Rao versus Murthy debate

C. N. R. Rao's[1] rebuttal to Murthy's observations that our scientists have not done enough, has started an interesting debate. First Murthy had said that neither IISc nor its scientists have contributed enough to either Indian science or the industry. Now Rao says that what Murthy has said may be partly true, but he has raised the question as to what the industry has done for Indian science. Both are partly right. The Indian industry has put in very little to add to the small percentage of budgetary allocations by the Government of India to improve science. Murthy's creation of awards for scientists is recent, but how much has the IT industry put back into Indian science is questionable. No doubt, the IT industry does earn substantial foreign exchange, but that is not much compared to what our Indian brethren send back from say working under difficult conditions in the Middle East. Sadly, both Rao and Murthy have overlooked the great contribution by our agricultural scientists to the nation. When India obtained freedom, we were begging for food and facing famines. Today, thanks to the inputs by the agricultural scientists, one hardly hears about starvation deaths, although undernourishment still exists in some parts of our country. India is not only in a position to feed its people, and store enough for an emergency, but even exports food to other countries. Driving out hunger from India is the greatest contribution of our agricultural scientists and overtakes all other contributions. When hunger is taken care of, there is enough room to think and improve other things and that is what the agricultural scientists have done. Sad, that both Rao and Murthy have overlooked their contribution.

1. Rao, C. N. R., *Curr. Sci.*, 2015, **109**, 844.

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Updating of records

While undertaking revisionary and monographic studies, taxonomists need to examine the types and authentic specimens in order to confirm the identity of the plants. Types and authentic specimens may be deposited in one or several herbaria throughout the world. Normally we take the help of Index Herbariorum on-line (http://sweetgum.nybg.org/ih/) to find the e-mail ids of the correspondents of different herbaria, so that we can request them for the images of types and authentic specimens. While checking the records of many a herbaria, we found that the records have not been updated for several years. The correspondents had changed/retired. So either we do not get a reply or the e-mails bounce back causing inconveniences in research work. We, therefore appeal to the Directors/Curators of the respective herbaria to regularly update their records.

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Uncitedness of reviews

Uncitedness refers to the status of academic publications that do not receive a single citation. A publication currently uncited does not indicate that it will never be cited. This publication might be the 'sleeping beauty'[1]. However, for now, uncited publications cannot be considered as the 'good' output for scientists, journals, institutions or subjects.

Studies have shown that reviews attract more attention and citations than other types of articles such as research papers, notes or letters and, therefore, they usually become highly cited publications[2,3]. This letter focuses on these reviews to explore their uncited ratio in the past ten years. The data were collected from *Web of Science* (*WoS*), a reference database, and included all the 607,219 reviews in *Science Citation Index* for a ten-year period from 2005 to 2014. A two-step method was used to determine uncited reviews: the first step was to arrange the reviews in descending order by number of citations in *WoS* and the second step involved extracting the records of uncitedness by their citations. Figure 1 shows the ratio of uncited reviews in each year.

As demonstrated in Figure 1 generally, the reviews are cited fairly quickly and approximately 92% of them is likely to be cited within three years after publication. However, it can be noted that during 2005–2009, there were 11,363 uncited reviews in total. The ratio (about 4% in each year) was just slightly lower than the result for the uncited ratios in articles on library and information science (LIS) published in China (4%–8%)[4]. Furthermore, according to Li[4], the uncited ratios in natural sciences are usually much lower than those in social sciences, within which LIS falls. Thus the ratio of uncited review (4%) does not seem to be an optimistic percentage.

Since the uncited ratios are closely related to time, the present study chose 2010 as a typical year for further analysis. Figure 2 *a* presents the distribution of uncited reviews at the country/territory

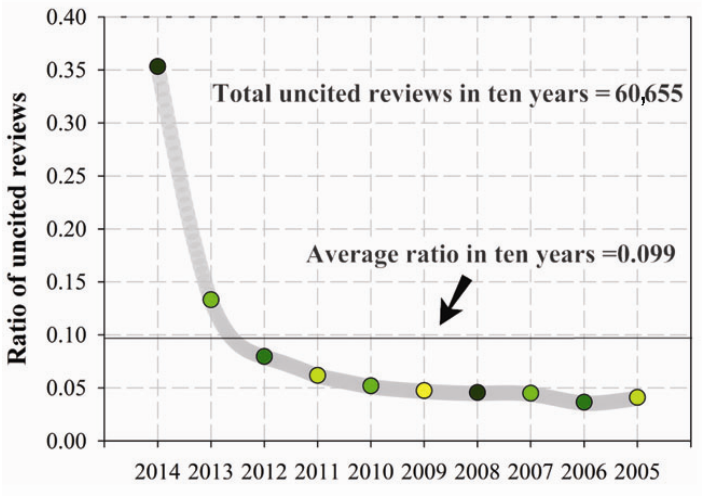

Figure 1. Descending trend in the ratio of uncited reviews.

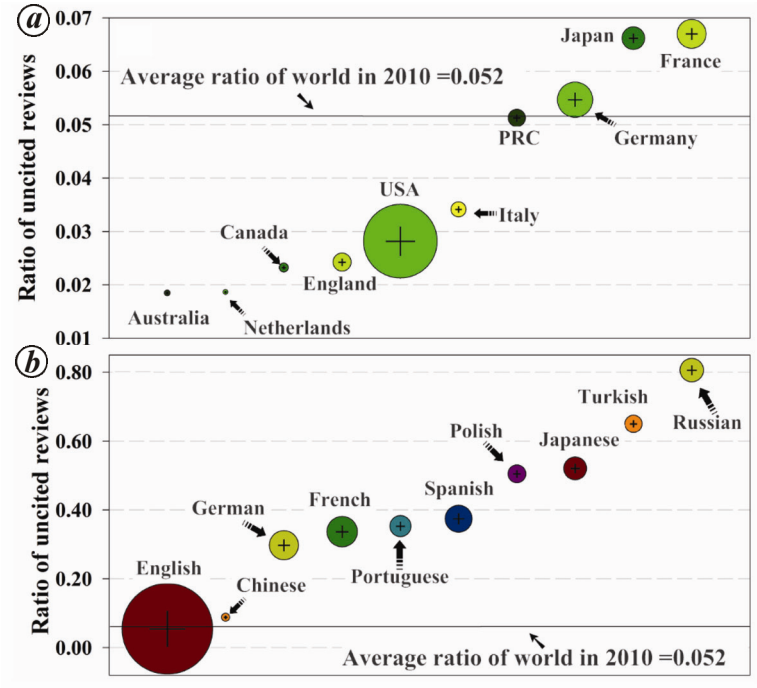

Figure 2. Bubble chart showing the ratio of uncited reviews of 10 countries/territories and 10 languages referring to most reviews. The size of the bubble denotes the number of reviews. (For clarity, the bubbles in (***a***) and (***b***) do not use the same scale.)

level. The uncited ratios of most countries/territories were below the world average and some non-English-speaking countries like Japan and France, had a relatively high ratio (close to 7%) of uncited reviews. In the case of China for which average citations of articles has grown rapidly in recent years[5], the ratio of uncited reviews was almost equal to the world average.

The language impact on uncited reviews can be observed more intuitively from Figure 2 *b*. In the ten major languages in which the reviews appeared, nine of the ratios of uncited reviews were higher than the world average, except for English. For example, the uncited ratio of reviews written in Russian was as much as 81%. However, for English, it showed a significant natural advantage in the case of reviews. The number of reviews written in English was 23 times that of the other nine languages, while the ratio of uncited reviews written in English was just three times that of the other nine languages.

Overall, the ratio of uncited reviews declined rapidly in the following three years after publication, and subsequently stabilized at around 4% in 5–10 years. Although the uncited ratio did not appear to be high, in the past decade, there were more than 60,000 reviews which had never been cited. It could also be concluded that language has an important influence as to whether or not the reviews are cited. Ideally, with scholarly communication, reviews seem to be the publications that attracted great attention and, therefore, receive the most citations in a short period of time. This finding would seem to suggest that the scientific community needs to consider the reasons behind the large volume of uncited reviews which remain dormant for a long time after being published.

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