

Thomson Scientific Takes a Fresh Look at Multiauthor Papers

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Was 2005 a Fluke for Multiauthor Papers or a Sign of What's to Come?

PHILADELPHIA and LONDON, Nov. 28 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Thomson Scientific, part of The Thomson Corporation (NYSE: TOC; TSX: TOC) and leading provider of information solutions to the worldwide research and business communities, today announced the results of a study assessing trends in multiauthor papers. In the November/December issue of Science Watch, Thomson Scientific analyzes data from its Thomson Science Indicators to evaluate the number of papers with more than 50, 100, 200 and 500 authors between the years 1993 to 2006. Science Watch uses unique citation data to provide rankings, interviews and reports on today's most significant science.

The numbers of scientific papers published with more than 50, 100, 200 and 500 authors plateaued from 2000 to 2003, then experienced a sharp increase in 2005. That year, each group reached its all-time highest levels. More than 750 papers with 50 or more authors were published in 2005, compared with a little more than 500 the previous year. Papers with more than 100 authors grew by more than 50 percent from 200 from just over 300 in 2003 to an impressive 475 in 2005. Interestingly, papers with 500 or more authors increased from 40 in 2003 to 131 in 2005. This group saw the largest jump of all -- a 200 percent increase.

While 2005 saw great leaps in the total number of multiauthor papers, most of the totals for the assorted groupings of multiauthor papers showed a decline during 2006 -- the most recent year of available data.

"In a few years we will be able to look back and see if the multiauthor papers reached a zenith in 2005 or if this is an ongoing trend," said Christopher King, editor of Science Watch. "It is important to note that we currently are able to identify some general trends. For example, the mean number of authors per Thomson Scientific indexed paper is continuing its upward trend reaching 3.8 in 2006. On the flipside, the percentage of single-authored papers continued its descent and is now at 24 percent of all published papers."

In order to convey the general makeup of recent multiauthor papers, Thomson Scientific divided the papers with more than 100 authors into two main groupings: physical sciences and biomedicine. The physical science group increased its volume by 144 in 2005 to total 393. (The majority of these papers were in the main field of physics.) Meanwhile, the number of biomedicine papers with 100 or more authors declined from 41 in 2004 to 19 in 2006.

This Science Watch study also highlights individual papers that had the highest number of authors. In 1987, a paper with 200 authors took the prize, and each year has seen the winning number increase. In 2000, the most-multiauthored paper had 918 contributors. The paper taking top honors in 2006 had 2,512 authors.

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NOTE: For information on subscribing to Science Watch, contact Christopher King, tel: +1 215.823.5341

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