# A Decade of Trends in Digital Librarianship Publications Analysed Through the OpenAlex Database

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Abstract

*The study explores digital librarianship trends using the OpenAlex database. It found subscription-based models dominate, accounting for 57.1% of publications, while open-access ones are increasing. The focus is on Web and Library Services, Library Science and Administration, and Information Literacy. Emerging topics like blockchain have lower engagement. The Russian State Library leads with 16 publications and 784 scholarly outputs. Publication trends from 2015-2024 show a peak in 2021, with the most cited paper discussing technology during COVID-19.*
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Keywords
Digital Librarianship; Bibliometric;, Open Access; VoSviewe;, AuthorshipPattern; Cluster; Publications;

Electronic access
The journal is available at www.jalis.in
DOI: **10.5281/zenodo.14992051**

**Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science**
ISSN: 2277-2219 Vol. 14. No.1. 2025. pp.88-96

## Introduction

Digital librarianship is a rapidly evolving field that blends traditional library science with digital technologies. As libraries increasingly shift toward digital content and services, the role of digital librarianship in managing and preserving this content has become central to information science. Bibliometric studies of digital librarianship help to quantify and analyze trends, themes, and the development of the field. A bibliometric study uses statistical and mathematical tools to analyze academic publications, including citation counts, author networks, and journal trends. In the context of digital librarianship, a bibliometric study aims to understand the growth of research in this area and identify prominent themes, influential publications, and evolving challenges in the field.

Over the past two decades, research in digital librarianship has grown significantly, with a surge in articles published in journals related to library and information science, digital archives, and information management. Early studies focused primarily on digitization techniques and metadata standards, as these were foundational for building digital collections. However, as the field matured, research expanded to cover areas such as digital preservation, intellectual property rights, and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning for managing digital resources. A prominent theme that emerges from bibliometric studies of digital librarianship is digital preservation. As more content is digitized, ensuring the long-term accessibility of digital materials has become a critical area of focus. This includes the technical aspects of preservation and the ethical and legal concerns regarding the ownership and distribution of digital content. Another key theme is metadata and cataloging, which is crucial for organizing and ensuring the discoverability of digital resources.

Bibliometric analysis highlights key journals that contribute significantly to the digital librarianship field, such as The Journal of Digital Information, Library Hi Tech, and Digital Library Perspectives. These journals regularly publish research on digitization methods, digital preservation practices, and the management of digital collections, making them essential sources of scholarly work in digital librarianship. Regarding influential authors, many leading experts in digital librarianship are affiliated with academic institutions or research centers that focus on information science, library studies, or

archival science. These researchers often collaborate across disciplines to address the multifaceted challenges in the field, from technical data storage issues to the social implications of digital access. Citation analysis usually reveals a network of highly cited scholars whose work has shaped current digital librarianship practices.

Bibliometric studies also reveal emerging trends, such as the growing importance of open access in digital librarianship. Many digital librarianship initiatives emphasize making knowledge freely accessible to the public, fostering global collaboration in preserving and sharing digital content. Additionally, with the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and machine learning, researchers are exploring how these technologies can assist in automating metadata generation, resource discovery, and even digital preservation efforts. However, significant challenges persist, particularly regarding digital equity and resource constraints. Ensuring equitable access to digital resources across different geographic regions and socio-economic groups remains an important issue. Furthermore, while digital librarianship offers many advantages, the financial and technical resources required for large-scale digitization and preservation projects can overwhelm smaller institutions or libraries in developing countries.

**Review of Literature**

Digital library literature has seen significant growth and characteristics over the years, with 61% of articles being single-authored. English is the most productive language, and the USA ranks first for the maximum number of journals. Verma & Shukla (2018) analyzed research and publication trends in the Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science, focusing on authorship patterns, references, and geographical distribution. Indrakshi das (2021) conducted a bibliometric analysis of World Digital Libraries – An International Journal, analyzing 149 contributions published between 2008-2020. The study concluded that the open access mode helps global users access various scholarly articles due to reduced cost barriers.

Pattar (2021) conducted a bibliometric analysis of Communications in Information Literacy (CIL) from 2007-2018, revealing that the number of papers published has grown substantially, with single-author contributions being the major chunk. Aboelmaged, Mouakket, and Ali (2024) conducted a scientometric analysis of digital library adoption over the past 30 years, revealing essential findings concerning research evolution, models, theories, intellectual foundations, emerging streams, frontiers, and hotspots that inform DLA decisions. This is the first attempt to comprehensively oversee the breadth and depth of DLA research over a long-time span.

**Methodology**

The study was developed with a bibliometric approach to digital librarianship-related research, considering a decade, 2015 to 2024, for data extraction from a premier database, *OpenAlex*. An advanced search was made in the OpenAlex database usingthe keyword ‘Digital Librarianship’. The data wasanalyzed using MS Excel.The downloaded results were analyzed using specific parameters with the help of bibliometric and science mapping tools, especially VoSviewer. The key contributions of the present comprehensive bibliometric study of digital librarianship can be seen in terms of the following aspects: access type, source type, primary topic, top fifteen authorship institutions, top ten articles with the highest number of citations based on the primary data downloaded from OpenAlex and Citation network analysis from the perspective of co-authorship structure of papers, bibliographic coupling for sources done through VoSviewer.

**Objectives**

- To assess the distribution and growth of research publications in digital librarianship from 2015 to 2024.
- To identify and evaluate the main topics of interest within digital librarianship research publications.
- To analyze the publication output of leading institutions and authors in digital librarianship research.
- To assess the various formats of scholarly outputs in digital librarianship from 2015-2024.
- To analyze citation metrics of key publications to understand trends in research interest.
- To explore the clustering of authors in digital librarianship research, identifying the concentration of themes and potential gaps in research representation.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The total number of records is 784 publications about Digital Librarianship downloaded, analyzed, and interpreted by various heads to fulfill the objective of the studies.

**Year-wise number of publications**

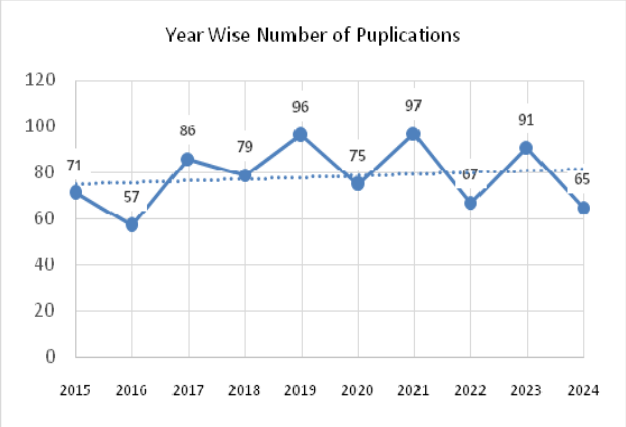



**Figure 1- Year-wise number of publications**

The figure1outlines the number of publications related to digital librarianship from 2015 to 2024, with 784 publications recorded over the ten-year period.The data shows an overall positive trend from 2015 to 2021, where publications peaked at 97 in 2021. This indicates a growing interest in digital librarianship during this period. There is a notable decline in publications in 2022 (67 publications), which is 31 publications lower than the peak in 2021. The number of publications rebounded to 91 in 2023, suggesting a resurgence in interest or activity in the field. The data indicates a projected decline to 65 publications in 2024, which may suggest a potential downward trend or fluctuation in interest. The analysis of the publication data on digital librarianship from 2015 to 2024 reveals a field characterized by growth, fluctuation, and potential challenges.

While the overall trend appears positive, with a total of 784 publications, the significant year-to-year variations indicate that stakeholders in digital librarianship should remain attentive to emerging trends and influences that could impact future research and publication efforts.

**Access Type of the content**

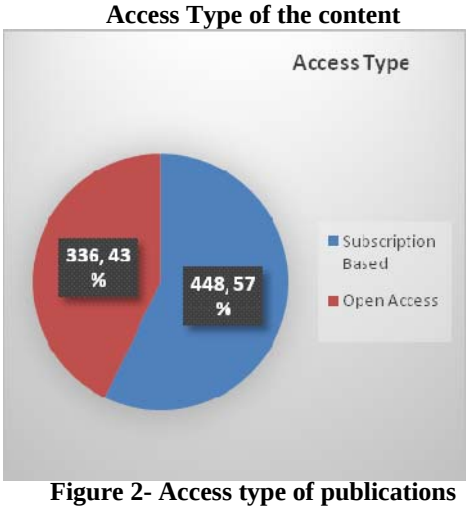



**Figure 2- Access type of publications**

The Subscription-based model accounts for a majority (57.1%) of the total publications about digital librarianship(Figure 2). This suggests that traditional subscription models remain prevalent in the current publishing landscape. Although open-access publications represent a smaller share (42.9%), this category has gained traction in recent years due to increased advocacy for open science and broader accessibility of research. The current proportion indicates a significant opportunity for growth in Open Access publishing. Recent trends in academic publishing show a shift towards Open Access due to funding policies and institutional mandates. The current data could reflect a transitional phase where Subscription-based models still dominate but may be challenged by the increasing demand for Open Access.

**Primary Topics about Digital Librarianship**

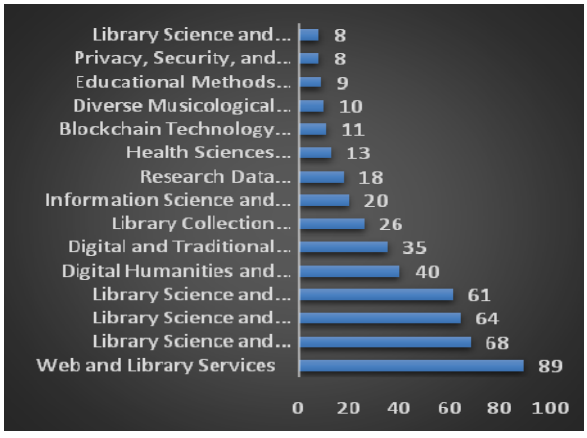



**Figure 3- Primary Topics**

Figure3 depicts the primary topics of digital librarianship research publications. The most prominent topic is "Web and Library Services" with a score of 89, suggesting a high level of engagement or research interest in this area.Following closely are "Library Science and Administration" (68) and "Library Science and Information Literacy" (64), indicating a strong focus on administrative and educational aspects of library science.“Digital Humanities and Scholarship" (40) and "Digital and Traditional Archives Management" (35) reflect a growing interest in the intersection of digital technologies and traditional library practices.Topics like "Blockchain Technology in Education and Learning" (11) and "Privacy, Security, and Data Protection" (8) suggest emerging concerns in the digital landscape, though they currently have lower engagement compared to traditional library topics. Topics such as "Diverse Musicological Studies" (10) and "Educational Methods and Media Use" (9) show lesser engagement, which may indicate niche interests or areas that require further development and attention.

**Top 15 Authorship Institutions**

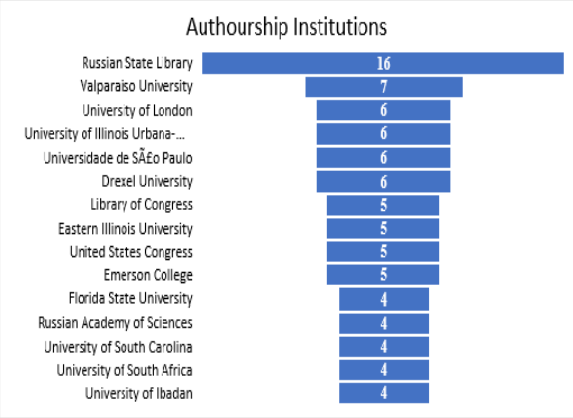



**Figure 4- Top 15 Authorship Institutions**

TheFigure 4 shows the top 15 institutions, the number of publications about digital librarianship, and their corresponding ranks. The institutions range from libraries to universities, with the count likely indicating the number of items, publications, or contributions related to each entity. The Russian State Library leads with publications of 16, significantly higher than any other institution. This suggests a strong presence or output in whatever metric is being measured, possibly indicating a vast collection or many publications.Several institutions are tied with six publications (University of London, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Universidade de São Paulo, Drexel University). This indicates a competitive environment among these universities, which are all ranked closely behind the top institutions. The institutions ranked from 7 to 10 (Library of Congress, Eastern Illinois University, United States Congress, Emerson College) have publications ranging from 5 to 4. This shows a drop-off in publications but still represents a notable presence in the ranking. The last five institutions (Florida State University, Russian Academy of Sciences, University of South Carolina, University of South Africa, University of Ibadan) have four publications, indicating they are on the lower end of the spectrum in terms of the publications about digital librarianship.

**Source Type of publications**

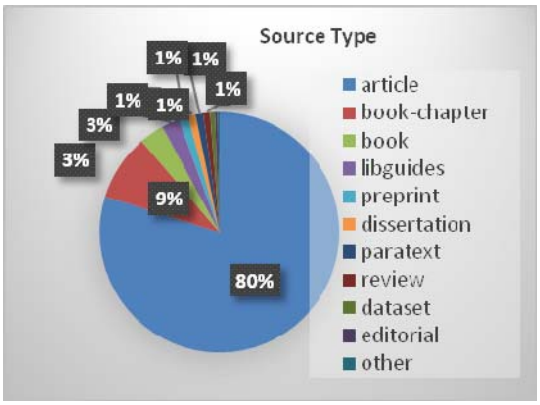



**Figure 5- Source Type of Publications**

Figure 5presents 784 scholarly outputs across various categories of digital librarianship. The highest representation is in the "article" category, which comprises 80% (N= 626) of the total outputs. The other categories contribute significantly less to the total count. The majority of the outputs are journal articles, which may reflect the preference or trend in academia towards publishing research findings in journal articles. This could also indicate a higher level of accessibility and dissemination of research through articles compared to other formats.The second most common output type is book chapters 9% (N=70), which may suggest that researchers also contribute to edited volumes or collaborative works. This could indicate a trend towards interdisciplinary research or the importance of comprehensive reviews in specific fields.The remaining categories (books, libguides, preprints, etc.) show significantly lower

counts, indicating that these formats are less frequently utilized in this dataset. This could suggest a more traditional focus on articles and book chapters over other forms of scholarly communication. Although limited (N=10), preprints indicate an emerging trend in rapidly sharing research findings before peer review. This is particularly relevant in fast-moving fields such as science and technology.

**Top Ten articles/authors based on citations**

The counts for datasets (N=5) and editorials (N=3) are pretty low, suggesting that these forms of scholarly output are less prioritized or under-represented in this dataset. This could imply a need for greater emphasis on data sharing and editorial contributions in the academic community.

**Table 1 -** Top Ten articles/authors based on citations

| S. N | Title | Author | Citations | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Connecting Through Technology During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic: Avoiding Zoom Fatigue | Brenda K. Wiederhold | 443 | 1 |
| 2 | Information literacy and fake news: How the field of librarianship can help combat the epidemic of fake news | Saoirse De Paor\|Bahareh Heravi | 136 | 2 |
| 3 | Introduction to Information Science | David Bawden\|LynRobinson\| LucianoFloridi | 126 | 3 |
| 4 | Digital transformation readiness: perspectives on Academia and Library outcomes in information Literacy | Marek Deja\|DorotaRak\|Brigitte Bell | 99 | 4 |
| 5 | Artificial Intelligence in Libraries | Isaiah Michael Omame\|Juliet C. Alex-Nmecha | 68 | 5 |
| 6 | What to make of maker spaces | Ina Fourie\|Anika Meyer | 59 | 6 |
| 7 | Global research on information literacy: a bibliometric analysis from 2005 to 2014 | Shankar Reddy Kolle | 57 | 7 |
| 8 | Convergence of digital humanities and digital libraries | Ying Zhang\|ShuLiu\|Emilee Mathews | 53 | 8 |
| 9 | Understanding research students'behavioral intention in the adoption of digital libraries | Asad Khan\|Saima Qutab | 48 | 9 |
| 10 | Knowledge visualization and mapping of information literacy, 1975-2018 | Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha | 44 | 10 |

Table 1 indicates about the digital librarianship related publication with the highest citations is "Connecting Through Technology During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic: Avoiding Zoom Fatigue" by Brenda K. Wiederhold, with 443 citations.The publication with the lowest citations is "Knowledge visualization and mapping of information literacy, 1975-2018" by Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha, with 44 citations. The top-ranked publication is directly related to the pandemic, indicating a significant interest in how technology is utilized during crises. This suggests that topics related to COVID-19 have garnered substantial academic attention and citations.Several publications focus on information literacy, including the second entry, "Information literacy and fake news," which highlights a growing concern around misinformation, especially relevant in the digital age.The presence of topics such as "Artificial Intelligence in Libraries" and "Digital transformation readiness" suggests a shift towards integrating advanced technologies in library science and information management.

**Co-authorshipPattern**

Figure 6 shows that most authors belong toCluster 1, indicating a possible concentration of themes, topics, or characteristics within this cluster.The ratio of authors in Cluster 1 (“Andrew Zalot, Bobbie Sartin Long, Christopher P. Dwyer, Denise Adkins, Denise E. Agosto, Diana Acosta, Elizabeth Bonsignore, Gabrielle salib, Julia burns Petrella, June Abbas, kerry Townsend, Lesley s. j. farmer, marilynsantacruz, nitzankoren, rachel m. Magee”) to Cluster 2 (Maria Cahill, Soohyung Joo) is 15:2, which suggests that Cluster 1 might represent a more prevalent or popular area of research or writing.

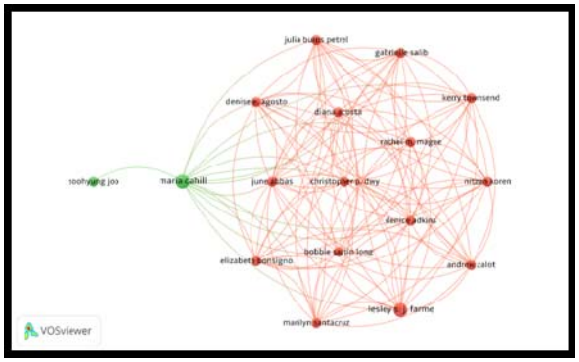



**Figure 6. Co-authorship Pattern**

Cluster 1 is significantly largerthan Cluster 2 (15 vs. 2), which may imply that this cluster encompasses a broader range of subjects or is more inclusive of various authors and their works. The stark contrast in the number of authors between the two clusters suggests a potential area for further exploration. Understanding why Cluster 2 has fewer authors could reveal insights about emerging trends or gaps in research.

The authors in Cluster 1 may have diverse backgrounds and expertise, which could lead to a rich variety of perspectives within that cluster. Analyzing their publications or contributions could provide a deeper understanding of the themes prevalent in this cluster. The concentration of authors in Cluster 1 could indicate a need for more collaborative efforts or discussions within this group to address topics of common interest. The limited number of authors in Cluster 2 might suggest opportunities for new research initiatives or collaborations to expand knowledge in this area.

**Keyword Occurrence – Key Concepts**

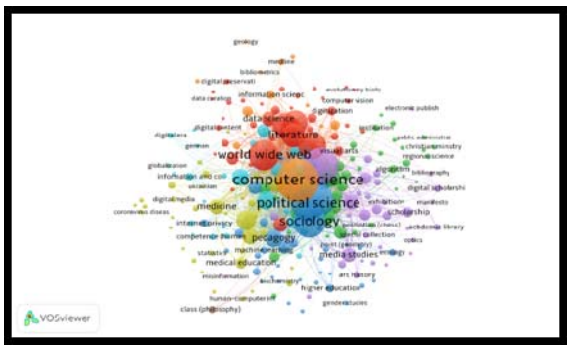



**Figure 7 – Keyword Occurrence – Key Concepts**

- Cluster 1: Contains 43 concepts related to digital technologies, data management, and the arts.
- Cluster 2: Comprises 36 mathematics, philosophy, and engineering concepts.
- Cluster 3: Includes 38 concepts focused on education, social sciences, and intellectual freedom.
- Cluster 4: Encompasses 36 concepts primarily related to health, social issues, and research methodologies.
- Cluster 5: Contains 37 concepts related to libraries, humanities, and digital scholarship.
- Cluster 6: Comprises 30 business, economics, and digital transformation concepts.
- Cluster 7: Includes 11 concepts primarily related to bibliometrics and information science.
- Cluster 8: Contains 1 concept focused on philosophy.
- Cluster 9: Contains 1 concept related to misinformation.

Figure seven dictated keyword occurrence based on key concepts in the largest cluster, Cluster 1, with 43 concepts, while the most minor clusters (8 and 9) have only 1 concept each. This disparity indicates that specific themes are more prevalent or interconnected than others.The average number of concepts per cluster is approximately 25. This suggests that most clusters contain a moderate number of related concepts, while Clusters 1, 3, and 5 stand out with larger groupings. Clusters 1, 4, 5, and 6 emphasize digital technologies and their applications, indicating a trend towardintegrating digital tools in various fields, particularly in education, health, and humanities. Concepts such as "data management," "digital literacy," and "information ethics" appear in multiple clusters, illustrating the interdisciplinary nature of modern research and practice. This reflects a growing recognition of the need for cross-disciplinary collaboration. Cluster 3 focuses heavily on education and social sciences, which suggests an ongoing societal interest in improving educational practices, information literacy, and addressing social issues. Cluster 4's focus on health-related concepts, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights the significant impact of current events on research themes and priorities. Cluster 6 indicates a strong emphasis on the implications of digital transformation in business and economics, suggesting that these areas are rapidly evolving in response to technological advancements.

**Bibliographiccoupling for sources**

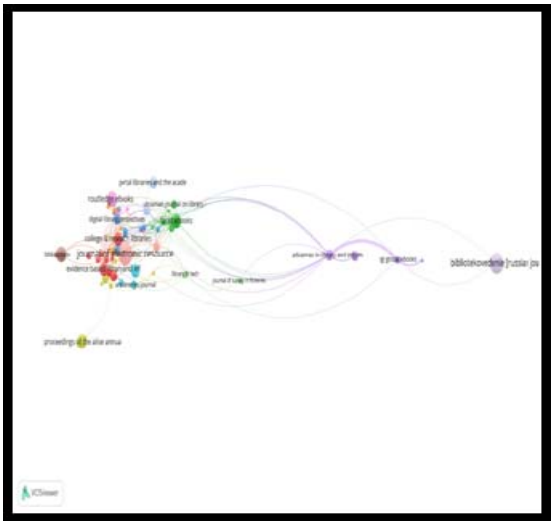


**Figure 8 - Bibliographic coupling for sources**

The figure 8 shows that bibliographic coupling sources and it consists of 14 distinct clusters. Cluster 1 has the highest number of sources (13), indicating a strong grouping of foundational or core literature in library and information science. Clusters 2 to 10 show a gradual decrease in the number of sources, with clusters 11 to 14 having fewer sources (3 or fewer), suggesting these may represent more niche or specialized topics. The first few clusters (1-4) encompass a wide range of foundational literature, including journals and proceedings essential for understanding the discipline. As the clusters progress, the number of sources decreases, indicating that the topics may become more specialized or that fewer publications exist in those areas. Clusters 7 and 8 suggest a growing interest in knowledge management and information quality, which are increasingly relevant in the context of digital transformation and data management in libraries. The presence of journals focusing on diversity and inclusion (Cluster 6) indicates an emerging trend towards addressing social issues within library science. Several journals from non-English speaking countries (e.g., Romanian, Russian) in clusters 7 and 14 suggest an international perspective in library and information science research, which may cater to diverse educational and cultural contexts. The presence of journals related to technology (e.g., digital libraries, information technology) in various clusters indicates that library and information science increasingly intersect with other fields, such as computer science and social studies.

**Findings**

The Subscription-based model makes up 57.1% of publications, indicating it is still popular. Open Access publications are growing at 42.9% due to advocacy for open science. The main topic is "Web and Library Services" with a score of 89, showing strong interest. Other topics like "Library Science and Administration" and "Information Literacy" also received attention. Emerging topics like "Blockchain" and "Data Protection" have lower engagement. Lesser-known areas like "Diverse Musicological Studies" show niche interests. The figure highlights the top 15 institutions regarding publications on digital librarianship. The Russian State Library leads with 16 publications, indicating strong output. Several universities, including the University of London and University of Illinois, each have six publications. Others range from four to five publications, showing a competitive landscape. The figure shows 784 scholarly outputs in digital librarianship, with 80% being journal articles (N=626). Book chapters represent 9% (N=70). Other formats like books, libguides, and preprints are used less frequently. Preprints (N=10) show a rise in sharing research quickly, especially in fast fields. Low counts for datasets (N=5) and editorials (N=3) suggest these need more focus in academia. The text outlines the publication trends in digital librarianship from 2015 to 2024, with a total of 784 publications. Publications peaked at 97 in 2021, declined to 67 in 2022, rebounded to 91 in 2023, and are projected to drop to 65 in 2024.

The most cited publication is "Connecting Through Technology During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic: Avoiding Zoom Fatigue," with 443 citations, while the least cited is "Knowledge Visualization and Mapping of Information Literacy, 1975-2018," with 44 citations. This highlights interest in technology during COVID-19 and information literacy concerns. Topics like "Artificial Intelligence in Libraries" show a move towards advanced technology in library science. Most authors belong to Cluster 1, suggesting it has concentrated themes or topics. The ratio of authors in Cluster 1 to Cluster 2 is 15:2, indicating Cluster 1 might be more popular or diverse in research. Understanding the fewer authors in Cluster 2 could highlight gaps or emerging trends. Analyzing Cluster 1's authors could offer varied perspectives and promote collaboration on shared topics. Cluster 1 is the largest, with 43 concepts, while Clusters 8 and 9 are the smallest, with only 1 concept each. Most clusters have about 25 concepts,

but Clusters 1, 3, and 5 are more extensive. Clusters emphasize digital technologies in education, health, and humanities, showing a need for cross-disciplinary collaboration. Cluster 3 focuses on education and social sciences, while Cluster 4 highlights health issues from the COVID-19 pandemic. Cluster 6 examines digital transformation in business and economics.The bibliographic coupling analysis of the provided data table reveals a structured landscape of library and information science literature, with significant insights into core areas of research, emerging trends, and potential gaps in the literature. Future research efforts could focus on enhancing the representation of specialized topics and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration to address the field's evolving needs.

**Conclusion**

This study reflects a clear majority of digital librarianship-based publications are Subscription-based publications over Open Access. While Subscription-based models currently dominate, the growing interest in Open Access signifies a changing landscape in academic publishing. Also highlights the key areas of interest within library and information sciences, revealing both strengths and opportunities for future exploration. The data suggests a robust engagement in traditional library services while also pointing towards emerging trends that could shape the future of the field.The data analysis indicates a strong preference for articles as the primary mode of scholarly communication. While this reflects an efficient means of sharing research findings, it also highlights potential gaps in the breadth of academic output. Encouraging a more diverse range of publication types could enrich the academic landscape and foster a more comprehensive approach to research dissemination.

This bibliometric study reflects a complex trend characterized by significant fluctuations and an overall downward trajectory in recent years about digital librarianship. The analysis highlights the need to examine further the factors contributing to these changes, especially the drastic shifts observed in the last few years. Also found valuable insights into the current trends in information science, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and information literacy. The significant variance in citation counts highlights the varying levels of impact and interest in different topics.The analysis provides significant insights into current trends and patterns in various fields. The emphasis on digital technologies, interdisciplinary connections, and social issues suggests a dynamic landscape where research and practice continually evolve. The clustering of concepts indicates thematic relationships that can guide future research directions and collaborative efforts across disciplines.

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