

“Sounding the red alert to the world”



Floods in Rochester, Australia, in January. Photo. Diego Fedele/Getty Images.

March media coverage of climate change or global warming in newspapers around the globe went up 10% from February 2024. However, coverage in March was still down 23% from March 2023 levels. Of particular note, in March international wire services increased 13% from the previous month, while radio coverage dropped 3% from the

previous month. Our Media and Climate Change Observatory (MeCCO) team has detected that the first three months of global print coverage has seen a drop 20% compared to the first three months of 2023. Figure 1 shows trends in newspaper media coverage at the global scale – organized into seven geographical regions around the world – from January 2004 through March 2024.

2004–2024 World Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming

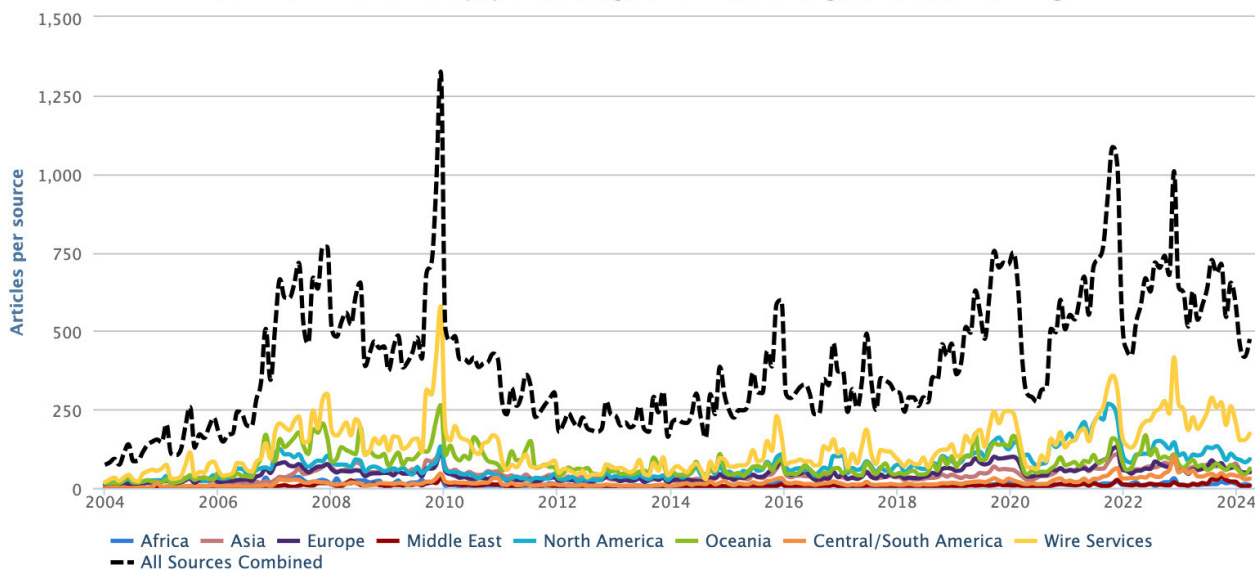


Figure 1. Newspaper media coverage of climate change or global warming in print sources in seven different regions around the world, from January 2004 through March 2024.

2004–2024 Asian Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming

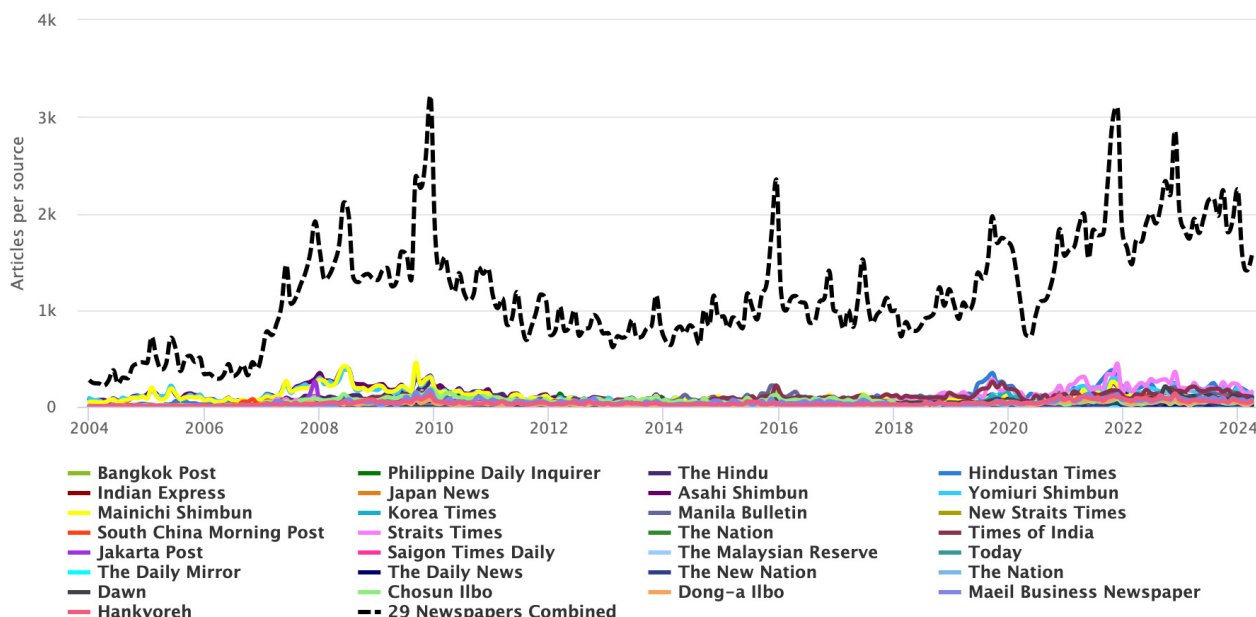


Figure 2. Newspaper coverage of climate change or global warming in Asian newspapers from January 2004 through March 2024.

At the regional level, March 2024 coverage increased in all regions from the previous month (except in Africa, which dropped 22%): the European Union (EU) rose 2%, Latin America shot up 9%, North America climbed 12%, Asia coverage increased 13% [see Figure 2], and Middle East and Oceania climate change news each surged 50%.

Moving to considerations of content, March 2024 media stories featured several *scientific* themes in stories during the month. To begin, the launch of a satellite to track methane pollution and leaks from oil and gas industry activities – called MethaneSAT – earned considerable media attention. For example, *Washington Post* correspondent [Nicolás Rivero](#) reported, “The global crackdown on methane emissions will get a boost from a watchdog satellite built to track and publicly reveal the biggest methane polluters in the oil and gas industry. The satellite launched March 4 on a SpaceX rocket and will begin transmitting data later this year. The satellite, designed by scientists from the nonprofit Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and Harvard University, will monitor areas that supply 80 percent of the world’s natural gas. Unlike other methane tracking satellites, it will cover a vast territory while also gathering data detailed

enough to spot the sources of emissions. “Soon, there will be no place to hide,” said Ben Cahill, a climate expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a national security think tank. “There’s going to be a lot of public data on methane emissions, so companies will have very strong incentives to figure out the problem and fix it.” Methane, a potent greenhouse gas released from farms, landfills and leaky fossil fuel equipment, accounts for nearly a third of global warming. Cutting methane emissions is one of the fastest ways to slow climate change, according to climate scientists, because even though it traps 80 times as much heat in the atmosphere as carbon dioxide, it dissipates after about 12 years. Most of the world’s oil and gas companies agreed to slash their methane emissions by more than 80 percent by 2030 at last year’s COP28 climate conference, and policymakers are working to hold them to that promise. U.S. regulators proposed steep fines on methane emissions in January and struck a deal with regulators in Europe, Japan, South Korea and Australia last year to monitor fossil fuel companies’ methane emissions. But so far, it’s been hard to track companies’ progress. There are thousands of oil and gas facilities around the world with countless pieces of equipment that can leak or malfunction and release methane,

which is odorless and invisible to the naked eye. Companies and regulators can measure some emissions by installing methane detectors or using planes or drones to fly sensors over a facility, but the data is incomplete and hard to compare between companies. Now, a new generation of satellites, led by MethaneSAT, promises to give a more complete picture of the oil and gas industry's global methane emissions".

As March unfolded, a report released from the World Meteorological Organization - called 'State of the Global Climate Report' - outlined impacts of a changing climate, and earned widespread media coverage. For example, [Guardian correspondent Ajit Naranjan reported](#), "The world has never been closer to breaching the 1.5C (2.7F) global heating limit, even if only temporarily, the United Nations' weather agency has warned. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) confirmed on Tuesday that 2023 was the hottest year on record by a clear margin. In a report on the climate, it found that records were "once again broken, and in some cases smashed" for key indicators such as greenhouse gas pollution, surface temperatures, ocean heat and acidification, sea level rise, Antarctic sea ice cover and glacier retreat. Andrea Celeste Saulo, secretary general of the WMO, said the organisation was now "sounding the red alert to the world". The report found temperatures near the surface of the earth were 1.45C higher last year than they were in the late 1800s, when people began to destroy nature at an industrial scale and burn large amounts of coal, oil and gas. The error margin of 0.12C in the temperature estimate is large enough that the earth may have already heated 1.5C. But this would not mean world leaders have broken the promise they made in Paris in 2015 to halt global heating to that level by the end of the century, scientists warn, because they measure global heating using a 30-year average rather than counting a spike in a single year. The report documented violent weather extremes - particularly heat - on every inhabited continent. Some of the weather events were made stronger or more likely by climate change, rapid attribution studies have shown".

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Aftermath of a wildfire caused by a deadly heatwave near the city of Santa Juana, Chile, in February 2023. Photo: Pablo Hidalgo/EPA.

Also in March 2024, there were several ongoing media stories relating to [ecological](#) and [meteorological](#) dimensions of climate change or global warming. At the beginning of the month, the European Union Copernicus Climate Change Service shared news that February 2024 was the hottest February in recorded history. This sparked news reporting. For example, [CNN journalist Laura Paddison reported](#), "Last month was the planet's hottest February on record, marking the ninth month in a row that global records tumbled, according to new data from Copernicus, the European Union's climate monitoring service. February was 1.77 degrees Celsius warmer than the average February in pre-industrial times, Copernicus found, and it capped off the hottest 12-month period in recorded history, at 1.56 degrees above pre-industrial levels. It's yet another grim climate

change milestone, as the long-term impacts of human-caused global warming are given a boost by El Niño, a natural climate fluctuation”.

Regionally, ecological and meteorological stories linking to climate change earned attention in March as well. For example, the heat that affected Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo was driven by climate change. [Folha de São Paulo published a story that noted](#), “A scientific study carried out by ClimaMeter, a platform of the Paris-Saclay University, evaluated the heat wave that hit part of Brazil from December 15 to 18. March and led to temperatures and thermal sensations reaching new records in cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The study concluded that heat waves similar to the one that occurred in March are 1°C warmer than those previously observed in the country, occurring even at the end of summer. In the assessment of researcher Tommaso Albert, one of the authors of the study, the recent heat wave highlights the profound impact of climate change in Brazil, with increased health risks and important economic implications. In the city of São Paulo, on Saturday, March 16, a temperature of 34.7°C was recorded, the highest recorded in the month in at least 81 years, since the Inmet (National Institute of Meteorology) began compiling the statistics, in 1943. This was the hottest day of 2024 in the capital of São Paulo. In Rio, the next day (March 17), the thermal sensation was record, with 62.3°C recorded at the Guaratiba meteorological station”.

Meanwhile, on the African continent, climate-related extremes garnered media attention. For example, [Associated Press correspondents Faray Mutsaka and Gerald Imray reported](#), “The drought in Zimbabwe, neighboring Zambia

“The drought in Zimbabwe, neighboring Zambia and Malawi has reached crisis levels. A year ago, much of this region was drenched by deadly tropical storms and floods. It is in the midst of a vicious weather cycle: too much rain, then not enough. It’s a story of the climate extremes that scientists say are becoming more frequent and more damaging, especially for the world’s most vulnerable people.”



James Tshuma, a farmer in Mangwe district in southwestern Zimbabwe, stands in the middle of his dried up crop field amid a drought, in Zimbabwe, March, 22, 2024. Photo: Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi/AP.

and Malawi has reached crisis levels. Zambia and Malawi have declared national disasters. Zimbabwe could be on the brink of doing the same. The drought has reached Botswana and Angola to the west, and Mozambique and Madagascar to the east. A year ago, much of this region was drenched by deadly tropical storms and floods. It is in the midst of a vicious weather cycle: too much rain, then not enough. It’s a story of the climate extremes that scientists say are becoming more frequent and more damaging, especially for the world’s most vulnerable people”.

In Europe, episodes of severe droughts impacted the region, and earned media

attention. For example, according to an [editorial in *La Vanguardia*](#), “in Catalonia, the drought is wreaking havoc in the Penedès. There is a danger that a third of the 32,000 hectares of vineyards in the Alt and Baix Penedès will not sprout this year, or that, if they do it, they do not produce production. Last year some winegrowers already lost a large part of their production and now it will be much worse. It was feared that climate change could be a threat to the vineyards of these regions. But everything has been brought forward with a lack of water and unprecedented high temperatures. The recent rains have been clearly insufficient.”

Media coverage in March 2024 also featured related and ongoing [cultural](#)-themed stories relating to climate change or global warming as well. To illustrate, there was reporting on how heat waves across several regions of the planet impacted everyday lives and livelihoods. For example, [Associated Press correspondent Deng Machol reported from Sudan](#), noting, “South Sudan is closing all schools starting Monday in preparation for an extreme heat wave expected to last two weeks. The health and education ministries advised parents to keep all children indoors as temperatures are expected to soar to 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit). They warned that any school found open during the warning period would have its registration withdrawn, but the statement issued late Saturday didn’t specify how long schools would remain shuttered. The ministries said they “will continue to monitor the situation and inform the public accordingly.” Resident Peter Garang, who lives in the capital, Juba, welcomed the decision. He said “schools should be connected to the electricity grid” to enable the installation of air conditioners. South Sudan, one of the world’s youngest nations, is particularly vulnerable to climate change with heat waves common but rarely exceeding 40 C (104 F). Civil conflict has plagued the east African country which also suffered from drought and flooding, making living conditions difficult for residents. The World Food Program in its latest country brief said South Sudan “continues to face a dire humanitarian crisis” due to violence, economic instability, climate

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People stand by their houses in Juba, South Sudan. Photo: Gregorio Borgia/AP.

change and an influx of people fleeing the conflict in neighboring Sudan. It also stated that 818,000 vulnerable people were given food and cash-based transfers in January”.

Meanwhile, [Associated Press journalist Sibi Arasu reported from India](#), “Bhavani Mani Muthuvel and her family of nine have around five 20-liter (5-gallon) buckets worth of water for the week for cooking, cleaning and household chores. “From taking showers to using toilets and washing clothes, we are taking turns to do everything,” she said. It’s the only water they can afford. A resident of Ambedkar Nagar, a low-income settlement in the shadows of the lavish headquarters of multiple global software companies in Bengaluru’s Whitefield neighborhood, Muthuvel is normally reliant on piped water, sourced from groundwater. But it’s drying up. She said it’s the worst water crisis

she has experienced in her 40 years in the neighborhood. Bengaluru in southern India is witnessing an unusually hot February and March, and in the last few years, it has received little rainfall in part due to human-caused climate change. Water levels are running desperately low, particularly in poorer areas, resulting in sky-high costs for water and a quickly dwindling supply”.

Meanwhile, in Europe there were stories of increasing climate-related risks for everyday citizens of the region. For example, [Guardian correspondent Ajit Niranjan reported](#), “Europe is not prepared for the rapidly growing climate risks it faces, the European Environment Agency (EEA) has said in its first risk assessment. From wildfires burning down homes to violent weather straining public finances, the report says more action is needed to address half of the 36 significant climate risks with potentially severe consequences that it identifies for Europe. Five more risks need urgent action, the report says. “Our new analysis shows that Europe faces urgent climate risks that are growing faster than our societal preparedness,” said Leena Ylä-Mononen, the EEA’s executive director. The report looks at how severe the climate threats are and how well prepared Europe is to deal with them. It says the most pressing risks - which are growing worse as fossil fuel pollution heats the planet - are heat stress, flash floods and river floods, the health of coastal and marine ecosystems, and the need for solidarity funds to recover from disasters. When the researchers reassessed six of the risks for southern Europe, which they described as a “hotspot” region, they found urgent action was also needed to keep crops safe and to protect people, buildings and nature from wildfires”. As a second example, [Associated Press journalists Carlos Mureithi and Dana Beltaji wrote](#), “Europe

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Residents help firefighters try to extinguish a wildfire burning near Athens, in July 2023. Photo: Miloš Bičanski/Getty Images.

is facing growing climate risks and is unprepared for them, the European Environment Agency said in its first-ever risk assessment for the bloc...The agency said Europe is prone to more frequent and more punishing weather extremes – including increasing wildfires, drought, more unusual rainfall patterns and flooding – and it needs to immediately address them in order to protect its energy, food security, water and health. These climate risks “are growing faster than our societal preparedness,” Leena Ylä-Mononen, the EEA’s executive director, said in a statement. The report identified 36 major climate risks for the continent, such as threats to ecosystems, economies, health and food systems, and found that more than half demand greater action now. It classified eight as needing

urgent attention – like conserving ecosystems, protecting people against heat, protecting people and infrastructure from floods and wildfires, and securing relief funds for disasters”.

Last, many *political* and *economic*-themed media stories about climate change or global warming were evident in March 2024 coverage. For instance, International Energy Agency statements regarding the need for greater clean energy investments and larger emissions cuts grabbed media attention. For example, *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Giulia Petroni wrote, “Global carbon-dioxide emissions reached a record high last year as extreme droughts hampered hydroelectric production across large economies, leading to a substantial increase in fossil fuel use, according to the International Energy Agency. Energy-related CO2 emissions rose by 410 million metric tons, or 1.1% year-on-year, reaching 37.4 billion tons in 2023, the Paris-based organization said Friday in its latest report. The use of fossil fuels to replace hydropower accounted for over 40% of the increase. In India and China, heavy reliance on coal and higher electricity demand following the postpandemic economic recovery pushed emissions significantly higher, offsetting reductions in other economies. Emissions rose more than 7% on year in India, where a weaker monsoon season drove hydropower output lower. In China, emissions from energy combustion rose by 5.2% to 12.6 billion tons—by far the largest on a global scale despite the country’s leading position in the deployment of clean-energy technology. The agency’s report refers to emissions from all uses of fossil fuels for energy purposes and industrial processes. In advanced economies instead, emissions fell 4.5% to a 50-year low last year, supported

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Smoke stacks in Liaoning province, China. Photo: Qilai Shen/Bloomberg News.

by a stronger deployment of renewables and energy-efficiency measures, but also weaker industrial production and milder weather in some regions resulting in lower energy demand. According to the agency, electricity generation from renewable sources and nuclear power in those economies reached 50% of total generation. Renewables alone accounted for 34% of electricity output, while the share of coal fell to a historic low of 17%. In the European Union, emissions from energy combustion fell by almost 9% in 2023 driven by a surge in renewables generation and drop in both coal and gas generation, despite economic growth of around 0.7%. In the U.S., emissions fell 4.1% on higher electricity generation from renewables and gas rather than coal, in spite of economic growth of 2.5%. Still, the deployment of clean-

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Figure 3. Examples of newspaper front pages with climate change stories in March 2024.

energy sources remains overly concentrated in advanced economies and China, the IEA said, calling for greater international efforts to increase investment and deployment in emerging and developing economies. Overall, the pace of global emissions growth slowed down in 2023, supported by the expansion of renewable energy and electric vehicles, the IEA said. In 2022, energy-related CO2 emissions rose by 1.3%".

In the US, there was abundant media coverage in late March about the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) release of transportation-related rules to reduce emissions from vehicles. For example, *Washington Post* journalist Maxine

Joselow wrote, "Rayan Makarem worries about the air that his 2-year-old daughter breathes. More than 100 diesel-powered trucks rumble through their neighborhood every half an hour, spewing harmful pollutants linked to asthma and other health conditions. The pollution in their community – and others like it nationwide – will be curbed under a climate change rule the Environmental Protection Agency finalized Friday. The rule will require manufacturers to slash emissions of greenhouse gases from new trucks, delivery vans and buses. Those limits, in turn, will reduce deadly particulate matter and lung-damaging nitrogen dioxide from such vehicles...The EPA rule follows strict emissions limits for gas-powered cars aimed at

accelerating the nation's halting transition to electric vehicles. It marks the first time in more than two decades that the federal government has cracked down on pollution from diesel trucks. The rule doesn't go as far as Makarem and other environmental justice advocates would like. The Moving Forward Network had urged the EPA to require all new trucks to be zero-emission by 2035. Yet EPA officials said the rule will not mandate the adoption of a particular zero-emission technology. Rather, it will require manufacturers to reduce emissions by choosing from several cleaner technologies, including electric trucks, hybrid trucks and hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles. Still, the rule stands to benefit poor, Black and Latino communities that are disproportionately exposed to diesel exhaust from highways, ports and sprawling distribution centers. These communities suffer higher rates of asthma, heart disease and premature deaths from air pollution". Elsewhere, *New York Times* correspondents Coral Davenport and Jack Ewing reported, "The Biden administration on Friday announced a regulation designed to turbocharge sales of electric or other zero-emission heavy vehicles, from school buses to cement mixers, as part of its multifront attack on global warming. The Environmental Protection Agency projects the new rule could mean that 25 percent of new long-haul trucks, the heaviest on the road, and 40 percent of medium-size trucks, like box trucks and landscaping vehicles, could be nonpolluting by 2032. Today, fewer than 2 percent of new heavy trucks sold in the United States fit that bill. The regulation would apply to more than 100 types of vehicles including tractor-trailers, ambulances, R.V.s,

garbage trucks and moving vans. The rule does not mandate the sales of electric trucks or any other type of zero or low-emission truck. Rather, it increasingly limits the amount of pollution allowed from trucks across a manufacturer's product line over time, starting in model year 2027. It would be up to the manufacturer to decide how to comply. Options could include using technologies like hybrids or hydrogen fuel cells or sharply increasing the fuel efficiency of the conventional trucks. The truck regulation follows another rule made final last week that is designed to ensure that the majority of new passenger cars and light trucks sold in the United States are all-electric or hybrids by 2032, up from just 7.6 percent last year. Together, the car and truck rules are intended to slash carbon dioxide pollution from transportation, the nation's largest source of the fossil fuel emissions that are driving climate change and that helped to make 2023 the hottest year in recorded history. Electric vehicles are central to President Biden's strategy to confront global warming, which calls for cutting the nation's emissions in half by the end of this decade".

Our Media and Climate Change Observatory (MeCCO) team continues to provide three international and seven ongoing regional assessments of trends in coverage, along with 16 country-level appraisals and 25 open-source datasets each month. Visit our website for open-source datasets and downloadable visuals.

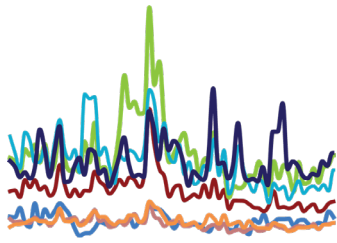
~ report prepared by Max Boykoff, Rogelio Fernández-Reyes, Ami Nacu-Schmidt and Olivia Pearman



Thank you for your ongoing interest in the work we do through MeCCO. We remain committed to our work monitoring media coverage of these intersecting dimensions and themes associated with climate change.

**Our ongoing work is dependent on financial support
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MeCCO

Media and Climate Change Observatory

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MeCCO monitors 131 sources (across newspapers, radio and TV) in 59 countries in seven different regions around the world. MeCCO assembles the data by accessing archives through through Factiva, Infomedia, ProQuest, Nifty and NexisUni databases for our work across our various institutions. These sources are selected through a decision processes involving weighting of three main factors:



Geographical Diversity

favoring a greater geographical range



Circulation

favoring higher circulating publications



Reliable Access to Archives Over Time

favoring those accessible consistently for longer periods of time