ResearchGate vs. the Institutional Repository: Competition or Complement?

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Lightning talk: 10 minutes max!

[Andrée’s part] PROBLEM

March 2013: University of Rhode Island passed a Harvard-style, permissions-based OA Policy.

Lack of staffing and technical support at URI:
- Our OA policy workflow is manual
- Relies upon active faculty participation
  - search alerts across a number of databases to identify URI-authored articles
  - Email authors to ask for accepted manuscripts
  - Deposit article on authors’ behalf

Compliance rate:
- 13-14% of faculty (low compared to other schools)

Yet, we saw that ResearchGate and Academia.edu growing;
Many URI faculty authors posting their full-texts (often illegally)

We asked ourselves: “What, are URI faculty sitting around all weekend in their bunny slippers, uploading their articles to ResearchGate and Academia.edu? Yet they can’t find the time to comply with our OA Policy?”

So we wanted to see if this was really the case, and, if so, why.
STUDY METHODOLOGY & RESULTS

Population study and survey.

Briefly:

Population study

Method:
Examined OA Policy and ResearchGate participation of all full-time URI faculty with research expectation (558 people).

Chose RG because most popular ASN.

Results:
- 47% of URI faculty have RG profiles
- 34% had contributed full-texts

[SLIDE 3]
Comparison with OA Policy (articles ≥ 2013):
- 20.3% of URI faculty - full-text of articles ≥2013 to RG
- 15.4% compliance with OA policy

[SLIDE 4]
But most faculty did neither:
- 9% OA policy only
- 14% RG only
- 6% both
- 71% neither

Discussion / Conclusion:
- [SLIDE 3] Of faculty who share their full-texts, RG beat OAP by only 5%
- Real difference is probably less b/c our OAP compliance numbers don’t include Gold OA articles
- And, b/c RG known to harvest full-texts w/out authors’ knowledge.
- So RG not the threat we thought it was.
Biggest issue is large number of faculty who don’t share work (at least not through OAP or RG)

Survey

Method:

- Goals:
  - Researchers’ motivations for participating in OAP and RG
  - Their understanding of the differences between two services
- To all full-time URI faculty (19% response rate) [710 valid emails of 728]

Results -- highlights:

- **Primary motivations + benefits** for OAP & RG
  - “Sharing work more broadly”
  - “Increasing visibility and impact of work”
- But, RG scores higher on both; belief that RG has wider audience
  - Because of social aspects of RG? Constant RG emails / notifications?
  - Both well-indexed by Google
  - Friction higher when downloading from RG

- **[SLIDE 6]** Huge theme in responses = preference for sharing final published version (ResearchGate “accepts final PDF versions”) and **dislike for sharing manuscripts** through IR
  - Preference for final published version of record
  - Not wanting multiple versions of same work to be available
  - Not wanting version with potential errors and typos to be made publicly available
  - Manuscript often messy => potential misunderstandings by readers
  - Manuscript version does not share the pagination of the final version => difficult to cite
  - Not having ready access to accepted manuscript version, especially when not corresponding author
  - Time and effort to reassemble manuscript, e.g. reintegrating figures and tables into text
- **[SLIDE 7] Copyright confusion:** Survey comments reveal belief that legality of posting articles depends on publisher policy and article version:
  - Ignorance of how permissions-based policies work
  - Yet 81.8% of respondents reported posting publisher PDF on RG (which most publishers do not allow)

- **[SLIDE 8] Statistical analysis:** Our co-authors created two multiple linear regression models of the survey results. Most significant finding:
  - Faculty who had provided articles to RG were more likely by 17% to have participated in the OAP than faculty who had not provided articles to RG (5% level of significance)
  - Faculty who had participated in the OAP were more likely by 15.5% to have contributed full-texts to RG (5% level of significance)
  - Conclusion - Positive correlation shows URI faculty are not using RG to the exclusion of the IR.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- **[SLIDE 9] URI faculty who posted articles to RG more likely to have complied with OA Policy, not less.**
- Only a minority of faculty are sharing their work through either service.
  - => Academic networks not a threat to OA.
  - => We need to recruit more faculty to share their work in general.

- **[SLIDE 10] Strong preference for sharing publisher PDF; aversion to sharing author manuscript versions.**
  - => Education and outreach to authors around options for legally sharing articles is needed.
  - => Green OA through IRs will remain an activity of a minority of authors?
  - => Supports efforts to hasten the transition to Gold OA publishing system.