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## ResearchGate vs. the Institutional Repository: Competition or Complement?

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# ResearchGate vs. the Institutional Repository: Competition or Complement?

2017 Digital Commons New England User Group Meeting

University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA  
July 28, 2017

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ResearchGate vs. the Institutional Repository: Competition or Complement?  
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Lightning talk

Description: The popularity of ResearchGate and Academia.edu indicates that scholars want to share their work, yet to librarians tasked with implementing an Open Access policy, it can appear as though faculty are willing to invest more time uploading articles to academic social networks—often in violation of publisher policies—than in submitting articles for deposit in the institutional repository. In this lightning talk, we will present the results of a population study and survey that revealed the practices, attitudes, and motivations of faculty at the University of Rhode Island around depositing their work in ResearchGate and complying with our permissions-based Open Access Policy. While the majority of URI faculty do not use either service, we were surprised to find that faculty who share articles through ResearchGate are more likely to comply with the Open Access Policy, not less, suggesting that librarians should not view academic social networks as a threat. We discovered that a significant barrier to compliance with the OA Policy is the fact that it targets the author's accepted manuscript version of articles and that misunderstandings about copyright leave authors confused about options for legally sharing their work.



## 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

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Image source: <http://robhirschfeld.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/bunny-slippers.jpg>

## Participation: OA policy vs. ResearchGate

*Percent of faculty  
in population  
study contributing  
full-texts of  
articles to the URI  
OA Policy and  
ResearchGate  
(n=558)*

	<b>% of Faculty</b>
URI Open Access Policy	15.4%
ResearchGate (articles published after March, 2013)	20.3%

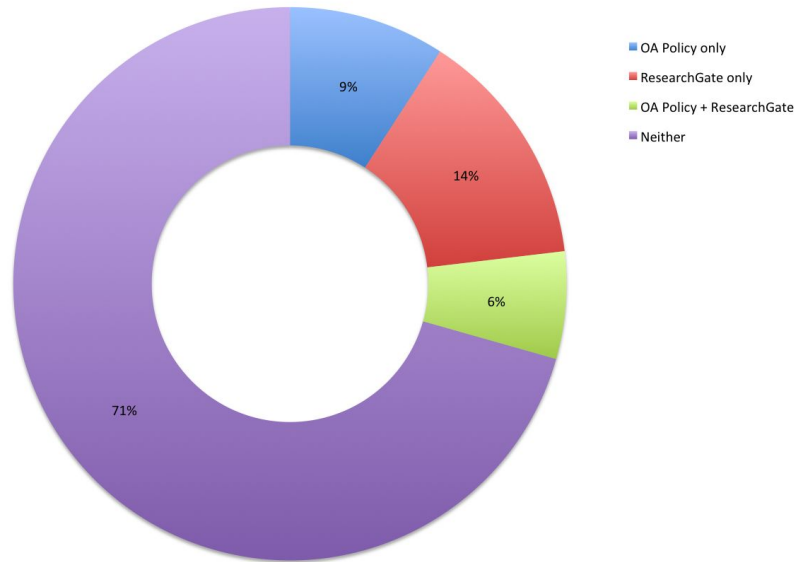
Population  
study  
results

Comparison with OA Policy (articles  $\geq$  2013):

- 20.3% of URI faculty - full-text of articles  $\geq$ 2013 to RG
- 15.4% compliance with OA policy

*Percent of faculty in population study contributing full-texts of articles to the URI OA Policy, RG (articles published after March 2013), both, and neither (n=558)*

## Population study results



But most faculty did neither:

- 9% OA policy only
- 14% RG only
- 6% both
- 71% neither

Discussion / Conclusion:

- 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)

## Authors think ResearchGate offers more benefits:

	DigitalCommons@URI	ResearchGate
Connected with other researchers	8.8%	63.6%
Shared my work more broadly	60.3%	80.0%
Increased the visibility and impact of my work	52.9%	78.2%
Tracked statistics on downloads of my work	36.8%	56.4%
Archived my work for the long term	17.7%	n/a
Other (please specify)	22.1%	9.1%

Survey: Benefits of having articles available in DigitalCommons@URI (n=68) and ResearchGate (n=55)

### 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

## Authors dislike sharing manuscript versions:

- Preference for final published version of record
- Not wanting multiple versions of same work available
- Not wanting version with potential errors and typos to be publicly available
- Manuscript often messy => potentially misunderstandings by readers
- Manuscript does not share pagination of 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

Huge theme in responses = preference for sharing final published version (ResearchGate “accepts final PDF versions”) and dislike for sharing manuscripts through IR



## Authors are confused about copyright:

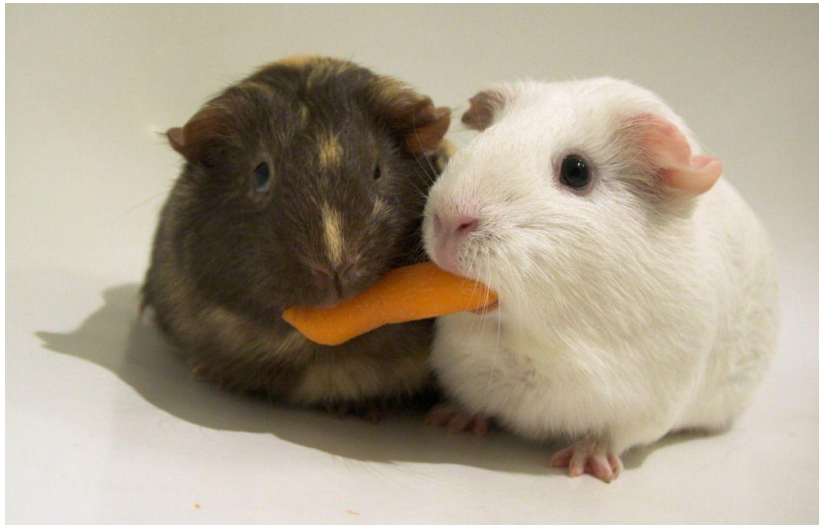
	Open Access Policy	ResearchGate
Legal under copyright law	50.4%	21.4%
Violates the copyright of the publisher	8.4%	17.5%
Not sure	41.2%	61.1%

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

- 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)

## Sharers gonna share...

Statistical analysis revealed that having shared research on one platform meant an author was more likely to have shared on the other.



"Sharing" by [Ryan Roberts](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#).

- 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: URI faculty are not using RG to the exclusion of the IR.

Sharing research on one platform makes an author more likely to share on another.

## Conclusions:

- 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.

## Conclusions:

- 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.