



June 11, 2008

**IMU AO Circular Letter 5/2008**

To: IMU Adhering Organizations

From: László Lovász, IMU President

**"Citation Statistics"**  
**a report analyzing impact factors and similar statistics based on citations**

Dear colleagues,

Today the IMU releases an important document, called "Citation Statistics", which we want to bring to your attention.

In summer 2007 a committee on "Quantitative assessment of research" was created (announced through IMU-Net 24, July 2007), that was asked to investigate various aspects of impact factors and similar statistics based on citations. The committee was appointed jointly by the Executive Committees of the International Mathematical Union (IMU), the International Council for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (ICIAM), and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS). It consisted of:

- John Ewing (Providence, USA), chair, appointed by IMU
- Robert Adler (Haifa, Israel), appointed by IMS
- Peter Taylor (Melbourne, Australia), appointed by ICIAM.

The terms of reference given to the committee can be found at:

<http://www.mathunion.org/Publications/2007/Charge-ComOnQuantAssessmRes070521.pdf>.

The committee has addressed this charge by reviewing and discussing current practices along with an extensive literature on the use of citations to evaluate research. Its report, written from the perspective of mathematical scientists, was submitted to the Executive Committees of IMU, ICIAM, and IMS, and all three endorsed the report. The 3 organizations are making the report "Citation Statistics" public today.

The report can be found at the following URL:

<http://www.mathunion.org/Publications/Report/CitationStatistics>.

The report is also released by IMU-Net, in its special issue IMU-Net 29b, June 2008, please look at

<http://www.mathunion.org/imu-net/archive/2008/imu-net-29b/>.

For your information, the report is attached to this circular letter as a PDF file.

This effort was triggered by numerous requests from IMU member countries, mathematical societies, important mathematical institutions, and individuals who reported the increasing use (and misuse) of impact factors and similarly of other citation-based indicators to measure the quality of research of individuals, departments, or whole institutions.

IMU suggests that you not only read the report but also distribute it to administrators and decision-makers who are involved in the assessment of research quality, in order to give them a mathematical science perspective. IMU, ICIAM, and IMS have agreed that, in order to assure as wide distribution as possible, journals, newsletters and similar publications that are interested in publishing this report will have the non-exclusive right to publish it in one of their issues. Please contact the newsletters/journals you are connected with and suggest publication of the report "Citation Statistics".

All 3 organizations, representing the world community of pure, applied, and industrial mathematics and statistics, hope that the careful analysis and recommendations in this report will be considered by decision-makers who are making use of citation data in research assessment.

Sincerely

László Lovász

Encl.