

Is Archival Scholarship for Everybody? A Bibliometric Analysis of Gender and Knowledge Production in the Archival Field, 1981 – 2019

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Background

Orchard et al. (2019) argue that, historically, the archives were an extension of the discipline of history and were therefore male dominated; the authors assert that it is not until its association with the library science field, relatively late in its history, that the archives began to be feminized. This assertion seems to align with a 2004 Society of American Archivists census that noted that respondents were 65% female and 35% male, "a reversal of the profession's profile in 1956" (Irons Walch et al., 2006, p. 329). While the gender shift among professional archivists indicates that more women are participating in archival practice, it is unclear if there has been a similar shift in archival scholarship. Michelle Caswell (2019) describes the scholarly literature on archival practice and theory as a canon that is "written almost exclusively by white men working for government archives" (p. 5).

This work-in-progress uses a bibliometric approach to study gender dynamics in the field of archives, by providing empirical insights on the perceived gender of authors in archival research, and its relationship with the number of citations received by the papers.

Methods

- List of archival journals available in Microsoft Academic Graph, Dimensions, CrossRef, and Library and Information Science & Technology Abstracts.
- All articles published in these journals, as well as all publications either citing or cited by those articles, were gathered.
- Gender estimated with GenderChecker based on the authors' first name.
- Impact analysis based on normalized citations: number of citations of papers divided by the average number of citations for all publications of the same year.

Results

Gradual rise in the number of academic journal articles being published from 1981 onwards with a sharp increase of publications in the 2000s

Figure 1. Number of publications

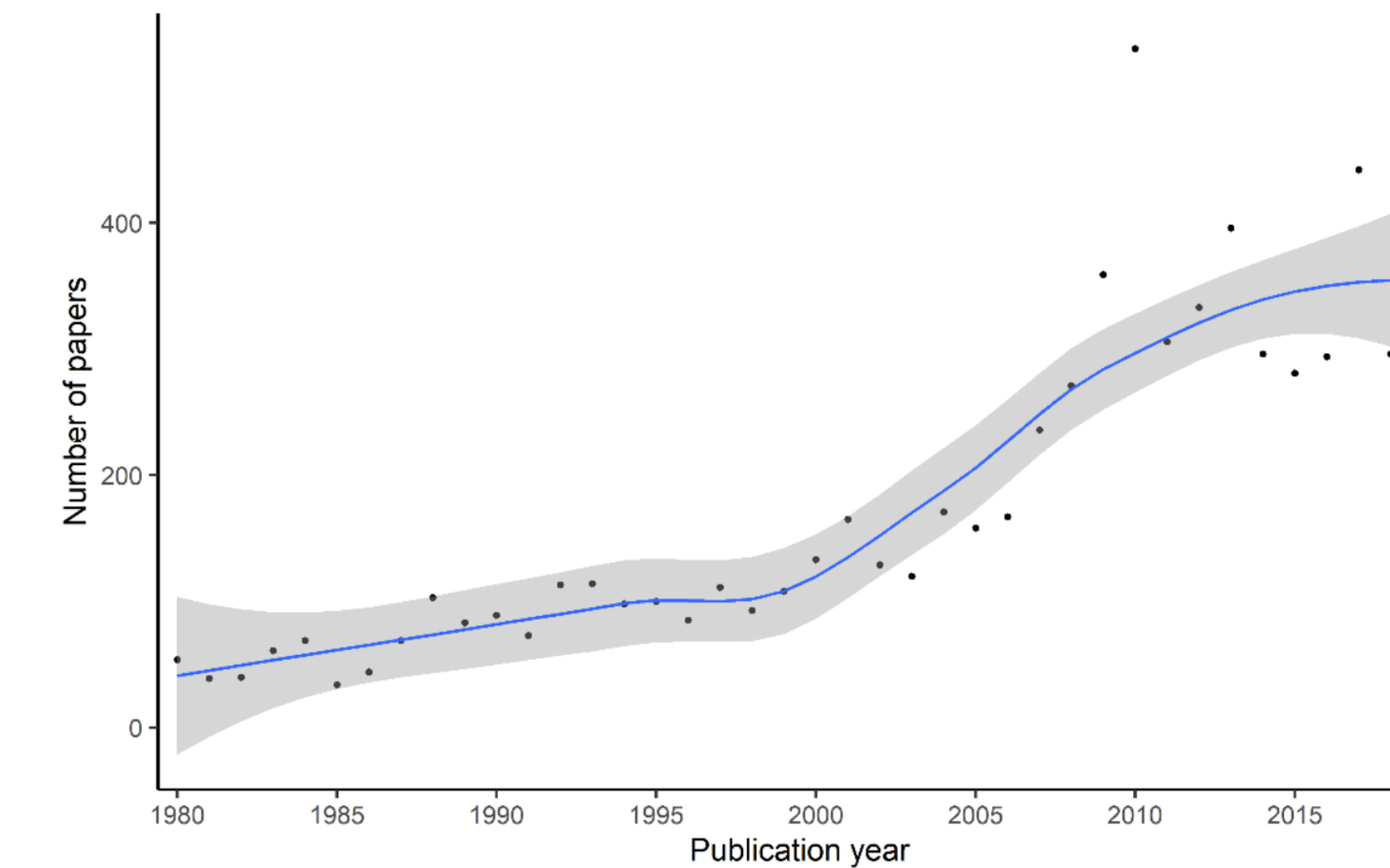
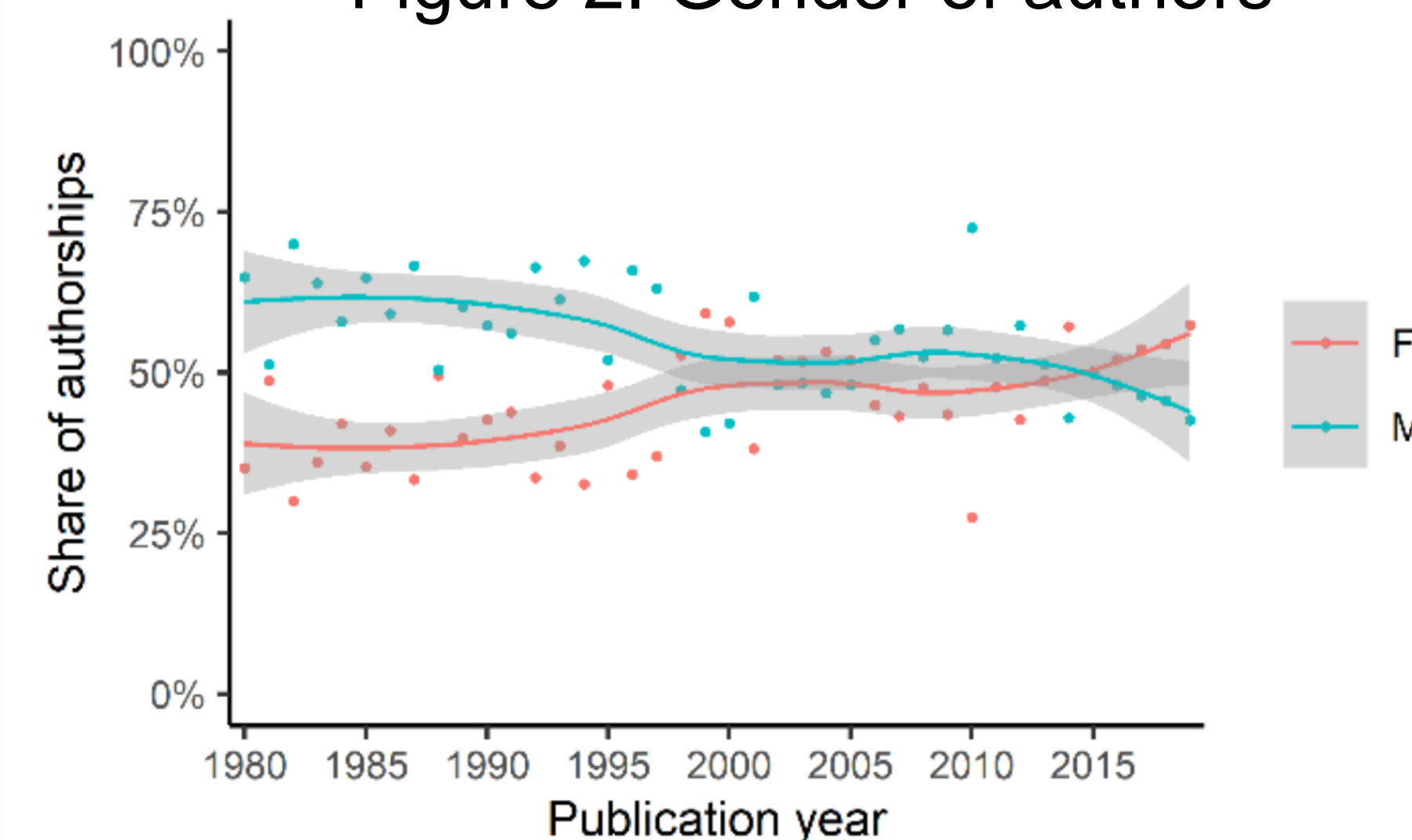


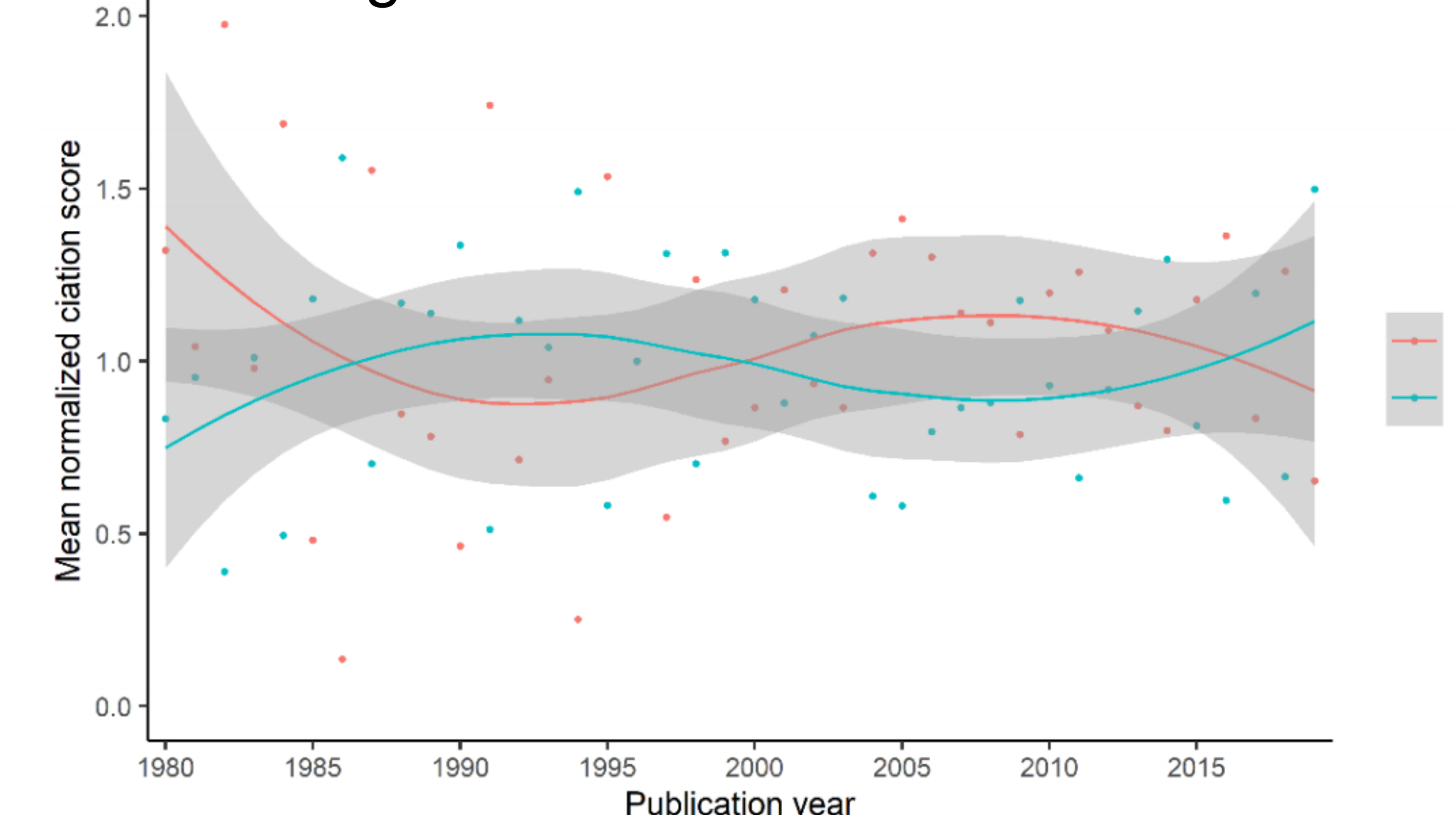
Figure 2. Gender of authors



Gradual rise of female-perceived authorship, illustrating a wide gap in the 1980's and 1990's but near parity in the 2000's. In 2010 female authorship began to overtake male authorship.

No clear trend in the mean normalized citation score of publication by perceived gender of first author. Despite the previously noted large gap between male- and female-perceived authors in the 1980's and 1990's, they were cited at approximately the same rate.

Figure 3. Normalized citations



Discussion

Figure 1: Gradual rise could be attributed to a wider scholarly interest in the archive. Alternatively, this could also be explained by the increase of the perception of archival science as its own, unique field.

Figure 2: Gradual rise of female-perceived authorship in the archival field in the past four decades.

Figure 3: Near parity of citations for male-perceived and female-perceived authors coincides with the statement made by Lynn et al. (2019), claiming that male academics surpass female academics in "hiring, tenure and promotion, funding and fellowships, earnings, and publications and patents" but not citations (p. 518).

Next steps

- Expand the data sources for a more comprehensive coverage of the field.
- Add papers from LIS journals like JASIST, JDOC and CJILS.
- Compare different areas of archival research to see if trends vary.

References

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