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In memoriam Judit Bar-Ilan

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We are deeply saddened by the news of Judit Bar-Ilan's passing. Judit was a dedicated member of the editorial board of Quantitative Science Studies (QSS). She became a member of the board of Journal of Informetrics (JOI) when this journal was established in 2007. Recently, when QSS was founded, she joined us in moving to this journal. Over the past decade, Judit has been of great help by reviewing lots of manuscripts for JOI/QSS. We are grateful for her valuable service to our community. We send our heartfelt condolences to her family.

An obituary, written by QSS board member Mike Thelwall, can be found below.

Ludo Waltman, Editor-in-Chief QSS
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OBITUARY JUDIT BAR-ILAN (1958–2019)

Professor Judit Bar-Ilan passed away on July 16, 2019, after a lengthy battle with cancer. She will be sorely missed as a friend, mentor and colleague by many in the scientometrics community. She was a recognisable face at conferences, with her ready smile, zest for knowledge, and important contributions to current issues.

Judit was born in 1958 to parents who had managed to escape the Holocaust in Hungary during the Second World War. With a Mathematics and Computer Science BSc and a Mathematics MSc, she received her PhD in the mathematical computer science topic 'applications of one-way functions and randomization in security protocols' from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1990. After a postdoctoral position at the Weisman Institute, her academic career started at the

Hebrew University of Jerusalem School of Library and Information Studies, where she worked and became familiar with library methods and techniques and especially bibliometrics from 1991 until 2002. Reflecting this change, in 2002 she moved to the Department of Information Science at Bar-Ilan University ("no relation", she joked). She was appointed full professor in 2010 and was department head for a five-year stint. She was a conscientious supervisor for many PhD students for library and information science topics and Dr Hadas Shema for altmetrics.

Although Professor Bar-Ilan is probably best known for scientometrics, her early computer science was also influential, with the 1989 paper 'Non-cryptographic fault-tolerant computing in constant number of rounds of interaction' being highly cited and still attracting citations thirty years later. She continued to co-author many computer and information science papers about information retrieval with Professor Mark Levene and Dr Maayan Zhitomirsky-Geffet, including 'Categorical relevance judgment' in 2018. Her extensive information studies work often took the form of mentoring PhD students and collaborations with colleagues in her department. Example articles include 'Students' academic reading preferences: An exploratory study' and 'Politicians' use of Facebook during elections' in 2018/9, illustrating the breadth of her knowledge.

Perhaps because of her computer science expertise and contact with the scientometrics community, Professor Bar-Ilan was a pioneer in the emerging field of webometrics, writing some of the first articles evaluating web search engines for information science and scientometric applications. Her paper, 'Search engine results over time: A case study on search engine stability' from 1998 is one of the earliest in the field and demonstrates her continual drive to apply common sense and technological expertise to understand and check assumptions. At the time, there was a tendency to take search engine results at face value, which she clearly demonstrated was wrong. Her research often deployed innovative computer-based methods to obtain data from the internet, combining it with a deep analysis of the results. She continued to research in this area, helping to sustain it until it evolved into the field of altmetrics and became more focused on the derivation and assessment of non-scholarly impact indicators from the web for journal articles. One of her last articles was 'Differences between altmetric data sources – a case study' from 2019. Ironically, given her mathematical background, an important part of her legacy is that the field of webometrics/altmetrics is not theoretical or focused on the maths of the internet, but is practical and concerned with the problems of generating usable information.

Professor Bar-Ilan also researched other scientometric topics, including citation analysis. Her most highly cited paper in Google Scholar is 'Which h-index? - A comparison of WoS, Scopus and Google Scholar', and she had a long-term interest in the accuracy and usefulness of Google Scholar.

Aside from over 300 journal articles, book chapters and conference presentations, Professor Bar-Ilan was on over 50 conference programme committees, co-organised at least seven workshops and conferences, and was on at least ten journal editorial boards. Her most recent major initiative was the 2018 launch of the Journal of Altmetrics (free and open access) with Dr Gali Halevi, which she edited. Her work was recognised by numerous prizes, culminating with the Derek de Solla Price Memorial Medal in 2017 for her pioneering webometrics/altmetrics and scientometrics contributions and the Association for Information Science and Technology Research in Information Science Award in 2018 for her wider information science research. Her infectious enthusiasm, warmth, and intellectual power will be greatly missed.