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ResearchGate vs. the Institutional Repository: Competition or Complement?

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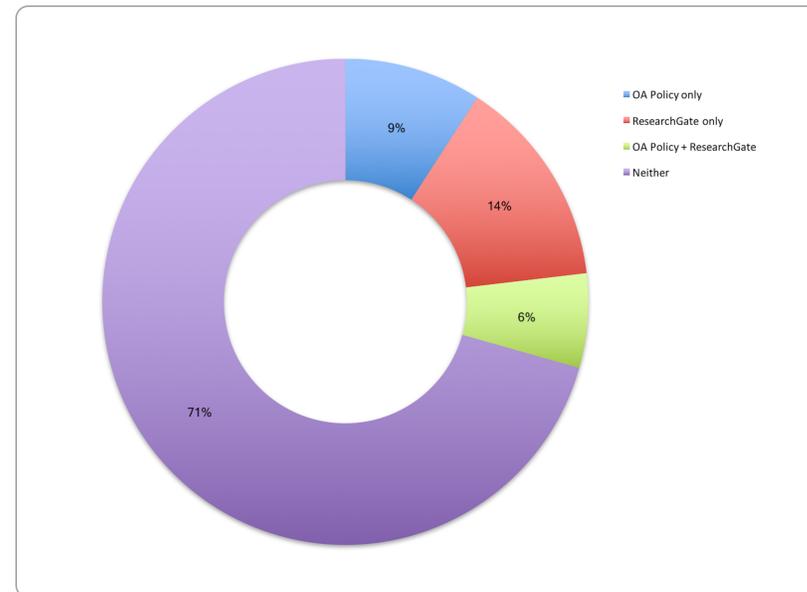
Institutional Repositories and Academic Social Networks: Competition or Complement?

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Summary: The popularity of academic social networks like ResearchGate and Academia.edu indicates that scholars want to share their work, yet for universities with Open Access (OA) policies, these sites may be competing with institutional repositories for content. Our study seeks to reveal researcher practices, attitudes, and motivations around uploading their work to ResearchGate and complying with an institutional Open Access Policy. We conducted a population study to examine the participation by 558 full-time University of Rhode Island faculty members in the OA Policy and ResearchGate, followed by a survey of 728 full-time URI faculty members about their participation in the two services.

Finding 1: While a slightly greater percentage of faculty have shared articles through ResearchGate than through the OA Policy, only a minority of faculty (29%) are participating in either ResearchGate, the OA Policy, or both. Contrary to expectations, faculty who participate in ResearchGate are actually more likely to share their articles via the Open Access Policy than faculty who do not participate in ResearchGate, and vice versa. This suggests librarians should not be overly concerned about academic social networking sites competing with OA policies; if anything, faculty who participate in academic social networking sites may be more likely to share their work in general.

Finding 2: Faculty reported a strong aversion to sharing the author manuscript version of their articles. This was the most significant barrier to participating in the OA Policy. This finding, if generalizable, should inform current discussions among OA advocates about the respective roles going forward of Green OA achieved through depositing author manuscripts in institutional repositories and Gold OA achieved at the point of publication.



1. Faculty participation in URI Open Access Policy and ResearchGate (n=558)

	Open Access Policy	ResearchGate
Participation is too time consuming	23.5%	7.3%
I'm concerned that publishers might retaliate and not publish my article or my future articles	10.3%	7.3%
I'm concerned about the effects of Open Access on publishers	11.8%	12.7%
I don't like having my manuscript version available instead of the final published PDF	42.7%	n/a
I'm concerned my work will be plagiarized or misused	8.8%	9.1%
Participation is more difficult when I'm not the lead author	16.2%	14.6%
I'm concerned about the legality of participating	8.8%	30.9%
Other (please specify)	32.4%	41.8%

2. Concerns about participating in the OA Policy (n=68) and having articles available in ResearchGate (n=55)

	Open Access Policy	ResearchGate
Legal under copyright law	50.4%	21.4%
Violates the copyright of the publisher	8.4%	17.5%
Not sure	41.2%	61.1%

3. Opinion of legality of complying with the OA Policy (n=131) and posting article full-texts on ResearchGate (n=126)

Finding 3: Our survey revealed a range of misunderstandings about the institutional repository (IR), OA policies, and copyright. For example, many respondents believe that the legality of posting one's articles in both the IR and ResearchGate depends on publisher policy and the version of the article posted. In fact, permissions-based OA policies make it legal to post author manuscripts in the IR regardless of publisher policies, and many subscription-access journals prohibit depositing any version of an article to commercial sites like ResearchGate. These misunderstandings indicate a need for librarians to conduct greater education and outreach to faculty around their options for legally sharing published articles.

Conclusion: Librarians should not view academic social networks as a threat to Open Access. Authors' strong preference for sharing the final, published version of their articles provides support for calls to hasten the transition to a Gold OA publishing system. Misunderstandings about the OA Policy and copyright indicate a need for librarians to conduct greater education and outreach to authors about options for legally sharing articles.

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