Vanishing Act

The Disappearance of Web Resources Cited in the Health Care Management Literature

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Introduction

- Many studies in recent years have documented the disappearance of Web resources cited in scholarly journals.
  See http://www.lib.siu.edu/abt/staffinfo/htmbib
- Our study examined health care management and health services research journals.

Study Questions

- How many Web resources were no longer accessible at the URLs provided in the citations of 5 health services/health care management journals?
- Is there a relationship between a resource's availability at its listed URL and the date of publication?
- Does availability differ depending on resource and domain type?

Methods

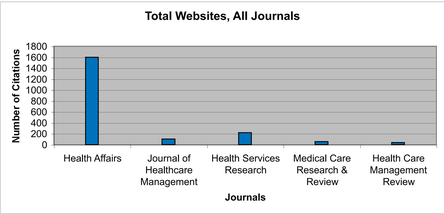
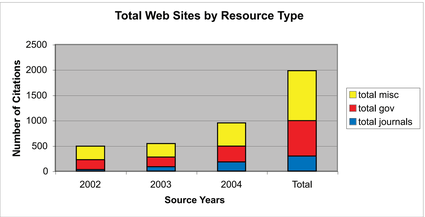
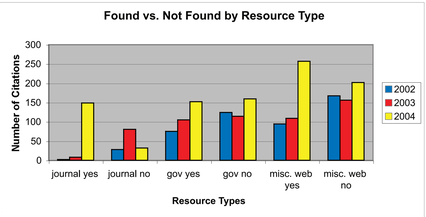
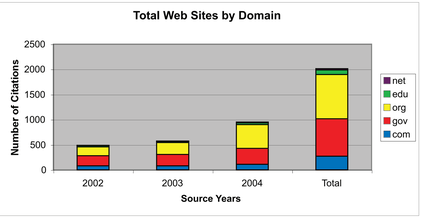
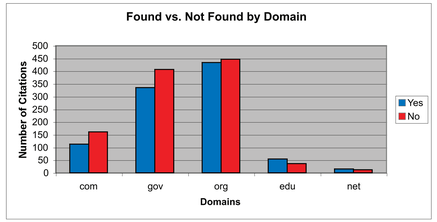
- Studied five journals
  - Health Affairs
  - Health Care Management Review
  - Health Services Research
  - Journal of Health Care Management
  - Medical Care Research and Review
- Examined web citations for the years 2002 through 2004
- Tallied web resources available at the URLs given
- Analyzed by format type (Government document, Journal, Miscellaneous)
- Analyzed by domains (.com, .gov, .edu, .org, .net)
- Analyzed by date

Results

- As of February 2007, 47.2% of the 2013 studied URLs were active.
- The longer since the publication of a citation, the more likely its URL was inactive ($r=-.21$, $p=0.00$).
- No difference in availability was found across resource types ($\chi^2=5.19$, $df=2$, $p=0.07$).
- Whether a URL was active varied across all domain types ($\chi^2=13.26$, $df=4$, $p=0.01$).
- The .com domain type had the greatest percentage of inactive URLs (58.8%); the .edu domain had the greatest percentage of active URLs (60.0%).

Conclusions

- Health care management researchers who cite Web materials should remember that these resources may not be available at the cited URLs after their research is published.
- We recommend that authors keep copies of all cited Web materials so that others may be able to verify and use the information.

Acknowledgements

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