The latest impact factors (2020) were recently released and are now available in the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) database. Clarivate, which owns JCR, made a few changes in the past year. The most pivotal change is to the way impact factor is calculated. Impact factors are now calculated based on the electronic publication date instead of the print publication date. Why does this matter? Most articles receive an electronic publication date that is significantly earlier than their print publication date. This means that a journal could collect citation counts even before print publication, which allows it to artificially stack its final impact factor score. Clarivate has changed the tracked date in an effort to reduce potential bias and increase the accuracy of its scoring system.

In addition, the JCR platform has been updated, and a new metric, the Journal Citation Indicator (JCI), was added. The JCI was designed to complement traditional impact factors. Clarivate is working to add JCI scores for all of the journals in the Web of Science Core Collection. Keep in mind that Impact factors are only applied to a subset of journals. How are JCIs scored?

Normalized across disciplines - JCIs are calculated based on existing subject categories created by Clarivate. The goal is to compare journals within specialized fields instead of comparing them to all academic journals. For instance, oncology journals often have higher impact factors than chemistry journals. JCIs are intended to normalize scoring by comparing only similar journals.

Publication types - In another attempt to normalize scores, JCIs only include original research and review articles in their citation counts. In contrast, impact factors all citation, even citations of editorials or commentaries.
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