

A "Briefer" History of Farm Management

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Over the last several decades, there has been essentially one outlet for applied farm management research. Namely, the [Journal of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers](#) (ASFMRA) has attracted research with practical applications. The [ASFMRA](#) is an association of rural property professionals who appreciate the practicality of articles published in their journal as opposed to the methodologically rigorous manuscripts considered by the majority of the agricultural economics outlets.

About a year ago, it occurred to me that it would be interesting to examine what trends in farm management literature, i.e. in the Journal of the ASFMRA, could be detected. One of the convenient things for this research project was the natural experiment that the Journal had created: selecting one published article each year as the recipient of the Gold Quill award aka Outstanding Article of the Year. Out of nearly two dozen articles each year, the Gold Quill has been selected based on a vote of the editorial board members that sets it apart from the others.

Several logical research questions and hypotheses were stated, with these three being at the top of the list:

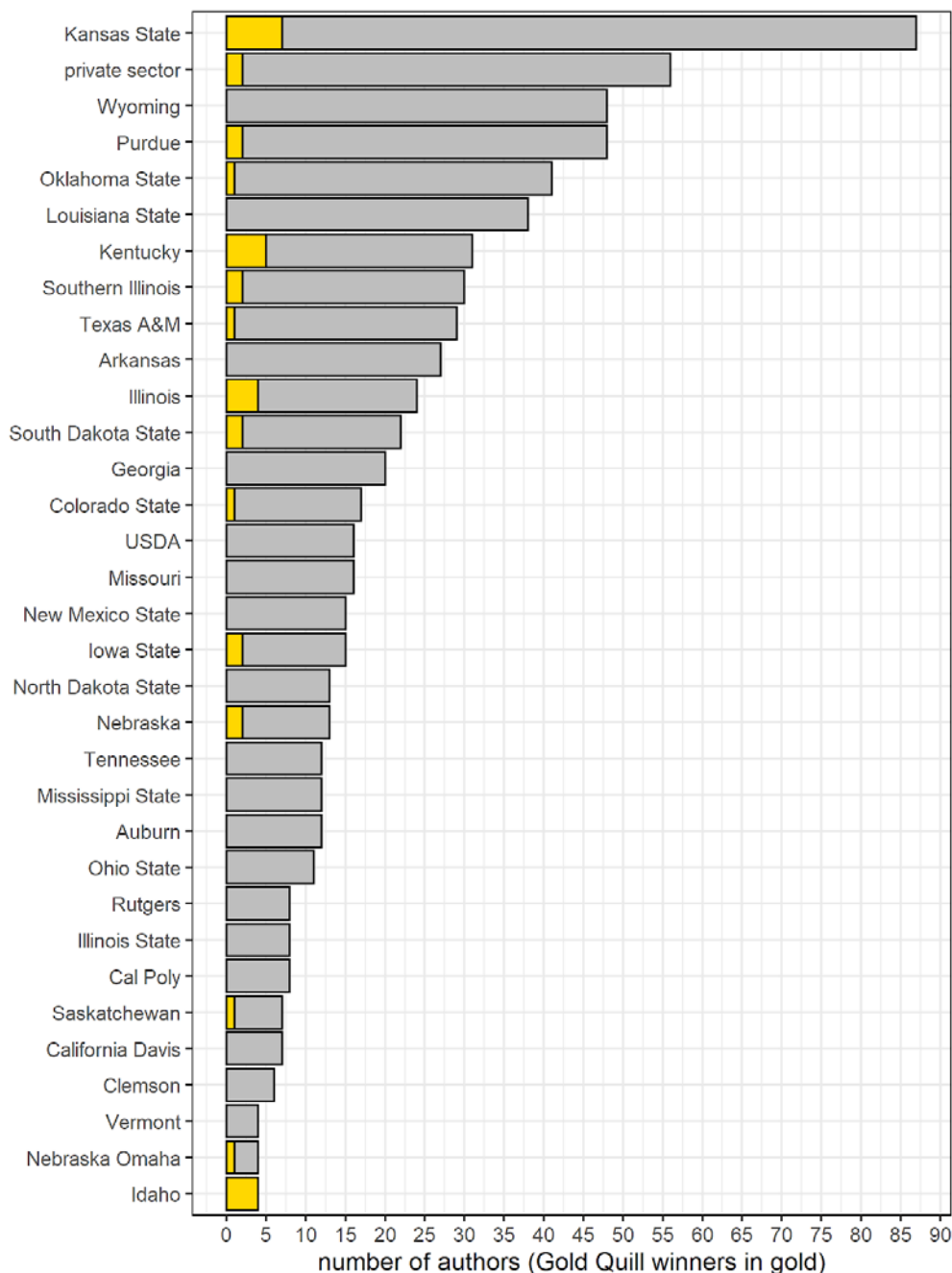
1. What words were most common in titles across all articles and by Gold Quill winners?
2. What academic institutions contributed articles and received the most Gold Quill awards?
3. Do certain subtopics attract more Gold Quill awards?

After some much-needed assistance by an undergraduate student and my trusty secretary, the master database was completed with pertinent information from publicly available articles. Initially, we only obtained access to articles published from 2004 to 2018 (presented here in the "briefer" version); however, older articles are being coded but at a much slower rate than the most recent 15 years (additional years presented in the "brief" version submitted for peer review).

Based on the stated hypothesis, graphs were created to compare Gold Quill winners from the remaining population of published articles. A draft manuscript entitled "A Brief History of Farm Management" has been penned that is less brief than this substantially "briefer" blog. The manuscript has been submitted to the Journal of the ASFMRA for consideration in their 2020 issue.

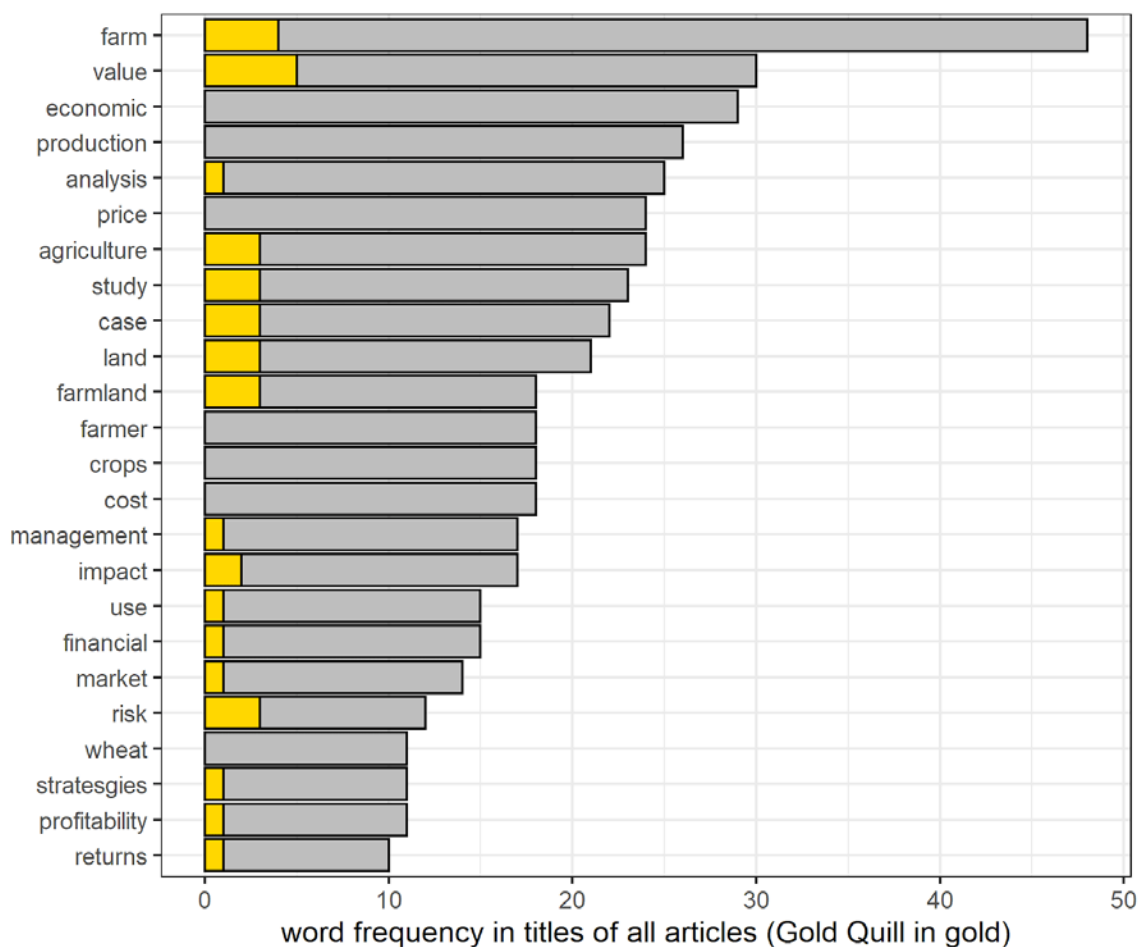
My current institutional affiliation, Kansas State University, has had more articles published than any other university. The reader should keep in mind that the affiliation was coded as the institution listed in the article when it was published. For instance, I published two articles while on faculty at the University of Arkansas. Those articles were counted as Arkansas and not as Kansas State.





It was no surprise that the most common word used in the title of the articles was “farm”. Coming in at a distant second was “value” followed by “economic”, “production”, “analysis”, and “price. The commonly used words “economic”, “production”, and “price” did not appear in the titles of articles selected for the Gold Quill award during this time period. The most notable word was likely “risk” which was associated with Gold Quill awards proportionately more often than it appeared in titles of all articles. As a visual, the most commonly used words in the titles were displayed as a wordle toward the beginning of this blog post.





As an extra piece to accompany the submitted manuscript, I decided to post the data and R script written to create the graphs on [Github](#). My hope is that others will take a look at the R script and learn something about writing code for applied research. I also welcome other researchers to build upon the data and to conduct advanced analyses if they see fit. I'm hoping to learn something from sharing these data and code as well. If any errors are found in the data or code, I would appreciate a discrete heads up via email!

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