

# Scientometrics Pioneer Dr. Eugene Garfield Passes Away

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Dr. Eugene Garfield started out as a chemist before learning that people were being employed in the field of literature searching. At the time, researchers were not overly concerned with the bibliometrics around their work. Dr. Garfield's foray into scientometrics started in 1951 when he started working at Johns Hopkins University on the Welch Medical Indexing Project. The project focused on identifying problems in the process of retrieving medical information and using new methods to index the biomedical literature. In this process, Dr. Garfield would gain exposure to ideas and methods which would help him pioneer advances in information science and science communication.

In 1955, he [published a paper](#) in *Science* entitled, "Citation indexes for science". This paper would later lead him to work on the development of a Genetics Citation Index. He would eventually start the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) which would regularly publish the Science Citation Index (SCI). The SCI was [initially published in 1964](#) and would go on to become the industry standard, accessible today via the [Web of Science](#). It contained bibliographic and citation data from some of the most influential journals of the day. The index was created to aid with information retrieval but it also allowed for the evaluation of the impact of a piece of research. The index allowed users to see how frequently a paper had been cited by others, an indication of its value to the research community.

Dr. Garfield and Irving Sher [worked together](#) to create the journal impact factor. This was an idea he first mentioned in 1955. In 1972, [he published](#) “Citation analysis as a tool in journal evaluation” in *Science*. This article outlined the rationale and methodology for creating impact factors. Impact factors were used at ISI to determine which journals should be included in SCI but Dr. Garfield [cautioned against their inappropriate use](#). He was not in favor of using impact factor as a shortcut to determine the quality of a publication, researcher, or institution.

Dr. Garfield also founded *The Scientist* which he envisioned as a daily newspaper for scientific researchers. He was of the opinion that the field of science needed an engaging publication that didn't feature original research and could discuss policy. Ivan Oransky, who currently serves as the global editorial director of *MedPage Today* and who was an editor at *The Scientist* between 2002 and 2008, fondly remembers Dr. Garfield and recalls the fact that Dr. Garfield required the participants in editorial meetings to have done their research. He was also committed to ensuring that his critiques were helpful and constructive.

While his contributions to scientometrics are undeniable, Dr. Garfield also left his mark on those he worked with. The Association for Information Science and Technology described him as a generous and dignified man who would often mentor others. His wife, Meher Garfield, said he thought of his employees as an extended family and never lost his humility. He was also responsible for training many of the female leaders in publishing today. It is therefore not surprising that tributes to Dr. Garfield and condolences for his family are pouring in from around the globe. He has left his mark and will be truly missed.

## Cite this article

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