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REFLECTIONS ON 1993 AND ALL THAT: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

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INTRODUCTION

1993 saw the inaugural International Symposium on Logistics (ISL). 1993 also saw the establishment of the European Operations Management Association (EurOMA) the European wide extension of the then United Kingdom Operations Management Association (OMA). OMA had already began the path to creating the inaugural EurOMA conference but, seeing the need for a distinct yet related activity focussed on logistics, part funded the first ISL.

While it may be argued in the general business studies discipline that journal publications are of more scientific value than conference papers, other disciplines give equal credence to both types of publication (Lisée et al., 2008). Given the strategic nature of the creation of ISL we seek to review the long term impact of the inaugural ISL and determine the value that has been gained by the EurOMA committee's initial investment and the wider academic community from the first cohort of papers that were presented.

In doing so, we draw from information science and adopt techniques that have seen use evaluating the value of conference papers in other disciplines such as the medical and natural sciences. Our research has identified such studies of conference papers are limited in management studies generally, with notable exceptions being Anderson and Haley (1984), Hofer et al. (2010) and Wuehrer and Smejkal (2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conferences represent an important part of the fabric of academic life, and one with which many scholars engage. There are a wide range of reasons for participating in conferences. Presenting research is probably the most important of these (Fennewald, 2005, González-Albo and Bordons, 2011). Often, the research presented is at an early stage (Drott, 1995, Chen and Konstan, 2010) and the objective is to receive feedback to improve later activities, either in data collection or the development of journal paper publications from the research (Garvey et al., 1972a, Frandsen and Wouters, 2009, Montesi and Mackenzie Owen, 2008). However, it is also noted that some conference presentations may encompass application papers or be by authors, for example practitioners, who are not considered "mainstream" academics (Drott, 1995). In these instances, the research is still useful but may not be considered of appropriate rigour, originality or significance to warrant publication in a peer reviewed journal.

Complementary to presenting research is learning about the current research activities in the discipline (González-Albo and Bordons, 2011, Drott, 1995, Fennewald, 2005), although whether this constitutes the 'state-of-the-art' has been debated (King, 1961, Hofer et al., 2010). The benefit a conference offers is that this learning process can take place in a concentrated period of time (Drott, 1995). This enables the researcher to remain abreast of the latest developments in their own specific field of interest, as well as providing the opportunity to learn more about activities being undertaken in related disciplines (Chen and Konstan, 2010, Rowley-Jolivet, 1999, Garvey et al., 1972b).

Finally, conferences enable researchers to maintain and develop their networks (Chen and Konstan, 2010, Zhang and Glänzel, 2012), often in an attractive venue (Oseman, 1989). Socialising and exchanging experiences is an important aspect of conferences, and can often have subsequent benefits in terms of developing future research activities and bids for funded research projects. For example, both Lacy and Busch (1983) and Rowley-Jolivet (1999) highlight how research collaborations often emerge from the

informal communication that occurs in conferences, leading to the exploration of new research areas.

In this research, we consider the presentation of knowledge at conferences. This can be through a variety of forms including papers, panels, posters or roundtable discussions (Fennewald, 2005) and our focus is on the first of these. While conference papers can be seen as an output in their own right (Drott, 1995), they are frequently considered as one stage on a research process, which starts with research activities in the "laboratory" and concludes with a journal paper publication (Rowley-Jolivet, 1999, Garvey et al., 1972a). This emphasis on journal papers may reflect wider pressures in academia, such as in the evaluation of individuals, say for promotion, and institutions for research quality (Schmenner et al., 2009, Montesi and Mackenzie Owen, 2008).

However, there is debate around this with various authors both within and outside of logistics arguing that the focus on journal papers, and the ranking of these titles to create "league tables", leads to other publication types being devalued (for example, Mingers and Willmott, 2013, McKinnon, 2013). There are also disciplinary aspects to this. For example, disciplines such as computer science, engineering and medical science regard conference papers as formal research outputs (Montesi and Mackenzie Owen, 2008, Lisée et al, 2008, Zhang and Jia, 2013). Advantages for conference papers include shorter publication times (Montesi and Mackenzie Owen, 2008, Michels and Fu, 2014), an interactive environment and the ability to reach non-academic audiences (Lisée et al, 2008) which are major drawbacks of journal papers.

Various studies have shown that conversion rates for conference papers to published journal papers are variable, with a range from 13% to 75% (see Table 1). Fennewald (2005) also considers the conversion ratio to be reflective of the research quality of a conference, while González-Albo and Bordons (2011) highlight that links between journals and conferences can be mutually beneficial. Many of the studies in Table 1 have been carried out in the medical and information sciences, with none considering logistics/operations management. In converting the papers, a lead times to the journal paper being published appear to be extending, with earlier works suggesting 1 to 2 years (Garvey et al., 1972b, Oseman, 1989) while more recent work give typical values between two and three years (Fennewald, 2005, Michels and Fu, 2014). There is much debate within the literature as to the extent of changes being made to the conference paper during this conversion process and evidence of discipline specific practices (Garvey et al., 1972a, Fennewald, 2005, Montesi and Mackenzie-Owen, 2008, Frandsen and Wouters, 2009, Zhang and Jia, 2013).

Source	***Discipline***	***Date(s) of Conference(s)***	***Conversion Rate***
Garvey (1972b)	Physical, Social and Engineering Science	1966-1968	Almost 50%
Oseman (1989)	Medical Science	1979	22.6%
Drott (1995)	Information Science	1987	13%
Fennewald (2005)	Medical Science	1977-1998	26-74%
	Natural Science	1989	51%
	Information Science	1999	32%
Miguel-Dasit et al. (2006)	Medical Science	2000	46%
González-Albo and Bordons (2011)	Medical Science	Not stated	30-50%
	Information Science	Not stated	33%
McRoberts et al. (2014)	Natural Science	1994-2006	28.2%
Michels and Fu (2014)	Social Science, Humanities, Science and Technology	2000-2010	27%

Table 1: Conversion rates of conference papers to published journal papers

An alternative approach to evaluating research quality is through citations (Andras, 2011, Michels and Fu, 2014), although a number of authors highlight the low usage of conference proceedings as a source. Chen and Konstan (2010) found that, for conferences in computer science, over 70% of papers received fewer than 2 citations in the two years after publication. In the context of management, Lisée et al (2008) show that conference proceedings represented between 0.1% and 0.2% of all references over the period 1981 to 2005. Further, Lisée et al (2008) discovered that conference proceedings get cited and exploited by practitioners more rapidly than journal papers, but also become obsolete in a shorter time span. Zhang and Glänzel (2012) suggest, as future research, that these citations may be from conference attendees and collaborators, in other words, those who are familiar with the paper's contents. Interestingly, both González-Albo and Bordons (2011) and Zhang and Glänzel (2012) highlight that papers that are converted into journal versions receive fewer citations than those which have not been to a conference. Further, papers in conference themed special issues of journals receive fewer citations than those appearing in regular issues (González-Albo and Bordons, 2011).

The above discussion provides an overview of the research into the usefulness of conference papers and provides a basis for the method and analytical approach adopted in this paper.

METHOD

The first stage in the research was, for each paper in the proceedings, to determine whether it had received any citations or if a journal paper version existed. Journal paper versions are important because, as found through the literature review, the conversion rate is one metric of conference quality (Fennewald, 2005). In the Proceedings (Pawar, 1993), 54 papers were listed and a search of Google Scholar was carried out using the following terms:

- Conference paper title in full, with and without quotation marks
- Partial conference paper, with and without quotation marks
- As above, but with author names added

For many of the conference papers, there was often a record within Google Scholar for the paper and this was used to determine citations. In some instances, and particularly where only one citation existed, the citing paper was listed but with the conference paper highlighted as being in the main text. Journal paper derivatives were determined based on the criteria of Oseman (1989), where the published version should include at least one of the original authors, a high degree of match between the titles and abstracts and, if numerical results were provided, commonality exists between the two papers. Once identified, the details of the journal paper were recorded against the conference paper.

Another metric of conference quality is the number of citations received by papers (Andras, 2011). To identify the details of citing articles, the "Cited by" link on Google Scholar was initially used, with the results then filtered to consider English language journal papers. This limitation was imposed to reflect both the language skills of the research team and the fact, discussed previously, that journal papers tend to be viewed by the academic community as the main focal point for outputs (Drott, 1995). Self-citations were also removed from consideration given the interest in considering the wider impact of the conference. Where the conference paper did not have a specific entry within Google Scholar, the citation(s) were manually evaluated against the same selection criteria. For journal paper versions, reference was made to other databases such as Scopus and Crossref to identify any other publications not already included. From this process, a list of citing works for each conference paper was identified and information such as the year and journal of publication noted. Random checks were carried out to ensure the accuracy of this list.

For each of the conference papers with citations, a review of the content was undertaken by the research team to consider aspects such as the focus of the research and the method adopted. Further, for the most cited papers, a review of the nature of the citations was undertaken to determine why these papers proved to be the most popular.

The analytical approach was influenced by both the literature presented in the above review and also more general approaches adopted in literature review methods. Tables and charts were used to capture the bibliometric data, while clustering of qualitative information identified common traits and features. To ensure consistency, the qualitative data was cross-checked amongst the research team to ensure common understanding.

FINDINGS

Conversion to journal papers

The research identified that 10 of the ISL 1993 conference papers have additional versions that were subsequently published in journals, of which four were for the inaugural ISL Special Issue that appeared in the International Journal of Logistics Management (published in 1994). Two others appeared in Logistics Information Management (1994), one in Journal of Business Venturing (1994), one in Supply Chain Management: An International Journal (1997), one in Technovation (1997) and one in International Journal of Operations & Production Management (1999). This results in a conversion ratio of 18.5% and an average publication lead time of 2.1 years.

Citation analysis

We found 65 citations for 17 conference papers and 189 citations for the 10 journal papers. As shown in Figure 1, conference paper citations demonstrate a cyclical pattern (with perhaps an indication of a very small increasing trend) while journal paper citations show a clear growing trend with some cyclical behaviour around the trend, reaching a level of approximately 13 citations per year. Some of the cyclical trend, particularly for conference papers, can be attributed to 'snowball citations' (Salomon, 1998) whereby the paper is cited by a later paper and then a further paper cites both the original and second paper. The lead time between these publications result in cycles emerging. Some conference papers were cited in journal papers during the same year as the conference, while there was a one year time lag for citations of the journal papers to emerge, from 1994 to 1995.

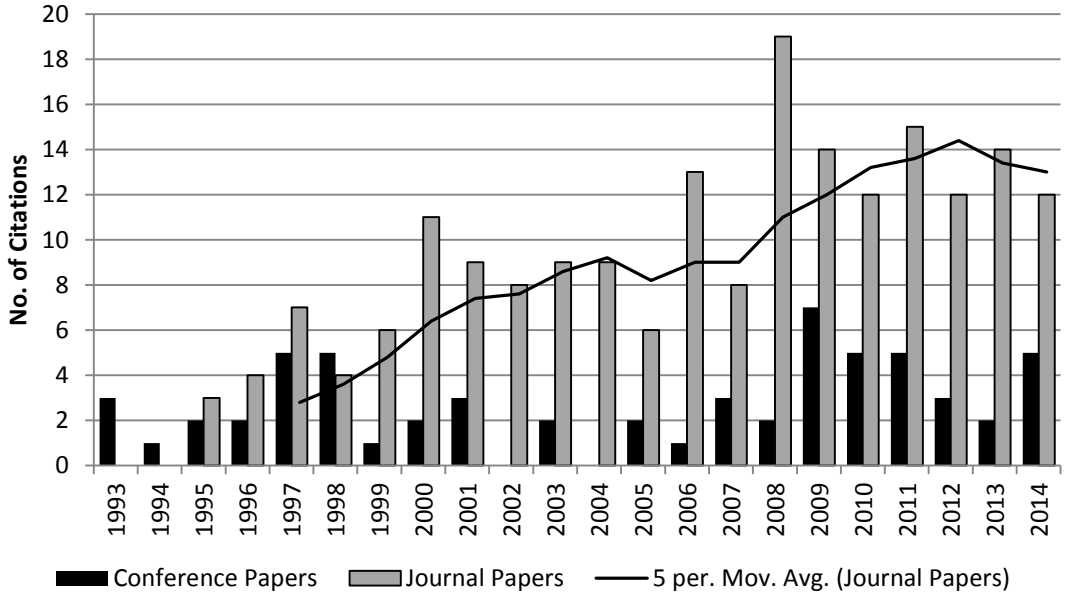

Figure 1: Citations over time

The most cited conference paper, with 50% of total citations, is Ghobadian et al., 'A computerised vendor rating system', often in papers related to supplier selection using multi-criteria decision analysis tools and normally for the statement "Material costs could account for up to 70 percent of the cost of production". While true back in 1993, it could be questioned whether this statement still applied when cited in papers published in 2014. With 28% of total conference paper citations, the second most cited paper is Forza et al, "Telecommunication services for quick response in the textile-apparel industry". The paper is particularly popular for its use of process visualisation and has been picked by papers advocating lean thinking and especially the use of value stream mapping. In terms of the citations made of conference papers, the majority of them are by authors who were also at ISL 1993 or worked closely with either the authors or someone who was there.

The most cited paper across both categories is Lipparini and Sobrero (1994), 'Innovation and small firms…', an extended version of the ISL conference paper, with 50% of the total journal paper citations. The journal version was published in the Journal of Business Venturing indicating the impact of the inaugural ISL beyond the discipline of what we call 'logistics'. Lipparini and Sobrero are generally cited to highlight the tenets, or antecedents, of innovation in organisations especially with respect to SMEs. Such innovations may be in the product, process or technology being developed by the organisations. A key precursor identified for innovation in SMEs is the role of networking. Such capability by SME entrepreneurs to develop linkages with other organisations ensures development of collaborations with other members of the network to leverage capabilities, including knowledge, to ensure innovation and competitive advantage.

Three other relatively well cited journal version papers are by Stainer (1997) with 14% of citations, Sohal (1997), which has 7%, and Bamfield (1994), with 5%. Stainer is cited for determining the characteristics of logistics performance measures while Sohal, although focussing on the traceability of faulty automotive parts, showing recent popularity with respect to ensuring visibility and integrity of food sourcing. Bamfield is concerned with the interplay between the use of EDI and the ability to adequately communicate and establish working relationships between manufacturers and retailers.

It is notable that the special issue papers are far less cited. The one that receives the highest citations, with only 4% of the total cites, is Hines (1994) that proposes a model for the establishment of supplier associations especially for exploitation outside of Japan.

Indicative of the cross-disciplinary nature of logistics is the wide range of journals in which the ISL papers have been cited in. In total there are 143 different journals with an average number of citations per journal under 2, although there is a long tail with 103 journals citing an inaugural ISL paper just once. The most highly citing journal is the International Journal of Production Economics, although it only account for 17 citations. The next most citing journals are International Journal of Logistics Management (8 citations), International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management (7) and Technovation (7). Table 2 gives the categorisation of citing journals and the number of citations per category. The categories are primarily based on the Associations of Business School's journal ranking guide (Harvey et al., 2010) with a number of additional categories for those journals that are outside of business and management studies. The categorisation exercise of Table 2 is repeated specifically for the top cited papers and is given in Table 3.

Most citations are concentrated in Operations and Technology Management journals, although Entrepreneurship and Innovation journals also feature highly due to the high citation count of Lipparini and Sobrero (1994). There is some indication of influence outside management, especially Engineering. Some of the titles that appear within the Operations and Technology Management category, such as International Journal of

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Production Economics and International Journal of Production Research, are multidisciplinary and may also be categorised as Engineering, for example, as per the ISI Web of Knowledge subject categories.

Journal Subject Area	***No. of Journal Titles***	***No. of citations***
Accountancy	1	1
Business Ethics and Governance	2	2
Economics	4	4
Engineering	7	7
Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management	16	39
General Management	10	13
Geography	1	1
Human Resource Management and Employment Studies	1	1
Information Management	8	19
Innovation	14	20
International Business	4	4
Management Development and Education	2	2
Marketing	9	14
Operations Research	5	5
Operations and Technology Management	31	90
Organisation Studies	4	4
Other	1	1
Sector Studies	12	15
Social Science	8	11
Strategic Management	3	3
Grand Total	**143**	**256**

Table 2: Spread of citing publications by journal type.

Journal Subject Area	***Ghobadian et al.***		***Forza et al.***		***Lipparini & Sobrero***		***Stainer***		***Sohal***		***Bamfield***	
	JT	***Cit.***	***JT***	***Cit.***	***JT***	***Cit.***	***JT***	***Cit.***	***JT***	***Cit.***	***JT***	***Cit.***
Accountancy												
Business Ethics and Governance					2	2						
Economics					2	2	1	1				
Engineering	3	3							1	1		
Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management	1	1			15	38						
General Management	2	3	1	1	4	5	4	4				
Geography					1	1						
Human Resource Management and Employment Studies					1	1						
Information Management	1	4			3	3					4	5
Innovation					12	18						
International Business					2	2						
Management Development and Education					1	1			1	1		
Marketing					7	9	1	1			2	2
Operations Research	4	4			1	1						
Operations and Technology Management	11	17	6	8	6	6	10	15	4	5	2	2
Organisation Studies					3	3	1	1				
Other									1	1		
Sector Studies					5	5	4	4	4	5		
Social Science					7	10	1	1				
Strategic Management					2	2						
Grand Total	**22**	**32**	**7**	**9**	**74**	**109**	**22**	**27**	**11**	**13**	**8**	**9**

JT = Journal Title; Cit. = Citations

Table 3: Location and number of citations for top 6 papers

The paper by Lipparini and Sobrero (1994) has a wide reach across disciplines but, reflecting the content of the paper, with a clear focus on innovation and entrepreneurship. Forza et al. (1993), Ghobadian et al. (1993) and Stainer (1997) are concentrated in Operations and Technology Management although the latter two have some impact outside that core discipline. Sohal (1997) and Bamfield (1994) are as influential outside that core discipline as they are within it. The former has been taken up by food (Sector Studies) supply chain researchers while the latter paper, based around EDI, has seen interest in the Information Management discipline.

Content Review

Looking at the content of the papers in the inaugural ISL, and with a focus on the papers being cited, we find limited theoretical foundations and little methodological justification. This is reflective of the early stage research presented in many papers. The single dominant approach was the use of case studies with 12 papers utilising such a method. Much of the research presented focussed on method and / or tool development with a strong emphasis on practical problem solving. There is also some development of computer aided systems such as vendor rating and product tracing approaches. We identified 14 non-academic authors, six of them sole, in 13 conference papers (from the total sample of 54 papers), although none of these papers later appeared in journal form.

The papers cover a broad range of topics with the unit of analysis ranging from a single firm to dyad, supply chain, and supply network, and covering different elements of the value added process from supply through manufacturing to distribution. Lipparini and Sobrero (1994), in researching the precursors for innovation, do have a broader audience for their research but do focus on the role of networks, which is pertinent to the logistics discipline.

DISCUSSION

We have sought to review the long term impact of the inaugural ISL and determine the value that has been gained by the EurOMA committee's initial investment and the wider academic community from the first cohort of papers that were presented. In meeting these objectives we have utilised a method more often associated with the general area of information management encapsulating library studies and information science. We have provided insights into the impact of the inaugural ISL cohort of published papers and shown their value to the logistics, and the wider operations, management community but also beyond. Particularly significant is the paper by Lipparini and Sobrero (1994) which has a broad reach but a particular focus on Innovation and Entrepreneurship. We have shown that EuroMA's initial investment has led to a long term effect that still shows continued growth in terms of number of citations being received.

While our analysis was specifically for the inaugural ISL, some of our findings resonate with the existing body of literature on the value of conference proceeding more generally. We enumerate these as:

- The conversion ratio, while low is consistent when compared against Table 1 with those for subject areas where journal papers are generally considered as the main 'unit of currency' in evaluating research. The lead time between conference and journal publication is also consistent with the literature from that period (such as Oseman, 1989), while also affirming the results of Gonzalez-Albo and Bordons (2011) in terms of special issues having a quicker publication lead time.
- Distinguishing characteristics between ordinary and conference special issue journal publications is that the latter tend to be shorter and have fewer citations (Gonzalez-Albo and Bordons, 2011). We have also found this to be the case. The papers that were selected for the inaugural ISL special issue remaining relatively unchanged from the conference versions (hence also supporting Fennewald's (2005) results) while those papers that independently appeared in a journal were enhanced. Such papers also received far more citations than the special issue papers.

- Lisée et al. (2008) found that proceedings are cited more rapidly but obsolescence is faster. When comparing the conference and journal versions of the papers that appeared in the inaugural ISL proceedings, we clearly find evidence of the former attribute. In doing so, we confirm the proposition of Zhang and Glänzel (2012) that this is linked to conference attendees and collaborators. With regards to obsolescence, we find that the journal versions of the papers have a great number of citations and show increased growth. The conference papers show cyclical behaviour indicating an initial obsolescence but then resurgence. While that may attributed to a rekindling of interest in specific topics it is an indicator that obsolescence may not be permanent. This supports Drott's (1995) observation that conference papers can have a scholarly impact.
- The nature of the data collected is such that we cannot conclude if journal versions of conference papers have fewer citations than those that go direct to the journal. However, it is found that those papers in the special issue had fewer citations that those sent independently to a journal, reflecting Gonzalez-Albo and Bordons (2011).
- The literature review suggested that conference papers generally represented early stage or application papers, which gave an indication of the state-of-the-art, and collectively provided a multi-disciplinary perspective on a subject area. The same can be said for ISL 1993, with evidence of paper development post-conference and citations in a broad range of journals. It was also found that the papers often lacked a theoretical underpinning, although this may well be reflective of the nature of logistics research at that time (Walker et al., 2015)
- Finally, we confirm Drott's (1995) observations that authors not in the mainstream academic track, such as practitioners, can publish in conference proceedings, with almost 25% of the papers featuring non-academic affiliations.

In addition, the method we have adopted may be utilised by other researchers to determine the impact of other logistics and operations management conferences. As with Andras (2011) and Chen and Konstan (2010) citations is the key indicator of the impact of published papers and hence also of conference papers.

CONCLUSIONS

While we have shown the impact of that inaugural ISL there is the possibility to extend the research to include subsequent ISLs in order to determine the continuous exploitation of the series of conference papers. Our approach has also been limited to the tracking of immediate citations and where they have been cited. We have yet to extend the tracking to further downstream citations (that is, what papers cited the citers) and who were the citing authors. A form of (social/citation) network analysis may help to address these two limitations. Also, an in-depth analysis of how the citations were exploited is lacking.

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