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Scopus data ranks the world

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Prize winners
The influence of Germany on science was clear to see this year, with the announcement of two Nobel Prize-winning German researchers. Gerhard Ertl of the Fritz-Haber-Institut der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, Berlin and Honorary Professor at Freie Universität Berlin and Technische Universität Berlin, won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his studies of chemical processes on solid surfaces. Peter Grünberg shared the Nobel Prize in Physics for the discovery of Giant Magnetoresistance, which resulted in a breakthrough in gigabyte hard disk drives.

In addition, Olaf Hohmeyer, University of Flensburg, is Vice Chair of the Working Group III of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This Group was awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts to spread awareness of man-made climate change and lay the foundations for countering it.

To see the analysis for the eight countries mentioned at the start of this article (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Mexico, Poland, Turkey and Egypt), please click here.

To visit the first issue of Research Trends and see the original ten-country analysis, click here.

Expert opinion

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In an editorial in Current Science, P. Balaram observed that “rankings and ratings enter every sphere of human activity” (1) and even went so far as to compare institutional rankings to a “beauty contest”. With the publication of The THES-QS World University Rankings on November 9, the winners of the 2007 beauty contest were announced.

The Times Higher Education Supplement (THES), a London-based weekly newspaper that reports specifically on higher education issues, has published its World University Rankings annually since 2004. It works closely with Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), a leading independent network for higher education and related careers that acts as its research and data analysis arm.

Switch to Scopus
For the first time, the data used to compile the World University Rankings have come from Scopus. “As our own methodology developed and improved, we felt we needed a more comprehensive data source,” explains Ben Sowter, QS’ Head of Research. “We chose Scopus for several reasons: the quality of the data, which will provide enhanced transparency and clarity for the rankings; strong journal representation outside the United States; and more non-English content than other databases. We believe that the strong data found in Scopus, combined with other enhancements we’ve made to our methodology, will help stabilize rankings, making them more effective for tracking year-on-year performance. They will also result in a more robust and balanced measure of comparative international university quality.”

In addition to the switch to Scopus for citation data, the key enhancements to QS’ methodology are:

• Z-score aggregation of indicators to generate overall scores
• Peer reviewers prevented from promoting their own university
• Consistent usage of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) data for all personnel-related data

For more information on the effect these changes will have on the data and thus the rankings, please click here.

References: