A Comparison of Research Sharing Tools: The Institutional Repository vs. Academic Social Networking Among University of Rhode Island Faculty

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“Tools for Modern Research Practice”
Project Briefing
CNI Fall 2016 Membership Meeting
Washington, D.C.
December 12, 2016
University of Rhode Island

Rhode Island’s public research university

Land-grant and sea-grant institution

Research strengths (per Web of Science):

- Engineering
- Environmental sciences
- Chemistry
- Oceanography
- Marine freshwater biology
- Pharmacology
- Psychology
URI Open Access Policy

Passed by unanimous vote of Faculty Senate in March 2013

Permissions-based policy (Harvard-style)

Applies to all faculty

Supported by manual workflow that relies on active faculty participation

Search alerts notify library staff of new articles by URI authors

Staff e-mail authors for manuscripts; deposit on authors’ behalf
Our study

Population study of full-time URI faculty (September 2016)

- Which faculty members have uploaded full-text articles to ResearchGate?
- Which faculty members have contributed articles to the URI OA Policy?

Web-based survey of full-time URI faculty (October 2016)

- Familiarity with both the OA Policy and ResearchGate
- Level of participation in both the OA Policy and ResearchGate
- Motivations, benefits, concerns
- If not participated in OA Policy or ResearchGate, why?
- Understanding of legality of sharing articles
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Discipline</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>OAP Articles (≥ 2013)</th>
<th>RG full-text articles uploaded by author (total)</th>
<th>RG full-text articles uploaded by author (≥ 2013)</th>
<th>RG profile?</th>
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<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Population study results

- 47% of URI full-time faculty have profiles on ResearchGate.
- Of these profiles, 73% have full-text articles provided by author.

BUT FOR COMPARISON…

- **ResearchGate**: # of faculty who provided full-texts of articles published *after March 2013*
  vs.

- **Open Access Policy**: # of faculty who provided articles in compliance with policy
% of URI faculty contributing full-texts (articles published after March 2013) to ResearchGate and the Open Access Policy

- **ResearchGate (RG):** 20.3%
- **Open Access Policy (OAP):** 15.4%
Faculty contributing to ResearchGate (articles published after March 2013) and the Open Access Policy

- 70.6% Neither
- 14% ResearchGate only
- 6.3% ResearchGate + OA Policy
- 9.1% OA Policy only
Faculty contributing to ResearchGate (articles published after March 2013) and the Open Access Policy, by broad discipline

- **STEM**
  - RG: 27.6%
  - OAP: 16.1%

- **Social sciences**
  - RG: 15.0%
  - OAP: 18.9%

- **Arts & humanities**
  - RG: 2.7%
  - OAP: 4.1%
Faculty contributing to ResearchGate (articles published after March 2013) and the Open Access Policy, by rank

- Full professor: RG 74.3%, OAP 54.1%
- Associate professor: RG 16.7%, OAP 11.7%
- Assistant professor: RG 9.2%, OAP 8.2%
Survey results: Demographics

- 23 multiple-choice questions through SurveyMonkey
- Sent successfully to 710 full-time URI faculty (all ranks)
- 135 responses = **19% response rate**
- Responses by College: relative to distribution of faculty,
  - Arts & Sciences under-represented by 11%
  - College of the Environment & Life Sciences over-represented by 12%
- Responses by Rank
  - Full professors over-represented by ~15%
  - Assistant Professors and Lecturers under-represented
Q1 The University of Rhode Island adopted an Open Access Policy in March 2013. How familiar are you with this Policy?

Answered: 135  Skipped: 0
Survey results: Understanding of OA Policy

More objective assessment from True/False questions:

● 31% “Not Sure” which statements described policy

● Some good news:
  ○ Majority of respondents understand the policy applies to URI faculty, covers journal articles, is not under the purview of the administration, and that authors may opt out.

● Some bad news:
  ○ A significant minority think that the policy applies to URI grad students (i.e. ETDs)
Survey results: Familiarity with ResearchGate

Q11 How familiar are you with the website ResearchGate?

Answered: 131  Skipped: 4

- **Very familiar**
- **Familiar**
- **Neutral**
- **Unfamiliar**
- **Very unfamiliar**
Survey results: Understanding of ResearchGate

Q12 Which of the following statements describe ResearchGate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ResearchGate is a social networking site for scientists and researchers</td>
<td>49.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ResearchGate allows researchers to share their research, ask and answer questions, and find collaborators</td>
<td>68.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ResearchGate is run by a non-profit organization</td>
<td>7.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ResearchGate provides Open Access to research</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ResearchGate only allows the sharing of journal articles (not books, data, etc.)</td>
<td>8.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is always legal to share your journal articles on ResearchGate</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not necessary to consult journal policies before uploading articles</td>
<td>2.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>36.64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 131
Survey results: Rates of participation

Q3 Have you participated in the Open Access Policy by submitting your journal articles for inclusion in DigitalCommons@URI?

Answered: 135  Skipped: 0

Q13 Have you provided the full text of your journal articles to ResearchGate?

Answered: 131  Skipped: 4
Survey results: Motivations for participating

Q4 What motivated you to participate?
Answered: 68  Skipped: 67

- Ease of participation
- Connecting with others...
- Sharing my work more...
- Increasing the visibility of...
- Tracking statistics of...
- Archiving my work for the...
- Other (please specify)

Q14 What motivated you to provide your articles to ResearchGate?
Answered: 55  Skipped: 80

- Ease of participation
- Connecting with others...
- Sharing my work more...
- Increasing the visibility of...
- Tracking statistics of...
- Other (please specify)
Survey results: Motivations for participating

**OA Policy**

- Many commented that they were complying with requirements or participated because they were asked (“pressure to do so”; “thought i had to”; “urged to by library staff”; “i received an email from URI library asking for the articles”)
- A couple idealists (“social justice”, “supporting open access”)

**ResearchGate**

- Being asked was also a motivation for RG participation (“I was asked to”; “Requests for articles”)

Survey results: Concerns and barriers to participation

**OA Policy takeaways:**

- Biggest concern: the **author manuscript version**
- People also cited **lack of time** and **lack of awareness** as both barriers and concerns
- A fair number also said “no concerns”

**ResearchGate takeaways**

- Many had “no concerns”
- 31% cited **concern about the legality of participating**
- Comments: “don’t trust” or not into social media; several not having time / “haven’t gotten around to it”
Survey results: Legality of participation

Q10 What is your opinion of the legality of complying with the URI Open Access Policy by submitting your articles to DigitalCommons@URI?

- Legal under copyright law: 50%
- Violates the copyright of...: 20%
- Not sure: 30%

Answered: 131  Skipped: 4

Q19 What is your opinion of the legality of researchers posting the full text of their journal articles on ResearchGate?

- Legal under copyright law: 40%
- Violates the copyright of...: 30%
- Not sure: 30%

Answered: 126  Skipped: 9
“If you have contributed to ResearchGate but have not participated in the URI Open Access Policy, why?”

- Many cite **ease of participation** and that ResearchGate accepts the **final published version**
- Common misunderstanding: ResearchGate has a **broader audience** than IR
  - False: OA Policy articles reach entire internet; ResearchGate articles are in Google Scholar but can only be downloaded by those logged in to their RG account
Main takeaways so far…

- Only a minority of faculty share articles through ResearchGate and/or OA Policy. Sharing is done disproportionately by full professors in the sciences.
- People really don’t like sharing the author manuscript version.
- Ease of participation is key.
- Actively asking people for their articles is key.
- Sharing work more broadly and increasing visibility are the two main motivations and perceived benefits for both OA Policy and ResearchGate (so we should emphasize how the OA Policy does this better)
- There are many misunderstandings about the legal aspects of the OA Policy.
Questions?

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