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Twenty-Five Years of the International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Article abstract

The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning (IRRODL) published its first issue in 2000. This paper provides an overview of the journal's development over its 25-year history using bibliometric indicators. We analyzed IRRODL's performance relative to other journals in the field and have highlighted key contributing countries, institutions, and authors based on the Scopus database. Our approach used various bibliometric techniques, including the number of articles and citations, cites per paper, and the h-index. The findings reveal that IRRODL is a leading journal in open and distributed learning, attracting a diverse group of authors from institutions and countries worldwide. Currently, Athabasca University is by far the most productive university, and the United States and Canada are the most productive countries appearing in the journal. However, the journal is very diverse with publications from all over the world.

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Twenty-Five Years of the *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

The *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning* (IRRODL) published its first issue in 2000. This paper provides an overview of the journal's development over its 25-year history using bibliometric indicators. We analyzed IRRODL's performance relative to other journals in the field and have highlighted key contributing countries, institutions, and authors based on the Scopus database. Our approach used various bibliometric techniques, including the number of articles and citations, cites per paper, and the *h*-index. The findings reveal that IRRODL is a leading journal in open and distributed learning, attracting a diverse group of authors from institutions and countries worldwide. Currently, Athabasca University is by far the most productive university, and the United States and Canada are the most productive countries appearing in the journal. However, the journal is very diverse with publications from all over the world.

Keywords: bibliometrics, Scopus, open and distributed learning, Web of Science

Introduction

The *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning* (IRRODL) is a leading international journal in the field of open and distributed learning. Over the past 25 years, IRRODL has adapted to the evolving educational landscape and has played a central role in advancing the discussion around digital education, online pedagogies, and the use of technology in learning environments. With a CiteScore of 5.8 and an *h*-index of 95 in 2024, the journal maintains a strong academic presence globally.

In 2025, IRRODL celebrates its 25th anniversary (Anderson et al., 2025). It is common in academic literature for journals to commemorate significant anniversaries through various special activities (see Arrow et al., 2011; Monastersky & Van Noorden, 2019). Many journals mark these milestones by publishing special anniversary issues; for example, the *Journal of Management Learning* (Durepos et al., 2020) or the *British Journal of Educational Administration Quarterly* (Hallinger, 2023). Others publish dedicated editorials or thematic reviews. These studies offer a comprehensive overview of the research output, providing a broad retrospective of trends and influences within the journal (Figuerola-Wischke et al., 2024).

Motivated by this 25th anniversary, this article presents a bibliometric overview exploring the journal's growth in terms of publication output to offer a comprehensive view of its global academic influence. Bibliometric analyses provide valuable insights into the development and influence of academic fields by quantifying the scholarly output and impact of journals and articles (Hussain et al., 2025). This bibliometric analysis aimed to assess the impact and scholarly contribution of IRRODL since its inception, focusing on key metrics such as citation and publication patterns, and the most productive authors, universities, and countries.

To do so, we collected all documents published in the journal between 2000 and 2023 using the Scopus database and analyzed the bibliographic information using a wide range of bibliometric indicators (Hussain et al., 2025). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for contextualizing the journal's contributions to the field of open and distributed learning.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The Methods section briefly reviews the bibliometric methodology used in this paper. The Results section presents our findings, including the publication and citation structure, the most cited papers, and the leading authors, institutions, and countries publishing in the journal. The concluding section summarizes the main findings and reviews the journal's present status.

Methods

Bibliometric Methods

This study used several bibliometric techniques to analyze the scholarly contribution of IRRODL over its 25-year history. Bibliometrics is the quantitative study of scholarly publications, offering a systematic method to evaluate research trends, academic productivity, and overall influence within a field (Broadus, 1987). Bibliometrics is one of the most widely employed quantitative methods used to thoroughly analyze and explain the movement and interaction of knowledge (Donthu et al., 2021).

The earliest bibliometric analysis can be traced back to the late 19th century, although for centuries there have been studies on bibliography statistics (Cole & Eales, 1917). Although the study did not incorporate citation analysis, it is still considered the first example of a bibliometric study. During the 20th century, the pioneering works of Eugene Garfield and other authors consolidated the field (Bensman, 2007; Garfield, 1955). Nowadays, the effectiveness of modern bibliometrics has significantly improved with the advent of comprehensive databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. Although the term *bibliometrics* was first used by Paul Otlet in 1934 (Rousseau, 2014), the modern definition was coined by Alan Pritchard in 1969 (Pritchard, 1969).

Bibliometrics can be applied to analyze a variety of academic subjects, such as a journal (Chen et al., 2020; Rialp et al., 2019), a topic (Rojas-Sánchez et al., 2023), or a country (Merigó et al., 2016). This methodology is widely used across fields, including economics, environmental sciences, and educational research. In education, for example, bibliometric studies have highlighted leading authors, institutions, and countries contributing to open and distance learning (Cheng et al., 2014; Durak et al., 2024; Rojas-Sánchez et al., 2023). Many journals have published a bibliometric overview of their publications, including the *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* (Akturk, 2022), *IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies* (Zurita et al., 2022), *Journal of Research on Technology in Education* (Wilson, 2022), and the *British Journal of Educational Technology* (Chen et al., 2020).

Data Collection

This study used data from Scopus, which is managed by Elsevier. Scopus contains a vast array of scholarly content, including over 1.7 billion cited references from more than 90.6 million records, and it covers approximately 27,950 active titles across various disciplines (Scopus, 2024). Other databases, including Google Scholar, Web of Science (WoS), and Microsoft Academic could also be considered (Bar-Ilan, 2008). However, Google Scholar and Microsoft Academic, although comprehensive, have several limitations in their search functionalities. These include limited support for Boolean and advanced search operators, restricted filtering options, and non-transparent algorithms for query processing and document ranking, which make them less suitable for rigorous bibliometric analysis. In this study, Scopus was selected due to its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed content, providing a comprehensive and representative view of global research, and because it is often preferred over other databases in bibliometric studies for its broader scope and more detailed citation data (Ding et al., 2014; Glanzel et al., 2019).

The data for this study was collected from the Scopus database between July and September 2024, using the query “International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning” OR “International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning” (the former title) in the “Source Title” option, excluding documents from 2024 as the year was not finished. This resulted in a total of 1,247 documents, covering articles, reviews, and conference papers from 2000 to 2023. The advanced search for the replicability of this procedure is: SOURCE-ID (17781) AND PUBYEAR > 1999 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , “ar”) OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , “re”) OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , “cp”).

Data Analysis

To properly evaluate a bibliometric study, it is essential to define the specific bibliometric indicators used in the analysis. The most frequently employed indicators are the total number of publications and the total

number of citations, both of which are generally seen as reliable measures of productivity and impact (Podsakoff et al., 2008). However, it is important to acknowledge that these indicators offer only a broad understanding and may not always perfectly capture productivity or influence. Co-authorship, for example, can affect productivity measures, as papers authored by individuals alone may show lower productivity, while some authors who did not contribute as much to the paper are still considered.

Other commonly used bibliometric indicators include the average citations per paper, the *h*-index, and citation thresholds (Hussain et al., 2025). The *h*-index is a measure that aims to represent the importance of a set of papers defining the largest number of H for which an author has H papers with at least H citations each (Hirsch, 2005). The *h*-index, which combines measures of both productivity and influence, has been extended and generalized by many authors. It is considered a good method by which to evaluate the influence of an author or journal because it combines different metrics in one indicator (Alonso et al., 2009). However, it has some weaknesses in measuring and analyzing very highly cited papers, but it works quite well with huge volumes of publications (Alonso et al., 2009).

Citation thresholds are used to count the number of publications that have surpassed a specific citation level, such as 10 or 100 citations. This is one of the most used metrics for bibliometric analysis and one of the main indicators used in this document. We sought to provide a comprehensive evaluation of bibliographic data by using multiple indicators for the same variable. This approach is justified by the absence of a universally accepted method for evaluating research. In practice, the evaluation strategy must be tailored to the specific problem being studied, as the relative importance of productivity and influence can vary. In some cases, their correlation may shift, either increasing or decreasing, depending on the context.

By applying these bibliometric techniques, this study offers a comprehensive evaluation of IRRODL's academic impact, contributing to a deeper understanding of the journal's role in shaping research in open and distributed learning.

Results

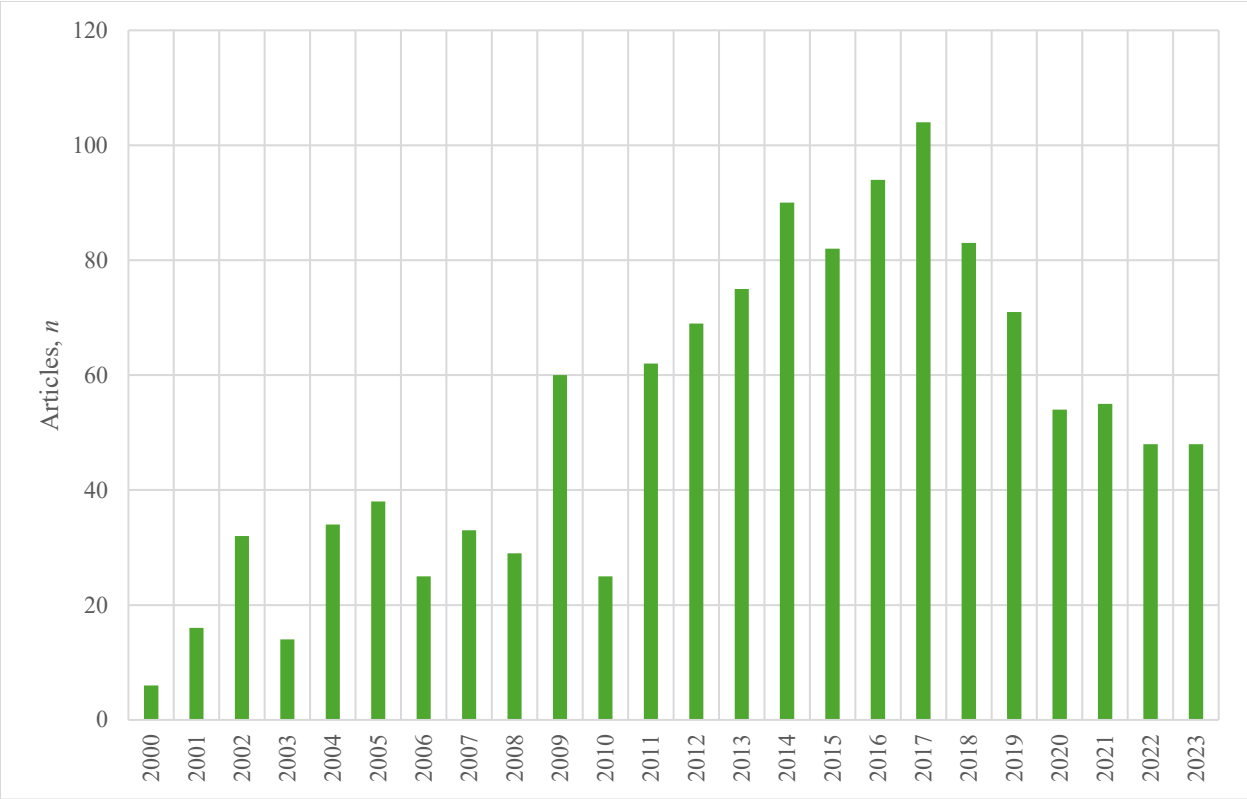
This section presents the results of our analysis. Between 2000 and 2023, IRRODL published 1,247 documents, when considering solely articles, reviews, letters, and notes. As of August 2024, the journal has 42,505 citations, and the *h*-index is 95.

Publication and Citation Structure of IRRODL

Figure 1 illustrates the annual number of papers published by IRRODL from 2000 to 2023. Up to 2018, the journal saw a steady increase in its publication output, reflecting its growing influence and recognition within the field of open and distributed learning. In 2018, the editorial team made a decision to limit the number of publications to 40 research articles per year. This policy remains in place.

Figure 1

Annual Number of Papers Published in IRRODL



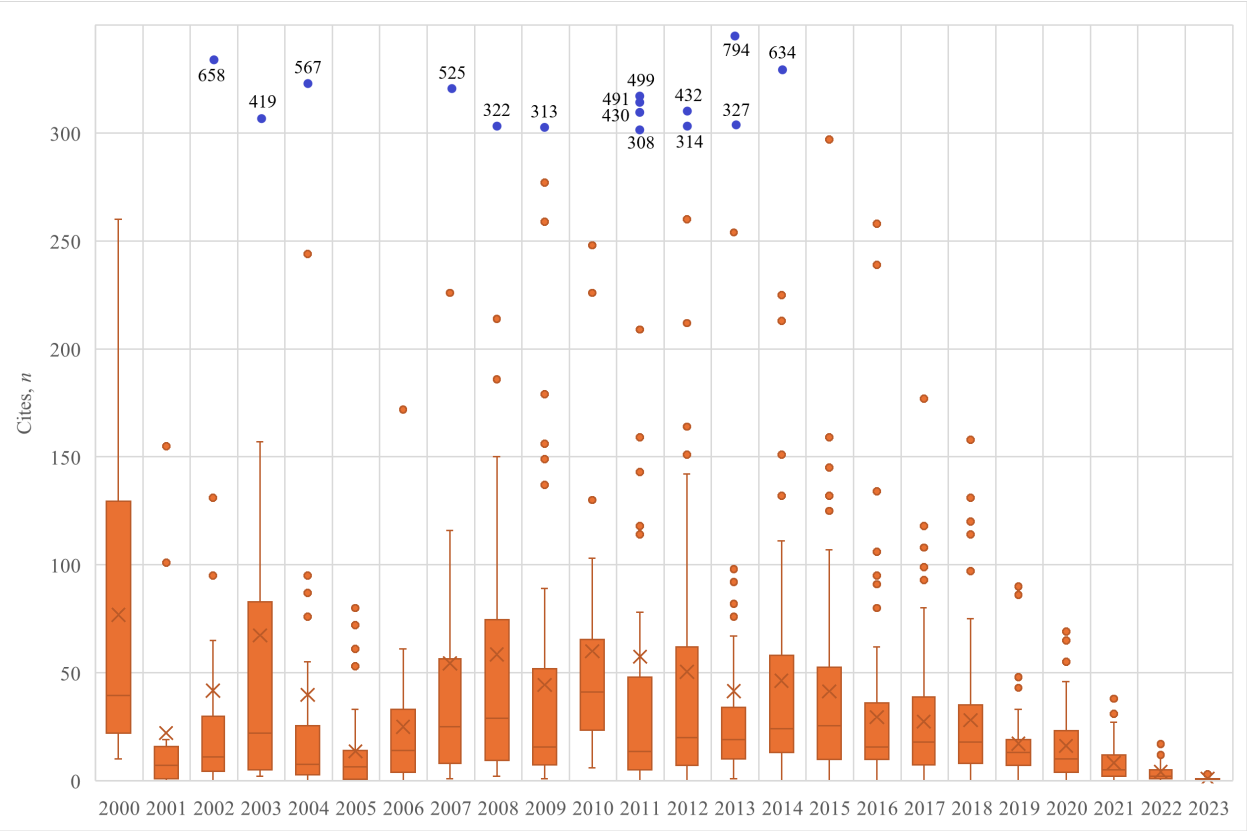
During its initial years (2000–2004), IRRODL published a modest number of articles, starting with just 6 papers in 2000 and reaching 38 papers by 2005. This early period marks the foundation of the journal as it began to establish itself in the academic community.

From 2010 onwards, there was a steady and significant rise in publication numbers, peaking at 104 papers in 2017. This surge correlates with the broader growth of open education resources and online learning, topics central to IRRODL's scope. Following this peak, the new policy to reduce the number of published research articles to 40 was implemented.

The box-plot structure in Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the annual distribution of citations received by papers published in IRRODL. Each box plot summarizes the spread of citations for each publication year, offering insights into the median, quartiles, and outliers within the citation patterns (Hussain et al., 2025; Tukey, 1977). Note that the figure is adjusted to 300 citations so outliers with fewer than 300 citations appear in orange, while extreme outliers with more than 300 citations are depicted in blue.

Figure 2

Annual Box-Plot Structure of the Citations of all Papers Published in IRRODL



Note. Articles with fewer than 300 citations appear in orange. Articles with more than 300 citations appear in blue.

The central trend observed across the years is a general increase in the median number of citations per article, reflecting the growing influence and visibility of the journal. The upper quartiles in most years indicate a significant number of highly cited papers, with some extreme outliers, representing exceptional research that has had a considerable impact on the field of open and distributed learning.

Notably, the years 2011, 2014, and 2017 show particularly high variability, with several papers achieving a citation count far above the median, highlighting the presence of a few standout articles that garnered substantial attention from the academic community. Conversely, the box plots for the years 2019–2023 show narrower ranges. However, this is expected due to their relative recency.

Table 1 presents a detailed analysis of IRRODL's performance in the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) of the Web of Science (WoS; Clarivate, 2024) and Scopus (Scopus, 2024).

Table 1

Analysis of IRRODL in the JCRs of the WoS and Scopus

Year	TC	IF	5YIF	ImIn	CI	AIS	REER	Q	PEER	CS	PS	QS
2011	228	0.68	-	0.14	63	-	108/206	Q3	47.82	1.6	73	Q2
2012	308	0.60	-	0.13	68	-	114/219	Q3	48.17	1.8	77	Q1
2013	349	0.74	-	0.04	75	-	108/219	Q2	50.91	2.3	83	Q1
2014	466	0.73	1.00	0.04	73	0.27	116/224	Q3	48.44	3.0	90	Q1
2015	725	1.24	1.44	0.19	47	0.32	61/231	Q2	73.81	3.5	90	Q1
2016	1,273	1.73	2.13	0.16	92	0.33	47/235	Q1	80.21	4.0	90	Q1
2017	1,899	1.82	2.60	0.18	85	0.35	70/239	Q2	70.92	4.3	93	Q1
2018	2,188	1.83	2.70	0.15	80	0.32	83/243	Q2	66.05	4.2	93	Q1
2019	2,443	2.29	2.88	0.32	70	0.36	59/263	Q1	77.76	4.2	93	Q1
2020	3,340	2.74	3.52	0.57	52	0.89	97/265	Q2	63.58	5.8	95	Q1
2021	3,489	2.77	3.48	0.52	51	0.78	105/270	Q2	61.3	6.1	94	Q1
2022	3,610	3.4	3.7	0.5	45	0.76	73/269	Q2	73	5.6	89	Q1
2023	3,040	2.5	3.4	0.3	48	0.72	133/760	Q1	82.6	5.8	86	Q1

Note. JCR = journal citation report; WoS = Web of Science; TC = total citations; IF = impact factor; 5YIF = 5-year impact factor; ImIn = immediacy index; CI = citable items; AIS = article influence score; REER = ranking in the WoS category of education and educational research; Q = quartile in education and educational research; PEER = journal impact factor percentile in education and educational research; CS = CiteScore of Scopus; PS = percentile in Scopus; QS = quartile in Scopus.

The data demonstrates IRRODL's steady rise in prominence within its field, particularly in the categories of "education and educational research" and "communication." Since its inclusion in the JCRs in 2011, IRRODL has seen a continuous improvement in its impact factor, reflecting its growing influence and the increasing quality of research it publishes. By 2016, the journal's impact factor exceeded 1.7, positioning it among the top quartile in its category. Since then, the journal has been fluctuating between the first and second quartiles (Q1 and Q2). Note that in Scopus, since 2012, IRRODL has always been ranked in the first quartile (Q1).

The 5-year impact factor also provides a broader perspective of the journal's sustained impact over time, showing consistent growth that mirrors global trends in open and distributed learning research. Note that the 5-year impact factor and the article influence score (Bergstrom et al., 2008) require six years before they can be calculated instead of the three years of the impact factor. This is the reason why there are no results between 2011 and 2013 for these two indicators. The table reveals that in recent years, IRRODL has maintained a strong citation base, indicating that its publications continue to be highly relevant and frequently referenced in ongoing research.

Table 2 highlights the publication records of the leading journals in the field of educational research, ranked by the C10 index (the number of citations received by the papers published between 2014 and 2023). This metric provides a clear indication of both the productivity and impact of these journals within the academic community, serving as a reliable measure of long-term influence. IRRODL is consistently positioned among the top-tier journals in educational research, demonstrating strong performance in terms of both the number of published papers and the number of highly cited articles.

Table 2

Publication Record of Leading Journals Connected to IRRODL (Rank by C10)

Journal name	P10	C10	C/P10	H10	TP	TC	C/P	H	Articles, *n* ≥ 500 citations	Articles, *n* ≥ 100 citations
IRRODL	**729**	**18,741**	**25.71**	**66**	**1,247**	**42,505**	**34.09**	**95**	**7**	**88**
Computers & Education	1,948	126,570	64.97	161	5,096	323,194	63.42	243	61	874
Review of Educational Research	697	51,356	73.68	123	3,984	276,367	69.37	260	118	640
British Journal of Educational Technology	1,187	39,968	33.67	89	3,085	96,844	31.39	123	5	188
Journal of Educational Psychology	866	35,106	40.54	90	7,983	425,570	53.31	299	124	1,041
Interactive Learning Environments	1,578	28,648	18.15	69	1,870	36,842	19.70	77	1	46
Educational Technology Research and Development	960	22,624	23.57	68	1,934	76,278	39.44	119	16	157
Educational Technology & Society	716	22,356	31.22	69	1,988	68,747	34.58	114	5	136
Educational Researcher	569	21,180	37.22	76	2,150	170,268	79.19	189	67	346
The Internet and Higher Education	274	19,970	72.88	77	702	63,817	90.91	122	19	159
Journal of Computer Assisted Learning	788	19,115	24.26	62	1,984	63,354	31.93	118	4	150
Journal of Educational Computing Research	591	12,782	21.63	53	1,368	36,591	26.75	82	3	53
Australasian Journal of Educational Technology	618	11,916	19.28	55	1,064	26,303	24.72	72	2	36
Distance Education	334	8,127	24.33	48	1,101	24,205	21.98	73	2	46
American Journal of Distance Education	287	3,588	12.50	29	652	11,016	16.90	47	4	11
Open Learning	236	2,633	11.16	27	1,004	9,809	9.77	44	0	11
International Journal of Distance Education Technologies	187	1,948	10.41	21	411	3,321	8.08	23	0	2
Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks	84	1,829	21.77	24	369	14,298	38.75	56	3	33
Journal of Interactive Media in Education	101	1,131	11.20	18	101	1,131	11.20	18	0	1
Open Praxis	111	487	4.39	11	111	487	4.39	11	0	0

Note. P10 = publications; C10 = citations; C/P10 = citations per paper; H10 = *h*-index between 2014 and 2023; TP = total publications; TC = total citations; C/P = citations per paper; H = *h*-index available in Scopus. This table includes documents only up to December 31, 2023. The figures in bold are for IRRODL.

Table 2 reveals that *Computers and Education* and *Review of Educational Research* lead in terms of overall citations, citations per paper, and the *h*-index for the last 10 years. These journals represent pillars in educational research, not only due to their broader citation counts but also due to their sustained impact in key areas, for example, technology in education and comprehensive educational review studies.

Other notable journals are the *British Journal of Educational Technology* and the *Journal of Educational Psychology*. However, IRRODL is consistently positioned among these top-tier journals, showcasing a robust performance in terms of both its publication volume and the impact of its highly cited articles.

Influential Papers in IRRODL

Table 3 lists the 30 most cited documents published in IRRODL over its 25-year history. The citation count for these top papers highlights both the quality and the relevance of the research disseminated by the journal. The most cited papers are diverse in terms of topics, ranging from the pedagogical implications of online education to the development of technological tools that enhance the learning experience in distributed environments.

Table 3

The 30 Most Cited Documents of IRRODL

R	TC, *n*	Title	Author(s)	Year	C/Y
1	794	MOOCs: A systematic study of the published literature 2008-2012	Liyanagunawardena, Adams, & Williams	2013	72.18
2	658	Building sense of community at a distance	Rovai	2002	29.91
3	634	Initial trends in enrolment and completion of massive open online courses	Jordan	2014	63.40
4	567	Blended learning and sense of community: A comparative analysis with traditional and fully online graduate courses	Rovai & Jordan	2004	28.35
5	525	Defining, discussing, and evaluating mobile learning: The moving finger writes and having writ…	Traxler	2007	30.88
6	499	A pedagogical framework for mobile learning: Categorizing educational applications of mobile technologies into four types	Park	2011	38.38
7	491	Three generations of distance education pedagogy	Anderson & Dron	2011	37.77
8	432	Heutagogy and lifelong learning: A review of heutagogical practice and self-determined learning	Blaschke	2012	36.00
9	430	The challenges to connectivist learning on open online networks: Learning experiences during a massive open online course	Kop	2011	33.08
10	419	Getting the mix right again: An updated and theoretical rationale for interaction	Anderson	2003	19.95
11	327	A predictive study of student satisfaction in online education programs	Kuo, Walker, Belland, & Schroder	2013	29.73
12	322	Connectivism: Learning theory of the future or vestige of the past?	Kop & Hill	2008	20.13
13	314	Building an inclusive definition of e-learning: An approach to the conceptual framework	Sangrà, Vlachopoulos, & Cabrera	2012	26.17
14	313	Virtual spaces: Employing a synchronous online classroom to facilitate student engagement in online learning	McBrien, Jones, & Cheng	2009	20.87
15	308	A pedagogy of abundance or a pedagogy to support human beings? Participant support on massive open online courses	Kop, Fournier, & Mak	2011	23.69

16	297	Massive open online course completion rates revisited: Assessment, length and attrition	Jordan	2015	33.00
17	277	Creating effective collaborative learning groups in an online environment	Brindley, Walti, & Blaschke	2009	18.47
18	260	Theoretical challenges for distance education in the 21st century: A shift from structural to transactional issues	Garrison	2000	10.83
19	260	Investigating instructional strategies for using social media in formal and informal learning	Chen & Bryer	2012	21.67
20	259	The technological dimension of a massive open online course: The case of the CCK08 course tools	Fini	2009	17.27
21	258	A systematic analysis and synthesis of the empirical MOOC literature published in 2013-2015	Veletsianos & Shepherdson	2016	32.25
22	254	Factors influencing students' acceptance of m-learning: An investigation in higher education	Abu-Al-Aish & Love	2013	23.09
23	248	Profiles in self-regulated learning in the online learning environment	Barnard-Brak, Lan, & Paton	2010	17.71
24	244	The relationship between self-regulation and online learning in a blended learning context	Lynch & Dembo	2004	12.20
25	239	Flipped classroom research and trends from different fields of study	Zainuddin & Halili	2016	29.88
26	226	Using mobile phones to improve educational outcomes: An analysis of evidence from Asia	Valk, Rashid, & Elder	2010	16.14
27	226	Mobile usability in educational contexts: What have we learnt?	Kukulska-Hulme	2007	13.29
28	225	Where is research on massive open online courses headed? A data analysis of the MOOC research initiative	Gašević, Kovanović, Joksimović, & Siemens	2014	22.50
29	214	Open educational resources: Enabling universal education	Caswell, Henson, Jensen, & Wiley	2008	13.38
30	213	Online instruction, e-learning, and student satisfaction: A three year study	Cole, Shelley, & Swartz	2014	21.30

Note. R = rank; TC = total citations; C/Y = citations per year.

The most cited document is "MOOCs: A systematic study of the published literature 2008–2012" by Liyanagunawardena et al. (2013), with 794 citations, reflecting the strong academic interest in MOOCs and online education, followed by "Building sense of community at a distance" by Rovai (2002), and "Initial trends in enrolment and completion of massive open online courses" by Jordan.Haga clic o pulse aquí para escribir texto.

Several key themes emerge from this list of top-cited documents. Research on massive open online courses (MOOCs), learner engagement, and digital pedagogies features prominently. Furthermore, the strong representation of research focused on the development of open educational resources (OER) and the pedagogical strategy for enhancing online learning indicates the journal's pivotal role in shaping discussions around educational technology and innovation.

Leading Authors, Institutions, and Countries

Table 4 provides a comprehensive analysis of the most productive and influential authors in the journal over its 25-year history. The data reflect the central role of key contributors in shaping research in open and distributed learning.

Terry Anderson from Athabasca University leads with 12 publications and a total of 1,198 citations, highlighting his significant influence with a high C/P ratio of 99.83. Following Anderson, David Wiley from Lumen Learning ranks second with 12 publications and 784 citations, giving him a solid C/P ratio of 65.33

Other prominent authors who have also made substantial contributions with multiple publications and high citation counts are Aras Bozkurt, Rory McGreal, Olaf Zawacki-Richter, and George Veletsianos. Note that 7 authors in Table 4 work at Athabasca University. The USA leads with 12 authors, followed by Canada with eight.

Table 4

Top 30 Most Productive Authors Published in IRRODL

R	Author	University or other affiliation	Country	TP	TC	H	C/P	Articles, *n*	
								≥ 100 citations	≥ 10 citations
1	Anderson, T.	Athabasca U	Canada	12	1,198	9	99.83	2	9
2	Wiley, D.	Lumen Learning	USA	12	784	11	65.33	2	12
3	Bozkurt, A.	Anadolu U	Turkey	11	516	8	46.91	3	8
4	McGreal, R.	Athabasca U	Canada	11	198	5	18	0	4
5	Zawacki-Richter, O.	U Oldenburg	Germany	10	523	9	52.3	3	8
6	Veletsianos, G.	U Minnesota	USA	9	641	8	71.22	2	7
7	Hilton, J.	Brigham Young U	USA	8	330	7	41.25	1	7
8	Baggaley, J.	Athabasca U	Canada	7	30	4	4.28	0	0
9	Bonk, C. J.	Indiana U Bloomington	USA	7	206	6	29.43	0	4

R				TP	TC	H	C/P	1	2
10	Jung, I.	Seoul National U	South Korea	7	183	7	26.14	0	7
11	Borup, J.	George Manson U	USA	6	111	4	18.5	0	3
12	Ching, Y. H.	Boise State U	USA	6	200	6	33.33	0	6
13	Fahy, P. J.	Athabasca U	Canada	6	175	4	29.16	1	1
14	Kimmons, R.	Brigham Young U	USA	6	177	6	29.5	0	4
15	Prinsloo, P.	U South Africa	South Africa	6	151	6	25.16	0	6
16	Sangrà, A.	Open U Catalonia	Spain	6	450	6	75	1	6
17	West, R.E.	Brigham Young U	USA	6	146	5	24.33	0	4
18	Abeywardena, I. S.	U Waterloo	Canada	5	26	4	5.2	0	1
19	Barbour, M. K.	Isabelle Farrington College	USA	5	222	5	44.4	1	4
20	Cleveland-Innes, M.	Athabasca U	Canada	5	244	4	48.8	1	2
21	Costley, J.	UAE U	United Arab Emirates	5	70	5	14	0	3
22	Graham, C. R.	Brigham U	USA	5	212	4	42.4	0	4
23	Schuwer, R.	OER Consultancy	Netherlands	5	149	5	29.8	0	5
24	Mackness, J.	Independent Consultant	UK	4	311	4	77.75	1	4
25	Aydin, C. H.	Anadolu U	Turkey	4	294	4	73.5	1	4
26	Ally, M.	Athabasca U	Canada	4	273	4	68.25	1	4
27	Shea, P.	SUNY Albany	USA	4	270	4	67.5	1	4
28	Richardson, J. C.	Purdue U	USA	4	266	4	66.5	1	4
29	Annand, D.	Athabasca U	Canada	4	185	4	46.25	1	4
30	Gulbahar, Y.	Ankara U	Turkey	4	168	4	42	1	4

Note. R = rank; TP = total publications; TC = total citations; H = *h*-index available in Scopus; C/P = citations per publication.

Table 5 highlights the key academic institutions that have significantly contributed to the journal's body of research over the past 25 years.

IRRODL's publisher, Athabasca University in Canada, leads with 128 publications and over 4,031 citations. It has a strong *h*-index of 30 and a notable C/P ratio of 31.49. Other leading institutions include the University of South Africa, The Open University, and Brigham Young University, all of which demonstrate strong academic contributions with high citation counts and significant papers with equal or more than 100 citations. Note that the USA has eight institutions in Table 5 and Canada, six.

Table 5

The Most Productive and Influential Institutions Contributing to IRRODL

R	Institution	Country	TP	TC	H	C/P	Articles, *n*	
							≥ 100 citations	≥ 10 citations
1	Athabasca U	Canada	128	4,031	30	31.49	10	57
2	U South Africa	South Africa	44	994	20	22.59	1	35
3	Open U	UK	36	2,093	21	58.14	4	30
4	Brigham Young U	USA	33	1,064	18	32.24	1	24
5	Open U Catalonia	Spain	31	1,262	19	40.71	2	26
6	Anadolu U	Turkey	20	765	12	38.25	4	13
7	Purdue U	USA	16	567	12	35.44	1	13
8	U Oldenburg	Germany	14	1,099	9	78.50	4	9
9	Open U	Netherlands	14	268	11	19.14	0	11
10	Boise State U	USA	12	380	10	31.67	0	10
11	Beijing Normal U	China	12	359	9	29.92	0	9
12	U British Columbia	Canada	11	225	7	20.45	0	7
13	Pennsylvania State U	USA	9	297	8	33.00	1	6
14	Ankara U	Turkey	9	286	7	31.78	2	5
15	Fern U Hagen	Germany	9	455	8	50.56	1	8
16	Open U Israel	Israel	9	350	8	38.89	1	8
17	UNED	Spain	9	153	7	17.00	0	5
18	U South Australia	Australia	9	217	8	24.11	0	5
19	U Florida	USA	8	307	7	38.38	1	6
20	Royal Roads U	Canada	8	435	6	54.38	1	5
21	U Alberta	Canada	8	175	7	21.88	0	6
22	U Calgary	Canada	7	427	6	61.00	2	6
23	Tel Aviv U	Israel	7	208	7	29.71	0	7
24	Old Dominion U	USA	7	357	7	51.00	1	7
25	George Mason U	USA	7	120	5	17.14	0	3
26	National Central U	Taiwan	7	119	6	17.00	0	5
27	Utah State U	USA	7	698	7	99.71	2	6
28	Thompson Rivers U	Canada	7	114	4	16.29	0	3
29	National Open U Nigeria	Nigeria	7	102	5	14.57	0	4

Note. R = rank; TP = total publications; TC = total citations; H = *h*-index available in Scopus; C/P = citations per publication. There are also 12 universities tied in the 30th position with 6 documents each. Not listed here because of space considerations.

Table 6 presents a detailed overview of the countries that have made significant contributions to the journal over its 25-year history.

The United States leads the ranking. Canada follows with approximately two thirds as many publications and half as many citations. Other notable countries include the United Kingdom, Turkey, and South Africa, each contributing a significant number of publications and citations, underscoring their influence in the field of open and distributed learning.

This table highlights the global impact of research in IRRODL, with contributions from countries across North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. It reflects the growing international collaboration in educational research, particularly in the areas of online learning and digital education technologies.

Table 6

The Most Productive and Influential Countries in IRRODL Publications

						Articles, *n*			
R	Country	TP	TC	H	C/P	≥ 100 citations	≥ 10 citations	P/Po	C/Po
1	United States	309	14,977	69	48.47	37	225	0.90	43.41
2	Canada	211	7,556	41	35.81	18	109	5.40	193.25
3	United Kingdom	95	6,279	36	66.09	15	78	1.37	90.74
4	Turkey	66	1,898	24	28.76	7	41	0.76	21.72
5	South Africa	62	1,263	21	20.37	1	47	0.98	20.05
6	Spain	62	2,003	25	32.30	2	45	1.29	41.82
7	Australia	52	1,214	21	23.34	1	30	1.90	44.31
8	China	57	1,353	20	23.74	1	37	0.05	1.30
9	Taiwan	40	904	18	22.6	1	27	1.67	37.82
10	Germany	38	2,038	23	53.63	6	28	0.45	24.12
11	South Korea	36	1,105	18	30.70	2	30	0.70	21.54
12	Malaysia	25	754	14	30.16	1	16	0.73	22.11
13	Netherlands	23	545	17	32.05	0	19	1.33	31.50
14	Israel	21	742	14	35.33	2	19	2.23	78.94
15	New Zealand	19	798	12	42	1	13	3.65	153.46
16	Sweden	17	225	10	13.24	0	8	1.60	21.23
17	Greece	15	490	10	32.67	2	9	1.50	49.00
18	Iran	15	80	7	5.33	0	3	0.17	0.89
19	Nigeria	15	194	7	12.93	0	7	0.06	0.83
20	India	14	212	8	15.14	0	7	0.01	0.15
21	Japan	14	1,096	10	78.28	1	10	0.11	8.86
22	Brazil	12	167	7	13.92	0	6	0.06	0.79

23	Portugal	12	245	8	20.42	0	8	1.15	23.56
24	Mexico	11	95	6	8.64	0	4	0.08	0.73
25	Norway	11	278	8	25.27	1	7	2.00	50.55
26	France	9	59	5	6.55	0	3	0.14	0.89
27	Indonesia	9	451	7	50.11	1	6	0.03	1.59
28	Switzerland	9	418	7	46.44	1	7	1.03	48.05

Note. R = rank; TP = total publications; TC = total citations; H = *h*-index available in Scopus; C/P = citations per publication; P/Po = number of papers per million inhabitants; C/Po = number of citations per million inhabitants. There are 4 countries tied in the 29th position with 8 papers each. Not listed here for space considerations.

Conclusions

In 2025, IRRODL celebrates 25 years. To mark this anniversary, this study has presented a bibliometric overview of the leading trends of the journal between 2000 and 2023. This bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive overview of IRRODL's impact, examining the evolution of its publication and citation structure, leading contributors, and geographic trends. The findings show IRRODL's sustained growth in reach and academic influence, establishing it as a cornerstone for research in open education and digital pedagogies.

Since its inception, IRRODL has experienced steady increases in both publications and citations, mirroring global trends in the educational technology and open learning fields. The journal's annual publication count has grown consistently, peaking at 104 articles in 2017, after which a policy change limited the number of research articles to 40 per year. IRRODL's citation structure further reflects this growth: as of 2023, the journal has amassed more than 42,000 citations with a substantial *h*-index of 95. This extensive citation reach, paired with a high *h*-index, attests to the significant academic value and quality of research disseminated through IRRODL, with numerous articles among the top-cited references in digital learning research.

The international nature of IRRODL's contributions reflects the journal's reach across a diverse array of educational contexts. The United States leads in terms of publications and citations, followed closely by Canada, the United Kingdom, and China, highlighting these nations' strong influence on global educational research. Notably, IRRODL's publisher, Athabasca University in Canada, ranks as the most productive institution, aligning with its reputation as a pioneering institution in distance education. Other leading institutions include the University of South Africa, Beijing Normal University, and The Open University (UK), all of which have consistently contributed to IRRODL.

While historically dominated by North American and European contributions, IRRODL has seen an increase in publications from institutions in developing countries, such as Turkey, Malaysia, and South Africa. This trend emphasizes the journal's role in promoting educational research across varied contexts, enhancing the inclusivity of perspectives in digital learning. Emerging countries, particularly Turkey, have made significant contributions, evidencing IRRODL's impact on expanding research from regions that are rapidly embracing educational technologies. This international scope not only supports a diversified

understanding of digital learning but also allows for the dissemination of innovative pedagogical practices adaptable to a variety of cultural and technological contexts.

IRRODL's ability to attract influential articles and consistently high citation rates signals its established role in educational research. Looking forward, sustaining this growth will require ongoing responsiveness to technological advancements and pedagogical shifts, particularly as digital education increasingly incorporates elements of personalized and data-driven learning. Enhancing contributions from emerging regions and exploring new topics such as AI and virtual learning environments could further strengthen IRRODL's position as an inclusive and forward-looking publication.

This study has provided a representative bibliometric analysis of IRRODL's impact over its 25-year history, though certain limitations are inherent to bibliometric methodologies. Citation data, while insightful, may not fully capture the interdisciplinary and applied impact of research, particularly for studies with applications outside academia. Additionally, this analysis relies on Scopus data, which, although comprehensive, may omit relevant contributions from other indexing databases. These factors underscore the importance of considering multiple perspectives when evaluating IRRODL's scholarly impact.

In sum, IRRODL's 25-year history reflects a remarkable trajectory of growth and influence, cementing its role as a foundational publication in open and distributed learning. The journal has successfully navigated shifts in the educational landscape, demonstrating resilience and adaptability to emerging trends and new research needs. Looking ahead, IRRODL is well-positioned to continue as a leader in digital education research, fostering innovative scholarship that not only addresses current challenges but also anticipates future directions in the field of educational technology.

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