

Do Prestigious Spanish Scholarly Book Publishers Have More Teaching Impact?

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Abstract

Purpose – This study assesses the educational value of prestigious and productive Spanish scholarly publishers based on mentions of their books in online scholarly syllabi.

Design/methodology/approach – Syllabus mentions of 15,117 books from 27 publishers were searched for, manually checked and compared with Microsoft Academic citations.

Findings – Most books published by Ariel, Síntesis, Tecnos and Cátedra have been mentioned in at least one online syllabus, indicating that their books have consistently high educational value. In contrast, few books published by the most productive publishers were mentioned in online syllabi. Prestigious publishers have both the highest educational impact based on syllabus mentions and the highest research impact based on Microsoft Academic citations.

Research limitations/implications – The results might be different for other publishers. The online syllabus mentions found may be a small fraction of the syllabus mentions of the sampled books.

Practical implications – Authors of Spanish-language social sciences and humanities books should consider general prestige when selecting a publisher if they want educational uptake for their work.

Originality/value – This is the first study assessing book publishers based on syllabus mentions.

Keywords scholarly book publishers, books assessment, monographs assessment, research evaluation, syllabus mentions, educational impact, humanities and social sciences, non-English books

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

A book is a good vehicle to spread knowledge, culture and languages (Kurschus, 2015). Scholarly books are important communication channels in the humanities and many social sciences fields, especially in terms of monographs and edited books (Engels *et al.*, 2012; Huang and Chang, 2008; Kulczycki *et al.*, 2018; Sivertsen, 2016). More important books may be published by more prestigious publishers, so some studies have ranked scholarly book publishers based on citations from Clarivate Analytics' Book Citation Index (Torres-Salinas *et al.*, 2012) or from Scopus journals (Zuccala *et al.*, 2015a). International commercial citation indexes principally cover prestigious international publishers from the USA and the UK (Giménez-Toledo *et al.*, 2017; Gorraiz *et al.*, 2013; Torres-Salinas *et al.*, 2014) and are not suitable for assessing publishers in non-English speaking countries. Some national book assessment initiatives (Giménez-Toledo *et al.*, 2016) and a diverse range of indicators have been developed to assess the impact of scholarly books. These include citations, book reviews, library holdings, editorial prestige and mentions in course syllabi.

Edited books, monographs and textbooks do not have to follow the dense style of typical journal articles and can be more accessible to students (Hyland, 1999). They also contain more information about their topic than a journal article and can therefore make a more substantial contribution to a course. A logical way to assess the educational value of books is therefore to count how often they are mentioned in course syllabi. Only one large-scale study has investigated mentions in course syllabi to assess the educational impact of academic books. It sampled English-language monographs indexed in Scopus but did not use the results to compare publishers (Kousha and Thelwall, 2016).

The current study explores whether course syllabi can reflect the educational impact of Spanish scholarly book publishers. It follows a previous study that examined whether syllabus mentions could be

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automatically and accurately identified for a set of Spanish-language books published by scholarly publishers that were prestigious or productive in Spain (Mas-Bleda and Thelwall, in press).

Despite the importance of books in academic teaching and the possibility that teachers consider publisher prestige when selecting books to recommend, this is the first study using empirical data to investigate publishers for the educational value of their works. Spain is a suitable test case because of the ability to get reasonably comprehensive information about published Spanish books from a central source.

2. Background

2.1 The book publishing industry

The global book industry has become concentrated due to acquisitions and mergers, but also more polarised between large and small publishers (Steiner, 2018). Book publishing is the largest cultural industry in Europe, with Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Italy being the largest markets (Federation of European Publishers, 2017). In addition to businesses, universities are also important publishers of academic books.

Books vary by type, format, edition and language. The Spanish ISBN Agency registered 86,000 ISBNs in 2016, mainly first edition books (98%) published by private publishers (90%) in Spanish official languages (91.4%; 73% in Spanish) and in paper format (70%) (MECD, 2017). Most books were from the social sciences and humanities (31%) and literary works (21%), such as literature, novels and poetry (MECD, 2017). In contrast, the ISBN Agencies in Latin America registered 189,857 books in 2016. These were mainly from Brazil (43%) and published in paper format (77%) by commercial publishers (55%) (CERLALC, 2017).

2.2. Scholarly book publishing

Scholarly monographs and edited books play an important role in the arts and humanities and many social science fields (Sivertsen and Larsen, 2012; Thompson, 2002), where they are frequently used and cited (Huang and Chang, 2008; Sivertsen, 2016). For instance, 67% of the documents cited in five representative Spanish humanities journals in 2006-2007 were books (Osca-Lluch *et al.*, 2013).

In Spain, there are 673 scholarly book publishers that produce books of interest to the scientific, scholarly or university community. They have all issued at least 50 ISBNs and are among either the 50% most prestigious or the 50% most productive publishers (Giménez-Toledo, 2017). Scholarly publishing in Spain accounts for 20% of all Spanish book titles, with law, history, education, economics and linguistics, literature and philology registering the most ISBNs (Giménez-Toledo, 2017).

University presses tend to focus on scholarly books and have a more multidisciplinary orientation than commercial publishers (Mañana-Rodríguez and Giménez-Toledo, 2018). In 2015, Spanish university presses produced 4,681 books, mostly published for the first time (87%), in Spanish (81%), in print format (61%) and in the humanities (46.6%) and social sciences (29%) (UNE, 2016).

2.3 Evaluation-oriented studies of books

Scholars in the humanities and social sciences have stronger national and regional interests (Hicks, 1999) and usually publish in the language of the nation or culture that is studied (Engels *et al.*, 2012; López-Navarro *et al.*, 2015; Moed *et al.*, 2002). They also tend to publish in national journals rather than international journals (Larivière and Macaluso, 2011), although there are country differences (Kulczycki *et al.*, 2018).

Scholarly books are important for tenure and promotion in the humanities and many social sciences fields (Bargheer and Walker, 2017; Cronin and La Barre, 2004). A monograph is typically a solo-authored narrowly-focused work, whereas an edited volume usually gathers together chapters from experts contributing perspectives on a common issue or topic. From a research assessment perspective, monographs, individual chapters and editing a collection may all be counted, as in the UK Research Excellence

Framework. Nevertheless, monographs are often regarded as the most important research output in the humanities (Williams *et al.*, 2009).

The Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus citation-based databases have been traditionally used to assess the impact of academic publications. Their coverage bias toward English-language journals led to the creation of the WoS Book Citation Index (BKCI) and the Scopus Books Expansion Project, but these are also biased towards English and publishers from English-speaking countries (Gorraiz *et al.*, 2013; Torres-Salinas *et al.*, 2014). For instance, most Spanish scholarly book publishers perceived as prestigious by Spanish scholars are not included in BKCI or Scopus (Giménez-Toledo *et al.*, 2017).

The coverage of Google Books (GB) is much larger than WoS or Scopus, with over thirteen million digitised books (Barron, 2011). Whilst it does not include a citation index, citations can be extracted by combining text search and filtering procedures (see Kousha and Thelwall, 2015). Presumably because of the large coverage of books, GB citations are more numerous than BKCI citations, at least for some book-based disciplines (Kousha and Thelwall, 2015).

Microsoft Academic (MA) is a free academic search engine that supports automatic queries through its Applications Programming Interface (API) based on scholarly publications found by Bing or harvested directly from publisher websites. Its old version stopped being updated in 2013, although its coverage had plunged in 2011 (Orduña-Malea *et al.*, 2014). A new version was launched in 2016 (Harzing and Alakangas, 2017) receiving a significant update in July 2017. MA claimed (by 30 March 2018) on its official website to index over 170 million publications. MA has larger coverage of book-related documents than WoS and Scopus (based on a small sample: Hug and Brändle, 2017) and finds more citations than Scopus for published journal articles (Thelwall, 2017).

Besides citation counts, a diverse range of indicators have been examined to assess the quality and impact of books. These include the number of libraries holding a book (Torres-Salinas and Moed, 2009; White *et al.*, 2009), book reviews from scholars (Gorraiz *et al.*, 2014; Sorli Rojo *et al.*, 2011; Zuccala and van Leeuwen, 2011) and from readers that are not necessarily scholars (Kousha *et al.*, 2017; Zuccala *et al.*, 2015b), publisher prestige (Giménez-Toledo *et al.*, 2013) and mentions from online course syllabi (Kousha and Thelwall, 2016; Mas-Bleda and Thelwall, in press). A study of multiple indicators (Scopus citations, Mendeley captures, Goodreads captures, tweets, Wikipedia mentions, reviews in Goodreads and Amazon, EBSCO PDF views and saves and WorldCat library holdings) for a sample of 70,000 ebooks concluded that books should be evaluated using a range of indicators (Halevi *et al.*, 2016).

Some European countries (Denmark, Flanders, Finland, Norway and Spain) have developed non-commercial national databases for the evaluation of scholarly books (Giménez-Toledo *et al.*, 2016). A recent study comparing three of these national systems with BKCI and Scopus showed that many book publishers are only indexed in one, usually non-commercial database. This emphasises the importance of national databases for research evaluation in non-English countries (Giménez-Toledo *et al.*, 2017).

Scholarly book publishers have been ranked in different ways. For instance, book publishers in humanities and social sciences disciplines have been ranked according to their perceived editorial prestige (Giménez-Toledo *et al.*, 2013) or citations from Clarivate Analytics' Book Citation Index (Torres-Salinas *et al.*, 2012). History publishers have been ranked based on citations to their books from Scopus journal articles (Zuccala *et al.*, 2015a) and journalism publishers have been ranked according to the number of WorldCat holdings and Google Scholar citations (Neville and Henry, 2014). Political science publishers have been assessed based on the publication and reading preferences of American political scientists (Garand and Giles, 2011) and according to subject specialist librarians' perceptions (Lewis, 2000). No publishers have been ranked for the educational value of their books, however, despite the importance of books for teaching.

In Spain, publisher prestige is one of the elements considered by ANECA (National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation), the national research evaluation system, for the assessment of scholarly books (ANECA, 2017). Evidence of publisher prestige is based on the Scholarly Publishers Indicators (SPI) portal (<http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI/rankings.html>), which ranks Spanish and non-Spanish scholarly book

publishers in the humanities and social sciences according to their prestige based on a survey of Spanish lecturers and researchers (Giménez-Toledo *et al.*, 2013).

2.4 Teaching value assessment based on syllabus mentions

A scholarly syllabus describes an educational course, created by its instructor and usually includes key course information (e.g. course title, academic year, course length, study mode), instructor details, background, objectives, course contents, teaching methods, assessment systems and recommended readings. Because instructors recommend scholarly publications that they consider to be helpful for students taking their course, often as either required or supplementary readings, a citation from a syllabus is an indicator of teaching value.

Previous research has shown that the most often recommended resources in Spanish scholarly syllabi are in Spanish and are books. A study examining syllabi related to media literacy in communication and education degrees in Spain found that 90% of the references recommended were in Spanish (Marta-Lazo *et al.*, 2014). Another study focused on syllabi related to pedagogy and didactics in sciences of physical activity and sport degrees in Spain reported that 89.5% of the recommended publications were in Spanish and 73.5% were monographs (Gutiérrez García *et al.*, 2016).

Monographs seems to prevail in the humanities whereas other types of books are more frequent in other fields. A dissertation examining syllabi from a Spanish university found that the monograph was the most recommended source type in history (69%) and sociology (51%) whereas reference manuals (including textbooks, treatises and language grammars) were more recommended in physics (72%) and biotechnology (55%) (Prieto-Paño, 2013).

The use of course syllabi to help assess the teaching utility of scholarly publications has rarely been attempted. One exception is a study analysing syllabus mentions of over 70,000 journal articles published in 2003 showing that they might be useful for some social sciences research (Kousha and Thelwall, 2008). Another study focused on syllabus mentions of 14,000 English-language monographs published from 2005 to 2010 indexed in Scopus. It reported that 56% of arts and humanities monographs had at least one syllabus mention, and about a third of them had no citations (Kousha and Thelwall, 2016). This underlines the importance of using different indicators to get evidence of the wider impacts of scholarly monographs.

The teaching value of Spanish-language books published by academic publishers that are prestigious or productive in Spain has previously been examined (Mas-Bleda and Thelwall, in press). This study explored whether mentions of 15,117 books in online scholarly syllabi could be automatically identified accurately and whether enough books had at least one online syllabus mention to make it a useful teaching impact indicator. The method developed had an accuracy of 99.5% for filtering out false mentions (i.e., only 0.5% of excluded document were valid syllabus mentions) and 74.7% for identifying correct matches (i.e., 25.3% of the retained syllabus mentions were not valid). A fifth (19%) of the books were recommended at least once in online course syllabi (Mas-Bleda and Thelwall, in press). The current follow-up study focuses on book publishers rather than individual books. Whilst the previous study was based on syllabus mentions alone, the present study uses both mentions from online course syllabi and citations from Microsoft Academic (MA).

The objective of this study is to examine whether online course syllabi are useful to assess the teaching impact of Spanish scholarly book publishers. This study is driven by the following research questions. The final question is for background information because it is not directly about book publishers.

- Are there substantial differences between publishers in the proportions of books that have at least one syllabus mention?
- Are there substantial differences between publishers in the proportions of books that have at least one MA citation?
- Which type of book publisher, prestigious or productive, is the most useful for teaching?
- Do syllabus mentions and Microsoft Academic citations reflect different types of impact for Spanish books?

3. Methods

3.1 Data collection

Datos.bne.es (<http://datos.bne.es>), the bibliographic data portal of the National Library of Spain, was used to download bibliographic records for books published in Spain, on 17 November 2016. Each record contained the book title, author names, publisher, publication year, publication place, document type, language and ISBN. This source contained records for books published in Spain by the end of 2011. Records were restricted to the 'texto impreso' (printed text) document type. Whilst most seemed to be monographs, there was no filter to distinguish between monographs, edited books and book serials. Other types of document (such as electronic resources, maps, periodical publications or printed music), records in other official languages in Spain (Catalan, Basque and Galician) and records that did not include basic information (author, publisher or publication year) were excluded.

Because this source did not have a classification scheme for academic subject areas or distinguish between academic and non-academic publishers, the Scholarly Publishers Indicators (SPI) website (<http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI>) was used to identify Spanish scholarly book publishers.

The SPI website ranks scholarly book publishers relevant to the humanities and social sciences by editorial prestige (both Spanish and non-Spanish publishers) and thematic specialization (Spanish publishers only). The publisher prestige ranking is based on Spanish scholars' opinions (Giménez-Toledo *et al.*, 2013). The thematic specialization ranking classifies the most productive publishers in each discipline (Anthropology, Archeology & Prehistory, Fine arts, Library & Information Sciences, Political Sciences, Communication, Law, Economy, Education, Arab and Hebrew Studies, Philosophy, Geography, History, Linguistics, Literature & Philology, Psychology, and Sociology), based on the number of books published.

The main steps for the selection of the sample were the following:

- a) Download the bibliographic records from Datos.bne.es database and select books in Spanish language with 'texto impreso' (printed text) as the document type.
- b) Select both the most prestigious and the most productive Spanish academic publishers according to the SPI portal. The ten most prestigious publishers were not the same in every discipline and, in some disciplines, some productive publishers were not perceived as prestigious. Because this study aimed at covering publishers from every discipline, both the most prestigious and the most productive ones were selected:
 - Prestigious publishers were selected based on the editorial prestige ranking by discipline. Publishers that appeared among the top ten in at least 6 out of 16 disciplines were selected.
 - Productive publishers were selected based on the thematic specialization ranking. The three most productive publishers in each discipline were chosen.
- c) Match the 'Datos.bne.es' books (step a) with the chosen list of publishers (step b).
- d) Restrict the set of publishers to those that had at least 200 Spanish-language books in the period 2002-2011 (to focus on major publishers), after removing duplicates and books with single and two-word titles (which are difficult to search for).

This generated 15,117 books from 27 Spanish publishers (Table 1). All publishers meeting the criteria were commercial, except for one university press (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya - UOC) and one publisher belonging to a research institution (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas - CSIC). This is not surprising since 90% of publishers in Spain in 2016 were private (MECD, 2017).

Table 1. Prestigious or productive Spanish academic book publishers with at least 200 Spanish-language books in the Datos.bne.es database for the period 2002-2011 (n= 15,117).

Publisher	Books in Datos.bne.es	Prestigious	Productive	Publisher	Books in Datos.bne.es	Prestigious	Productive
Ediciones B	1521	No	Yes	Desclée de Brouwer	396	No	Yes

Alianza	1299	Yes	Yes	Cátedra	393	Yes	Yes
Tirant Lo Blanch	1206	Yes	No	UOC	366	No	Yes
Espasa Calpe	980	No	Yes	Tecnos	364	Yes	No
Paidós	904	Yes	No	Trotta	347	No	Yes
Aranzadi	781	No	Yes	Herder	341	No	Yes
Dykinson	708	No	Yes	Trea	304	No	Yes
Obelisco	626	No	Yes	CSIC	269	Yes	Yes
Síntesis	575	Yes	No	Nowtilus	250	No	Yes
Akal	573	Yes	Yes	Vicens Vives	235	No	Yes
Civitas	561	No	Yes	ESIC	234	No	Yes
Marcial Pons	504	Yes	No	Díaz de Santos	220	No	Yes
Ariel	485	Yes	No	Lunwerg	213	No	Yes
Crítica	462	Yes	No				

Source: Mas-Bleda and Thelwall (in press).

3.2 Gathering and filtering syllabus mentions

Mentions of the 15,117 books from 27 Spanish scholarly book publishers were searched for in online academic syllabi, exploiting the coverage of the Bing general web search engine. Queries were submitted to the Bing Search API, via the free Webometric Analyst program (<http://lexiurl.wlv.ac.uk>) on Friday 13 December 2016, as explained below.

Webometric Analyst was used to generate automatic searches using the first author surname, the first (up to) 7 terms of the book title as a phrase search and the terms “guía docente” and “guía académica” to limit the results to Spanish-language course syllabi. These seemed to be the most widely used terms, according to previous manual checks made by authors of this study through university websites. The vertical bar ‘|’ (an OR operator internal to Webometric Analyst) was used to run both queries separately in Bing and combine the results after removing duplicates. The publisher name was added to the queries for books with three words in their titles to reduce the number of false matches. The following are examples of the queries used.

Antón "Manual de técnica policial" "guía docente" | Antón "Manual de técnica policial" "guía académica"

Bellori "Vidas de pintores" "Akal" "guía docente" | Bellori "Vidas de pintores" "Akal" "guía académica"

Some publishers appeared in Datos.bne.es with variants of their names (e.g. ‘Alianza’ and ‘Alianza Editorial’; ‘Civitas’ and ‘Thomson Civitas’) so publishers’ names were standardised, and automatic queries contained the terms most likely to give the maximum recall.

The automatic queries retrieved 52,716 syllabus mention matches for the 15,117 sampled books but not all were correct. They were filtered via Webometric Analyst to remove false matches based on a set of rules defined for the titles, descriptions and URLs of the syllabus search results from scholarly websites. This adapted a method previously used for English-language books (Kousha and Thelwall, 2016) by translating the syllabus terms to Spanish, adding new terms related to the Spanish educational system and adding new rules to exclude non-academic sites. Different sets of rules were tested and the most accurate set was selected:

- Search results title matches. The title field in the Bing API results was used to limit the results to pages containing terms with a high likelihood of being in a syllabus. Wildcard matching (*) was used to cover

multiple term endings. Some of the terms included were: *asignatura*, *guía docente*, *guía académica*, *guía didáctica*, *bibliografía*, *referencias*.

- Search results description matches. Some syllabus webpages did not include syllabus-related terms in their titles, such as *asignatura* or *guía docente*. Instead, they used a course name, the repository where the syllabus was contained or the faculty name, which made it difficult to automatically detect if the webpage was a syllabus from its title. Therefore, additional rules were added to search syllabus-related terms in the description field. Rules for the description field can be case sensitive so terms were included in different case formats (e.g. '*Guía docente*', '*GUÍA DOCENTE*').
- Search results URL matches. A list of syllabus terms that should be found in URLs was specified, mainly taken from the title field. Some relevant instances of syllabus terms in URLs include the following.

<http://web.unican.es/estudios/Documents/Guias/2015/es/G402.pdf>

<http://titulaciones.unizar.es/asignaturas/26111/actividades15.html>

http://www.uca.es/wuca_fichasig_todasasig_xdpto?dpto=C118

Mentions from non-scholarly sites were all judged to be false. These included document-sharing websites (e.g. *docplayer.com*), book download websites, platforms hosting blogs, wiki hosts, publishers, online bookshops, scientific databases, scientific journals, academic social networks and a wide range of other sites.

Many false matches also came from scholarly teaching centre reports, journal articles, conference papers and PhD dissertations containing the term "syllabus" as part of their topic. Most were hosted in institutional repositories, university journals and scientific databases. False matches from non-syllabus publications were removed by ignoring any results with a range of related terms in their title (e.g. *Memoria de investigación**) or URL (e.g. **journal_content**, **congreso**). Repositories and databases were excluded when their contents were solely scientific (journal articles, conference articles, books, dissertations, etc.). To remove false matches from other digital libraries, book databases or book lists, results with a range of related terms in their title (e.g. *Buscador**, *Catalogo de libros*) and URL (e.g. **buscador**, **catalogo-libros**) were ignored. Blogs, forums and CVs were also removed from results.

Academic syllabi were assumed to be in Word (*.doc* and *.docx*), PDF (*.pdf*) or HTML (*.htm* and *.html*) format, although an analysis of the file extensions of the documents mentioning the sampled books showed that files with these extensions were not exclusively course syllabi (Mas-Bleda and Thelwall, in press). Files with other extensions (e.g. *.ppt*, *.txt*, *.xls*, *.xml*) were excluded as they tended to be other types of document, such as conference or course presentations, reports or library catalogues (Mas-Bleda and Thelwall, in press).

Out of 52,716 syllabus mentions reported by the Bing API, 26,195 (49.7%) were automatically classified as initially correct matches and 26,521 (50.3%) as initially false matches by Webometric Analyst, based on the rules defined above. All the syllabus mentions were checked to verify whether the sampled books were mentioned in the context of academic course reading lists (during the period June-November 2017). The rules to filter out incorrect matches rejected very few correct matches since 99.5% of the rejected Bing results were false mentions. Nevertheless, ignoring matches that could not be assessed, 74.7% of the matches judged by the filtering rules to be correct syllabus mentions were genuinely correct matches.

The full set of rules can be accessed in the Webometric Analyst software by specifying Spanish as the syllabus filtering language. Both a detailed description of the defined rules and the main characteristics found from manual checks are reported on the study that precedes to this research (Mas-Bleda and Thelwall, in press).

Only the 17,104 individual web pages (individual online course syllabi) correctly mentioning the sampled books were considered. However, course syllabi were sometimes replicated within a website if copies were posted for different academic years (e.g.: 2015-2016, 2016-2017) formats (e.g.: *.html* and *.pdf*) or languages (e.g.: Spanish-Galician, Spanish-Basque, Spanish-Catalan). For instance, the book '*Stewart, P., Strathern, A. Brujería, hechicería, rumores y habladorías. Madrid: Akal, 2008*' was recommended in two online course syllabi (<http://eguia.ull.es/fcps/imprimir.php?codigo=119493201&curso=1415> and

<http://eguia.ull.es/fcps/imprimir.php?codigo=119493201&curso=1617>), but they were identical copies for different academic years. To prevent duplication, the syllabus mention count was based on the number of web domains, rather than web pages, citing the sampled books. A web domain is the part of an URL after “//” (e.g. ‘eguia.ull.es’ in the previous URLs). Using web domain counts, the sampled books received 12,025 verified syllabus mentions.

3.3 Counting Microsoft Academic citations

Citation counts from Microsoft Academic (MA) were collected to examine the relationship between syllabus mentions and citations. Citation counts for books were gathered from Microsoft Academic (MA) because previous research had reported coverage biases in WoS and Scopus towards literature in English and scientific journals (Albarillo, 2014; Archambault *et al.*, 2006; Van Leeuwen, 2001). In addition, the ability of MA to find more citations than Scopus for recently published journal articles (Thelwall, 2017), its higher coverage of book-related document types than WoS and Scopus (Hug and Brändle, 2017) and the difficulty to collect large-scale data from Google Scholar (GS) (Halevi *et al.*, 2017) all make MA a useful source of citations to Spanish books.

Whilst syllabus mention counts were collected in December 2016, citation counts from Microsoft Academic were collected in December 2017. This time difference should not bias the main correlation tests performed.

4. Results

4.1 Total syllabus mentions versus total citation counts

The number of MA citations (29,005) to the sampled books is higher (241%) than the number of syllabus mentions (12,025) to them, but recall that the MA citations were gathered a year later than the syllabus mentions. Nevertheless, there are more books with at least one syllabus mention (2,849, 18.85%) than books with at least one MA citation (1,930, 12.77%).

A manual check of one random MA citation for a random sample of 100 books showed that 88% of citations referred to the sampled books. The remaining 12% were false for two reasons: 1) they cited other academic publications (journal articles and a dissertation) with the same title and author as the sampled books, and 2) the cited book was the same as the sampled book but had been published by another publisher. MA does not report a book’s publisher but usually provides a link to information about each book, which usually reports its publisher. Almost half of the citations checked (47%) referred to the correct book published in a different year.

4.2 Educational and research impact of Spanish book publishers

There is huge difference between the Spanish publishers in terms of apparent teaching value (Table 2). Very few publishers have over 50% of their books recommended in online academic course syllabi (Ariel, Síntesis, Tecnos, Cátedra), a few publishers have 25-50% of their books recommended (Paidós, Crítica, Akal, Alianza, Marcial Pons, Tirant lo Blanch), one publisher (CSIC) has 14%, and the remainder have less than 4% of their books recommended.

Microsoft Academic found citation information for 2,305 (15%) books, but it reported at least one citation for 1,930 (12.8%) books. There also is difference between publishers in terms of citations, with the proportions of books being cited ranging from 44% to 0.25%.

The most prestigious publishers have both the highest proportion of books recommended in online syllabi and the highest proportion of books cited in Microsoft Academic (Table 2). Most publishers have a higher proportion of books being recommended in course syllabi than cited.

Table 2. The proportion of books published by Spanish publishers (2002-2011) with at least one syllabus mention or MA citation.

Publisher	Sampled books	Books with \geq 1 syllabus mention (%)	Books with \geq 1 MA citation (%)	Prestigious	Productive
Ariel	485	58.1%	32.8%	Yes	No
Síntesis	575	55.1%	30.8%	Yes	No
Tecnos	364	54.1%	44.0%	Yes	No
Cátedra	393	50.1%	40.0%	Yes	Yes
Paidós	904	45.2%	19.1%	Yes	No
Crítica	462	44.8%	23.6%	Yes	No
Akal	573	38.6%	22.9%	Yes	Yes
Alianza	1299	35.3%	33.0%	Yes	Yes
Marcial Pons	504	26.4%	22.0%	Yes	No
Tirant Lo Blanch	1206	24.9%	15.5%	Yes	No
CSIC	269	13.8%	16.0%	Yes	Yes
Herder	341	3.5%	1.2%	No	Yes
ESIC	234	3.0%	1.3%	No	Yes
UOC	366	2.7%	1.6%	No	Yes
Díaz de Santos	220	1.8%	1.8%	No	Yes
Trotta	347	1.7%	2.6%	No	Yes
Trea	304	1.6%	1.6%	No	Yes
Civitas	561	1.4%	2.0%	No	Yes
Dykinson	708	1.4%	1.3%	No	Yes
Aranzadi	781	1.2%	0.8%	No	Yes
Desclée de	396	1.0%	0.3%	No	Yes
Espasa Calpe	980	0.8%	1.7%	No	Yes
Vicens Vives	235	0.4%	0.4%	No	Yes
Nowtilus	250	0.4%	0.8%	No	Yes
Ediciones B	1521	0.3%	0.4%	No	Yes
Obelisco	626	0.2%	1.3%	No	Yes
Lunweg	213	0.0%	0.9%	No	Yes
Total	15,117	18.9%	12.8%		

4.3 Books recommended and cited most often

An analysis of the twenty-three books recommended most often in online course syllabi and the twenty-three books cited most often according to Microsoft Academic showed that both sets were from publishers that are perceived as prestigious. The initial number of books to consider in the analysis was twenty, but some books had the same number of syllabus mentions (see Appendix). Frequently recommended books were not necessarily often cited and vice versa. About 60% of the books with at least one syllabus mention had no MA citations and about 41% of books with at least one MA citation had no syllabus mentions.

The books recommended most often in online course syllabi were mainly single-authored humanities monographs, particularly in the field of law, written originally in Spanish (Table 3). The six (26%) translated books were from English except one from Italian. The books cited most often in Microsoft Academic were mainly single-authored translated humanities monographs, from English (39%), French (33%) or German (28%) and they were mostly about philosophy (Table 3). According to a database of books published in Spain (<https://www.mecd.gob.es/cultura-mecd/areas-cultura/libro/bases-de-datos-del-isbn/base-de-datos-de->

[libros.html](#)), all these books are monographs. Three books were both highly recommended and highly cited (Table 4).

Table 3. A comparison between the most highly recommended and most highly cited Spanish books.

Characteristics	The most recommended books in online syllabi (n= 23)	The most cited books in Microsoft Academic (n=23)
Single-author books	19 (83%)	20 (87%)
Translated books	6 (26%)	18 (78%)
Original language of translated books	English (83%) and Italian (17%)	English (39%), French (33%) and German (28%)
Predominant subject field	Law (39%)	Philosophy (48%)
Type of book	Monograph (100%)	Monograph (100%)
Publisher	Alianza (26%), Tecnos (22%) and Ariel (17%).	Alianza (26%), Tecnos (22%) Ariel (17%), Paidós (17%)

Table 4. Spanish books that were both highly recommended and highly cited.

Book	Syllabus mentions	MA citations	Original language	Topics
Escandell Vidal, M. V. <i>Introducción a la pragmática</i> . Ariel, 2006.	35	332	Spanish	Linguistics
Savater, F. <i>El valor de educar</i> . Ariel, 2008	28	286	Spanish	Society, Philosophy
Castells, M. <i>Comunicación y poder</i> . Alianza, 2009.	27	275	English	Sociology

4.4 Correlation between syllabus mentions and MA citations

Separate Spearman correlations for each year and publisher was calculated (Table 5). The correlations are between 0.38 and 0.46 overall for all years considering all books and are positive. The moderate correlations indicate a considerable overlap between educational impact (syllabus mentions) and scholarly impact (MA citations). Thus, books that are useful in education also tend to be useful for research.

Table 5. Spearman correlation between syllabus mentions and MA citations to Spanish books indexed in Bne.datos.es (n=15,117) by publisher and year.

Publisher	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Average
Akal	0.34	0.29	0.49	0.23	0.37	0.35	0.18	0.24	0.33	0.31	0.31
Alianza	0.47	0.32	0.37	0.37	0.35	0.46	0.44	0.17	0.34	0.45	0.37
Aranzadi	0.70	0.49	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	-	0.35
Ariel	0.14	0.10	0.55	0.51	0.44	0.41	0.45	0.55	0.40	0.62	0.42
Cátedra	0.29	0.34	0.30	0.47	0.62	0.32	0.36	0.34	0.11	0.35	0.35
Civitas	-0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.71	0.00	0.70	-0.04	0.00	0.24
Crítica	0.22	0.19	-0.01	0.39	0.13	0.29	0.08	0.21	0.59	0.23	0.23
CSIC	0.00	0.03	-0.12	0.31	0.58	0.36	0.25	0.08	0.15	-0.25	0.14
Desclée	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Díaz de Santos	1.00	-0.03	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.16
Dykinson	0.00	0.00	0.39	0.66	0.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.15
Ediciones B	0.71	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.07
ESIC	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.68	0.00	0.00	0.17

Espasa Calpe	0.00	0.29	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.70	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.13
Herder	0.00	-0.03	0.58	0.00	1.00	-0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.15
Lunweg	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Marcial Pons	0.33	0.37	0.07	-0.10	0.34	0.05	0.00	0.36	0.24	0.01	0.17
Nowtilus	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Obelisco	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.04	0.00
Paidós	0.02	0.29	0.06	0.35	0.14	0.28	0.20	0.26	0.07	0.27	0.19
Síntesis	0.35	0.21	0.37	0.40	0.20	0.46	0.18	0.41	0.31	0.26	0.32
Tecnos	0.36	0.34	0.36	0.34	0.44	0.33	0.52	0.14	0.54	0.03	0.34
Tirant lo	-0.03	0.16	0.22	0.21	0.07	0.06	0.14	0.58	0.31	0.38	0.21
Trea	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.72	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.27
Trotta	0.72	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.72	1.00	0.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.42
UOC	0.00	1.00	-0.05	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	-0.01	0.00	0.70	0.36
Vicens Vives	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.10
All publishers	0.42	0.39	0.43	0.46	0.43	0.43	0.38	0.38	0.40	0.43	0.42

5. Discussion

This study examined the educational value of the most prestigious and productive Spanish scholarly book publishers in the humanities and social sciences, based on mentions of their books in online scholarly syllabi. Whilst there is an increasing trend to make available course syllabi on the web, the proportion of Spanish syllabi available online is unknown and, therefore, it is not clear how far the online syllabus mentions gathered underestimate the total educational impact of the books assessed. Moreover, there may be disciplinary differences in the proportion of syllabi online that may affect some publishers more than others.

Some books appear as part of a series following a theme that may be managed by a team of senior academics. The prestige of individual series may be more important than the prestige of the publisher, although this was not assessed here.

The results in this study might be influenced by the selection of publishers and the collection of syllabus mentions is limited to the Bing API search results. Whilst the method developed filters out almost exclusively false matches (99.5%), only 74.7% of the remaining matches were correct. Consequently, manual checking is needed to filter out the remaining 25.3% incorrect matches. The previous study explains the method developed in more detail and discusses problems related to the gathering of syllabus mentions and conceptual issues, such as a lack of university policies for sharing course syllabi online, duplication of syllabi, book translations and books with multiple editions (Mas-Bleda and Thelwall, in press).

Some syllabi probably have restricted access and cannot be found by search engines. Course syllabi usually differentiate between basic and supplementary readings. Whilst the basic material has a higher educational utility for a given course, this study did not treat the two types differently. Moreover, the reasons why instructors select reading materials are not well understood and may produce selection biases.

Citation counts from Microsoft Academic were collected to calculate the relationship between educational and research impact. However, only few studies have investigated this tool since its re-launch. More books had syllabus mentions (19%) than MA citations (13%), revealing the importance of books in education. Despite the overall moderate correlation between syllabus mentions and citations, 60% of the books with at least one syllabus mention had no MA citations, showing that a large proportion of Spanish-language books have measurable educational despite not having a measurable research impact. This figure is much higher than corresponding data about English-language monographs, in which 18% of art and humanities monographs had at least one syllabus mention but no Scopus citations. It seems likely more Spanish language books written for educational rather than research uses.

The first research question addressed the proportion of books published by each publisher with at least one syllabus mention and the second research question examined the proportion of books with at least one citation. Some book publishers, such as Ariel, Síntesis, Tecnos and Cátedra seem to have a strong educational impact, since over 50% of their books have been recommended at least once in online course syllabi. Other publishers, such as Paidós, Crítica, Akal, Alianza, Marcial Pons, Tirant lo Blanch also influence teaching, since about 25-50% of their books have at least one syllabus mention. These ten publishers have published the 95% of the books that were recommended at least once and 93% of the books that were cited at least once. Thus, there are substantial differences between publishers in the educational value of their books. There are similar substantial differences between publishers in the citation impact of their books.

In response to the third research question, whilst the Spanish scholarly book publishers that were productive in some humanities or social science fields received few syllabus mentions or MA citations, the publishers perceived as prestigious by Spanish scholars had high proportions of books recommended in online syllabi and high proportions of books cited, suggesting that the perceived prestige is relevant for recommending books in course syllabi and for citing them, or that these publishers successfully identify useful educational or scholarly books.

A survey-based study has argued that monographs add to the prestige of a publisher, making their portfolio of books more likely to be used and cited (Williams *et al.*, 2009). Other survey-based studies suggest that Spanish scholars from different social sciences and humanities disciplines consider both editorial prestige and thematic specialization when assessing the quality of a book publisher and when selecting a publisher for their work (Giménez-Toledo and Tejada-Artigas, 2012, 2015). If the thematic specialisation of a publisher is relevant for academics, why are books published by specialist publishers rarely recommended in course syllabi? As mentioned above, the sample selection might influence the results of this study. Other books published by specialist publishers, such as those belonging to collections, might receive more syllabus mentions. Further research could shed light on this issue. Large-scale multi-disciplinary surveys investigating instructors' reasons for recommending material in their course syllabi would also be useful.

Previous studies have highlighted the concentration of the global book industry due to acquisitions and mergers (Stainer, 2018), which might affect their impact. Six out of ten Spanish prestigious book publishers with high impact in teaching belong to two publishing groups, Planeta (Ariel, Paidós and Alianza publishers) and Anaya (Tecnos, Cátedra and Alianza publishers), suggesting that publisher mergers might contribute to the credit that scholars give to them.

The twenty-three books that had been recommended and cited most often tended to be single-authored. However, there are differences in language and subject: whilst the most recommended books were written originally in Spanish, most of the highly cited books were translations. The subject predominant among the most recommended books was law whereas the predominant subject among the most cited books was philosophy, but some also covered the topic society. Previous research has shown the prevalence of single-authored books in the humanities and social sciences (Leydesdorff and Felt, 2012). Although Dickinson, Aranzadi and Civitas are the three most productive publishers in the field of law, none have published any of the most recommended law books.

For the fourth research question, moderate correlations (0.38 to 0.46) between MA citations and syllabus mentions reflect the academic value of syllabus mentions for Spanish-language books in humanities and social sciences. The results are broadly in line with a previous study that reported a correlation between syllabus mentions and Scopus citations of 0.52 for English-language books in social sciences and 0.30 for books in art and humanities (Kousha and Thelwall, 2016). The slightly lower result for Spain might reflect a more teaching orientation for Spanish books.

6. Conclusions

Not all books published by a publisher have the same quality but there is a positive relationship between the perceived prestige of a Spanish book publisher and the average educational impact of their books (as

estimated by the proportion of their books being recommended in at least one online course syllabi). This study therefore ratifies the concept of publisher prestige and demonstrates that it applies not only to scholarly impact but also to educational value. Thus, publisher prestige seems to be more useful than previously claimed, and this indicator can be applied to educational contexts. Nevertheless, since the correlation between citations and syllabus mentions for Spanish books is moderate, if finer grained impact evidence is needed then online syllabus mentions could be gathered for this to supplement publisher prestige. As always with bibliometric indicators, publisher syllabus mentions should be used to guide or supplement expert evaluations but are not accurate enough to replace peer judgements for individual outputs.

The thematic specialization of a book publisher and its editorial prestige are the two most valued characteristics for Spanish scholars publishing a book (Giménez-Toledo and Tejada-Artigas, 2012, 2015). Nevertheless, this study suggests that Spanish scholars give more importance to editorial prestige when recommending a book in a course syllabus. The educational value of a book publisher (as reflected by the proportion of their books being recommended in at least one online course syllabus) might be seen as an indirect indicator of publisher prestige as well as a direct indicator of publisher educational value. The results suggest that authors hoping for educational uptake should not ignore the prestige of potential publishers, since this may affect the likelihood of their work being listed in Spanish syllabi. Of course, there are likely to be exceptions and disciplinary differences in the applicability of this advice and scholars should use their expert judgement to decide whether it is applicable to their case.

Although the results apply only to Spain, it seems likely that the same is true for most other countries, unless they have important publishers that are reputable for academic textbooks but not academic monographs, or vice versa. This might occur, for example, if a publisher specialises in textbooks and has a reputation for them and then starts to publish monographs as a side-line or purchases a minor academic publishing house for future expansion.

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Appendix

Table A1. The 23 sampled books recommended most often in online course syllabi

Authors	Title	Year	Publisher	Syllabus mentions	MA citations	Original language	Broad topic
Broseta Pont, M., Martínez Sanz, F.	Manual de derecho mercantil	2010	Tecnos	48	27		Law
Arnhem, R.	Arte y percepción visual	2002	Alianza	47	-	English	Art & Psychology
Mangas Martín, A., Liñán Noguerras, D.	Instituciones y derecho de la Unión Europea	2010	Tecnos	42	36		Law
Harris, M.	Introducción a la antropología general	2004	Alianza	38	93	English	Antropology
Lasarte Álvarez, C.	Principios de derecho civil	2011	Marcial Pons	36	-		Law
Vicent Chuliá, F.	Introducción al derecho mercantil	2010	Tirant lo Blanch	36	16		Law
Escandell Vidal, M. V.	Introducción a la pragmática	2006	Ariel	35	332		Linguistics
Calsamiglia, H., Tusón Valls, A.	Las cosas del decir	2007	Ariel	34	57		Linguistics
De Micheli, M.	Las vanguardias artísticas del siglo XX	2002	Alianza	33	42	Italian	Art, History
Davis, F.	La comunicación no verbal	2010	Alianza	31	143	English	Psychology
Martín Valverde, A., Rodríguez-Sañudo, F., García Murcia, J.	Derecho del trabajo	2011	Tecnos	31	-		Law
Gardner, H.	Educación artística y desarrollo humano	2011	Paidós	30	72	English	Society, Psychology, Pedagogy
Maravall, J.A.	La cultura del Barroco	2008	Ariel	29	-		Society, Art
Lasarte Álvarez, C.	Curso de derecho civil patrimonial	2011	Tecnos	29	-		Law
Peña, D.	Fundamentos de estadística	2008	Alianza	28	29		Statistics
Savater, F.	El valor de educar	2008	Ariel	28	286		Society, Philosophy
Pérez Royo, J.	Curso de derecho constitucional	2010	Marcial Pons	28	-		Law
Querol Fernández, M. A.	Manual de gestión del patrimonio cultural	2010	Akal	27	24		Arqueology
Castells, M.	Comunicación y poder	2009	Alianza	27	275	English	Sociology

Bercovitz Rodríguez-Cano, A.	Apuntes de derecho mercantil	2002	Aranzadi	27	3	Law
Ruiz Ramón, F.	Historia del teatro español	2005	Cátedra	27	55	Literary studies
Torrojat, E.	Razón y ser de los tipos estructurales	2007	CSIC	27	14	Engineering
Pastor Ridruejo, J. A.	Curso de derecho internacional público y organizaciones internacionales	2008	Tecnos	27	35	Law

Table A2. The 23 sampled books cited most often in Microsoft Academic

Authors	Title	Year	Publisher	MA citations	Syllabus mentions	Original language	Broad topic
Vygotskii, L.S.	Pensamiento y lenguaje	2010	Paidós	881	-	English	Society & Psychology
Morin, E.	Los siete saberes necesarios para la educación del futuro	2011	Paidós	582	2	French	Society & Pedagogy
Arendt, H.	La condición humana	2005	Paidós	519	14	English	Society & Philosophy
Popper, K.R.	La lógica de la investigación científica	2008	Tecnos	406	20	English	Philosophy
Kant, I.	Crítica de la razón pura	2002	Tecnos	371	11	German	Philosophy
Escandell Vidal, M.V.	Introducción a la pragmática	2006	Ariel	332	35		Society & Culture
Laplanche, J., Pontalis, J.-B.	Diccionario de psicoanálisis	2003	Paidós	313	2	French	Society & Psychology
Durkheim, E.	Las formas elementales de la vida religiosa	2003	Alianza	302	4	French	Sociology & Religion
Savater, F.	El valor de educar	2008	Ariel	286	28		Society & Philosophy
Castells, M.	Comunicación y poder	2009	Alianza	275	27	English	Sociology
Lakatos, I.	La metodología de los programas de investigación científica	2006	Alianza	263	10	English	Philosophy
Freud, S.	La interpretación de los sueños	2011	Alianza	237	2	German	Psychology
Habermas, J.	Ciencia y técnica como "ideología"	2005	Tecnos	235	10	German	Philosophy
Boltanski, L., Chiapello, E.	El nuevo espíritu del capitalismo	2002	Akal	212	6	French	Economy
Kant, I.	Fundamentación de la metafísica de las costumbres	2005	Tecnos	212	6	German	Philosophy
Adorno, T. W., Horkheimer, M.	Dialéctica de la Ilustración	2007	Akal	211	7	German	Philosophy
Ortega y Gasset, J.	La rebelión de las masas	2003	Tecnos	201	7		Philosophy
Marcuse, H.	El hombre unidimensional	2010	Ariel	191	6	English	Society & Philosophy
Descartes, R.	Discurso del método	2011	Alianza	177	6	French	Philosophy
Beauvoir, S.	El segundo sexo	2005	Cátedra	177	14	French	Feminism

García Márquez, G.	Cien años de soledad	2005	Cátedra	172	11		Fiction
Arendt, H.	Los orígenes del totalitarismo	2006	Alianza	160	8	English	Totalitarianism
Moreno Fernández, F.	Principios de sociolingüística y sociología del lenguaje	2009	Ariel	160	21		Sociolinguistics