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Ranking the Open Access-ibility of Universities

University rankings and league tables, although controversial, always attract much attention from the institutions themselves and those affiliated, as well as other stakeholders. There has been criticism that the Shanghai Jiaotong ARWU ranking and the Times Higher Education Supplement rankings promote a certain vision of the university to the detriment of all others, but they are far from the only one. Given the amount of attention and possible impact such rankings can create, there has been a number of attempts at creating rankings that promote certain causes, whether it is environmental friendliness, most wired campus or most vegan friendly. This project aimed to explore whether it would be feasible to create a ranking of universities in terms of their Open Access-ibility.

The project surveyed the literature pertaining to existing rankings - both comprehensive rankings, and those promoting a specific cause - to understand the criticisms that are often raised against the ranking methodology, and assembled a list of factors that would have to be considered when attempting to produce a formula for ranking OA-ibility of universities. It then proposed a simple approach that avoids many of the pitfalls of existing rankings, but also lists a number of choices that could be made to make the rankings more complex, but possibly also less reliable and accurate. Finally, it discussed how feasible it would be to automatically generate rankings of universities. We believe that such rankings could make an important contribution to OA advocacy, by exploiting the universities' desire for self-promotion and improvement.

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