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Dimensions empowers multiple strategies across SPIE

SPIE, the international society for optics and photonics, has been using Dimensions Analytics since May 2019. We have spoken to Patrick Franzen (Director, Publications and Platform) and Mary Summerfield (Manager, Publications Business Development) about their experience of using Dimensions on a day-to-day basis, focusing on how Dimensions supports SPIE in their strategic thinking and planning for the future.

An enterprise-wide product that can benefit every team

“We use Dimensions in a wide variety of ways across the society. Dimensions for us has never been a tool just for publishers, but rather an enterprise-wide product that may provide valuable information to every SPIE team,” notes Patrick. He goes on to explain how Dimensions helps his team understand where SPIE falls into the greater ecosystem of scientific publishing. On a day-to-day basis, Patrick’s colleagues run data analytics to check the publishing output regionally or per country and institution, as well as what SPIE’s author distribution looks like. “Our publishing teams also use Dimensions to look at our editorial boards. We are interested to know where they are publishing and how we can support them in their role,” Patrick adds.

Understand, evaluate and predict future strategies and trends

SPIE organizes and sponsors approximately 25 major technical forums, exhibitions, and education programs in North America, Europe, Asia, and the South Pacific every year. Furthermore, SPIE publishes the SPIE Digital Library, the world’s most extensive collection of optics and photonics applied research with nearly 500,000 items from SPIE journals, conference proceedings, presentations, and eBooks. Understanding current trends and predicting future ones is fundamental to Mary’s work. To support her in her analyses, Mary uses Dimensions to answer many different types of questions relating to business development strategy for SPIE.

“For me, it is all about the bigger picture,” notes Mary, adding “we use many databases to help inform our publishing strategy. We find that Dimensions gives us the broadest possible lens - particularly around funding and patent information.” In the past few years, SPIE has been pushing hard to integrate more and more data into their business and workflows. While SPIE collects deep organizational data, it is only when they integrate it with external resources including Dimensions data that they can truly begin to understand, evaluate, and predict future strategies and trends that could affect society business.

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One unique aspect of the Dimensions database that SPIE deeply values is patent citations. The SPIE community is very applied and technology-driven so many papers generate more patent citations than academic citations, and researchers value learning about how their research is used in patent applications. “Tracking patent citations is incredibly important to SPIE, and other scholarly databases don’t typically include this information, so Dimensions is integral for creating a much clearer picture,” notes Mary.

Conference planning for future success

The conference team at SPIE uses Dimensions to support their strategic thinking and planning for future conferences. “We use Dimensions to identify trends or to spot which areas are growing most and obtaining more funding,” explains Patrick. He outlines how the conference team can then use this information to put together programs that reflect where SPIE fields are heading. This ensures that the SPIE conference programs are attractive to conference participants and relevant to researchers in applied science and engineering. Patrick also explains that it works in reverse too. It is equally essential for SPIE to be able to identify topical areas that are waning in importance. Once these areas are identified, the team can build strategies to sunset their efforts in them and focus on the fields that are of growing importance.

Patrick also adds that Dimensions is used to evaluate performance of past conferences, by looking at publications output. He notes that “Dimensions is useful for this because it is an independent audit, which is important to SPIE because we know we can rely on the neutrality of information and data provided.”

Supporting the membership team

The SPIE membership team also uses Dimensions to review potential student chapters. When university programs apply to become a SPIE-affiliated student chapter, they need to meet many requirements to become a student chapter and receive support from SPIE. SPIE already knows how an institution is collaborating or interacting with their products and services through internal data. But Patrick adds that “Dimensions helps us to get a wider perspective in terms of publishing content, program strength and how much engagement the institute has within the subject areas and technical areas that are relevant to SPIE as a whole.”