
Wp6 – The role of scientific intermediaries

NIWI – KNAW, Social Sciences Department

Peter van den Besselaar

Eleftheria Vasileiadou

Conceptualising scientific intermediaries

- Scientific intermediaries are defined as actors that create a network of actors in which scientific output, scientists and/ or scientific institutions are the nodes, from the part of the science system. They link the science system with other actors (from the market, the government etc), but also within the science system.
- Their defining characteristic is that they aggregate scientific output, scientists and scientific institutions into meaningful sets of networks.
- Examples: Research councils, research centres, Association of Universities, liaison offices, patent offices, publishers, patient organisations.

What is going on with scientific intermediaries?

- Our main questions: How can the function of an intermediary indicated online? How can the (intended) audience be indicated online? How are online indicators (e.g. luminosity, impact factor etc) related to the audience of an intermediary and the functions it performs? Can we then further refine these online indicators and how relevant they are for intermediaries?

How we have proceeded so far (1)

- Conceptualisation of scientific intermediaries proved difficult: what are the defining attributes and how can they be best represented online?
- a distinction in terms of the units they aggregate and also in terms of different relevant actors (governmental/ market academic etc) proves fruitful.
Conceptualisation of intermediaries as creating a network of actors useful to test actor-level and also network-level indicators.

Classification scheme

Relevant actors/ Aggregation units	Market	Public sector	Public	Sciences
Output				
Scientists				
Scientific institutions				

Testing Online indicators

- Scientific output - % of .doc/ .pdf/ .ppt etc files (Isidro)+ average # of words (Nigel's webcount). We tested it in a series of intermediaries and they do NOT hold. Maybe because these indicators cannot hold in a less-codified system of scientific output

Testing for depth of outlinks

- Experimenting with the meaning of the different depth of out-links of a scientific intermediary: Hypothesis that out-links referring to websites 0/1 levels deep indicate strategic partners of an organisation, whereas links to “deeper” sites indicate a thematic partnership between the two institutions.
- ? Case studies
- Hypothesis NOT confirmed

How to move on

- Selection of more case studies from each category and performing of discriminant analysis to the set of indicators: are there clusters of intermediaries?.
- Historical overview and recent development of intermediaries.
- NIWI responsible for D6.3 Indicators of differentiation and convergence (month 40)