# Bibliometric analysis of libraries and the 2030 Agenda

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The United Nations held a meeting in 2015 where the 2030 Agenda was adopted. This agenda is ambitious and aims to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals across the universe, covering economic, cultural, environmental and social development. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals target several areas of society, including libraries and information science. These institutions provide access to information and support information and digital literacy, digital inclusion, resource sharing, equitable access to knowledge, and help local governments understand and respond to the information needs of communities. This study presents the results of a bibliometric and quantitative analysis of scientific output on libraries and the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, indexed in Scopus. The study shows how libraries contribute to the achievement of these goals through practical examples of verified cases from around the world. The research data sets were obtained within the period 2015-2024, no filters were used regarding the type of documents. Microsoft Excel, VosViewer and Bibliometrix were used for data analysis, Excel for graphs and tables, Vosviewer for network visualisation and in-depth bibliometric analysis of countries, journals and keywords, and Biblioshiny for authorship and impact. From a total of 111 publications, after reading all the abstracts, a pull of 83 documents was selected, of which 82% are articles. Despite the time spam, no publications from 2015 and 2017 were selected. A total of 38 countries around the world contributed to the study on the relationship between libraries and the 2030 Agenda, among which we can highlight Nigeria, the United States of America and South Africa. Public and academic libraries are the ones where it's possible to identify a commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, although the concept of green libraries has been growing in recent years.

Keywords: 2030 Agenda; Bibliometrics; Sustainable Development Goals; Information Science; Libraries.

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

This is a descriptive and quantitative study that reflects on the role of libraries as agents for sustainable development, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, based on the results of a bibliographic search of the scientific production on this theme indexed in the Scopus, between 2015 and 2024.

It seeks to show the content of the scientific research carried out, which describes the role of libraries as privileged agents to implement and support achieving the 2030 Agenda, from the activity of providing access to information as a driver of progress to empower communities and sustain equality among all individuals, as well as the development of other activities to achieve other Goals, as can be seen in the results and discussion.

## 1.1 2030 Agenda for sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda, proposed by the United Nations in 2015 (United Nations, 2015) was presented to countries around the world as a sustainability plan, to be implemented through development goals. It is a wide-ranging and universal plan that aims to improve the world in environmental, economic and social aspects (United Nations, 2018a), so that the lives of citizens in different countries are transformed and developed.

These 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) formed a new proposal to advance those previously put forward by the UN between 2000 and 2015, the eight Millennium Development Goals which similarly proposed social and economic targets to political rulers, and others, to reform the world (United Nations, 2000; 2010).

17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 corresponding targets have been created for national and local governments, public and private institutions and individuals to implement and have them enforced through innovative and sustainable decision-making. The SDGs have the scope of the year 2030, by which time developed and developing countries will have proactively been able to work on the SDGs they most need, from the most global to the most local, in an inter-relational and/or integrated manner. The suggestion is to work on one SDG in particular, or, in a holistic manner, on all the SDGs, making the world in general, or in a more regional and local aspect of the world, more sustainable and inclusive. Sustainability is the motto for the promotion of the Goals, so that poverty and hunger are eradicated; the environment, terrestrial and marine life are protected, renewable energy is plentiful; the fight against climate change is carried out, education and health are effective; gender equality and dignified work are achieved; industry and infrastructure, drinking water and sanitation, as well as sustainable cities are possible; a less unequal world, living in peace and with justice, strengthening the means to implement these SDGs with partnerships of all kinds, are the aspirations of the UN and all entities that have come together to construct policies, measures and actions to achieve the fulfilment of the Goals (United Nations, 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2024).

The UN's annual reports have shown some progress in certain areas, such as a reduction in extreme poverty, a decrease in infant child mortality rates and an increase in individuals' access to electricity. They report that the global response is still not ambitious enough, and there are still many vulnerable people and countries. The 2024 report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlights that there is insufficient progress on the SDGs: only 17% of targets are on track, while 33% have stagnated or regressed. The COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, geopolitical tensions, and climate change have exacerbated the challenges. The report calls for bold actions, including: conflict resolution and the promotion of peace; reforms to the global financial system to support developing countries; investments in health, education, green energy, and sustainable infrastructure; and the strengthening of international cooperation and partnerships. Despite advances in data collection, significant gaps remain, especially in poorer countries, hindering the availability of information. The report emphasizes that, with less than six years remaining until 2030, it is essential to accelerate efforts to achieve the SDGs and ensure a sustainable and inclusive future for all (United Nations, 2024).

These SDGs are a challenge for the general transformation of societies, with micro and macro, economic and environmental implementations, so that the well-being of all is achieved.

## 1.2 The role of IFLA and libraries as agents for sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda is a commitment to the ideal of improving the human condition in all aspects, with the main aim being peace, justice and social equality for all. This wish is expressed in Goal 16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. Target 16.10 states that ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms is the primary path to transforming the world. Libraries and documentation centres are essential partners in and for sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, through the availability of their services to provide access to information (Garrido, M. & Wyber, S., 2017; 2019).

The main conclusions of the *Development and Access to Information 2024 report* indicate that progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is insufficient. Despite global advances, progress in gender equity, civil and political rights—such as freedom of expression, association, and internet freedom—has been limited or even reversed. The target to achieve the SDGs by 2030 is far from being met. Libraries play a crucial role in promoting meaningful access to information, supporting education, gender equity, health, and other SDGs. They can also help combat misinformation and promote digital inclusion. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to accelerate progress on the SDGs, but concerns remain about inequalities and ethical use. Libraries can contribute to implementing inclusive AI that serves the public good. Partnerships among governments, libraries, NGOs, and academic institutions are essential to accelerate SDG progress and ensure equitable access to information (Garrido, M. & Wyber, S., 2024).

The significance of the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions), to the UN and information professionals, is mentioned to highlight the essential role that libraries and information centres play in the natural access to information and the networked services that underpin development. The IFLA, a confederation of professional associations from more than 150 countries, is the leading international body representing the interests of information services and their users, working to promote the library profession as the driving force behind an informed and literate society. It is a unique and universal voice that calls for and does advocacy work for the implementation of the SDGs in professional practices, training them on the importance of the 2030 Agenda, encompassing all types of economic, environmental, cultural and social development, without neglecting any SDGs (IFLA; 2017a). Prior to the adoption of this 2030 Agenda, IFLA, through the Lyon Declaration (IFLA, 2014), had already called on UN member states to make an international commitment to ensuring that everyone has access to and can understand, use and share the information needed to promote development and foster democratic societies.

Thus, through the *International Advocacy Programme* (IAP), the IFLA undertakes awareness raising on the SDGs among information professionals worldwide, promoting the role that libraries can play in development at local and national levels, not only in access to information, but also in the development of SDGs, particularly in information literacy, digital and other literacies (IFLA, 2017b), in helping local governments understand the information needs of communities, promoting networked services, digital inclusion and Information and Communication Technologies (IFLA, 2017c; 2018).

The citizens of the world, especially in less developed societies, have access to information, preferably in libraries and information centres. Thus, with libraries and their professionals, they can improve their knowledge, have access to education, develop new skills and make informed decisions, whether in the area of health, agriculture, environment (IFLA, 2017a). Access to information is not an end in itself, but is the driver of progress to empower communities and sustain equality among all individuals as advocated in the holistic approach of the 2030 Agenda (Garrido, M. & Wyber, 2024).

In 2022, IFLA highlighted the importance of the role of libraries in monitoring progress, understanding interconnections, disseminating innovations, and ensuring accountability in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Libraries play a crucial role as a link between evidence producers and

decision-makers. They support research, manage data, disseminate information, teach skills for accessing and using information, and preserve knowledge for future research and accountability, as well as supporting open access and open science. These findings underscore the need for collaboration between governments, the UN, and libraries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (IFLA, 2022).

# 1.3 Libraries and the 2030 Agenda

Scientific production in 2019 related to the theme of Libraries and the 2030 Agenda was in a growth phase (Alvim, 2019). At that time, researchers in the field of Information Science were beginning their work on this emerging topic. Other researchers note that, across all disciplines, scientific productivity on this subject is increasing (Alfirevic et al., 2023; Chowdhury & Chowdhury, 2024).

IFLA worked on and disseminated documents among library professionals so that public, school, academic, and other libraries could develop projects to address the SDGs (Silk, 2022). Experiences, theoretical implementation models, types of library evaluation for sustainable development, and analyses of contributions to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda were subtopics studied, as is evident in the scientific output of subsequent years (Costa & Alvim, 2021a; 2021b; 2024; Chowdhury & Chowdhury, 2024).

Scientific production continues to grow with new subtopics, since, politically, socially, and culturally, the 2030 Agenda remains in expansion and development, as demonstrated by the main library associations and professional associations.

SDG 4 – Ensure inclusive education, and SDG 16 – Promote peace and justice, are among the research priorities. Special attention is given to SDG 4, reinforcing the role of libraries, especially public ones, as key agents in access to information, universal literacy, and public access to information.

Researchers Connaway et al. (2023) mention SDG 4 as the most utilized in libraries worldwide, since libraries are deeply involved with quality education and believe that education is where they can have the greatest impact on the community. In this regard, Gama et al. (2023) identify and present the most prominent actions in the SDG Stories document from the Library Map of the World (2023) as information mediation activities. It is also worth highlighting the universal nature of the SDGs, with global application, and the universality of all SDGs, making it possible to identify scientific production from various continents, with emphasis on Africa and Europe (Costa & Alvim, 2021b; Chowdhury & Chowdhury, 2024). Each country implemented the various goals according to political preferences, the specific challenges of its socioeconomic context, and its own circumstances.

The analysis of the evolution of the 2030 Agenda and its academic, professional, and social relevance among Information Science researchers—based on experiences, dynamics, and reports from various countries around the world—highlights the beginnings of a foundation for building a research field on Sustainable Development and the 2030 Agenda.

In Europe, organizations such as EBLIDA, PL2030, LIBER, NAPLE, and IFLA (2024) are concerned with the post-2030 Agenda, emphasizing that the European Union can advocate for the inclusion of culture as a development goal, promote informed and empowered societies, and continue to support international reforms, such as copyright, so that libraries can fulfill their functions globally.

#### 2 METHODOLOGY

The research data sets were obtained within the period 2015-2024, no filters were used regarding the type of documents. Microsoft Excel, VosViewer and Bibliometrix were used for data analysis, Excel for graphs and tables, Vosviewer for network visualisation and in-depth bibliometric analysis of countries, and keywords, and Biblioshiny for authorship and impact.

## **3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As previously mentioned, the data was extracted from the Scopus database and analysed using VOSviewer and Biblioshiny software. Data is presented on the number of publications per year, journals of publication, authors with the highest production and their respective co-authorship networks, the corresponding authors' countries and collaboration networks and the co-occurrence of keywords. From a total of 111 publications, after reading all the abstracts, a total of 83 documents was selected.

## 3.1 Publications per year

Of the ten years analysed, no documents were retrieved from the years 2015 and 2017. As can be seen in Figure 1, the years with the highest production are 2024 with 24 documents, 2020 with 14, 2022 with 13 and 2023 with 12.

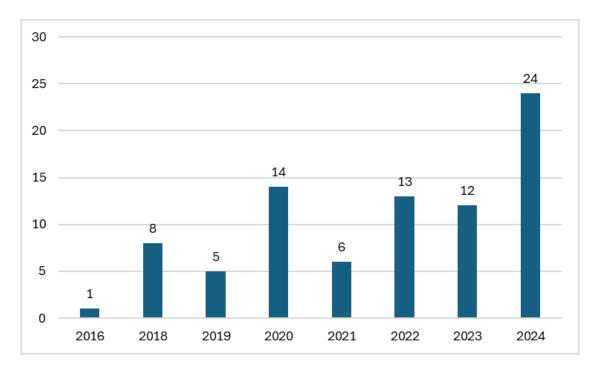


Figure 1: Number of publications per year

#### 3.2 Publications type

No limits were applied in terms of publication type, and as can be seen in Figure 2, the vast majority of publications are articles, 82 per cent, followed by book chapters, seven per cent, with 5% are the publications in conferences and Reviews and one per cent for Note.

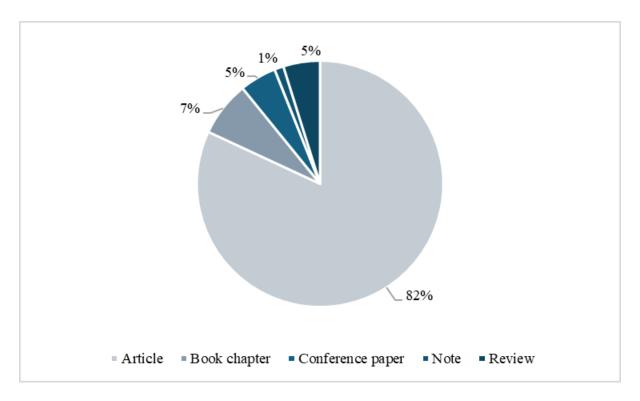


Figure 2: Publications type

# 3.3 Journals of publication

The journals with the highest number of publications are shown in Figure 3, where we can see the top five journals. The *IFLA Journal* and *Library Philosophy and Practice* have six publications each, followed by *Vjesnik Bibliotekara Hrvatske* with five, and with four publications we have the *International Information and Library Review* and the *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*. The other publications *Digital Library Perspectives*, *Journal of Library Administration*, *Library Management* with three publications, *Global Knowledge*, *Memory and Communication* and *Ibersid* with two publications.

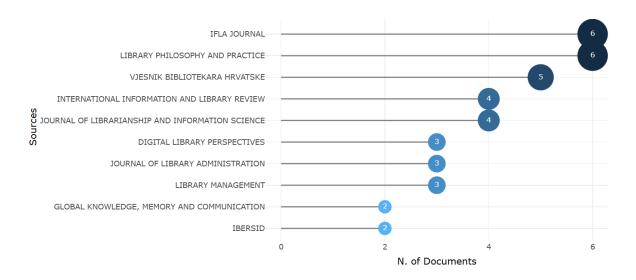


Figure 3: Journal of publication

#### 3.4 Authors

Concerning authors (Figure 4), Bangani S., a South African author, stands out with five publications. Arquero-Avilés R. and Yang F. followed with four publications, Chou D., Chowdhruy G., Li C., Mehra B., Moller A.-B., Mr, Onyancha O.B. with three publications each.

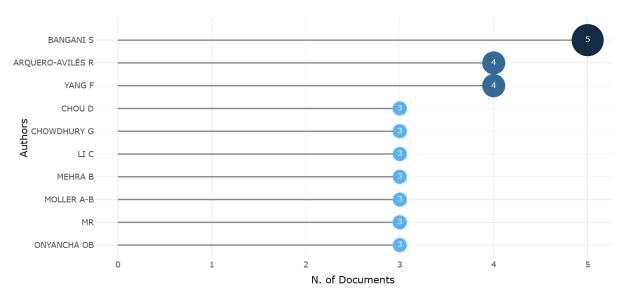


Figure 4: Authors with the most publications

# 3.5 Corresponding authors: countries

Regarding the countries of origin/affiliation of the corresponding authors, it is possible to see in Figure 5 not only where they are from, but also their international collaboration, since the figure shows publications with SCP (single country publication) and MCP (multiple country publication) by country. Nigeria is the country with the highest number of articles, eight in total, of which two are by authors from multiple countries. The United States appears in second with seven publications, two of which were co-authored by authors from several countries.

We can also mention that the scientific output of countries such as South Africa, Ghana, Croatia, Australia, Spain, Malaysia and Brazil only have publications with authors from the corresponding authors' countries (SCP).

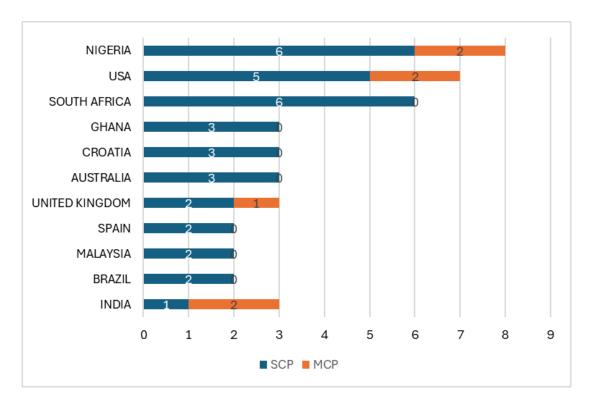


Figure 5: Corresponding author's countries

# 3.6 Countries

Figure 6 shows the co-authorship collaboration network of the authors of the publications analysed. As previously mentioned, it can be seen that many of the publications are by authors from the same country, and there are no international collaboration networks between them. However, collaborative networks do exist, especially between the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Nigeria, India and Greece as showned in Figure 6.

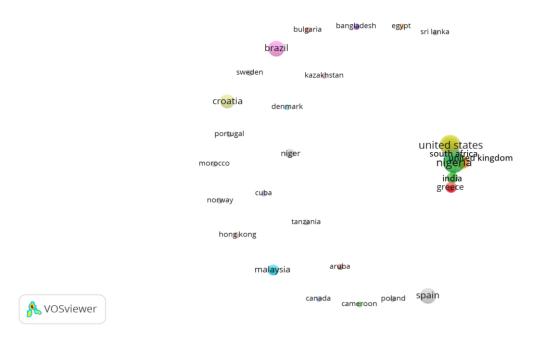


Figure 6: Countries network collaboration

## 3.7 Keywords

With regard to the co-occurrence networks of keywords, Figure 7 shows the existence of six clusters. The green cluster highlights the concept of 'sustainable development goals' with 74 occurrences, associated with 'libraries' with 19, 'united nations' with 12, 'sustainability' with five and 'information science' also with five. The red cluster centres on the term 'sustainable development' with 16 occurrences associated with "planning" with six, 'digital libraries' with five, 'information services' also with five, 'green libraries' and 'sustainable libraries' both with three occurrences. In the purple cluster, the term 'education' stands out with five occurrences, "advocacy" with four and 'information literacy' and 'access to information' with three. The light blue cluster emphasizes the term 'academic libraries' with 17 occurrences, 'gender equality' with five and 'community development' with three. The orange cluster highlights 'public libraries' with 15 occurrences and their relationship with 'school libraries' (3). The yellow cluster lists terms such as "lifelong learning", "strategic planning" both with four and "digital skills" or "media skills" with three. Finally, the dark blue cluster with "library services" and "information access" with four, with "capability building" and "university libraries" with three.

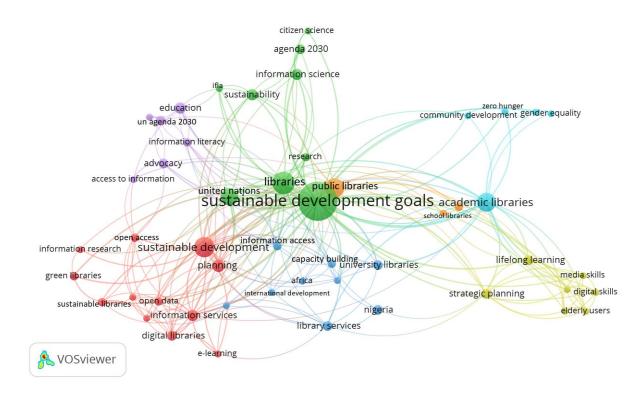


Figure 7: Keyword co-currence network

## **4 CONCLUSION**

Out of a total of 111 publications, after reading all the abstracts, a set of 83 documents was selected, of which 82% are articles. Despite the time span, no publications from the years 2015 and 2017 were selected.

The results obtained show that the highest year of production was 2024. The most used type of publication was journal articles. IFLA makes a great effort to show the role of libraries for Agenda 2030. The IFLA Journal stands out as the publication with the most articles on these topics, demonstrating the importance of IFLA's role among information professionals and researchers, working to disseminate information, promote debate, and advocate for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, with the aim of helping libraries contribute to a more democratic and developed society. Another

notable publication is Library Philosophy and Practice, which confirms its commitment to emerging, innovative, and current topics in the field of Information Science.

A total of 38 countries from around the world contributed to the study on the relationship between libraries and the 2030 Agenda, with Nigeria, the United States of America, and South Africa standing out. Public and academic libraries are where commitment to the SDGs can be identified, although the concept of green libraries has been growing in recent years.

The countries of origin/affiliation of the corresponding authors are Nigeria and the United States and both have two publications co-authored by authors from several countries. Many of the publications are the result of the collaboration of authors from the same countries, although there is cooperation between the United States, United Kingdom, South Africa, Nigeria and India.

For the co-occurrence network for keywords it can be seen that six clusters exist with more impact on the terms sustainable development goals associated with libraries, united nations, sustainability and information science. Other terms related to the subject can be found in the other cluster. This work demonstrates that the topic of Libraries and the 2030 Agenda is being researched within very specific groups, based on the Sustainable Development Goals, in very particular clusters, for example, with the following subthemes: open data, green libraries, digital libraries, e-learning; another cluster with the subthemes: lifelong learning, digital and media literacy; another cluster: zero hunger, community development, gender equality; and finally, another major cluster with the sub themes of Information Science, Citizen Science, and IFLA.

Sustainability is on the agenda of public, academic, and other libraries from various continents and regions of the world, as observed in the keywords of these scientific articles. There is also a greater research focus in the field of Information Science (Mathiasson & Jochumsen, 2022), on the concept of sustainability and the challenges that the Sustainable Development Goals pose to information service professionals.

This literature review provides an overview of the emerging research area on libraries and their professionals in addressing global sustainability challenges, reinforcing the importance of research in understanding which sustainable library practices are being implemented, how libraries engage with communities in this mission, and what new topics and subtopics are emerging in the literature as a result of this sustainable transformation.

#### **5 FUNDING**

This work is funded by national funds through the Foundation for Science and Technology, under the project UIDB/00057/2025

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