

## Publications at the Social Science Faculty at Uppsala University

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What do we produce at the social science faculty at Uppsala University? In this article I will briefly review a study made by the "quality group" at the social science faculty. The purpose of our study was to provide quantitative information about published research. We can have different views on how various forms of publications should be valued but quantitative information can be a basis for discussions about what we are doing.

Some years ago a publication database was created by Uppsala University and this is a great advantage when it comes to counting publications. Publication lists by department are now available on the university web page and also included in the yearly reports from the different departments to the social science faculty. The compilation and counting of publications has been done by Leif Eriksson.

We did not try to describe the *process* by which research is done. What we count is the results in the form of published research. Publications were divided into 5 categories and also by language of publication. As it turned out, there were very few publications in other languages than English and Swedish.

Of particular interest to us was the degree of internationalization. To what extent are the researchers in Uppsala producers – and not just consumers – in the international research community? We view internationalization as an important instrument of quality control. Our research should be compared to, and compete with, the best international research.

### Why Publications?

Why should we count publications? The purpose of research is to generate new knowledge and hopefully this knowledge should be useful in some way. But how could anyone use this knowledge if it is not published in one way or another? Presentations at seminars and newspaper articles can advertise the results but not transmit the detailed knowledge that is necessary if someone is to use the results for other research, government studies, policy decisions or in some other way. Publication is a necessary – but not sufficient – condition for use.

### Quantity and Quality

But many publications do not necessarily mean good research. What we really want is good quality research – research that is useful in some way. Quality is hard to measure on this general level but the *form of the publication* and the *language* give us some indications of the intended readership.

Research which is published in scientific journals with refereeing has been evaluated by experts and

found sufficiently good to be published. Still, this is an uncertain measure of quality, because there are many bad journals with refereeing. The ISI selects journals to be included in the Social Science Citation Index and the Science Citation Index on the basis of the circulation and impact of the journals. If a journal is included in the ISI databases this is an indication of quality. Also, it means that the reference can be easily found by other researchers. But even in the ISI there are some bad journals.

The most reliable indication of quality would be to select "top journals" as journals which are frequently quoted in the ISI databases. Articles in such journals are typically good articles. At the same time, this would be a narrow quality indicator which would exclude many forms of publication.

### **Five categories**

We did not try to select "top journals" but chose to divide publications into five categories:

- BOK: Books
- KAP: Chapters in books and published conference volumes
- ISI: Articles published in journals included in the ISI
- REF: Other articles which were subject to refereeing as reported by the author
- ART: Non-refereed articles.

Of these categories ISI and REF are typically scientific publications but the other categories may include also popular science, debate etc.

### **Input and Output by Department**

To be meaningful, the publication numbers must be related to the size of the department. But the size is not easy to measure. Some persons are on leave or have part time positions. A full time researcher is expected to publish more than a teacher with a heavy teaching load. We chose to measure the size of a department by the amount of resources that the social science faculty gives to each department for research and Ph D education (fakultetsanslaget). Using this as input we thus constructed five output measures by relating the various publications to the allocation: *publication per million (PPM)*.

Since the Ph D education is analyzed in another report we excluded doctoral theses from the output measure and grants for Ph D students from the input measure. Alternatively one could have included these in the input and output measures.

But who should be said to belong to a department? What do we do with people on leave etc? Since our intention was to measure the results of research activity in the various departments - independent of how it is financed - we decided to include all persons who were reported to be active at least 30% of their time in the department. When publications had many authors, we counted the share of the authors that belonged to a particular department.

### **Publications in English**

*Table 1* and *Figure 1* show publications per million in English. There are substantial differences between departments. The departments of Psychology, Domestic sciences, and Economics focus very much on articles in international refereed journals (ISI and REF). The departments of Peace and conflict research, Government, and Economic history publish a substantial number of books and chapters in books. Some departments seem to publish very little in English. Although these numbers are subject to reporting errors they indicate a substantial variation across departments. An interesting observation is that the cross-disciplinary departments tend to have rather few international publications.

### **Publications in Swedish**

When we turn to publications in Swedish we see a very different picture (*Table 2*, *Figure 2*). The department of psychology, which is a clear leader in international publications, publishes almost nothing in Swedish. Economic history, with relatively few publications in English, has a very large volume of publications in Swedish.

### **Comparisons within field**

The faculty board asked us to provide comparisons within fields. How good is our department of economics compared to other departments in Sweden, for example. One way to answer this question is to look for rankings of universities. We found such rankings for economics and political science. In both cases the rankings are based on publications in good international journals. Either there is a selection of good journals or the publications are weighted by the impact of the journal. One well known ranking in economics puts Uppsala University as number 6 among the Nordic universities and 46 in Europe. A recent ranking in political science puts Uppsala as number 3 among Nordic universities and 25 in Europe. It is a matter of time when similar rankings will appear in other areas.

## Conclusion

This kind of quantitative description raises some interesting questions. Why do we sometimes write in Swedish sometimes in English? When should one language be preferred to the other? Who is the intended reader? What are the arguments for writing books rather than journal articles? Why are there so large differences between departments? Are the subjects really that different in themselves or is it a matter of tradition. If it is tradition, is this something we could question and discuss? Should one expect all researchers to be part of the international scientific debate? If so, how can we help young researchers to learn how to publish in international journals?

A more detailed description of the method and the results can be found in Kvalitetsrapport 2005 published by the social science faculty in Uppsala.

## References

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**Table 1. Publication per million - English**

	<b>BOK</b>	<b>KAP</b>	<b>ISI</b>	<b>REF</b>	<b>ART</b>
Economic history	0,00	<b>1,30</b>	0,10	0,00	0,10
Peace and conflict	<b>0,50</b>	<b>1,75</b>	0,56	<b>0,34</b>	<b>1,87</b>
Business studies	<b>0,11</b>	<b>1,24</b>	0,28	<b>0,32</b>	0,05
Domestic sciences	0,00	0,71	<b>1,04</b>	<b>0,67</b>	0,00
Information science	0,04	0,50	0,65	0,14	0,00
Social & economic geography	0,00	<b>0,98</b>	0,74	<b>0,34</b>	0,09
Economics	0,00	0,15	<b>0,96</b>	<b>0,36</b>	0,07
Education	0,04	0,17	0,00	0,03	0,12
Psychology	0,00	<b>1,32</b>	<b>3,18</b>	<b>0,73</b>	0,06
Sociologi	0,07	0,57	0,53	<b>0,35</b>	0,09
Government	<b>0,44</b>	<b>1,09</b>	0,60	0,10	<b>0,49</b>
East European Studies	0,00	0,46	0,39	<b>0,43</b>	0,17
Housing Research	0,05	0,47	0,32	0,21	0,10
<i>Soc. Sci. Faculty</i>	<i>0,08</i>	<i>0,74</i>	<i>0,77</i>	<i>0,30</i>	<i>0,17</i>

**Table 2. Publication per million - Swedish**

	<b>BOK</b>	<b>KAP</b>	<b>ISI</b>	<b>REF</b>	<b>ART</b>
Economic history	<b>0,72</b>	<b>4,26</b>	0,00	0,00	<b>3,14</b>
Peace and conflict	0,16	0,16	<b>0,11</b>	0,00	<b>1,16</b>

Business studies	0,03	0,16	0,00	0,06	0,00
Domestic sciences	<b>0,41</b>	<b>0,83</b>	0,00	<b>0,17</b>	<b>0,86</b>
Information science	0,08	0,27	0,00	<b>0,20</b>	0,00
Social & economic geography	<b>0,39</b>	<b>0,89</b>	0,00	0,00	0,45
Economics	0,11	0,26	0,00	<b>0,14</b>	0,44
Education	0,07	<b>0,87</b>	0,00	0,07	0,58
Psychology	0,00	0,10	0,00	0,00	0,06
Sociologi	<b>0,37</b>	0,46	<b>0,09</b>	<b>0,25</b>	0,60
Government	<b>0,69</b>	<b>1,66</b>	0,00	0,00	<b>1,19</b>
East European Studies	0,09	0,09	<b>0,09</b>	0,00	<b>0,95</b>
Housing Research	0,05	0,64	0,00	0,00	0,61
<i>Soc. Sci. Faculty</i>	<i>0,19</i>	<i>0,67</i>	<i>0,02</i>	<i>0,07</i>	<i>0,61</i>

Figure 1.

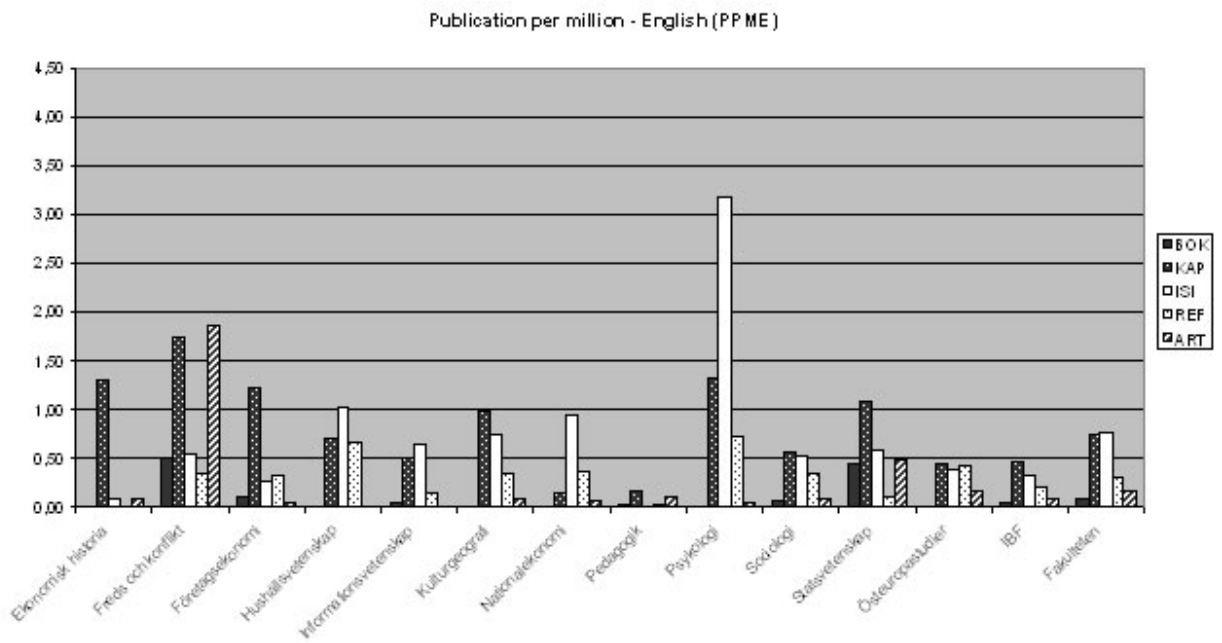
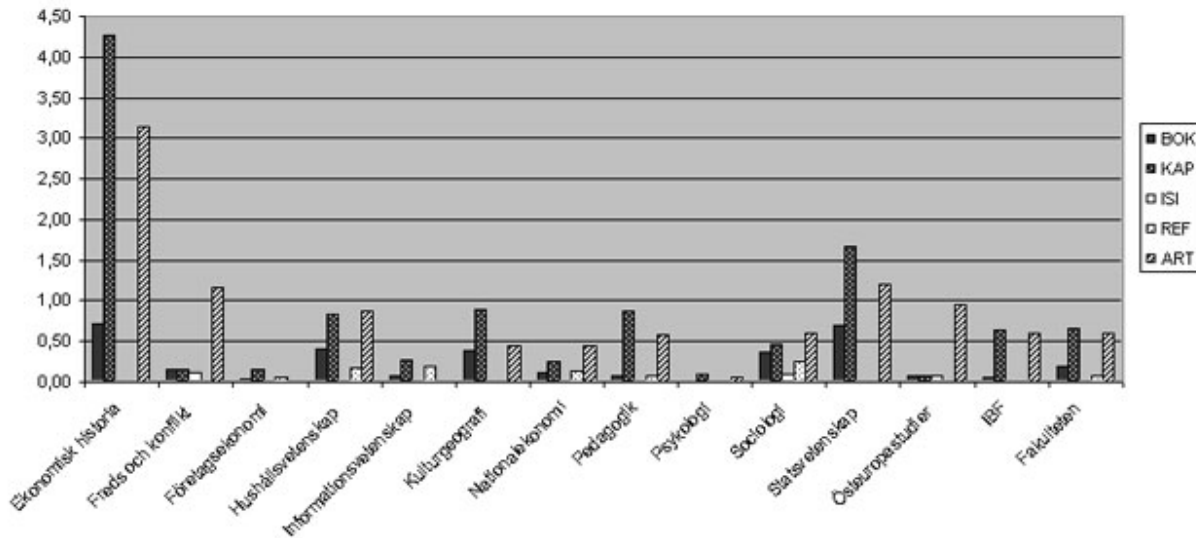


Figure 2.

Publication per million - Swedish (PPMS)



Editor's comment: see also Ulla Carlsson, "**Open Access and Journal Publication in the Social Sciences and the Humanities**" (ScieCom info 2005:2), and Thomas Brante, "**Modes of Publication and Scientific Quality**" (ScieCom info 2005:3).