

RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: GLOBAL BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS (2015–2025)

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The importance of Research Data Management (RDM) for academic libraries is a strategic function, as it can act as the supporting element to organize preserve share and reuse research data across research lifecycle. In response to the increasing priorities of open science, digital research infrastructures and data-intensive science, the research on this topic enhances rapidly. This study explores the worldwide research contribution on RDM in academic libraries looking at it from bibliometric analysis of the related literature.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A bibliometric approach was adopted and the Lens database was used as data source.

The publications issued from 2015 to 2025 were selected through applying a formal search strategy. The search was applied on 2 August 2026 and the search results comprised 821 articles obtained based on inclusion/exclusion criteria. The data extracted from the search results have been analyzed using descriptive bibliometric measures like publication trends over the years, most relevant journal, most productive authors, most productive institutions and countries, highly cited publications, and frequently-used words as keywords, etc.

Results: The study revealed that there is an increase in the number of research data management in academic libraries throughout the study period. Moreover, the year 2021 recorded the highest number of publications, which means research data management and services in academic libraries attract a significant amount of attention worldwide. The study highlights the dominant publication outlets, prolific authors, organizations and countries contributing to the domain.

Identification of research frontiers and trending themes based on keywords analysis reveals that main research threads include RDM, Academic Libraries, Research Data Services, Open Science and Data Management. Originality/Value: This paper provides a bibliometric analysis of international scientific research activity on Research Data Management in Academic Libraries in the period 2015-2025.

It considers the leading authors publications, institutions and research areas, as well as publication patterns over the years. The analysis provides insight into potential future research directions. Researchers, librarians, higher education institutions, and policymakers can use it to improve research data services and practices.

KEYWORDS: Research Data Management; Academic Libraries; Bibliometric; Research Data Service; Open Science; Lens Database; Library and Information Science.

1. INTRODUCTION

The growth of digital research has changed how researchers communicate. It has led to a significant rise in the amount of research data created, stored, and shared. Because of this, Research Data Management (RDM) has become a crucial part of the research cycle. RDM includes planning, managing, describing, preserving, and sharing research data for ongoing access and future use ([Buys & Shaw, 2015](#); [Hickson et al. 2016](#); [Cox et al. 2017](#)).

RDM can also support research transparency and reproducibility while helping researchers adhere to institutional requirements as well as funder and sponsor policies. As a result, academic libraries have evolved and taken on new roles. As well as providing library and information organization and collection management, academic libraries now often provide services like research data planning, metadata



registration, digital curation, institutional repository management and researcher training ([Martin, 2017](#); [Catalano et al. 2018](#)).

Academic libraries can be significant in supporting researchers during the research data lifecycle and boosting institutional research capability. The expansion of open science and digital research infrastructures is also contributing to the rapid growth of RDM services in academic libraries. Libraries are building capacity in technological infrastructure, data repositories, and professional development to enhance support for research and data sharing ([Chiware & Becker, 2018](#); [Cox, 2021](#)).

More up-to-date literature suggests that emerging technologies like AI and more sophisticated digital tools are transforming the delivery of services in academic libraries through enhanced data discovery, automation, and research support ([Ngoaketsi, 2021](#); [Cox, 2022](#)). Prior research has explored various aspects of Research Data Management, like institution's preparedness, librarians skills, research data services, digital preservation, and policy development ([Kriesberg et al. 2017](#); [Smale et al. 2018](#); [Vejvoda et al. 2021](#)).

While these studies have contributed valuable insights, they have concentrated on an individual institution or a region's experience or certain elements of research data services.

So, a general analysis of research worldwide to detect publication areas, key researchers, subjects, and target bands for research prospective is still needed. Bibliometric analysis refers to quantitative studies of the development and structure of research areas based on information about published works, citations of these works, researchers, journals, institutes, countries, and topics under investigation.

Because of this, this study offers a bibliometric analysis of worldwide research on Research Data Management in Academic Libraries based on articles Indexes in Lens database from 2015 to 2025. The publication tendencies, top journals, prolific authors, institutions as well as countries, top cited works, highly frequent keywords, and a general research progress of Research Data Management within academic libraries are explored through this study.

1.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- (1) Examine the overall annual publication trends of Research Data Management research published between 2015 and 2025.
- (2) Identify the most productive publication sources, authors, institutions, and countries
- (3) Identify the highly cited publications based on citation counts.
- (4) Identify the most-occurring author keywords and emerging research themes/buzzwords, and
- (5) To summarize world's research into Research Data Management in academic libraries and propose future research areas based on bibliometric analysis of published articles.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This research used a bibliometric research approach to explore the research landscape of RDM in Academic Library environment world-wide.

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method of analyzing the scientific literature, based on the study of such indicators as productivity, citation impact, authors, journals, institutions, countries, and fields of research.

The bibliographic data were retrieved from the Lens database because it is an open-source platform providing scholarly publication, patent, and citation data by researchers. Lens was used because of its wide coverage, citation information, search and export features, and suitability for bibliometric analysis.

2.2 Search Strategy

A search was undertaken in the Lens database on 2/8/2026 to locate any publications on Research Data Management in Academic Libraries. Searches were limited to the years 2015-2025. These search queries was used:

("Research Data Management" OR "Research Data Service" OR "Research Data") and ("Academic Library" OR "University Library" OR "Research Library")

We limited the search to English-language publications. Following abstract screening and the application of the predetermined inclusion/exclusion criteria, 821 publications were included in the final bibliometric dataset.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To guarantee the relevance and quality of the dataset, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Publication related to research data management in academic libraries	Publications unrelated to research topic
Publications indexed in the lens database	Duplicate records
Publications published between 2015 and 2025	Publications published outside the selected time period
English -language publications	Non -English publications
Scholarly publications, including journal articles, conference papers, reviews, and book chapters	Records with incomplete bibliographic information

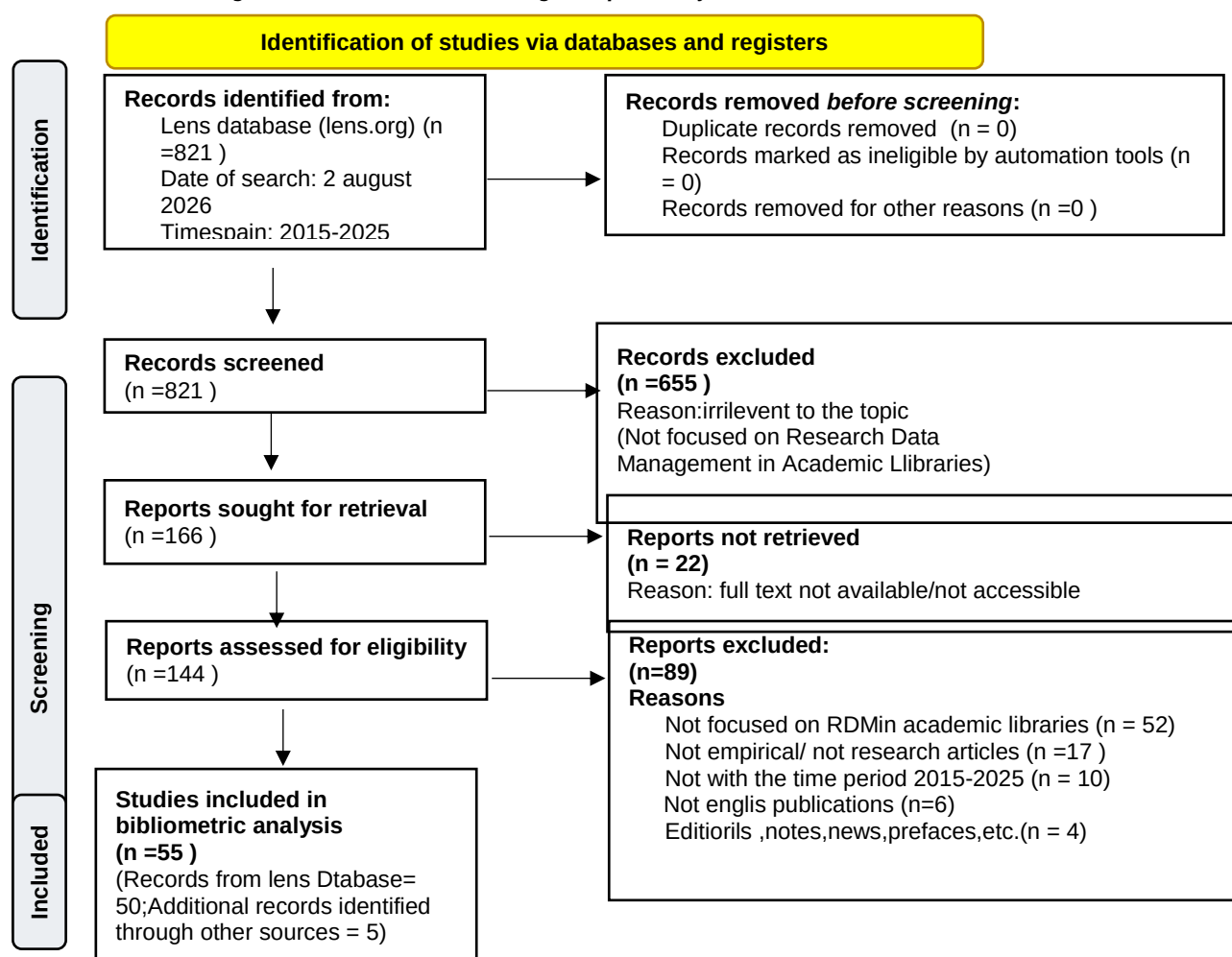
2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The bibliographic information of retrieved articles was exported from the Lens database (source: publication description author publication year, source description detail address country number of citations, author keyword, Keywords used in this study, were used as search string) as CSV file.

Before bibliometric analysis, the articles were selected to fit with the purpose of this research.

A total of 821 articles was finalized for bibliometric analysis. Flow chart outlining the selection process of studies, adapted from the PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram.

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process



*RDM =Research Data Management

*Source: Prepared by the Author

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Overview of the Retrieved Dataset

In total, 821 publications on Research Data Management in Academic Libraries were recovered from the Lens database. Publication dates range from year 2015 to 2025 and they reflect the global research on the topic. Publications sources include peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings reviews book chapters and other types of publications found in the Lens database. We performed a bibliometric study mainly looking for publication trends, most productive sources of papers authors institutions, countries and so on, analysis of highly citable papers, and identification of author keywords that are most frequently appearing. These data provide us with a good understanding of the development and the status of science in the field of Research Data Management and of what areas around it are active at a global level. We shall report the results through tables, figures and descriptive statistics in the coming sections.

TABLE 2: General Characteristics of Dataset

Characteristics	Description
Database	Lens
Search Date	2 August 2026
Study Period	2015- 2026
Total Publications	821
Language	English
Research Method	Bibliometric Analysis

3.2 Annual Publication Trends

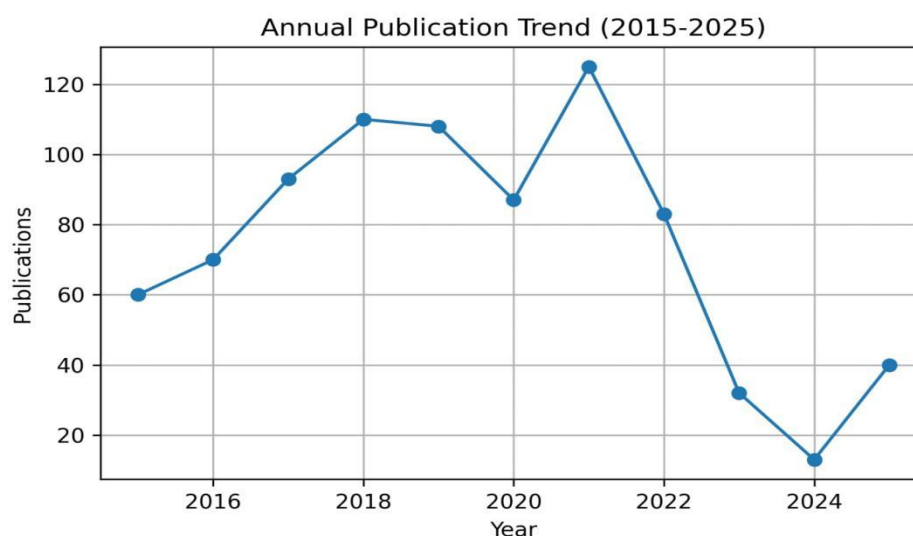
The annual distribution of publications provides useful perception into the growth and development of Research Data Management research in Academic Libraries. Table 3 and Figure 2 present the yearly publication output between 2015 and 2025.

Table 3: Annual Publication Trends (2015-2025)

Year	No of Publications
2015	60
2016	70
2017	93
2018	110
2019	108
2020	87
2021	125
2022	83
2023	32
2024	13
2025	40
Total	821



Figure 2: Yearly Publication output between 2015 and 2025.



Interpretation:

The trend of publication has shown a great growth in academic library-related scholarship output for Research Data Management during the period under study. The publication numbers went up continuously between 60 and 110 publications for the years 2015 to 2018, which indicates more awareness about library research data services. The publication output of 2021 was the highest one, with 125 publications, which showed interest at a global level in research data management and digital research support initiatives, in particular, open science.

The publication output was at the lowest levels after the 2021 peak at 13 papers only in 2024. A lower number of publications These days could be partly due to indexing delays in the databases or time that has passed for the newly published literature to appear fully indexed. Publication numbers have risen again to 40 papers in 2025 showing that the scholar community remains interested in the subject area. Overall, publication patterns show that Research Data Management has become increasingly important for research in Library and Information Science. This shift is mainly driven by the growing role of academic libraries in managing research data.

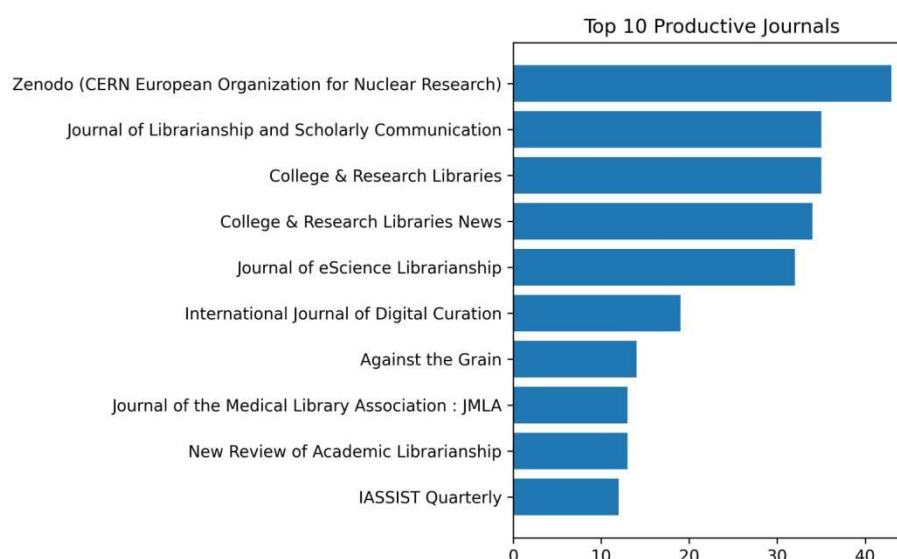
3.3 Most Productive Publication Sources

The analysis of publication sources can provide an overview of journals and scholarly literature. The following platforms have made the most impact in sharing the results of studies on Research Data Management in Academic Libraries. The top-producing publication sources will help us to know where the most authors publish research and what journals have been the main pillars in developing this branch of Study. For research reporting, documents without a source title (i.e., Unknown) were not. Since their sources cannot be identified, they are included in the list.

Table 4: Top Publication Sources

Rank	Publication Source	Publications
1	Zenodo (CERN European Organization for Nuclear Research)	43
2	College & Research Libraries	35
3	Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication	35
4	College & Research News	34
5	Journal of eScience Librarianship	32
6	International journal of digital cu-ration	19
7	Against the Grain	14
8	Journal of the Medical Librarian Association	13
9	New Review of Academic Librarianship	13
10	IASSIST Quarterly	12

Figure 3: Top 10 Productive Journals



Interpretation

A closer look at the results revealed that the publications of Zenodo (European Organization for Nuclear Research) took the lead with 43 items. The second category contained the peer-reviewed sources with College & Research Libraries and Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication being the most productive sources with 35 articles each. College & Research Libraries News came in at a very respectable number four by publishing 34 papers, whereas the Journal of eScience Librarianship was slightly behind with 32 publications. Other sources with quite a high number of publication figures are like this: International Journal of Digital Curation (19 papers), Against the Grain (14 journals), Journal of the Medical Library Association (13 papers) and New Review of Academic Librarianship (13 papers).

Publication sources of this kind have greatly facilitated Research Data Management research dissemination by showcasing scholarly studies covering research data services, digital curation, institutional repositories, open science and scholarly communication. A very major point that is being highlighted here is that Library and Information Science journals are still the major channels for publication. That is, even when the topic is Research Data Management, one can still expect Library and Information Science journals to house such articles. As can be seen, Library and Information Science has embraced the field of Research Data Management to such a degree that it becomes both a very important and rapidly developing field within Library and Information Science.

Publication diversity is further a sign that Research Data Management does not belong to just one area of study. Instead it includes different subjects. These subjects are preservation, data stewardship, information technology and scholarly communication. These are the things that make Research Data Management very cross-disciplinary.

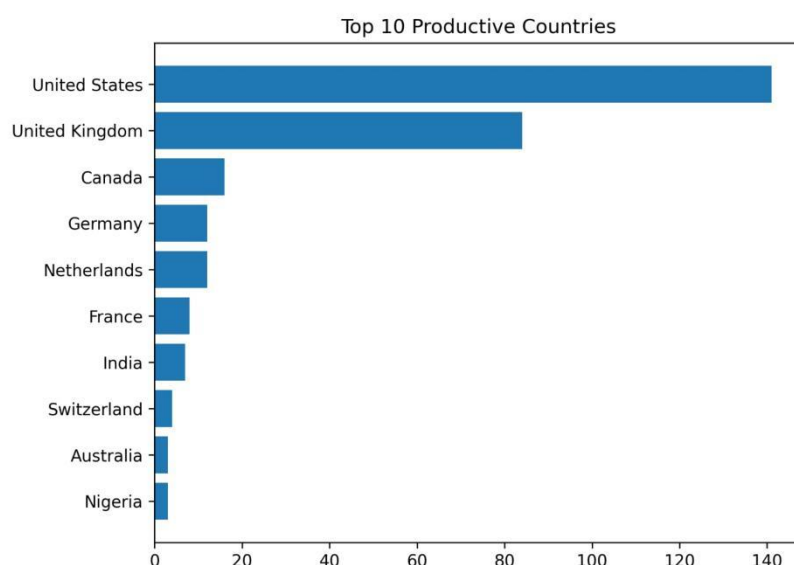
3.5 Publication Distribution by Source Country

This analysis shows top countries that serve as major publishing hubs for research in this field

Table 5: Top Source Countries

Rank	Source Country	Publications
1	United states	141
2	United kingdom	84
3	Canada	16
4	Germany	12
5	Netherlands	12
6	France	8
7	India	7
8	Switzerland	4
9	Australia	3
10	Nigeria	3

Figure 4: Top 10 Productive Countries



Interpretation

According to the results, among the 164 articles identified, 141 were published by authors affiliated with American institutions. Following them are authors from the UK, who published 84 Papers. The countries that provided the most significant contribution to the development of the given field are Canada 16 Papers and Germany, the Netherlands 12 Papers each, respectively. Besides, the countries that made a considerable contribution to the growth of Library and Information Science are France 8 Papers, India 7 Papers, Switzerland, Australia, Nigeria 6 Papers each. Remarkably, the number of source countries that appeared in the top ten is relatively small compared to the total number of countries represented in the sample.

The overwhelming majority of papers originate from North America and Europe, which suggests that Library and Information Science journals and publishers are more prominent on these continents. Nevertheless, the fact that researchers from developing countries such as India and Nigeria also made significant contributions to the growth of Research Data Management highlights the increasing interest in the subject across the globe and the growing need for international collaboration.

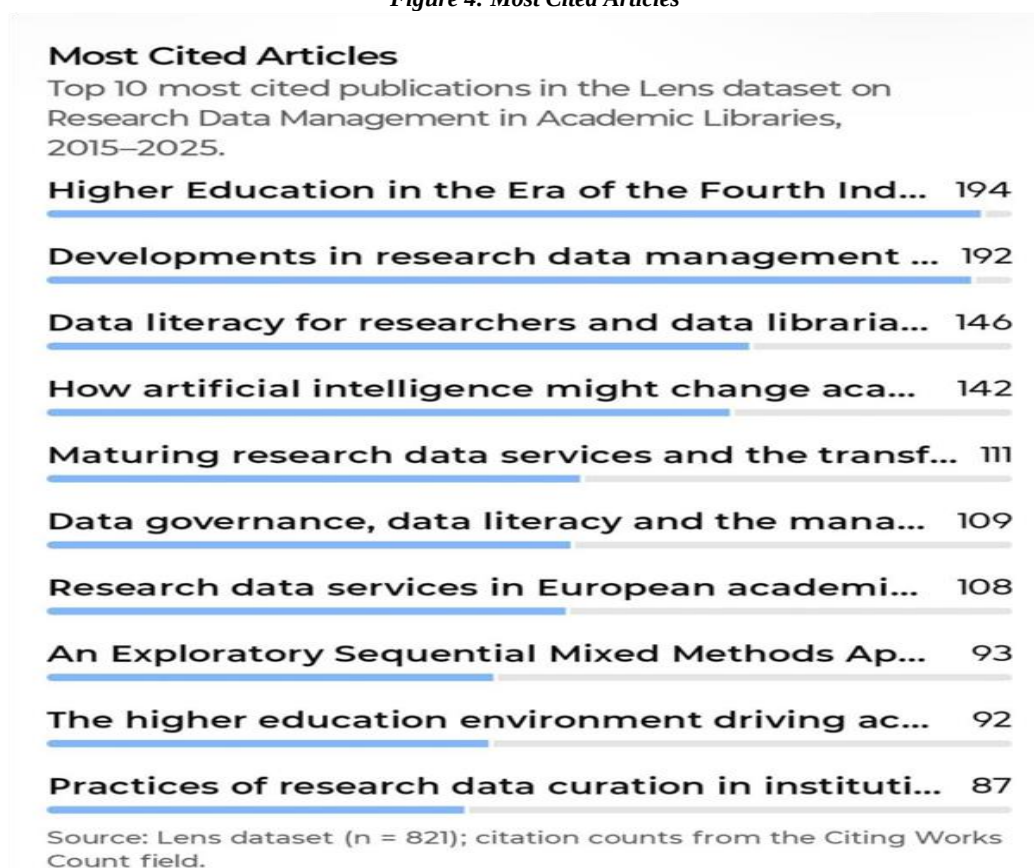
Table 6. Top 10 Most Cited Article

Citation analysis constitutes one of the most prevalent techniques in bibliometric researches, enabling the identification of papers with significant attention from the academic community.

Rank	Article Title	Year	Citations
1	Higher Education in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution	2018	194
2	Developments in Research Data Management in Academic Libraries: Towards an Understanding of Research Data Service Maturity	2017	192
3	Data Literacy for Researchers and Data Librarians	2017	146
4	How Artificial Intelligence Might Change Academic Library Work: Applying the Competencies Literature's and the Theory of the Professions	2022	142

5	Maturing Research Data Services and the Transformation of Academic Librarians	2019	111
6	Data Governance, Data Literacy and the Management of Data	2022	109
7	Research Data Services in European Academic Research Libraries	2017	108
8	An Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Approach to Understanding Researchers Data Management Practices	2019	93
9	The Higher Education Environment Driving Academic Library Strategy: a Political, Economic, Social and Technological (PEST) Analysis	2021	92
10	Practice of Research Data Curation in Institutional Repositories	2018	87

Figure 4: Most Cited Articles



(Source: lens dataset (n=821; citation counts from the citing works count field.)

Interpretation

The citation analysis results demonstrate that Higher Education in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is the most cited article within the dataset, garnering an impressive 194 citations. The second spot is occupied by Developments in Research Data Management in Academic Libraries: Towards an Understanding of Research Data Service Maturity, which has been cited 192 times, which underlines its significance in terms of Research Data Management studies.

The other highly cited (and high-impact) articles are Data Literacy for Researchers and Data Librarians (146 citations) and How Artificial Intelligence Might Change Academic Library Work (142 citations). This suggests that there is a growing interest in scholarly communication in the realms of data literacy and artificial intelligence. Indeed, the lower-tiered articles on the list mostly concern research data services, data governance, institutional repositories, strategic planning, and data curation, and they are cited numerous times as well. This underlines the sheer scope and scale of Research Data Management studies, which now unite the fields of digital scholarship, open science, information management, and academic libraries, and therefore impact a variety of disciplines.

Highly cited articles such as the ones detected by the present analysis serve as the foundation for subsequent studies of the topic, as they encapsulate the essence of the field while providing direction and inspiration for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers across the globe.

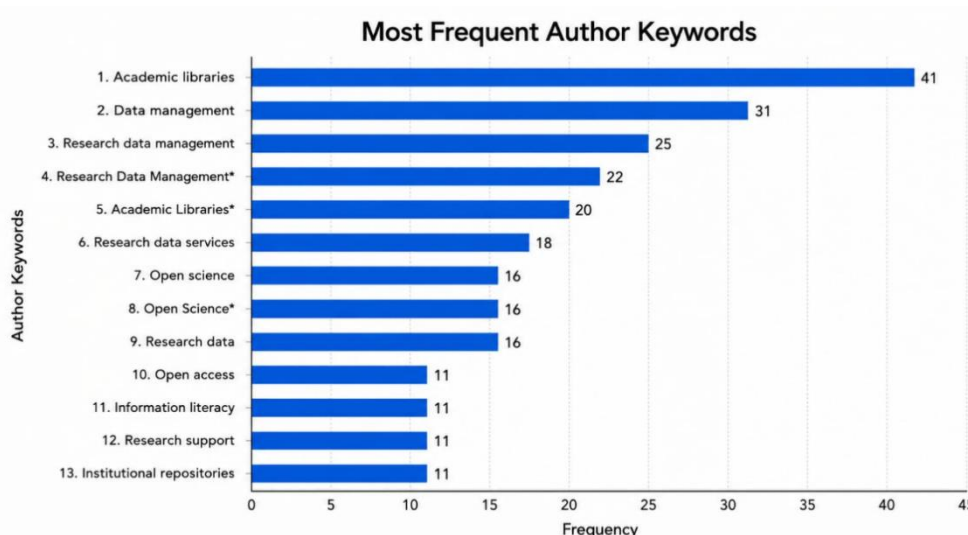
3.7 Most Frequent Author Keywords

Author keyword analysis reveals the core research themes and rising trends in research management

Table 7: Most Frequent Author Keywords.

Rank	Author keyword	Frequency
1	Academic libraries	41
2	Data management	31
3	Research data management	25
4	Research data management*	22
5	Academic libraries*	20
6	Research data services	18
7	Open science	16
8	Open science*	16
9	Research data	16
10	Open access	11

Figure 5: Most Frequent Author Keywords



Source: Lens dataset (n = 821) | Search date: 2 August 2025

Note: * indicates variations of the same keyword.

Interpretation

The key word frequency list is headed by the term "academic libraries" which was cited by the authors 41 times. The second place went to the "data management" keyword (31 instances) and the third spot "research data management" was used 25 times. "These results suggest that a significant number of studies examine the role of academic libraries in supporting research data management practices and digital research services."

Other author keywords that appeared frequently include "research data services", "open science", "research data", "open access", "information literacy", "research support", and "institutional repositories", showing that nowadays research is more than just a storage of data as research topics also include open science, support to researchers, digital preservation and institutional research infrastructure.

4. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

4.1. conclusion

In this paper, we provide a bibliometric overview of worldwide research in RDM. Based on a total of 821 publications from the Lens database published in the years 2015-2025, our study suggests that RDM has been a highly trending research topic in the LIS field, indicating the evolving value of research data for the entire research life cycle. The results demonstrated that during the period under review, there was an overall increase in the number of publications. The number of publications was highest in 2021, which suggests that there is a growing interest in research data services, digital curation, institutional repositories, and open science.

Besides, the emerging source of publication, prolific author, top source country, highly cited publication and common author keyword were provided in this research time period, which actively contributed to the research data service development field. The prominent keywords, which include Academic Libraries, Data Management, Research Data Management, Research Data Services, and Open Science suggest that academic libraries are embracing their roles in supporting research data curation, sharing, digital preservation, and research data services.

The results also demonstrate the emerging nature of Research Data Management as an interdisciplinary research area that brings together elements of librarianship, information technology, digital scholarship, and open science.

Academic libraries are positioned as key partners in research data management, supporting researchers in all stages of the research cycle, from planning and organization to dissemination and preservation of research data. In this regard, the present paper provides an overview of research trends and the intellectual basis of RDM in academic libraries. The results contribute to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the main areas of research and providing an in-depth understanding of the underlying trends and topics. Also, the findings offer practical implications for librarians, researchers, policymakers, and academic institutions in improving research data services and strategies.

As research becomes more data intensive, investment in research infrastructure, librarian expertise, emerging technologies, interdisciplinary collaborations and data-sharing practices will contribute to enhanced RDM services and research communication. Cutting edge investments in research infrastructure, skills of research librarians, new technologies, and institutional cooperation and sharing will benefit the success of RDM services and research communication sustainability around the globe.

4.2. Limitations of the Study

Although this study presents a bibliometric analysis of Research Data Management in academic libraries, there are some limitations to this research that should be noted. For example, the study is purely based on the list of papers that was given to us by Lens, even though Lens is considered by many to be a rather complete and widely used scholar resource, other databases like Scopus, Web of Science, or Dimensions may have published some other studies of interest that we could also look at later on. Second the study considered only the English language publications between 2015-2025. Research published in other languages or outside the selected time frame was excluded, which may have limited the global representation of the literature.

In addition, the accuracy as well as completeness of the information in Lens database greatly contributed to the results. For instance, a paper that is authored by different persons and written in several organizations might lead to an inaccuracy in the number of papers per an institutional affiliations or authors. Different kinds of authors might produce different kinds of paper and citation patterns.

The last limitation is that one should keep in mind that bibliometric methods offer a snapshot of a large volume of work by counting it, rather than by going deeply into the nature of the publications. They provide us with data about publication patterns, research areas, author networks but they fail to assess the quality or the methodological soundness of the individual papers. Because of this, the results need to be considered as reflecting a picture of the production of knowledge as well as publication behavior and not evaluating the scientific quality of the publications.

Although this paper presents various limitations, the study gives an extensive understanding of the overall research on the topic of RDM in academic libraries worldwide, and therefore it may be considered a valuable source for further research.



4.3. Future Research Directions

The results imply some of the possibilities for further research into the RDM in academic libraries. For future research, not only one but multiple bibliographic database searches may be conducted by integrating some others like Scopus, Web of Science, and Dimensions to generate more inclusive representation of worldwide publications on RDM.

Future studies could also conduct more in-depth bibliometric analysis such as co-authorship analysis, co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling, thematic evolution and collaboration network analysis to investigate the intellectual structure and social structure of RDM research, with the implementation of visualization tools like VOSviewer, CiteSpace or Bibliometric to examine research clusters, emerging themes and knowledge networks, etc.

Also, an area for future research related to the needs of academic libraries is to explore other variables such as geographic location and type of institution (i.e. community college, medium-sized university, etc. To examine the implementation and adoption of Research Data Management services. A comparison with the observations and experiences of developed versus developing countries would be useful to see different policy issues and approaches taken in research data management. And the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, machine learning, cloud computing and big data technologies, the future study should make investigations on how those emerging technologies further impact the provision of Research Data Management services, digital preservation, creation of metadata and research support in academic library context.

A strong argument for future research on how to innovate the research data management services in library institutions with those emerging technologies will be justified. Finally, future research could aim at examining the importance of institutional policies, librarian skills, researcher knowledge and Open Science efforts for the efficiency of RDM services. This type of research would Definitely provide useful arguments for policy makers universities research funders and library staff who aim at improving research data infrastructures and developing Research Data Management practices.

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