

# The Webometric Estimate of the Publication Activities of Universities: The Influence of the Belgorod Declaration

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**Abstract**—This paper gives the webometric estimate of the functioning of the universities included in the Near-Frontier Belarusan–Russian–Ukrainian University Consortium (in the context of the adoption of the Belgorod Declaration on open access to scientific knowledge and our cultural heritage) during 2008–2009 on the basis of the Spanish webometric university ranking and the potential of the Google Scholar search engine. The classification of the universities of the Near-Frontier Belarusan–Russian–Ukrainian University Consortium has been built according to the degree of publication activities. The influence of the Belgorod Declaration on university publication activities was shown.

**Key words:** webometric estimate, open access, Google Scholar search engine, publication activities, universities, Near-Frontier Belarusan–Russian–Ukrainian University Consortium, Belgorod Declaration

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Since 2004, the Spanish cybermetric laboratory has been calculating the webometric rankings of the world's universities that have autonomous domains (URL addresses) ([www.webometric.info](http://www.webometric.info)). This global university ranking is on a par with the British Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) Ranking, as well as with the Shanghai and Taiwanese University Rankings.

The following indices are measured based on the responses received from four high-capacity search engines (Google, Yahoo, Live Search, and Exalead): SIZE (the total number of pages obtained from the above-mentioned engines for each university domain), VISIBILITY (the total number of unique external citations obtained with the help of the last three engines), RICH FILES (the number of pdf, ps, doc, and ppt file formats obtained using the first engine), SCHOLAR (the number of academic documents and their citation obtained with the help of the Google Scholar search engine); and subsequently, the integral webometric index, according to which the world's universities are ranked, was calculated using special mathematical procedures [1].

We consider this ranking to be the key indicator of how much universities are involved in the processes of the international movement towards open access to scientific knowledge. These processes are connected with the specific mechanisms and instruments described in the initiatives and declarations about open access to scientific knowledge: the Budapest Initiative, Berlin Declaration, Scotland Declaration, etc. The Belgorod Declaration about open access to scientific knowledge and cultural heritage ranks with these initiatives and declarations. The electronic archives

for open access to scientific publication (OA (open-access)-repositories), whose international registers are held at the Southampton (ROAR) and Nottingham (DOAR) Universities, are the major instruments of this movement. Signing the Belgorod Declaration on January 30, 2008, the universities of the Near-Frontier Belarusan–Russian–Ukrainian Consortium (NBR-UUC) took the initiative to create such archives [2]. The first OA-repository was created within the framework of this declaration based on the open DSpace software at the Belgorod State University in May 2009, and the analogous repository was created little later at Kharkov National University.

The effect of creating such electronic archives can be estimated using the systematic monitoring of the Spanish webometric rankings and experiments with the Google Scholar search engine. The dynamics of the webometric rankings of the NBRUUC universities for the last 1.5 years are given in table 1, which represents 6 of 10 NBRUUC universities ranked by the Spanish cybermetric laboratory. It is of note that the rankings of the universities, included in TOP-500 were published until January inclusively, and those included in TOP-6000 were published until July 2009. It follows from this that four remaining NBRUUC universities (the Taurida National University (TNU), Zaporozhye National University (ZNU), Donetsk National University (DNU), as well as Kursk State University (KurSU)) were included in the seventh thousand of universities according to the webometric ranking.

Table 1 shows how strongly the webometric ranking is affected by the modernization of the site and change of its URL-address, although the rating was restored during the next year after its significant decrease. The

**Table 1.** The dynamics of the webometric rankings of the NBRUUC universities

| Universities | World webometric rankings |                 |                   |           | The changes in a ranking for 0.5 years |             |             | The changes in a ranking for 1.5 years |
|--------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------|--|-------------|-------------|--|
|              | January 2008              | July 2008       | January 2009      | July 2009 | 06.08–01.08                            | 01.09–06.08 | 06.09–01.09 | 06.09–01.08                            |
| GSU YC       | Lower than 5000           | Lower than 5000 | Lower than 5000   | 5805      |  |             |             |  |
| VSU          | 2370                      | 2377            | 2625              | 1752      | –7                                     | –248        | 873         | 618                                    |
| SFU          | 4743 <sup>1</sup>         | 3036            | 2579              | 1286      | 1707                                   | 457         | 1293        | 3457                                   |
| BelSU        | 3802                      | 3660            | 4108 <sup>2</sup> | 2511      | 142                                    | –448        | 1597        | 1291                                   |
| KNU          | 2946                      | 2305            | 2629 <sup>3</sup> | 2570      | 641                                    | –324        | 59          | 376                                    |
| EUNU         | Lower than 5000           | Lower than 5000 | Lower than 5000   | 5590      |  |             |             |  |

Notes: <sup>1</sup>: The low ranking is connected with reorganizing (enlarging) the university and transforming its site (the change in the URL-address);

<sup>2</sup>: The site of the BelGU was transformed since September 2008; this being the case, despite its URL address having been retained, the resources of the former site, which did not automatically move to the new site, have become badly accessible to search engines;

<sup>3</sup>: The decrease in the ranking is connected with modernizing the site.

GSU (Gomel State University);

VSU (Voronezh State University);

SFU (Southern Federal University);

BelSU (Belgorod State University);

KNU (Kharkov National University);

EUNU (East-Ukrainian National University).

table also shows the strong increase in the ratings of the Belgorod State University (BelSU) and Southern Federal University (SFU) for the first half of 2009, which is connected with the creation of an OA-repository in the former university and joining web resources during the amalgamation of a number of universities with Rostov State University.

Studying the structure of the webometric ratings permits one to understand at what expense they change. Table 2 shows that the rank (place) of the SIZE index presenting the total number of documents found by the search engines in the sites of these university very strongly increased for a year and a half for the Southern Federal University (by 2496 positions), which conducts the process of integrating web resources that has been mentioned above. This being the case, the visibility of documents also abruptly increased in the site of the SFU. The large growth of these two indices led to the moderate growth of two others.

The Belgorod University had the greatest growth of the SCHOLAR index (by 911 positions), which is connected to the creation of an OA-repository (dspace.bsu.edu.ru). Its creation also resulted in the fact that pdf files of the scientific documents of the bibliographic index for the BelSU Scientific Library (elibrary.bsu.edu.ru) were more visible to the Google Scholar search engine. This is likely to be connected with the fact that the same pdf files were also used as an

OA-repository. Note that the full-text documents of the bibliographic index for the BelSU Scientific Library were very poorly found by the School Scholar search engine. The strong growth in the rank of the index under consideration, together with the significant growth in the rank of the VISIBILITY index, surpassed the decrease in the rank of the SIZE index and, finally, led to an increase in the integral webometric rating of the BelSU by 1597 positions (see table 1).

The responses received from queries to the URL-addresses of the NBRUUC universities that were made using the Google Scholar search engine were also estimated by the values of the SCHOLAR constituent webometric rating, measured by the Spanish cybermetric laboratory. As a whole, they are in agreement with the above-described calculations (see table 2), with the exception of our estimates for KNU, for which there may be reasons, which we will touch upon somewhat later.

In order to show the character of the fluctuations in responses to queries of the Google Scholar search engine, we made queries for two proximate dates (September 26, 2009 and October 7, 2009). For a small number of responses, such fluctuations can be of several orders (the KurSU); for a large number of responses (on the order of  $10^3$ ), they can vary up to 3–8% (VSU and KNU). This is connected with the searching process running uninterruptedly, as a result of which newfound documents constantly appear and irrelevant or dupli-

**Table 2.** The structural dynamics of the webometric rankings of the NBRUUC universities

| Date, universities  | The constituents of the webometric ranking |            |            |         |
|---|--|------------|------------|---------|
|   | SIZE                                       | VISIBILITY | RICH FILES | SCHOLAR |
| July 2008   |  |            |            |         |
| VSU (Voronezh State University)                             | 1499                                       | 4046       | 2462       | 660     |
| SFU (Southern Federal University)                           | 4781                                       | 3429       | 2975       | 2709    |
| BeISU (Belgorod State University)                           | 2216                                       | 5793       | 3098       | 2263    |
| KNU (Kharkov National University)                           | 2724                                       | 2648       | 3572       | 2104    |
| January 2009  |  |            |            |         |
| VSU (Voronezh State University)                             | 2053                                       | 4415       | 2165       | 564     |
| SFU (Southern Federal University)                           | 4199                                       | 2708       | 2905       | 2331    |
| BeISU (Belgorod State University)                           | 2851                                       | 6475       | 2347       | 2501    |
| KNU (Kharkov National University)                           | 3041                                       | 3158       | 3758       | 1875    |
| July 2009   |  |            |            |         |
| VSU (Voronezh State University)                             | 1958                                       | 3970       | 2295       | 587     |
| SFU (Southern Federal University)                           | 2285                                       | 640        | 2375       | 2250    |
| BeISU (Belgorod State University)                           | 3367                                       | 4257       | 3083       | 1352    |
| KNU (Kharkov National University)                           |  |            |            |         |
| The changes in the constituents of the ranking for 1.5 year |  |            |            |         |
| VSU (Voronezh State University)                             | -459                                       | 76         | 167        | 73      |
| SFU (Southern Federal University)                           | 2496                                       | 2789       | 600        | 459     |
| BeISU (Belgorod State University)                           | -1151                                      | 1536       | 12         | 911     |
| KNU (Kharkov National University)                           | -503                                       | 1418       | 210        | 557     |

**Table 3.** The dynamics of the responses received from the queries to the site addresses of the NBRUUC universities during the simple search in Google Scholar

| A university                                   | The simple search option          | The number of responses |            |            |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|
|  |                                   | 26.09.2008              | 26.09.2009 | 07.10.2009 |
| GSU (Gomel State University)                   | site: gsu.unibel.by               | 159                     | 124        | 121        |
| VSU (Voronezh State University)                | site: vsu.ru                      | 3680                    | 3760       | 3660       |
| SFU (Southern Federal University)              | site: sfedu.ru                    | 106                     | 850        | 982        |
| BeISU (Belgorod State University)              | site: bsu.edu.ru                  | 125                     | 850        | 982        |
| KurSU (Kursk State University)                 | site: kursk-uni.ru                | 5                       | 456        | 436        |
| KNU (Karazin Kharkov National University)      | site: univer.kharkov.ua           | 1410                    | 1170       | 1260       |
| EUNU (East-Ukrainian National University)      | site: snu.edu.ua                  | 4                       | 14         | 14         |
| TNU (Taurida National University) <sup>2</sup> | site: crimea.edu/thu <sup>1</sup> | 390                     | —          | —          |
| DNU (Donetsk National University)              | site: donnu.edu.ua                | 5                       | 87         | 87         |
| ZNU (Zaporozhye National University)           | site: znu.edu.ua                  | 89 <sup>2</sup>         | 317        | 310        |

Notes: <sup>1</sup>: The new site address <http://www.crimia.tnu> appeared at the end of 2008, however, the responses to this site were absent during our queries.

<sup>2</sup>: January 22, 2009

cated documents disappear. Therefore, in the event that the monitoring of responses to queries of the Google Scholar search engine, as well as those of any other search engine, is regular, it is expedient to take the averaged trends into account.

Allow us to make a small comment on table 3.

For the Gomel State University, there were a great number of articles in English from two sites on September 26, 2008, viz., [nit.gsu.unibel.by](http://nit.gsu.unibel.by); [newit.gsu.unibel.by](http://newit.gsu.unibel.by); subsequently, the search was

**Table 4.** The number of scientific articles published by the scientists of the NBRUUC universities (the responses of Google Scholar to the English names of universities)

| Dates             | Universities |      |     |      |     |      |      |       |       |     | The conditions of the widened search with the exact phase       |
|-------------------|--------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|-----|---|
|                   | KNU          | DNU  | TNU | EUNU | ZNU | SFU  | VSU  | BelSU | KurSU | GSU |   |
| October 7–8, 2009 | 4751         | 990  | 384 | 174  | 93  | 5438 | 2940 | 397   | 59    | 388 | With the limitations on fields of science and time intervals    |
|                   | 6085         | 1024 | 432 | 215  | 137 | 6169 | 3380 | 471   | 78    | 447 | With the limitations on fields of science                       |
|                   | 7244         | 1270 | 479 | 248  | 198 | 6720 | 3360 | 636   | 155   | 512 | Without the limitations on fields of science and time intervals |
| December 30, 2008 | 5589         | 911  | 340 | 188  | 105 | 5101 | 2716 | 351   | 61    | 361 | With the limitations on fields of science                       |
|                   | 6278         | 1073 | 371 | 209  | 155 | 5540 | 3100 | 394   | 81    | 403 | Without the limitations on fields of science and time intervals |

reoriented to the site [gsu.unibel.by](http://gsu.unibel.by) with a predominance of articles in the Russian language.

The pdf files of articles from the “*Vestnik VGU*” were predominant in the responses to the queries to the URL address of Voronezh State University during the entire annual period.

The Southern Federal University was previously represented mainly by documents in the Russian language, and, since September 26, 2009, a great number of responses from certain sites have appeared, viz., [gsen.pi.sfedu.ru](http://gsen.pi.sfedu.ru), [open-edu.sfedu.ru](http://open-edu.sfedu.ru), [math.sfedu.ru](http://math.sfedu.ru), etc., which represent the sites of different teaching and scientific structures and programs; for example, the [math.sfedu.ru](http://math.sfedu.ru) site is the site of the SRI of Mechanics and Applied Mathematics.

As of September 26, 2008, Belgorod State University was represented mainly by irrelevant responses (the decisions of the Scientific Council, different curricula, etc.), and the reorganization of the Google Scholar search mechanism for the URL address of this university occurred over a year owing to the creation of an OA-repository ([dspace.bsu.edu.ru](http://dspace.bsu.edu.ru)), as has been noted above. This also resulted in improving the visibility of resources of the bibliographic index for the BelSU Scientific Library ([elibrary.bsu.edu.ru](http://elibrary.bsu.edu.ru)).

For Kharkov National University an interesting situation was initially observed, where the Google Scholar search engine found a great number of English articles by e-mail addresses, the ending of which corresponded to the URL-address of the university ([univer.kharkov.ua](http://univer.kharkov.ua)), which is incorrect. Subsequently, the search engine reoriented itself to the correct search, having removed such incorrect responses. This determined the decrease of responses over the year from 1410 to 1170. Meanwhile, the Google Scholar search engine identified a large number of pdf-files of English articles for this university in September–October 2009.

On the site of the Donetsk National University, documents in the Russian language that are not journal papers and scientific monographs were mainly found, despite this university’s publication of a great number of proper scientific journals. The same situation is observed for the Zaporozhye National University, where documents in the Ukrainian language are predominant, and articles from the *Vistnik* (Bulletin) of this university sometimes occur.

The classical universities of Kursk and Lugansk had a number of responses to queries of their sites that was too small; therefore, it is not timely to speak about the character and properties of scientific documents placed in them.

The queries to the nonautonomous site of the Taurida National University initially led to irrelevant responses (information on departments and faculties, personal pages of teachers and scientists, information about the conferences held by the university, etc.), and subsequently, after creating the autonomous site, we did not receive responses to it using the Google Scholar search engine.

Table 4 presents the results of experiments with the Google Scholar search engine when the queries on the English names of the NBRUUC universities (widened searches with the accurate English name of a university and with consideration for different organizations) were made according to the technology we previously suggested [3, 4].

Table 5 gives the names of universities used in table 4, together with the numbers of responses as of the beginning of October 2009 that were received using the widened search without limiting the fields of the science and the time intervals.

We also tested the old names of the classical universities from the period when they were pedagogic institutes, but we received no more than 4–6 responses to

**Table 5.** The responses received to the English names of the NBRUUC universities during the widened search with the exact phase without the limitations on fields of science and time intervals (October 7–8, 2009, Google Scholar)

| The Russian names   | The English names                          | The number of responses; |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| Харьковский государственный университет                         | Kharkov State University                   | 2510                     |
|   | Kharkiv State University                   | 244                      |
| Харьковский национальный университет<br>им. В.Н Каразина        | Kharkov National University                | 2840                     |
|   | Kharkiv National University                | 1650                     |
|   | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>7244</b>              |
| Донецкий государственный университет                            | Donetsk State University                   | 728                      |
| Донецкий национальный университет                               | Donetsk National University                | 542                      |
|   | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>1270</b>              |
| Симферопольский государственный университет                     | Simferopol State University                | 405                      |
| Таврический национальный университет<br>им. В.И Вернадского     | Taurida National V.I. Vernadsky University | 21                       |
|   | Vernadsky Taurida National University*     | 53                       |
|   | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>479</b>               |
| Восточно-Украинский государственный университет<br>им. В.И Даля | East Ukrainian State University            | 54                       |
|   | East Ukrainie State University*            | 8                        |
| Восточно-Украинский национальный университет<br>им. В.И Даля    | East Ukrainian National University         | 194                      |
|   | East Ukrainie National University*         | 0                        |
|   | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>256</b>               |
| Запорожский государственный университет                         | Zaporozhye State University                | 140                      |
| Запорожский национальный университет                            | Zaporozhye National University             | 58                       |
|   | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>198</b>               |
| Ростовский государственный университет                          | Rostov State University                    | 5840                     |
| Южный федеральный университет                                   | South Federal University                   | 189                      |
|   | Southern Federal University*               | 691                      |
|   | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>6720</b>              |
| Воронежский государственный университет                         | Voronezh State University                  | 3960                     |
| Белгородский государственный университет                        | Belgorod State University                  | 636                      |
| Курский государственный университет                             | Kursk State University                     | 155                      |
| Гомельский государственный университет                          | Gomel State University                     | 512                      |
|   | <b>In sum</b>                              | <b>21430</b>             |

Note: \* The names of universities marked with starlets were not taken into account in the queries of December 30, 2008.

**Table 6.** The classification of the NBRUUC universities according to the degree of their publication activities (the number of Google Scholar responses to the English names of universities without limitation on the searching conditions)

| The gradatio of responses | The degree of publication activities | Universities     |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| From 0 to 250             | Very low                             | EUNU, ZNU, KurSU |
| From 250 to 1000          | Low                                  | BelSU, GSU, TNU  |
| From 1000 to 4000         | Average                              | VSU, DonNU       |
| Higher than 4000          | High                                 | KNU, SFU         |

them, which were not taken into account in the subsequent summarizing.

The following preliminary classification of universities according to the degree of publication activities (table 6) may be suggested based on the entire range of the changes in the responses of Google Scholar to the English names of the universities (see table 4).

If this situation is considered without limitations on the searching conditions, the maximum growth in responses to the English names of the NBRUUC universities was observed for the Kursk and Belgorod Universities (by a factor of 1.9 and 1.6, respectively), and the minimum one was observed for the Kharkov University (by a factor of less than 1.2) (see table 4).

Returning to the analysis of table 5, we should note that the largest classical universities of Kharkov, Rostov-on-Don, and Voronezh account for 84% of all publications of the NBRUUC in the English language, and the share of the Ukrainian universities in the publication potential of this consortium accounts for approximately 44%. This being the case, the summary publication potential of the NBRUUC yields to Moscow State University in the number of English publications, which were determined in the same way using the Google Scholar search engine (149000).

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