

Abstract

The meaning and function of the citation in the humanities: A theoretical analysis

The citation is one of the key units of analyze in bibliometric research and the meaning and use of citations has been debated. Theories of citations have been proposed and the first part of this article gives an overview of these, and how they are expressed through metaphors. The second part focuses on how references are used in the humanities and it concentrates on two aspects of the references in the humanities; one, why are they given? And two, how are they given? And furthermore is there a connection between these two aspects. The motivation for citing is different in the humanities compared to science. A simplification would be that the humanist scholar cites to show his originality while a natural scientist cites to show his affiliation. Also the citation in the humanities is a descendant from the tradition of the footnote which emerged from the disciplines of history and religion. This article is a first attempt for a “citation theory/ reference theory” that includes the humanities.

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