INTRODUCTION

Citational Politics and Justice: Introduction

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This introduction provides an overview of the thirteen articles which constitute this special issue about "citational politics and justice." The issue begins with a discussion paper, followed by six research articles, one commentary, one project report, one teaching reflection, and finishes with three conversations. Authors reflect on the history and future of citation practices, and what they mean for the recognition of marginalised scholars, knowledges, and forms of output. The range of contributions offers insights into how more just scholarly practices can be promoted in teaching, research, publishing, and collaboration with academic and societal partners. Together, these articles provide ideas for achieving greater citational justice, and ultimately improving the quality of knowledge.

Citation remains a cornerstone of scholarly and scientific work. It is how we acknowledge those on whose shoulders we stand, and with whom we are in conversation. It is also an important service to our readers. Analysis of citations provides insight into scholarly networks and the circulation of ideas. However, like many academic practices, citation is neither neutral nor universal. There are important differences between disciplines and language groups, and how and what we cite changes over time. There is also a great deal of evidence suggesting that the conscious and unconscious biases and discrimination that mark so much of our world also shape who gets cited. Such bias serves to render the contributions of marginalised groups less visible.

This opening paragraph is adapted from the call for papers that launched this special issue. I have been delighted by the interest in the topic of citational politics and justice, and am very pleased to provide a brief introduction to the thirteen contributions, by an impressive total of forty-four authors based in Australia, Austria, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the United States.

KULA is decidedly a multi/inter/trans-disciplinary journal, and the call for papers encouraged submissions from scholars and practitioners across disciplines, and from those working with publishers, libraries, and research funding agencies. Most contributors, though not all, have backgrounds in the humanities and social sciences. It was a pleasure to receive contributions involving PhD candidates as authors. Not surprisingly, the contributions from those working in academic libraries provide valuable insights for students, teachers, and researchers.

The first discussion paper by Nicole Basaraba offers useful background and context to citational justice, and importantly, to different forms of citational injustice, such as citation cartels and coercive citation. She traces how citation practices have emerged, and focuses on the challenges to traditional forms of citation posed by digital technologies. These challenges include how to cite born-digital outputs and the use of artificial intelligence (see also Blechinger and Popowich on the latter).

We then move to six research articles. The first two provide important historical perspectives. Linda C. Smith revisits her own earlier article, "Citation Analysis," published in *Library Trends* in 1981, through the lens of citational justice. As a complement to the contributions in the issue that focus on the citation practices of authors, she focuses on how citation data have been used for analytic and evaluation purposes. Smith emphasises the importance of citations after academic work has been published, and suggests ways of ensuring that historically marginalised scholars become part of the scholarly conversation that underlies citation analysis.

Dominic Lusinchi traces the shift from the rather idiosyncratic citation practices that emerged in the seventeenth century to the formalised and standardised rules that emerged during the twentieth century. Using Robert K. Merton's paper "Science and the Social Order" (1938) as a case study, he illustrates how "deficient" bibliographic referencing hampers the research process. Nonetheless, he also argues that the standardised rules imposed by publishers, supported by digital reference management systems, can hinder creativity and diversity in what gets cited and how.

Sam Popowich picks up on the question of citational injustice (see also Basaraba), drawing on Iris Marion Young's book *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990). Young's "five faces of oppression"—exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence—are central to understanding *how* citational injustice is unjust. Popovich also reflects on the use of generative AI in academic work.

Christina Crespo, Max Liboiron, Alex Flynn, Molly Rivers, Riley Cotter, Rui Liu, Dome Lombeida, Kaitlyn Hawkins, Nadia Duman, Abu Arif, Edward Allen, Natasha Healey, Nicole Power, Alex Zahara, John Atkinson, Paul McCarney, Charlie Mather, Rivers Cafferty, and Lana Vuleta collectively reflect on how to change the material practices of altering citational politics. They are all past or present members of the Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR). Their ongoing work on citational justice and related issues of academic integrity have been an inspiration[1] for many other contributors to this special issue. In this article, they are inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa's (2015) "pathway to conocimiento" as a framework for explaining the process of unlearning and learning that occurs through engaging with citational politics. Their analysis is designed both to support scholars as we individually reflect on our own citational politics and practices and to provide a framework for facilitating collective change.

Joel Blechinger examines the challenges posed to achieving citational justice by generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). He analyses how official style guides recommend the acknowledgement and citation of GenAI, pointing out how these serve to obliterate the work of human authors. He also points out how "hallucinated" or "fabricated" citations undermine the relational, communicative nature of scholarly work. He concludes by highlighting how GenAI could be used as an opportunity to reimagine pedagogic and library practices, precisely to emphasise relationality.

Kirsten Thorpe, Shannon Faulkhead, Lauren Booker, Nathan mudyi Sentance, and Rose Barrowcliffe describe a referencing guide they developed for Australian libraries in order to honour Indigenous knowledge sources. This serves to challenge the ways in which Western knowledges have been privileged in academic work. They also discuss when it is important not to acknowledge Indigenous sources, in order to protect heritage or to challenge settler claims to "discovery."

The next three contributions offer reflections and advice about encouraging more just citational practices amongst students, teachers, and researchers. Jessica Mussell, Jessie Lampreau, and Heather Dean provide an overview of a citational justice project developed at a Canadian academic library. This was part of a broader library initiative addressing inherent biases within traditional scholarly publishing and academic research practices. Just as Blechinger and Ruiter, this project report reminds us of the importance of libraries and librarians.

Floor Agnes Andrea Ruiter focuses on how researchers find literature to cite, pointing out that searching for literature is where citational bias and injustice might first emerge. In her commentary, she examines index bias in literature databases, inherent/unconscious bias during search strategy development, and systematic bias of controlled vocabularies. She includes useful advice for how to better prepare literature searches and design search queries in order to create more inclusive literature representations and reduce citation inequity.

Sarah R. Davies reflects on her experiences of teaching citational politics as an aspect of academic writing in a PhD course. Similar to the three conversations included in this special issue, she describes the discussions that arise when students and teachers engage with citational justice. Just as Ruiter emphasises literature searching as a practice to improve citational diversity and justice, Davies suggests that citation practices are but one aspect of scholarly writing.

Three conversations follow, providing fascinating fly-on-the-wall experiences for the reader. The first two reflect some of what Davies discusses, as they involve PhD and early career researchers grappling with making sense of their own citation practices and how they learned about citation. The first is between members of a lab with different disciplinary backgrounds and experiences as scholars, artists, dancers, and storytellers. Ame Min-Venditti, Leah M. Friedman, Farah Najar Arevalo, Lívia Cruz, Adriene Jenik, and Alexandrina Agloro

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[1] CLEAR maintains a public bibliography on citational politics (available here: https://wyw.zotero.org/groups/4620796/citational_politics-clear_library). In "Doing Ethics with Cod," Max Liboiron et al. created one of my favourite subversions of academic citation practices in which they "have not ordered [their] citations alphabetically but according to whom we owe a debt of gratitude, arranging them the same way you feed Elders and teachers first at a feast" (2021, 149). I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall for those discussions.

share their conversations about citation as a practice of community accountability, aesthetic expression, resistance to erasure, and care for knowledge lineages. Their wide-ranging discussions highlight the need to cite Indigenous scholars not only when writing *about* Indigenous knowledge, but also to honour place-based intellectual contributions.

The second is an email exchange between Maud Oostindie and Veerle Spronck over several months in which they reflect on their own citational practices. This multimodal contribution engages with issues of citational justice, and includes not only text but also some beautiful and informative drawings, collages, maps, and knitted data visualisations. They use these to reflect on the tensions between quantification and the lived, relational nature of scholarly influence that often extends far beyond the "canon."

This special issue concludes with a conversation between Stuart Glennan and Federica Russo, established philosophers of science from the Global North with experience as authors, reviewers, and journal editors. They highlight the importance of "charity" as a value for realising more just citation practices that could help to challenge colonial power structures and other forms of epistemic injustice.

Ending this special issue with these three conversations is appropriate, to demonstrate how important it is to continue these discussions with our students, colleagues, librarians, and editors, and to conduct these conversations with "charity," as Glennan and Russo propose. As Smith and other contributors to this special issue point out, rather than seeing citation as a chore, we can see it as an opportunity to expand our communities and enrich our dialogues with the works of both the living and the dead.

I have learned a great deal from reading all of the contributions included here. My own practices are not perfect, reflecting my disciplinary training, geographical locations, and, let's be honest, laziness. It is too easy to keep doing what I have always done, and referring to the work I know well. Samantha MacFarlane, co-editor-in-chief of *KULA*, tells me that working on this special issue has stimulated her to think about the journal's citation practices. Referencing style guides are not laws to be followed faithfully. As authors and journal editors, we can also try to resist and subvert those referencing styles (see note 1 for inspiration) so that they better reflect our commitments to epistemic justice. This might mean including first names, pronouns, land acknowledgements, and more. It might sometimes mean uncomfortable conversations with ourselves, with co-authors, and with publishers. No one ever claimed unlearning old habits was easy.

In the call for papers, we listed a number of possible topics. Many have been addressed, and some contributions certainly took up the challenge to experiment with creative and experimental forms of representation, though we did not receive any speculative fiction or interviews with non-humans, perhaps with one's past citations or with reference management systems.

There is still much more work to be done. Tanja Bosch (2025) calls for more attention to the political economy and material infrastructures of knowledge production and academic publishing. She argues that "citation becomes a political act not only in what it includes but in what it refuses" (Bosch 2025, 1722). Paying attention only to improving the diversity of those we cite is not sufficient to challenge all of the hierarchical and colonial structures of knowledge production there are in the world.

There are contributions addressing the citation of non-traditional output, such as datasets, digital objects, software, museum catalogues, artistic workshops and performances, and oral traditions, but again, more work remains to be done. Several contributions address the implications of generative AI for citation practices. That is most definitely not resolved, and will continue to challenge us in our roles as teachers, authors, reviewers, and editors. Some journals already expect authors to include "citation diversity statements." Research using both qualitative and quantitative methods will be needed to assess their effectiveness.

We also need to attend to how best to deal with citations of retracted work or of people whose practices do not conform to the values and norms of academic life. These include those who commit academic fraud, plagiarism, or otherwise exploit the knowledge of others without due credit.

For me, and I hope for readers, this special issue demonstrates the importance of carefully considering how and what we cite, and how we engage with students, colleagues (especially those from disciplines other than our own), librarians, editors, publishers, and societal partners. Moreover, it makes us more aware not only of the challenges but also the opportunities offered by citing with care and with justice.

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Competing Interests
The author declares that she has no competing interests.

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