTS has examined the influence of age on the productivity of researchers (CWTS 2010), and we would like to offer CWTS the above citation as a birthday present.

#### References

Costas, R; van Leeuwen, T.N. & Bordons, M (2010). A bibliometric classificatory approach for the study and assessment of research performance at the individual level: the impact of age on productivity and impact *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*



THE CORRELATION BETWEEN CONFETTI AND SERPENTINES

## H-INDEX FOR THE HEART-BROKEN

▼ If you are being cited by your former lover, is that called "exciting"?

## ON POLAR BEAR INSTINCT

▼ "It's quite possible that my words are used in a completely different context."

inspired by Peter Dahler-Larsen

## OTHERS ON PETER DAHLER-LARSEN

▼ "Illuminated by moments of real eloquence, [he] moves easily between down-to-earth examples and philosophical profundities."

-Christopher Pollitt, Catholic University of Leuven.

"[He] introduced me to a new way of thinking about evaluation, and I came away with great ideas."

-Leslie Goodyear, Education Development Center.

"...cogent, persuasive, compelling and clever..."

-Thomas A. Schwandt, University of Illinois.

## COLOPHON

▼ The Daily Issue is produced and printed on the spot. This edition was brought to you by Harmen Zijp, Diana Wildschut, Oscar Kocken, Claud Biemans and Maaike Haneveld with the illustrations of Danibal.

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