
DEVELOPMENT OF THE JOURNAL SEARCH PROCESS IN INTERNATIONAL DATABASES TO ENHANCE RESEARCH PUBLICATION EFFICIENCY AND SUPPORT UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT IN QS RANKINGS

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Abstract

This research aimed to develop a journal search process in international databases to enhance the efficiency of research publication and support the university's development in the QS Rankings. A journal search manual was developed and evaluated by 34 staff members responsible for research in each faculty/college at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The results showed that all respondents (100%) had used international databases, with Scopus being the most used (100%), followed by SJR (64.71%) and Google Scholar (2.94%). The major obstacles were a lack of understanding of database usage (70.59%) and difficulty in accessing databases (58.82%). The most requested improvement was to make the search process "easier and faster" (82.35%). After implementing the manual, user satisfaction was rated at the highest level, with an overall mean score of 4.58 (S.D. = 0.80). Key dimensions included improved efficiency in journal selection ($\bar{X}$ = 4.65), manual design suitability ($\bar{X}$ = 4.65), and overall satisfaction ($\bar{X}$ = 4.65). The manual helped reduce search time and improve relevance, leading to more efficient performance reporting. In conclusion, the journal search manual serves as a practical innovation that enhances staff performance and supports the university's advancement toward international academic excellence.

Keywords: Journal search, international database, manual, QS Rankings, research publication

Introduction

In the modern era, electronic databases play a vital role in supporting education and research by providing extensive access to academic journals and scholarly publications (De Groote & Dorsch, 2003; Falagas, Pitsouni, Malietzis, & Pappas, 2008; Schnell, 2020). These databases enable lecturers, researchers, and academic personnel to conveniently, rapidly, and accurately retrieve credible sources of information, thereby enhancing the efficiency of research production and publication (Tantivorapha, 2008; Sisuk, 2010), as evidenced by previous studies on database utilization among faculty members in Thai universities. Consequently, the efficiency of research production and publication in international journals has been greatly improved, which is a key factor in developing universities toward global recognition, particularly in the QS University Rankings that emphasize both the quality and quantity of published research outputs (Elsevier, 2023; Giménez-Toledo, Román-Román, & Fernández-Cano, 2016; QS Quacquarelli Symonds, 2025).

However, although international databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, IEEE Xplore, and SpringerLink are valuable sources of information, accessing and utilizing these

databases remain challenging for certain user groups (Falagas et al., 2008; Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020). This is especially true for academic support staff who play an essential role in assisting lecturers and researchers in identifying suitable journals for publication. Common problems include the use of inappropriate search terms, difficulty in distinguishing high-quality international journals, and the complexity of search platforms (Bates, 1989; Wilson, 1999). These challenges often result in time-consuming searches and unsatisfactory outcomes (Schnell, 2020).

To address these issues, this R2R research project focuses on developing a more efficient journal search process within international databases. The study aims to establish a standardized approach that can be applied by academic support staff and related personnel. Furthermore, it seeks to create a journal search manual that provides clear, practical guidance to assist lecturers and researchers in selecting appropriate journals for publishing their research work (Kim & Kim, 2017; McCain & Merrill, 2011). This research is significant in improving the quality of research and aligns with the university's strategic goals, particularly those of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, which emphasizes increasing both the number and quality of international research publications (Office of Research and Development Institute, 2025). The project supports Strategy 3, which promotes and encourages the creation of academic works, research, and innovations at both national and international levels for sustainable social development. Specifically, it relates to Objective 3.5, "Publication and dissemination of research, innovation, and creative works at national and international levels," with key indicators such as the number of articles published in international journals indexed in Scopus and SJR Quartiles 1–4, in collaboration with universities ranked in the QS Top 1–1000, and the number of articles published in journals indexed in Scopus and SJR Quartiles 1–4. Therefore, the development of an international journal search process is an essential strategy for enhancing research publication efficiency and serves as a mechanism that supports the university's progress in achieving its research and ranking objectives effectively.

Research Objectives

1. To develop an international journal search process to enhance the efficiency of research publication and support the university's advancement in the QS Rankings
2. To create a journal search manual for international databases that improves the effectiveness and efficiency of research-related operations

Research Methodology

1. Population and Sample

The population in this study consisted of 34 personnel from various faculties, colleges, and educational centers of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

2. Research Instruments

A questionnaire was used as the primary research instrument for data collection. The development and construction of the questionnaire followed these steps:

2.1 A review of literature, concepts, theories, documents, definitions, and previous research related to the study topic was conducted to guide the formulation of appropriate questionnaire items.

2.2 Research methodologies and techniques for questionnaire design were reviewed to ensure validity and reliability.

2.3 The questionnaire was constructed with content that comprehensively covered the research objectives and enabled respondents to provide factual information relevant to the study.

Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire used in this research consisted of six sections as follows:

Section 1: General information of the respondents

This section contained demographic questions such as gender, age, faculty/college affiliation, educational background, and type of personnel. The questions were in a multiple-choice format.

Section 2: Understanding of the journal search process

This section assessed the respondents' knowledge and understanding of the journal search process through multiple-choice questions.

Section 3: Expectations from the journal search process

This section explored the respondents' expectations toward the journal search process, also using multiple-choice questions.

Section 4: Support for university development in QS Rankings

This section focused on how the journal search process could support the university's progress in the QS Rankings, presented in a multiple-choice format.

Section 5: Satisfaction with the international journal search manual

This section evaluated respondents' satisfaction with the journal search manual using a five-point rating scale questionnaire.

Section 6: Additional suggestions

This section provided open-ended questions for respondents to share recommendations for improving the international journal search manual.

Sections 2, 3, and 4 of the questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, where respondents were instructed to select only one answer per item, although they were allowed to choose more than one applicable option when appropriate.

Section 2 focused on respondents' understanding of the journal search process.

Section 3 examined respondents' expectations regarding the journal search process.

Section 4 explored how the journal search process could support the university's development in the QS Rankings.

Section 5 also consisted of closed-ended questions but was designed using a five-point Likert rating scale to measure satisfaction with the international journal search manual. The rating scale was defined as follows:

- 5 = Very High Satisfaction
- 4 = High Satisfaction
- 3 = Moderate Satisfaction
- 2 = Low Satisfaction
- 1 = Very Low Satisfaction

For interpreting the mean scores in Section 5, the researcher applied established criteria to determine the levels of satisfaction presented in the analysis. The interpretation levels were defined as follows:

- 4.50 – 5.00 = The level of satisfaction with the journal search manual is very high.
- 3.50 – 4.49 = The level of satisfaction with the journal search manual is high.

- 2.50 – 3.49 = The level of satisfaction with the journal search manual is moderate.
1.50 – 2.49 = The level of satisfaction with the journal search manual is low.
1.00 – 1.49 = The level of satisfaction with the journal search manual is very low.

Section 6 consisted of open-ended questions designed to allow respondents to provide additional comments and suggestions for improving the journal search manual in international databases.

3. Data Collection

The data collection process was conducted through the following steps:

3.1 The researcher distributed the questionnaires to academic and supporting staff who were relevant to the study, according to the number of samples determined.

3.2 A specific timeline for returning the completed questionnaires was set, and the researcher personally collected the responses.

3.3 The completed questionnaires were checked for accuracy and completeness, coded, and then analyzed using a computer with a statistical software package.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 The completed questionnaires were checked for accuracy and completeness, then coded according to the criteria specified for each section of the research instrument.

4.2 The coded data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for processing and statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were computed, and the results were analyzed and summarized to address the research objectives.

4.3 The data obtained from the open-ended questions were analyzed using content analysis to identify key themes and insights.

Research Results

The results of the research titled “Development of the Journal Search Process in International Databases to Enhance Research Publication Efficiency and Support University Advancement in QS Rankings” are summarized as follows:

The study revealed that most respondents were female, accounting for 20 individuals (58.82%), while male respondents comprised 14 individuals (41.18%). Regarding age distribution, the majority of respondents were between 36–45 years old (14 individuals, 41.18%), followed by those aged 46 years and above (10 individuals, 29.41%) and 25–35 years old (8 individuals, 23.53%). A small number of respondents were under 25 years old and 69 years old or above, with one individual in each group (2.94%).

In terms of educational attainment, most respondents held doctoral degrees (16 individuals, 47.06%), followed by those with master’s degrees (13 individuals, 38.24%) and bachelor’s degrees (5 individuals, 14.71%).

Regarding employment type, academic staff represented the majority (19 individuals, 55.88%), while academic support staff accounted for 15 individuals (44.12%). This reflects a balanced participation between academic and supporting personnel in evaluating and providing feedback on the international journal search process.

Analysis of respondents’ affiliated faculties and colleges indicated that most participants were from the College of Innovation and Management (21 individuals, 61.76%), followed by the College of Logistics and Supply Chain (3 individuals, 8.82%). Other faculties and colleges including the College of Nursing and Health, Graduate School, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Law, College of Allied Health Sciences,

Faculty of Management Science, and Faculty of Industrial Technology and Engineering each contributed between one and two respondents, representing 2.94% to 5.88%, respectively.

Table 1: General Information of Academic and Supporting Staff from Faculties, Colleges, and Educational Centers

General Information	Number (Persons)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	20	58.82
Female	14	41.18
Age		
Below 25 years	1	2.94
25–35 years	8	23.53
36–45 years	14	41.18
46 years and above	10	29.41
Others (69 years)	1	2.94
Faculty/College Affiliation		
Faculty of Education	1	2.94
Faculty of Management Science	1	2.94
Faculty of Industrial Technology and Engineering	1	2.94
Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts	1	2.94
Graduate School	21	61.76
College of Innovation and Management	2	5.88
College of Nursing and Health	1	2.94
College of Allied Health Sciences	3	8.82
College of Logistics and Supply Chain	1	2.94
College of Hospitality Industry	1	2.94
Management		
Faculty of Law	1	2.94
Educational Qualification		
Bachelor's degree	5	14.71
Master's degree	13	38.24
Doctoral degree	16	47.06
Type of Personnel		
Academic staff	19	55.88
Academic support staff	15	44.12
Total	34	100.0

Part 2: Understanding of the Journal Search Process

Table 2: Experience in Using International Databases for Journal Search

Database Usage Experience	Number (Persons)	Percentage
Used	34	100.00
Never Used	0	0.00
Total	34	100.0

The results in Table 2 show that all respondents (100%) had experience using international databases for journal searches. This finding indicates that the participants possessed a foundational understanding and prior exposure to international database systems, which is an essential factor for developing an efficient journal search and publication process.

Table 3: Most Frequently Used International Databases for Journal Search

International Databases Frequently Used	Number (Persons)	Percentage
Scopus	34	100.00
SCImago Journal Rank (SJR)	22	64.71
Web of Science	13	38.24
Google scholar	1	2.94

The results in Table 3 indicate that Scopus was the most frequently used international database by the respondents (100.00%), followed by the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) (64.71%) and Web of Science (38.24%). The least used database was Google Scholar (2.94%). This finding reflects that Scopus is the primary and most preferred source of information for academic personnel when searching for journals for international research publication.

Table 4: Major Problems Encountered in Searching for Journals in International Databases

Main Problems Encountered	Number (Persons)	Percentage
Lack of understanding in using databases	24	70.59
Difficulty in accessing databases	20	58.82
Lack of clear user manuals	15	44.12
Information not matching user needs	9	26.47
Limited access due to content restrictions	3	8.82

The results in Table 4 show that the majority of respondents identified a lack of understanding in using databases as the main problem (70.59%), followed by difficulty in accessing databases (58.82%). The least reported issue was limited access due to content restrictions, at 8.82%. These findings highlight the need to enhance users' database literacy and to improve system design for greater accessibility and usability.

Part 3: Expectations from the Journal Search Process

Table 5: Needs and Expectations Regarding the Journal Search Process in International Databases

Expectations for the Journal Search Process in International Databases	Number (Persons)	Percentage
Easy and fast searching	28	82.35
Effective search filter tools	26	76.47
Recommendations for journals relevant to the research field	26	76.47
Guidelines or advice for journal publication	21	61.76

The results in Table 5 reveal that the majority of respondents (82.35%) wanted the international journal search process to be easy and fast. This was followed by the expectation for effective search filtering tools and recommendations for journals relevant to specific research fields (76.47% each). The least expected feature was guidelines or advice for journal publication (61.76%). These findings indicate that personnel place high importance on convenience and efficiency in accessing and using information, which are key priorities in developing an improved journal search system.

Table 6: The Extent to Which the Development of a Journal Search Manual Can Improve the Efficiency of Database Searching

To what extent do you think the development of a journal search manual can enhance the efficiency of database searching	Number (Persons)	Percentage
Greatly improves efficiency	28	82.35
Improves efficiency to some extent	6	17.65
Total	34	100.0

The results in Table 6 show that the majority of respondents (82.35%) believed that the development of a journal search manual would greatly improve the efficiency of the search process in international databases, while 17.65% indicated that it would improve efficiency to some extent. These findings reflect the respondents' strong expectation for a systematic and user-friendly search process that enhances convenience and accuracy in journal selection.

Part 4: Support for University Development in QS Rankings

Table 7: The Impact of Publishing Research Articles in International Journals on University Development in QS Rankings

To what extent do you agree that publishing research articles in international journals contributes to the university's development in the QS Rankings	Number (Persons)	Percentage
Highly impactful	33	97.06
Moderately impactful	1	2.94
Total	34	100.0

The results in Table 7 show that the majority of respondents (97.06%) believed that publishing research articles in international journals has a significant impact on the university's development in the QS Rankings, while 2.94% believed it has some impact. These findings reflect the respondents' strong awareness of the importance of international publications as a key mechanism in elevating the university's global ranking and academic reputation.

Table 8: Aspects of the International Journal Search Process That Can Support University Development in QS Rankings

In your opinion, which aspect of the international journal search process can most effectively support the university's development in the QS Rankings	Number (Persons)	Percentage
All of the above	23	67.65
Increasing research citations	5	14.71
Publishing in high-quality journals	3	8.82
Increasing the number of research publications	3	8.82
Total	34	100.0

The results in Table 8 indicate that most respondents (67.65%) believed that all aspects of the journal search process in international databases can support the university's development in the QS Rankings. This was followed by 14.71% who emphasized the role of increasing research citations, while 8.82% each highlighted publishing in high-quality journals and increasing the number of research publications. These findings demonstrate that respondents recognized the journal search process as a key mechanism in promoting research visibility, improving publication quality, and contributing to the university's international ranking performance.

Part 5: Satisfaction with the International Journal Search Manual

Table 9: Levels of Satisfaction with the International Journal Search Manual

Items	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level of Satisfaction
1. The content of the manual is clear and easy to understand.	4.50	0.90	Very High
2. The search steps described in the manual can be practically applied.	4.59	0.82	Very High
3. The manual helps reduce the time spent searching for journals.	4.59	0.82	Very High
4. The manual enhances efficiency in selecting appropriate journals.	4.65	0.77	Very High
5. The layout and presentation of the manual are appropriate.	4.65	0.77	Very High
6. Using the manual increases confidence in selecting journals for publication.	4.62	0.82	Very High
7. Overall, you are satisfied with this manual.	4.65	0.77	Very High

The results in Table 9 indicate that respondents expressed a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the international journal search manual. The items with the highest mean scores were “The manual enhances efficiency in selecting appropriate journals,” “The layout and presentation of the manual are appropriate,” and “Overall satisfaction with the manual,” each with a mean score of 4.65 (S.D. = 0.77). The item “The content of the manual is clear and easy to understand” received the lowest mean score of 4.50 (S.D. = 0.90), although it still falls within the “Very High” satisfaction level.

These findings suggest that the developed manual was well received, being both practical and effective in supporting journal search processes among university personnel.

Additional Suggestions for Improving the Journal Search Manual in International Databases

1. The manual is considered highly useful; therefore, it is recommended that training sessions on how to use the manual be organized to enhance users’ understanding and practical application.

2. It is suggested that the university regularly conduct workshops or training sessions on journal database searching and journal evaluation to strengthen staff competency and ensure continuous improvement.

Discussion

The use of a manual to support journal searches in international databases has proven to be an effective approach that directly addresses the needs of personnel. It enables users to access information more easily, quickly, and accurately in alignment with their research publication objectives. Consequently, it has contributed to enhancing the overall quality and international visibility of the university’s research performance.

The findings revealed that staff members were highly aware of the importance of publishing research in international journals and recognized its significant impact on improving the university’s standing in the QS Rankings. This awareness was particularly evident among those who were able to identify and select high-quality journals suitable for their research work.

Such outcomes reflect the university's clear orientation toward achieving academic excellence and international competitiveness.

Moreover, a comparison before and after the implementation of the manual demonstrated a noticeable change in users' behavior. Initially, users faced difficulties in finding appropriate journals and spent a considerable amount of time in the process. After using the manual, however, they were able to conduct searches more efficiently and accurately, which resulted in improved performance and more effective research reporting within the university.

Conclusion

The research project titled "Development of the Journal Search Process in International Databases to Enhance Research Publication Efficiency and Support University Advancement in QS Rankings" aimed to develop and implement a manual for journal searching in university-recognized international databases. Data were collected from 34 participants who were responsible for research management at the faculty and college levels of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

The results revealed that all participants had prior experience using international databases, with Scopus being the most frequently used, followed by SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) and Google Scholar. However, several challenges were identified in the journal search process, including a lack of understanding of database usage, difficulty in accessing databases, and a lack of publication guidance.

After the development and dissemination of the journal search manual, user satisfaction was found to be at the highest level, particularly in aspects related to improving efficiency in journal selection, appropriateness of manual design, and overall satisfaction. Furthermore, the manual helped reduce search time and enhanced the relevance of search results, thereby improving work efficiency and the quality of research performance reporting within the university.

Overall, the development of the international journal search manual has proven to be a practical and effective tool that enhances research management processes, supports the publication of quality research outputs, and contributes to the university's advancement toward excellence in the QS Rankings — an outcome that aligns with contemporary models of institutional performance and sustainable academic development (Chansuchai et al., 2022; Chansuchai, 2024).

Recommendations

1. Continuous training programs or workshops on the use of international databases should be organized for both academic and supporting staff to enhance their research and information retrieval skills.
2. The development of a system or tool with advanced filtering functions—such as filtering by discipline, journal ranking level, or database—should be promoted to improve the efficiency of journal searching and reduce redundancy through better database structuring
3. The scope of future research should be expanded to include lecturers, researchers, and graduate students in order to obtain more comprehensive and in-depth information that reflects the increasing use of digital academic databases and e-journals.

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