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

Björn Hellqvist, Phd-student.

Department of Library and Information Science.

Institution of ABM. Uppsala University

Supervisor(s): Kerstin Rydbeck & Fredrik Åström

Bjorn.hellqvist@abm.uu.se



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“Academic texts are usually more interesting for their footnotes than their main argument – that is, for what they consume rather than what they produce.”
(Fuller 2005, *The Intellectual*, p. 131)



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Outline

- Theories of citation
- The metaphors of citation
- The citation in the humanities
- Citations and intellectual organization



Theories of citation

Three levels:

1. A rethorical device (inside the text)
2. A reference to another text (between texts)
3. A "Citation" in a citation index (outside the text)



Theories of citation

Two main viewpoints:

1. Cognitive viewpoint: "what is said"
2. Social viewpoint: "who saying it"



Metaphors of citation

Cronin "Footsteps"

Small "Symbols"

Van Raan "Votes"

Gilbert "Tools of

Persuasion"

McInnis "A

metaphor"

Latour "Weapon"



Metaphors of citation

Theory	Cognitive	Social
Metaphors	<i>Symbol, metaphor and vote.</i>	<i>Weapon or tools of persuasion.</i>
Perspective	“The cited”.	“The citer”.
Focus on	What is said?	Who is saying it?
Reason for citing	“By citing a physically existing document, the idea it symbolizes is given, indirectly, physical embodiment.” (Small, 1978 p. 339)	“That of mobilizing allies in the defense of knowledge” (Luukkonen, 1997 p. 29)
View of Science	Positivist view of science. Knowledge exists independently of social factors.	Science is a socially constructed practice which “produces” knowledge.



The citation in the humanities

The tradition of the footnote

- Introduced during the Renaissance (Hume, Gibbons and Ranke)
- mark of credibility
- Commenting on primary sources
- Reflexive (meta-level)



The citation in the humanities

Use of footnotes

- Indicates the mixed audience in the humanities
- Focus both on primary and secondary material



The citation in the humanities

	<i>The Citation</i>	<i>The Footnote</i>
Origin	Natural sciences	Humanities (history and religion)
Place in the text	Inside the text	Outside the text
Main function	Link to previous research	Comment and link to primary sources
Reading options	Requirement	Option



The citation in the humanities

- Integral references
- Negational (negative)
- Whole name
- Conversational
- More rhetoric?
- Less persuasive?



Citations and intellectual organization

”Fragmented ahocracies” (Whitley, 1984)

– citer not motivated to cite other scholars (peers)

– instead primary material and general theory (often interdisciplinary)

- No ”invisible Colleagues”



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Citations and intellectual organization

Search for literature differs?

- Key-word and direct searching less effective
- Chaining and browsing
- Searching integrated part of the research process



Questions

What implications does citing practices in the humanities have for:

1. Informetric analyses?
2. Knowledge organization?



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Thank You!

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