

How Multilingual Is Area Studies? Citation Patterns of German Studies Scholars at American Institutions

Tara Murray Grove

Academic libraries invest significant resources for developing collections of foreign-language materials, so it is important for librarians to understand how scholars use these materials. This study uses citation analysis to investigate how frequently scholars in the United States cite sources in languages other than English, taking German Studies as an example where one would expect to find multilingual scholarship. The results indicate that American scholars do incorporate foreign-language sources into their scholarly outputs, but the rate varies significantly between disciplines. Area studies collections should be developed to support discovery and use of diverse materials, including those in languages other than English.

Introduction

Developing collections of foreign-language materials in academic libraries requires resources beyond those needed to develop collections of domestic materials. These additional resources include using a variety of vendors for acquisitions, language expertise for selection and cataloging, and even travel to international book fairs to make purchases. It is, therefore, important for librarians to understand how scholars in their institutions use foreign-language materials so that they can develop and maintain collections strategically.

Discussions of trends in scholarly communication tend to frame library collections and services as a unified whole. The primary vehicle of communication for scientists (and, to a somewhat lesser extent, social scientists) is the recent journal article, and the rising costs for libraries to provide access to these journals has, appropriately, been a prominent topic of discussion and study. At the same time, many libraries are moving print collections off-site and purchasing fewer print books, leading some to wonder if we are witnessing the death of the book. An acquisitions librarian at a major university went so far as to declare, in 2001, "The scholarly monograph is dead."¹ The reality is that scholarly communication is nuanced and varies by field. This circumstance is reflected in disciplinary library collections. Humanists, the primary users of foreign-language collections, typically use monographs, print collections, and older works more than scholars in other disciplines. Previous research has established the importance of the monograph for humanities scholars,² as well as the tendency of humanities

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scholars to cite older works more often than scientists.³ Print has remained dominant in the humanities,⁴ but researchers have called for continued examination of digital publishing as it becomes more sophisticated and online sources mature into the age of peak citation for print sources, which is generally more than ten years in the humanities literature.⁵ For the humanities, it appears that the scholarly monograph is evolving rather than dying. As both scholarship practices and library collections change, the question of language, and the extent to which humanities scholars use multilingual collections, deserves further study.

This study investigates how frequently scholars in the United States cite sources in languages other than English, using German studies as an example where one would expect to find multilingual scholarship. German studies is a logical area to begin this investigation. Previous studies have found that, after English, German is one of the languages most frequently cited by American humanities scholars, regardless of discipline.⁶ In addition, because scholarship practices in the United States are similar to those in Germany,⁷ it is unlikely that a different culture of citation learned from foreign sources would influence German studies scholars. While area studies is inherently multidisciplinary, the German studies scholars whose works are included in this study are primarily humanists working in literature, culture, history, and philosophy. The exception is linguistics, where scholarly communication practices more closely align with the social sciences.

Literature Review

A number of previous studies have looked at the frequency with which humanities scholars writing in English cite foreign-language sources. Many of these studies have deliberately examined only fields where primary sources are not predominantly in a non-English language to avoid a natural skewing toward that language. While useful for some purposes, this approach neglects humanities fields related to a language or geography (area studies). We may assume that area studies scholars use primary sources in the language of their field of study, but prior research has shown that scholars favor secondary sources in their native language.⁸

A few studies have examined foreign-language and area studies disciplines, including German studies. Batts examined a 1969 sample of literary criticism journal articles in English, French, and German, and found that for all three languages, when the language of the article differed from the language of the topic (for example, an author writing in English about German literature), about 60 percent of the secondary sources cited were in the language of the topic and about 30 percent in the language of the article, with the remaining 10 percent in other languages.⁹ When the language of the article and topic were the same, the number of sources in that language was 90 percent. Batts concluded that scholars favor sources in their native language, regardless of the language of their topic of study, and ignore potentially important sources in other languages.

Cullars also looked specifically at the language of sources used by English-speaking scholars of foreign literature, using a sample of 30 monographs. He found that “the scholar will cite the original text and some secondary sources in the language of the text, but the bulk of the remaining references will be to English-language sources.”¹⁰ References in the language of the original text made up 64 percent of the total, including both primary and secondary sources. Citations to other languages were only 2 percent of the total, indicating that scholarship might be bilingual but is not truly multilingual.

Both Cullars and Batts attempted to distinguish native English speakers in their studies. Cullars relied on biographical information, and for cases where biographical information was not available excluded “authors with foreign surnames,” a questionable practice.¹¹ Batts simply assumed that scholars were writing in their native language and publishing in the journals of their home country.

In another study, this time examining French and German literary monographs, Cullars found that these scholars also predominantly cite sources in the language of their writing (75 percent for German and 84 percent for French), and that English is the most frequently cited foreign language.¹²

Collins and Rutledge looked at the literature of German studies as a whole, using a random sample from an annual bibliography of the field. Not surprisingly, they found that the majority of publications were in German (80 percent), with English making up the second-largest portion (12.8 percent), providing further evidence of the dominance of English in scholarly communication.¹³

Ostos examined citation patterns of faculty in Latin American studies at a large American university and found that 42 percent of monographs cited were in languages other than English. Of these, only 11 percent were owned by the university library, versus 44 percent for the English-language titles, “indicating a major gap in local holdings for the non-English language titles needed by researchers.”¹⁴ Although Ostos found significant citation of non-English sources, the majority of monographs cited were in English.

Giullian and Monroe-Gulick analyzed publications by faculty in Slavic and Eurasian studies at the University of Kansas and found that even though the topic of study was closely linked to other languages, English sources made up 76 percent of book citations and 85 percent of journal citations.¹⁵ A recent analysis of East Asian studies by Li found that only about half (53 percent) of citations in doctoral dissertations were to East Asian materials.¹⁶

Citation studies of humanities fields where literature in a foreign language is not the topic of study have found that humanities scholars in general do cite foreign language sources, but that the rates vary widely by discipline. In an analysis of five decades of citation data from four humanities disciplines, Kellsey and Knievel found that 78.2 percent of citations were to English-language materials, but the discipline-specific results ranged from 65.3 percent English-language sources in art to 99.7 percent in philosophy.¹⁷ The most common language cited after English was French (5.3 percent) followed closely by German (4.7 percent). In another study of eight humanities disciplines, the same authors again found differences between the disciplines. The authors concluded that the “most consistent result of this study is the variation among the citation patterns of the various humanities fields.”¹⁸

A later study by the same authors doesn’t specifically address language in the discussion but does include the data gathered on language in an appendix.¹⁹ Overall, 12.8 percent of citations from the sample, which included four humanities disciplines, were in languages other than English, and the discipline-specific percentages ranged from 3.2 percent in English literature to 30.5 percent in classics. Similarly, Li’s analysis of East Asian studies found a great deal of variation, and Li noted that “dissertations focusing on linguistics topics tend to cite very few East Asian materials.”²⁰

Citation analysis is just one method used to examine the sources used by scholars. A UK study conducted structured interviews with selected faculty members. The literature review included in this study indicates that the decline of the monograph is on the publishing side, and

not a result of declining demand for the format from scholars. The analysis of the interviews suggests that “the monograph remains the single most valued means of scholarly publishing and communication within the A&H field.”²¹ Brockman et al. conducted a qualitative study of humanities scholars at a large research university to better understand how these scholars interact with the library and engage in research activities. The analysis verified earlier studies, finding that humanities scholars continue to use older sources.²²

Overwhelmingly, citation analyses of humanities scholarship have found that the monograph is far from dead, and in fact remains a central part of scholarly communication. McDonald found that humanities scholars and social scientists (based on a sample of publications authored by forty-seven Caltech faculty) cite books and journals at about equal rates, and these rates did not vary significantly over a seven-year time period (1994–2000).²³ Literature faculty cited books at the highest rate (78 percent), although this is based on a small sample of citations from only thirteen publications. Thompson analyzed a sample of monographs on 19th-century English and American literature and found that of the secondary sources cited, 67 percent were books and 18 percent were periodicals.²⁴ If book chapters are included in the book category, the figure for citations to books climbs to 81 percent. Not surprisingly, primary source citations were overwhelmingly to books (79 percent). In a more recent study covering the years 2004–9, Kellsey and Knievel found that 69 percent of citations from their humanities sample were to books.²⁵ For all of the disciplines included in the sample (philosophy, classics, English, and history), the percentage of citations to items more than twenty-five years old at time of citation was substantial, ranging from 27 percent to 39 percent. Similarly, in an analysis of citation data extracted from dissertations at Notre Dame, Kayongo and Helm found that 73 percent of citations from the arts and humanities dissertations were to books versus 23 percent to journals, while for all other disciplines citations to journals outnumbered citations to books.²⁶ The same study also found that the average age of cited sources was significantly greater in the arts and humanities, at 33.4 years versus an overall average age of 19.1 years. Looking specifically at Slavic and Eurasian studies, Giullian and Monroe-Gulick found that even in this multidisciplinary field (including humanists and social scientists) there were more citations to books (54 percent) than to journals (32 percent).²⁷ The sample included publications from 2005 to 2013, and the average publication date of cited sources was 1998. Similar to Thompson,²⁸ Giullian and Monroe-Gulick suggest that not only do scholars continue to cite older works, but that “a work must stand the test of time before being cited more often.”²⁹ Conkling and his coauthors analyzed two samples of dissertations representing the pre-web (1990–93) and post-web (2003–6) periods to see if new methods of accessing the literature had changed citation patterns. Their analysis showed enough variation, both within and among disciplines, that results were difficult to generalize, but one interesting finding is that the age of cited material overall increased,³⁰ perhaps because electronic journal back files and databases have made older articles easier to find and obtain.

Methods

This study employs citation analysis of publications by German studies scholars based at institutions in the United States to determine what kinds of sources are incorporated into scholarly outputs. Citation data provide more direct information about scholarly communication than other types of data such as library usage statistics or faculty requests for materials. Usage statistics, such as circulation and journal download counts, are relatively easy to obtain

but do not tell the whole story of how scholars engage with the literature. Faculty requests fail to measure use of materials already obtained by approval plan or librarian selection and overlook the role of the library collection in scholars' discovery. Citation analysis, the method used for this investigation, measures which kinds of sources are incorporated into scholarly outputs. It has been used by many prior studies on foreign languages and scholarly communication, facilitating comparisons.

The population analyzed includes the citations from all known publications of the faculty in departments of German studies, German language, or German literature at the fourteen Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA)³¹ member universities from a single year (2017). The BTAA is selected for several reasons:

- Drawing publications from multiple institutions avoids disproportionate influence by the citation habits of any one scholar or department. This is especially important because German studies departments tend to be relatively small.
- Focusing on publications by faculty at large research universities with robust library collections and interlibrary loan services avoids most problems of lack of access to foreign language books and journals.
- Because the primary goal is to inform collections decisions at American universities, and because differences in scholarly communication across English-speaking countries are beyond the scope of this study, only institutions in the United States are included.

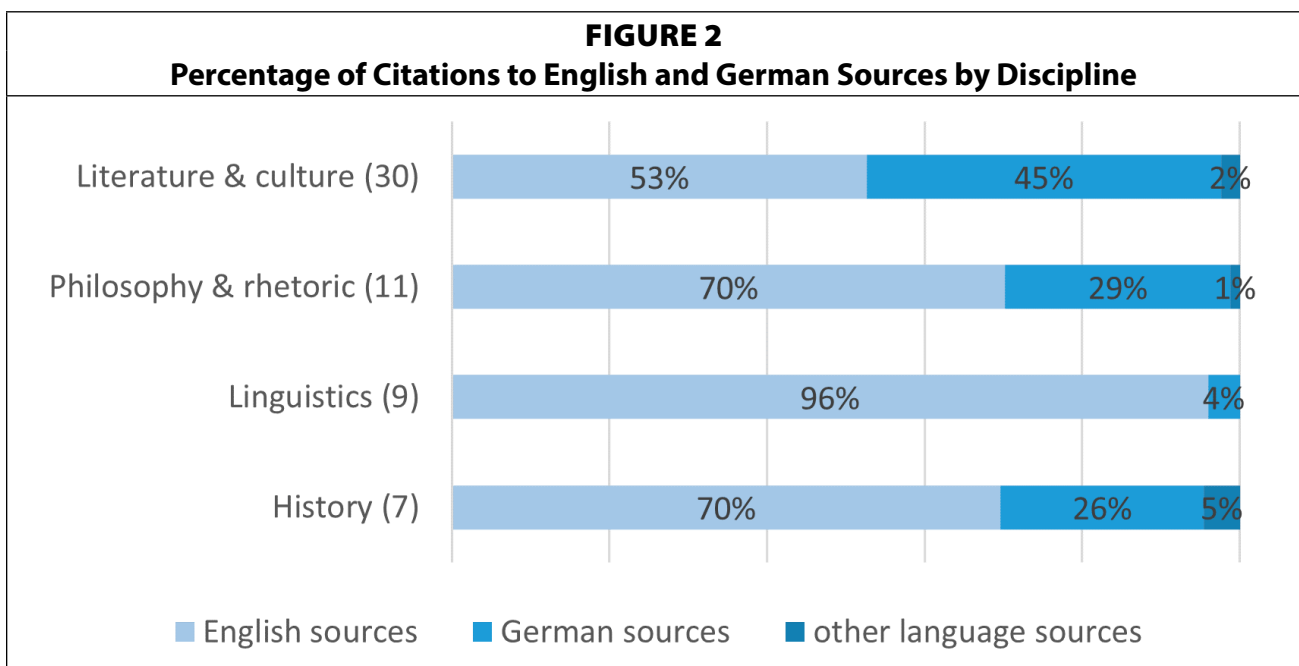
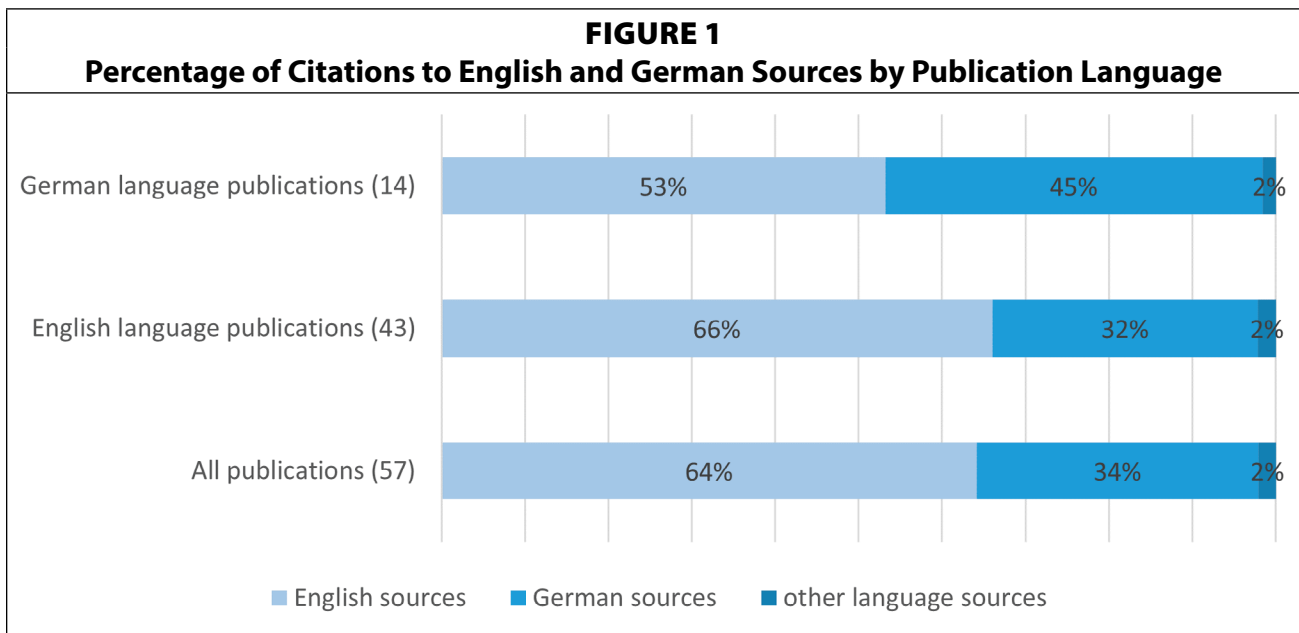
In cases where German studies is part of a broader area studies department, the publications of faculty focusing on areas where German is not the primary language, such as Scandinavian or Slavic studies, are excluded. Most German studies departments include faculty with backgrounds in various disciplines and with appointments in other departments, for example history, linguistics, and philosophy, and these are included. Publications, for the purpose of this study, include monographs, contributions to edited volumes, and journal articles. Publications in both German and English are included, and no attempt is made to distinguish between native and non-native English speakers, because the goal of the study is to find communication patterns of scholars at American institutions regardless of background. Publications such as editorials and opinion pieces containing no citations or only a few citations were excluded. Publications were identified from curriculum vitae and publication lists available on university department websites and from literature searches in WorldCat, MLA International Bibliography, Arts and Humanities Citation Index, Germanistik Online Datenbank, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts, and Penn State University Library's federated search. Following the above criteria, a total of fifty-seven publications from scholars at fourteen universities were selected for inclusion in this analysis.

The citing publications were entered into a spreadsheet, assigned an identifier, and coded by format (monograph, book chapter, or journal article), language (English or German), and discipline (literature and culture, history, philosophy and rhetoric, or linguistics). All of the citations from these publications were then entered into a second spreadsheet and linked to the citing publication by identifier. A total of 3,821 citations were collected. The citations were coded by language, format, and age (determined by subtracting the date of the citation from the date of the citing publication). Citations were not coded as primary and secondary sources. While some previous studies have made a distinction between primary and secondary sources, in this dataset separating primary and secondary sources would have required a close reading of some texts. While primary sources in German studies may be more likely

than secondary sources to be in a language other than English, the publications included in this study did also cite secondary sources in non-English languages. In addition, some publications cited English-language primary sources or primary sources in translation.

Results

The majority of sources cited in all publications included in the study are in English (64 percent), and a significant minority are in German (34 percent). Only two percent of citations are to sources in a language other than English or German (mostly other European languages). In English-language publications, a slightly higher percentage of sources cited are in English (66 percent), while in German-language publications, closer to half of the sources cited are in German (45 percent) (see figure 1).



Citation patterns in this sample vary significantly by discipline (see figure 2). All of the publications in history and linguistics are written in English. Linguistics, at least in the departments at the universities in this study, appears to be an almost monolingual discipline, with 96 percent of sources cited in English. The history publications in this sample, on the other hand, even though they are all written in English and favor English-language sources, cite sources in more different languages than publications in other disciplines, with 5 percent in languages other than English and German. The literature and culture publications cite the most German-language sources (45 percent), which reflect citations to the texts being studied in the original language as well as citations to German-language scholarship. In rhetoric and philosophy, publications in both English and German heavily favor English-language sources (70 percent). Interestingly, the rhetoric and philosophy publications in this sample written in German cite more English-language sources (78 percent) than the publications written in English (67 percent) (see figures 3 and 4).

FIGURE 3
Percentage of Citations to English and German Sources for English Language Publications by Discipline

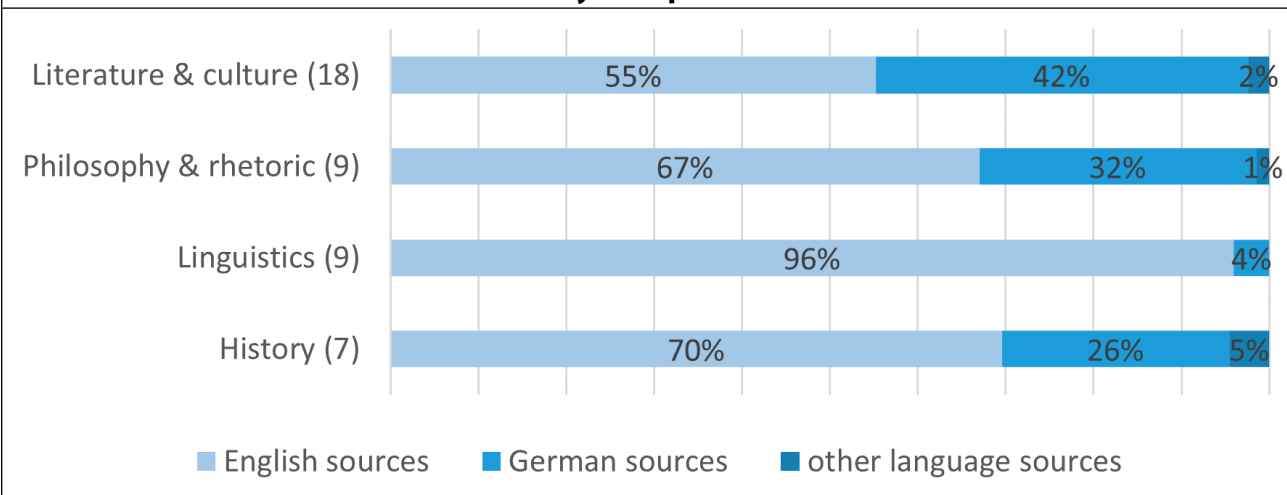
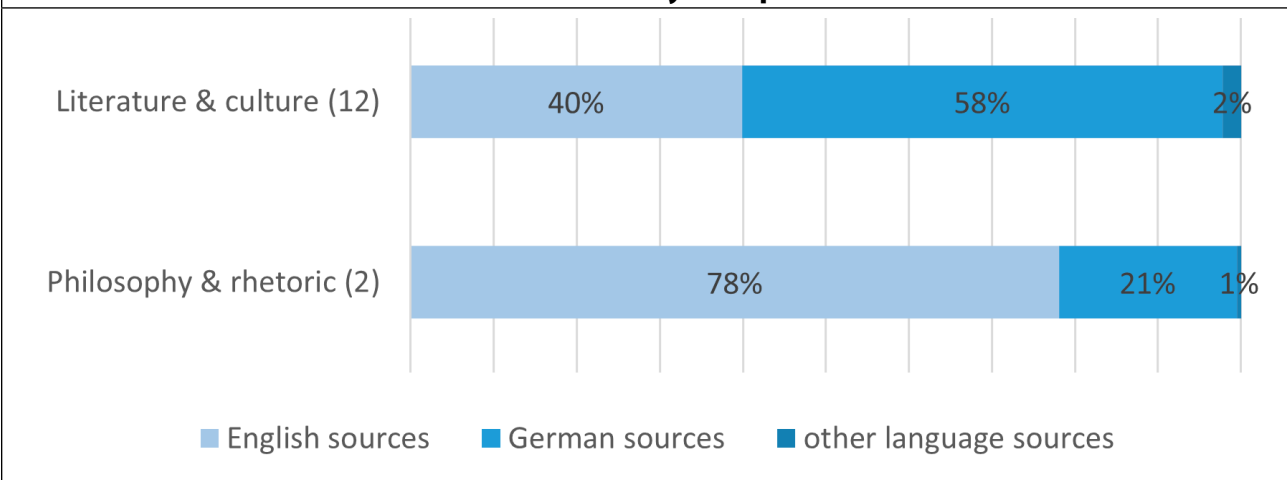
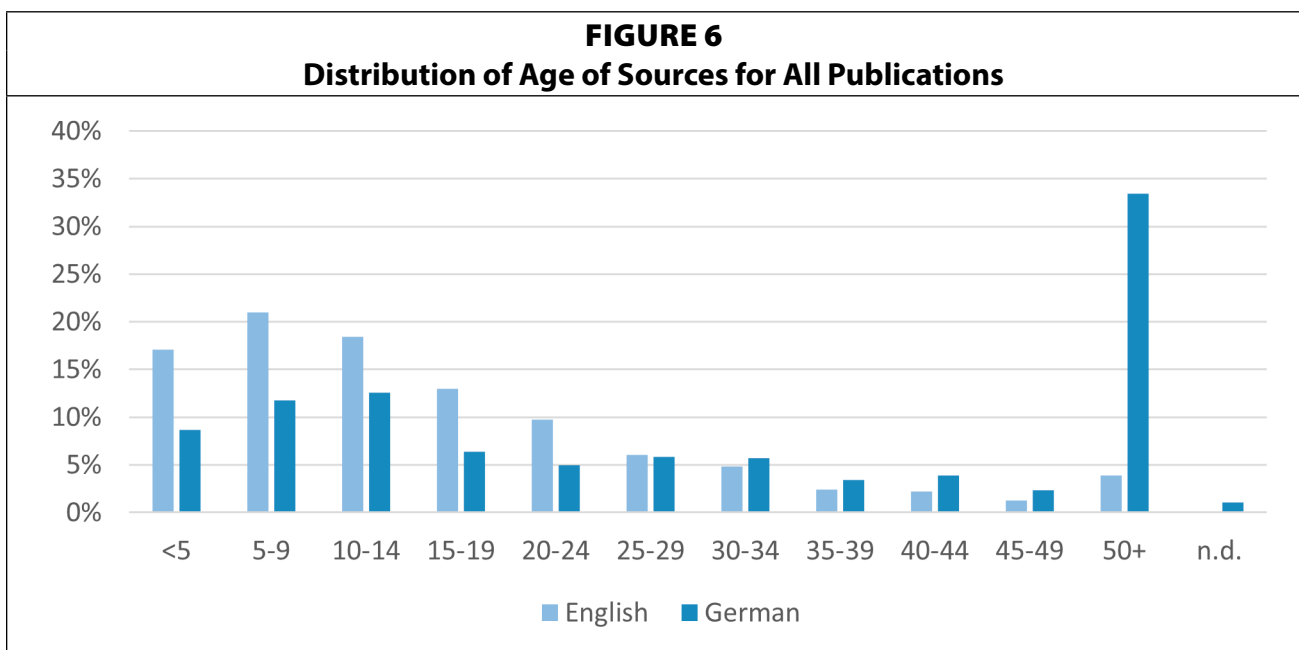
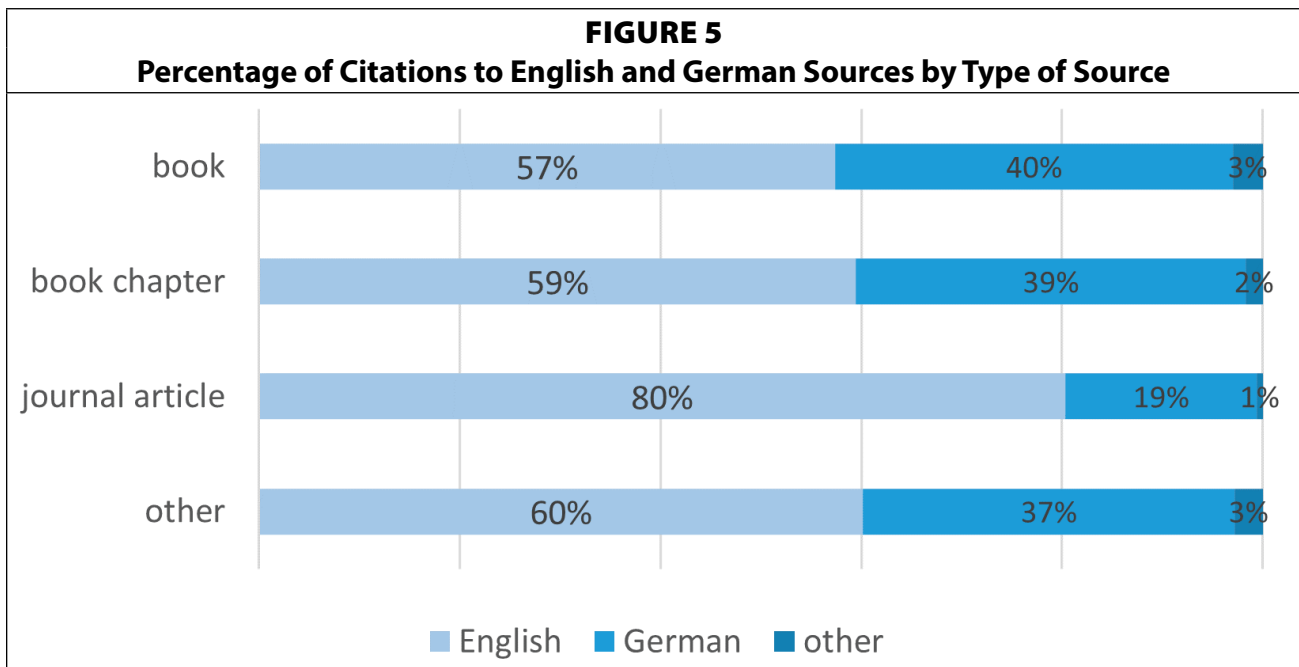


FIGURE 4
Percentage of Citations to English and German Sources for German Language Publications by Discipline



The language of cited sources also varies by source type (see figure 5). A significantly higher percentage of journal articles cited were in English (80 percent), compared to books (57 percent), book chapters (59 percent), and other types of sources, such as dissertations, manuscripts, websites, newspaper articles, and films (60 percent). Nearly half of the citations in the sample were to books (45 percent), with similar numbers of citations to book chapters (21 percent) and journal articles (27 percent), and relatively few citations to other types of sources (7 percent).

For both German and English publications, the age of sources cited follows a predictable pattern, with the majority of sources cited being less than twenty-five years old (see figure 6). The main language difference is in the very old sources (fifty or more years old). Regardless of



the language of the publication, a greater percentage of citations to German-language sources are fifty or more years old. For English-language publications, 38 percent of German sources cited are fifty or more years old (see figure 7). For German-language publications, where a greater proportion of all citations are to German-language sources, the distribution by age is more even, with only 15 percent of German sources cited being fifty or more years old (see figure 8). Only a small number of citations were to sources with no date (n.d.), such as databases.

FIGURE 7
Distribution of Age of Sources for English-Language Publications

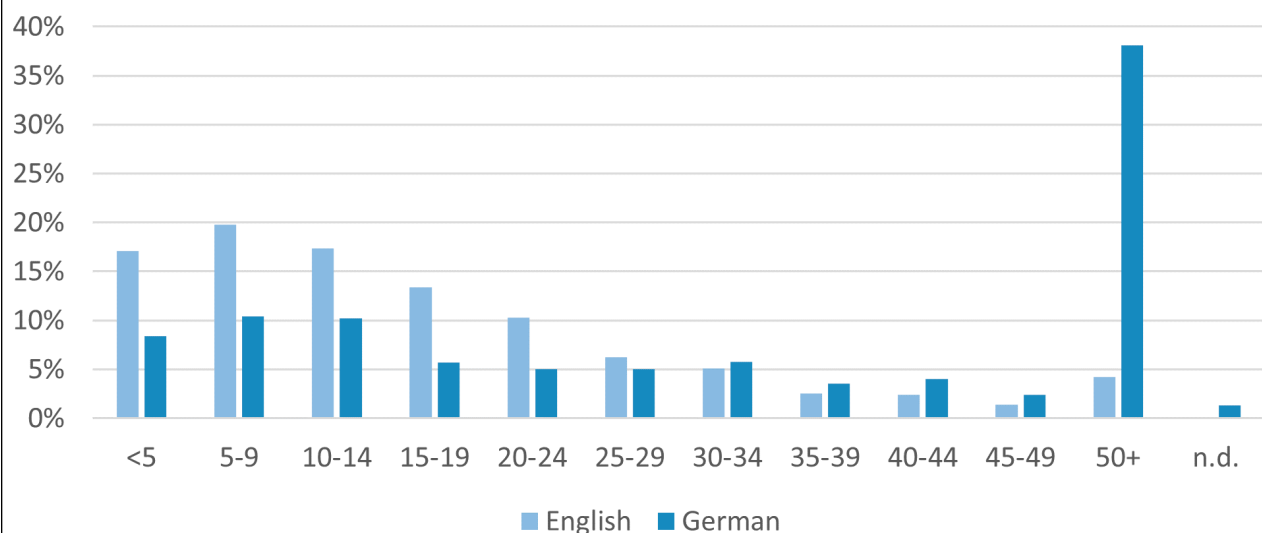
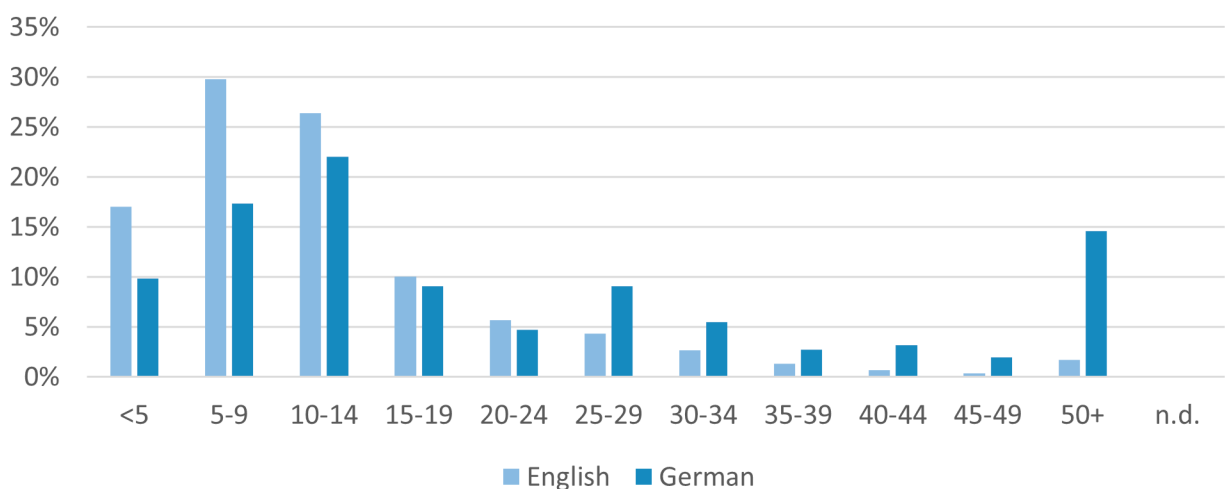


FIGURE 8
Distribution of Age of Sources for German-Language Publications



Discussion

The results of this study confirm three findings from earlier studies of the humanities: 1) humanists use sources in multiple languages but show a preference for sources in the language of their own writing or institution; 2) scholarly communication varies significantly across

humanistic disciplines; and 3) humanists rely heavily on books and continue to cite them long after initial publication.

The English-language publications included in this study cite a smaller percentage of German-language sources than the German-language publications do. This supports Batts' earlier finding that scholars are more likely to cite sources in the language of their own writing.³² Looking specifically at publications in literature and culture, the subject of Batts' study, the present study finds that 55 percent of sources cited in English-language publications were in English, 42 percent in German, and only 2 percent in other languages. Batts found that in cases where the language of publication and the language of the topic differ, as with the English-language German studies publications in this study, 60 percent of citations were to sources in the language of the topic, 30 percent were to sources in the language of the publication, and 10 percent were to a third language.³³ For publications where the language of publication and the language of the topic are the same (that is, a German-language publication on a German-language topic), the present study finds that only 58 percent of citations are to sources in that language, whereas Batts' study found 90 percent.³⁴ These differences between the present study and Batts' study suggest that English-language publications have become less multilingual, and that scholars writing in all languages are citing more English-language sources, although the comparison to the Batts study is not direct because Batts included publications in three languages (English, German, and French) from scholars in multiple countries. Determining whether the trend to citing more English-language sources reflects a preference on the part of scholars, a lack of awareness of sources in languages other than English, or a shift in publishing to favor English is beyond the scope of this study. If the finding by Collins and Rutledge that the vast majority of German studies literature is written in German³⁵ still holds true today, it does suggest that scholars in the United States disproportionately rely on the English-language literature in their field.

The difference by discipline in percentage of citations to non-English-language sources in this study, from next to none in linguistics to more than half of all citations in German-language literature and culture publications, supports Knievel and Kellsey's conclusion that citation patterns vary widely by discipline within the humanities.³⁶ Li found similar differences between disciplines, noting, as in the present study, that linguistics publications had few to no citations to non-English-language materials.³⁷ This variation holds true in the present study even for scholars in different disciplines who work together in the same German studies department, suggesting that German studies and by extension other area studies are diverse fields with no uniform model of scholarly communication.

This study, like previous studies, found that humanities scholars continue to favor books as sources, and that they continue to cite sources long after their initial publication. The very old (published fifty or more years before the citing publication) sources cited in English-language publications were much more likely to be in German, whereas the distribution was more even in German-language publications, perhaps indicating that the very old sources are primary source materials. Similarly, a greater percentage of all book sources cited were in German compared to other types of sources, reflecting that humanists' primary sources tend to be books.

Conclusion

Knievel and Kellsey concluded that "Collection development in research libraries is, at best, an inexact science or, more properly, an art."³⁸ This study, and several previous studies, found a

great deal of variation between humanities disciplines. To best serve the local community, the art of collection development in each of these disciplines should reflect this variation as well as local needs and interests. The results of this study will help librarians developing collections for area studies better understand scholarly communication in their fields and inform collections decisions.

This study shows that humanities scholars continue to cite sources long after their initial publication, and that these very old sources are more likely than other types of sources to be books and to be in a language other than English. Under current budget pressures, many libraries now prioritize electronic resources and acquire materials “just in time” instead of “just in case.” This approach will be less effective in the humanities, where scholars rely on a collection built over time. Foreign language materials often must be purchased in a brief window of availability in the United States, or during visits to book fairs and international bookstores. If librarians do not purchase these materials proactively, based on their local knowledge of scholars’ needs, scholars may find them difficult to access at the point of need. Indeed, scholars may never even discover these sources because they can’t be found in the library collection. Interlibrary loan and cooperative borrowing agreements will only help to provide access to resources if at least some libraries acquire foreign-language books at the time of publication. Relying on “just in time” access therefore has chilling implications for efforts to build diverse collections and to encourage the amplification of diverse international perspectives in collections and in scholarship.

The comparison between the results of this study and the results of Batts’ 1972 study suggest that American scholars today cite fewer foreign-language publications. While multiple factors likely contribute to this decline, whether foreign-language publications can be discovered and accessed through the scholar’s home library must play a role. There are many possible reasons for scholars’ citation choices, as explained by Li:

Whether a scholar does or does not use and cite a material in a non-English language may depend on how much research on the scholar’s chosen topic has been conducted and published in that language, the scholar’s awareness of what research has been conducted and published in that language, how highly the scholar regards the research conducted and published in that language, and how easily the research conducted and published in that language is accessible to the scholar.³⁹

Hempel surveyed classical archaeologists in the United States and found that although most indicated support for multilingual scholarly communication, research published in English has a greater chance of being read by researchers and students in the United States.⁴⁰ The scholars who responded to the survey worried that as library budgets are cut, non-English publications will not be collected as much as they once were.

Understanding all of the factors that lead to citation choices is beyond the scope of the present study, but discovery and accessibility, and thus the decisions made by libraries, are certainly among those factors. Librarians who proactively select foreign-language publications diversify their libraries’ collections and encourage scholars to incorporate these perspectives into their own work.

Acknowledgments

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39. Li, "Citing East Asia," 570.
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