

Legal research quality assessment: A survey on legal monographs in Italy

Non-Bibliometric Analysis of book evaluation

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Ginevra Peruginelli

*Institute of Legal Information Theory and Techniques,
National Research Council (ITTIG-CNR)
Florence, Italy*

The role of legal scholarship

Essential role of legal literature in the global context

- Link to legal practice
- Influence and connection with other disciplines
- Methodological diversity and interdisciplinary nature
- Impact and implications on society, for the development of new policies and legislation.

Typologies of legal scholarship

- Journal article
- **Monograph**
- Contribution in edited volumes
- Contribution in conference proceedings
- Case note
- Commentaries
- Contribution on encyclopedias
- Critical edition
- Review

The project

Funded by ANVUR - Agenzia per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca

Research question: Opportunity to identify specific indicators to support the evaluation of the quality of legal monographs (*informed peer review*)

Research methodology:

- **National survey**, via a questionnaire for legal scholars (4.700) + focus groups on specific topics.
- International Survey via LERU (quite difficult to reach the League)
- Comparative analysis (France, England, The Netherlands).

The national survey

4.645: Invitation sent

4.501: Invitation arrived

1.241: Answers received (26% of the target population)

Three sections:

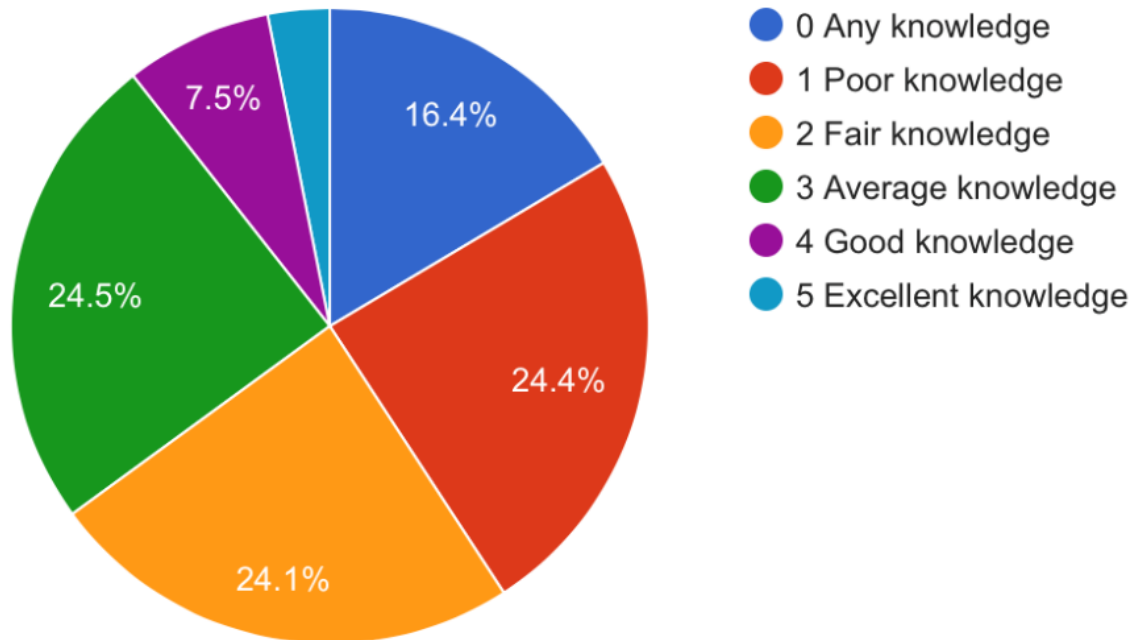
1. Experience and knowledge of respondents
2. Indicators of the assessment of legal monographs
 - Definition of legal monographs
 - **Quality and impact indicators for legal monographs**
 - Focus of specific aspects of indicators (ranking of publishers and series, usefulness of citation databases...
3. General information on respondents

Free comments space available

Distribution according to areas of law

Areas of law	MIUR staff	Invited	Respondents	Response rate (%)
IUS01 - Private Law	688	677	143	21,12
IUS02 - Comparative Private Law	162	161	43	26,71
IUS03 – Agri-food Law	41	40	12	30,00
IUS04 - Business law	408	390	113	28,97
IUS05 - Economics Law	66	65	22	33,85
IUS06 - Navigation and Air Law	47	45	9	20,00
IUS07 - Labour Law	295	294	77	26,19
IUS08 - Constitutional Law	234	230	73	31,74
IUS09 - Public Law	285	277	39	14,08
IUS10 - Administrative law	422	410	90	21,95
IUS11 - Ecclesiastical and Canon Law	111	109	33	30,28
IUS12 - Tax Law	186	184	40	21,74
IUS13 - International Law	265	260	72	27,69
IUS14 - European Union Law	106	103	33	32,04
IUS15 – Civil Procedural Law	199	196	45	22,96
IUS16 – Criminal Procedure	185	181	35	19,34
IUS17 - Criminal Law	274	273	66	24,18
IUS18 - Roman and Ancient law	235	235	75	31,91
IUS19 - History of Medieval and Modern Law	159	157	58	36,94
IUS20 - Philosophy of Law	229	227	97	42,73
IUS21 - Comparative Public Law	132	131	41	31,30

Familiarity with bibliometrics



The 3 quality dimensions envisaged

Three different **dimensions of quality**:

1. the quality *tout court*
2. the impact and dissemination within the scientific community of a monograph ('impact on scientific community');
3. the societal impact of a monograph.

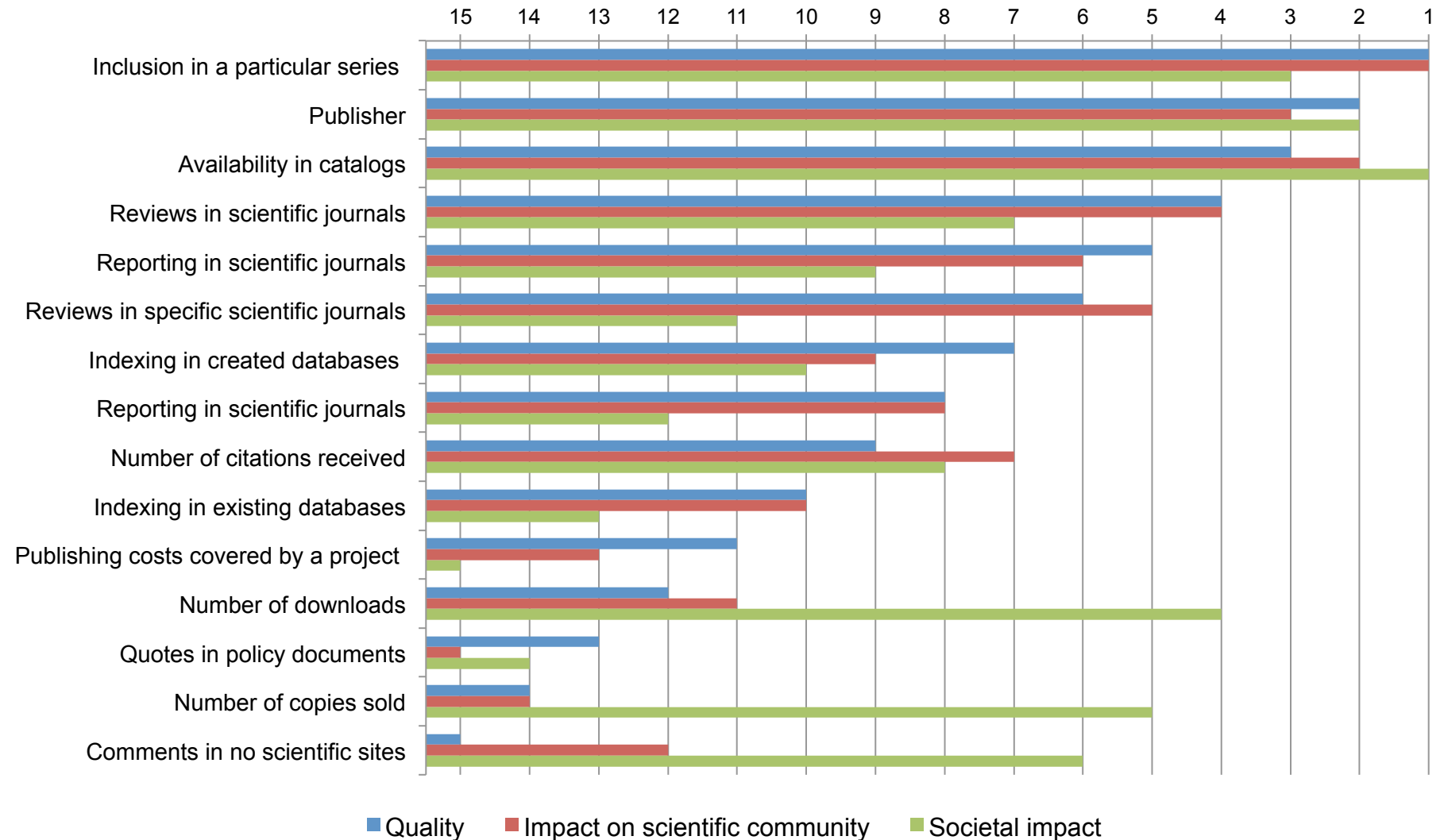
Indicators for assessing the quality of legal monographs

- Publisher
- Inclusion in a particular series with special characteristics (review process...)
- Availability in the catalogs of national and international libraries
- Indexing in existing citation databases (Web of Science, Scopus, SSRN ...)
- Indexing in citation databases specifically created for the legal domain
- Number of citations received
- Reviews in scientific journals
- Reviews in specific scientific journals (only highly ranked journals)
- Reporting in scientific journals
- Reporting in specific scientific journals (only highly ranked journals)
- Comments and citations in no scientific sites (e.g. Newspapers)
- Number of copies sold
- Number of downloads in case of monograph available online
- Publishing cost covered by a research project financed on the basis of an evaluation process
- Quotes in policy documents

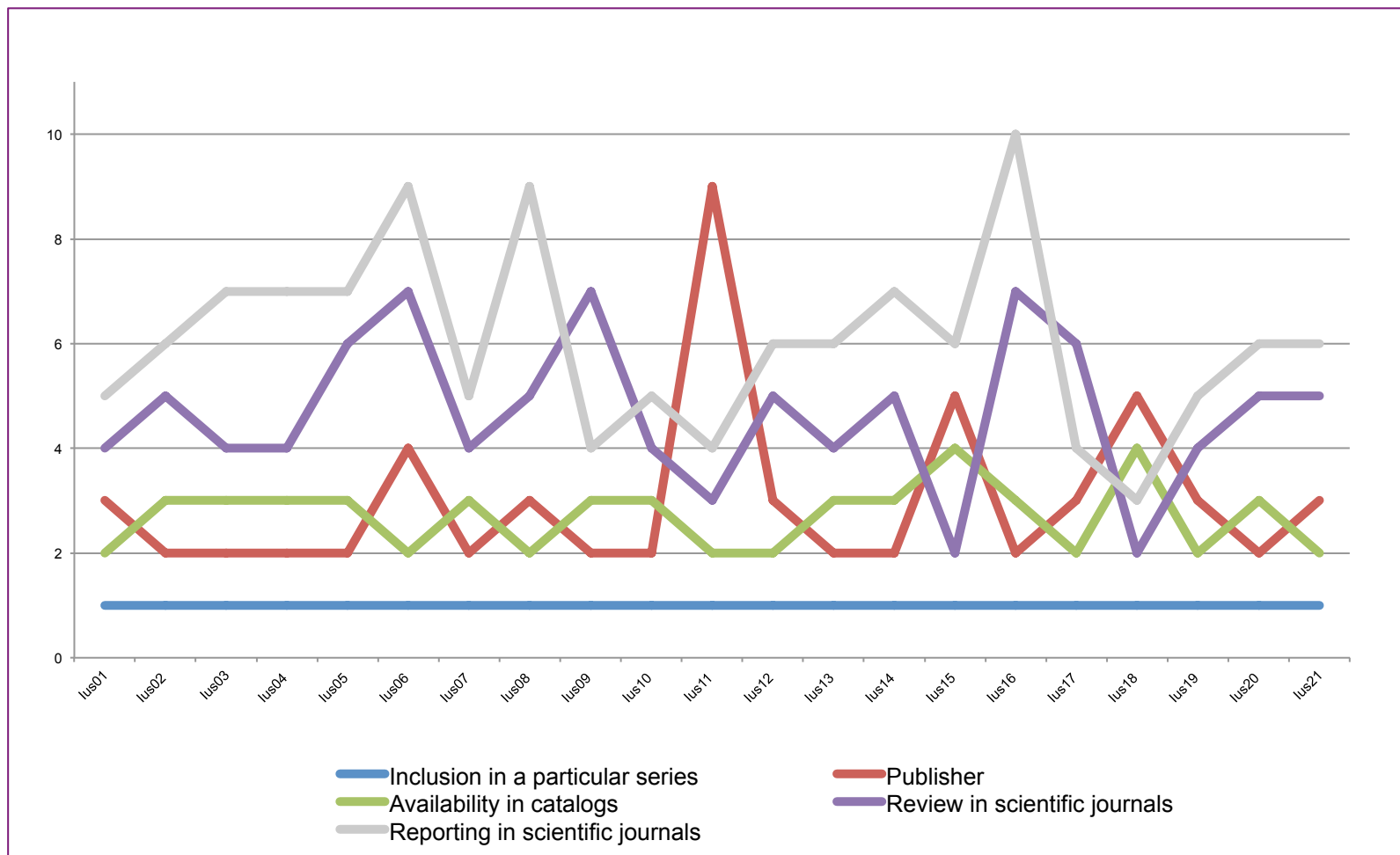
The first five positions of indicators

	Quality	Impact on scientific community	Societal impact
◦1	Inclusion in a particular series with special characteristics (review process...)	Inclusion in a particular series with special characteristics (review process...)	Availability in the catalogs of national and international libraries (except for the legal deposit)
◦2	Publisher	Availability in the catalogs of national and international libraries (except for the legal deposit)	Publisher
◦3	Availability in the catalogs of national and international libraries (except for the legal deposit)	Publisher	Inclusion in a particular series with special characteristics (review process...) ...
◦4	Reviews in scientific journals	Reviews in scientific journals	Download numbers in the case of monograph available online
◦5	Reporting in scientific journals	Comments and citations in no scientific sites	Number of copies sold

Ranking of indicators for the three dimensions

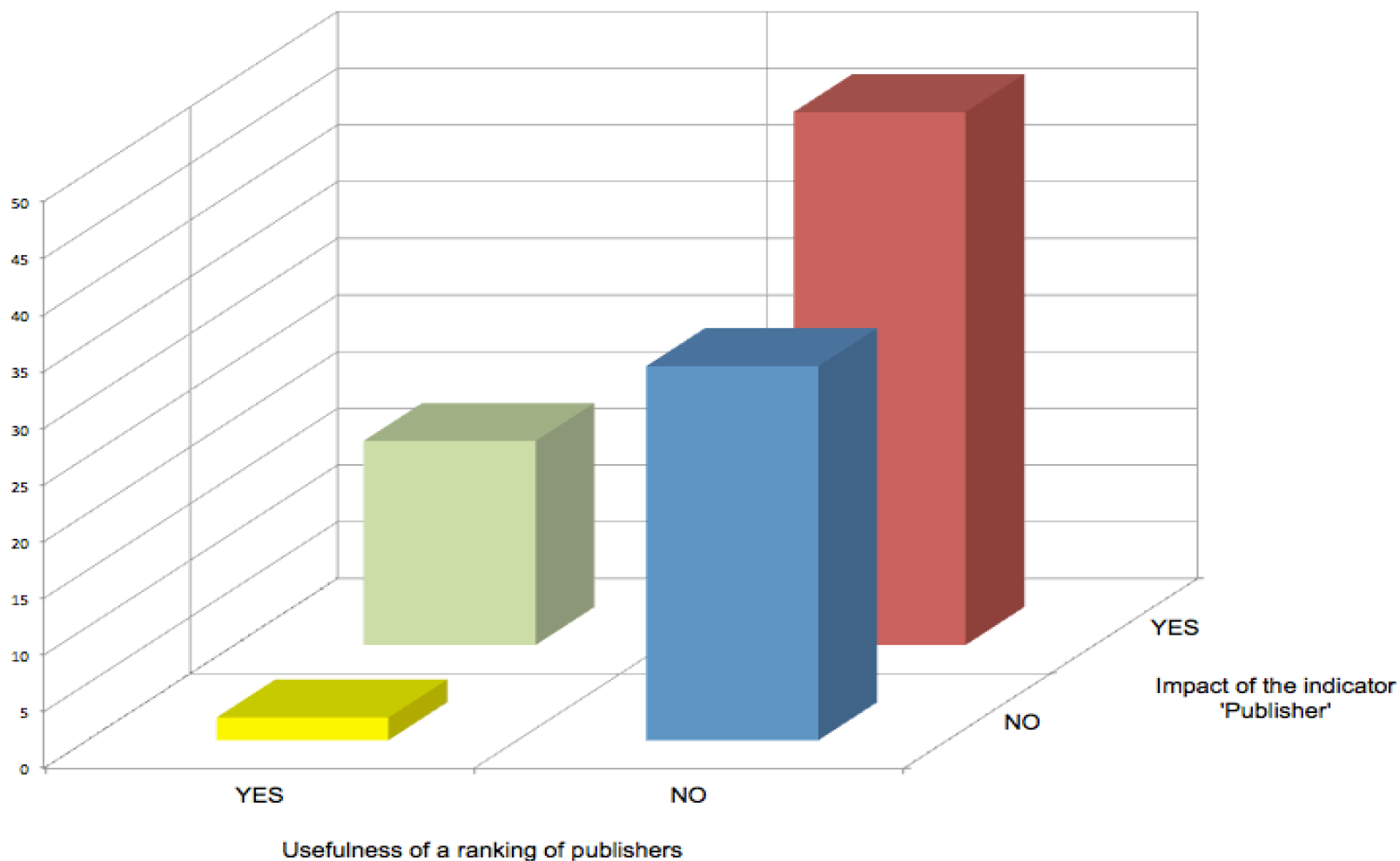


Position of top five indicators of quality according to each areas of law



Ranking of publisher

Comparison between the answers to questions about the usefulness of a ranking of publishers and answers on the impact of the indicator 'Publisher' with reference to quality



Food for thought

- Monographs as the principal 'coin of the realm'
- Peer review (non-blind) as the standard for assessing the quality of legal monograph
- Implicit recognition of publisher relevance but no consensus to the formalization of ranking of publishers
- Internationalization: which value?
- Societal impact: hard to measure
- Lack of qualification of reviewers

... see more in G. Peruginelli, *Research Quality Evaluation: The Case of Legal Studies*, in A. Bonaccorsi (ed.), *The Evaluation of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities. Lessons from the Italian Experience*, Springer, 2018

Key elements to have in mind and to take action

- Quality indicators should not be imposed upon legal scholars in a top down way
- Need for transparency and accountability of legal evaluation process
- Desirable harmonisation of legal research assessment exercises at European level
- Leading role of legal scholars in order to avoid negative effects (restrictions on academic freedom, approval ...).

Kiitos
peruginelli@ittig.cnr.it