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Do we need a qualitative approach in bibliometric studies?

The interpretation of bibliometric studies needs often background information about the object of the study. The background information can be acquired from different sources, like milestone publications, web pages, media, as well as interviews of gatekeepers. This paper deals with those sources, and especially thematic interviews as a way to know more about the research subject, its roots and history. The paper is based on experiences that have been got during the research process when studying the concept of Social Capital and its diffusion in science, politics and everyday life. The focus is on the co-word analysis and interpretation of its results.