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Self-archiving options on social networks: a review of options

Monica Eberechukwu Eze, Clement Chukwuma Okeji and Gabriel Ejioji Bosah

Introduction

Document-sharing services such as ResearchGate (RG), Academia.edu, Google Scholar and other profiling platforms are experiencing a strong growth, caused by a massive incorporation of new members from all over the world and every discipline (Ortega, 2017). Self-archiving is the act of the author depositing a free copy of an electronic document online (pre-print, post-print, theses, book chapters, etc.) to one's own institutional repository or open archive for the purpose of maximizing its accessibility, usage and citation impact (Hamad, 2001). Journal publishers have different copyright policies with regard to self-archiving pre-print and post-prints. According to the policy of many publishers, one can self-archive different versions of their research paper:

- the version before peer review, called the "pre-print"; and
- the version that has been peer reviewed and accepted for publication, called the "post-print."

Several studies have reported the importance of self-archiving papers. The study by Ale-Ebrahim *et al.* (2014) found that self-archiving of the articles will greatly improve the visibility and citation impact of the articles. According to Ale-Ebrahim *et al.* "Once a paper's visibility increases, the citation will be increased at a significant rate."

According to Cerejo (2013), researchers should "go ahead and consider self-archiving as a viable option to contribute to the progress of science and to increase one's own research impact by making research more accessible." Many publishers now encourage researchers to consider having profiles in academic social networking sites like Kudos, ResearchGate, Mendeley.com, etc. For

example, Emerald, in their website, called for researchers to create a profile with Kudos by saying "As you know, sharing knowledge with peers and maximizing the quality of your research are invaluable tools in furthering your work and increasing citations." They also added "many of our authors find that when they are connecting with other authors on social media and accessing their peers' research, they find inspiration for their next article."

If self-archiving carries such benefits, why is it not widely prevalent? Cerejo (2013) enumerated some of the reasons for this and counter arguments in support of self-archiving. They are:

- *Lack of awareness of its benefits:* A large proportion of authors are unaware of the option of self-archiving and its benefits. Therefore, even if the authors' institutions have repositories, authors themselves don't bother with self-archiving unless their institutions mandate it.
- *Concern about the quality of self-archived articles:* In some fields of study, such as computer science, pre-prints are archived much more than post-prints. Self-archiving pre-prints allows for research to be scrutinized by the larger scientific community before it goes through peer review. Further, in all archiving repositories, pre-prints are clearly marked as such. As for post-prints, their quality need not be questioned because they are merely a copy of the journal's peer-reviewed published version.
- *Fear of infringing the journal's copyright policies:* Most journals, in their instructions for authors, clearly state their copyright policies with regard to self-archiving. As long as you read and understand these policies, most of

which allow authors to self-archive, you do not risk infringing any agreements.

- *Perception that self-archiving is time consuming and cumbersome:* Contrary to this belief, self-archiving takes only about 10 min for the first paper when you have to create a profile/account, and only a small percentage of people find it "very difficult." For all subsequent papers, the process is even easier and faster.
- *Fear of disrupting the current scholarly publishing model:* Institutions may refrain from creating repositories for fear that such archives may be seen as a substitute for journals.

Some social networks specifically relevant to the academic community include ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Mendeley.com, and others (Beall, 2010). Many researchers, mostly in the developing countries, are not aware and do not utilize open access platforms to showcase their research output. For example, Jan and Anwar (2013) have reported the relative non-visibility of Pakistani LIS outputs published in local languages and in non-impact-factor journals.

Examples of self-archiving platforms by researchers

Academic social networks can help one make connections, find jobs, learn what other researchers in one's field are working on, and ask and answer questions. Studies have shown that researchers use different academic social sites for different purposes. For example ResearchGate and Academia.edu were mainly utilized for contacting new collaborators, while Mendeley.com was used for finding new papers (Van Noorden, 2014). Hausteijn *et al.* (2014a)

also report that Google Scholar C was used to check citations, while Academia.edu and ResearchGate were used to upload papers. Vasquez *et al.* (2015) reported that maintaining multiple profiles on various social networking sites could be a time-consuming process.

The study by Mikki *et al.* (2015) compared the profiles of researchers of the University of Bergen on five sites and found that 37 per cent of the researchers have profiles in at least one social network. The highest prevalence was observed in the Faculty of Social Sciences. In the same manner, Ortega (2015) studied “Disciplinary differences in the use of academic social networking sites” among Spanish National Research Council researchers registered in the most currently relevant academic social network sites (Google Scholar, Academia.edu, ResearchGate and Mendeley.com) and their results and those of Thelwall and Kousha (2014) show that academia.edu is used quite frequently by humanists and social scientists. The study by Van Noorden (2014) found that ResearchGate is widely known by more than 88 per cent of scientists and engineers and in comparison, 29 per cent of scientists were familiar with Academia.edu and only 5 per cent visited the network on a regular basis. In total, 48 per cent of scientists in the survey were aware about Mendeley.com and 8 per cent were regular visitors.

Ali and Richardson (2017) reported that uploading articles or creating a profile in academic social networks would be advantageous to promote their use to new Pakistani LIS scholars. They noted that social media sites are a significant source of free articles in lower-income countries not normally available in their institution. They further noted that establishing a public professional profile creates the potential for collaboration, building connections and exchanging information and ideas.

Bhardwaj (2017) in a study reveals that ResearchGate scored the highest with 61.1 per cent of users and was ranked “above average,” followed by Academia.edu with 48.0 per cent and Mendeley.com with 43.9 per cent. Muscanell and Utz (2017) argued that ResearchGate exposes researchers to interesting new work in

their field, makes it easy for them to access publications and offers tools for question asking and collaboration; this would make researchers more productive.

Academic social networking sites excluding institutional repositories are commercial ventures, and while there is currently no charge to use them, their business model is to find a way to profit from the data that users provide. According to Rathemacher *et al.* (2016) “since these are commercial sites, you should be very careful about uploading the full text of your publications. By doing so, you could violate the copyrights held by your publishers” (p. 10). For example, in ResearchGate before you upload a file you confirm that “you have reviewed this file and that it contains no material protected by intellectual property laws or personal rights unless you own or control such rights or have received all necessary consents” in their site.

Some popular self-archiving social networking options

Academia.edu (www.academia.edu/about)

Fortney and Gonder (2015) note that this network can be used to share papers, monitor their impact, and follow the research in a particular field. It was launched in September 2008 with 47 million users from around the world. As of January 2017, over 11 million texts were uploaded (Academia.edu, 2017). Academia.edu was founded by Richard Price, who raised \$600,000 from Spark Ventures, Brent Hoberman and others and was launched in 2008. The website allows its users to create a profile, upload their work(s), select areas of interests and then the user can browse the networks of people with similar interests.

ResearchGate (www.researchgate.net/about)

ResearchGate is an academic social networking site that provides interactive access to a wealth of scientific knowledge. ResearchGate users create profiles and are encouraged to list their publications and other scholarly activities, to upload copies of articles they have authored and to collaborate with other scholars with common interests. ResearchGate is the site that provides the largest number of indicators at the author level, going

from social measurements (followers, following) and usage metrics (page view, document downloads) to bibliometric indicators (impact points, papers and citations). Ijad Madisch, ResearchGate CEO, says ResearchGate aims to help “free knowledge from the Ivory Tower, to digitize it and make it accessible for everyone in order to accelerate scientific progress” (TechCrunch, 2013). Research Gate has more than 14 million users, over 150 million publications, and over 40 million monthly visits ResearchGate makes publications that might otherwise be behind a paywall easily available, users might see it more as an archive for publications, and as an efficient way to access papers, although the sharing of such publications is not always legal (Muscanell and Utz, 2017).

Kudos (www.growkudos.com)

Kudos is a service partnered with Wiley that helps authors achieve greater article impact. It provides various tools and resources that allow authors to monitor and increase usage of their published content and engage with the digital research community. Kudos integrates other third-party platforms that measure the impact of scholarly content, making it an efficient space for authors to track articles. Such platforms include ORCID, Altmetrics, and Thompson Reuters’ Web of Science. Presently, Kudos has 71 publishers, and over 100,000 users. Kudos encourages authors to use common language and to incorporate supplemental links to explain their articles in a manner that is easy to understand, to share their articles through social media and email and to access metrics that assess the impact of their articles. Kudos main strength is its mission to maximize the visibility, impact and accessibility of published research. It provides a unique service to scholarly communities, by presenting metrics that reach across multiple publishers and publications, which can be utilized by researchers, institutions of higher education, academic publishers and the general public. Although Kudos is a new distribution platform, there is empirical evidence suggesting that Kudos increases the use of published articles (Williams, 2017).

Melinda Kenneway, Charlie Rapple and David Sommer began Kudos as a solution to the many challenges facing both producers and consumers of academic research. The founders argue that Kudos fills a void in academic publishing by addressing the following concerns: difficulties in navigating the growing wealth of scholarly literature; tracking what happens to an author's research after it is published; the increasing prevalence of digital impact measures and altmetrics that assess and evaluate scholars' performance; employing new platforms for research in digital media; and the pressure publishers are experiencing to compete with one another in order to provide authors with services required to meet their needs (Korlaar, 2014).

Mendeley.com (www.mendeley.com)

Mendeley.com is a free site that allows users to register documents that they are interested in and creates reference lists for them (Gunn, 2013). It was bought by Elsevier in 2013 (Bosano, 2013). Mendeley.com incorporates the ability to connect with other members, form groups and examine other users' libraries of registered documents. It also recommends relevant articles to its users (Beel *et al.*, 2016) and supports information seeking (Alhoori and Furuta, 2011). Mendeley.com is public and so the number of people registering an article in the site is evidence of the impact of that article, even if the article does not have a citation count in traditional research indexes (Maleki, 2015). A recent study on whether Mendeley.com reader counts high enough for research evaluations when articles are published, show that there are more Mendeley.com readers than Scopus citations per article at the month of publication. The study also found that articles attracted, on average, between 0.1 and 0.8 Mendeley.com readers per article in the month in which they first appeared in Scopus (Thelwall, 2017a). Studies have shown that counts of Mendeley.com readers correlate with citation counts for individual journal articles within a field, whichever field is analyzed (Haustein *et al.*, 2014b; Thelwall and Wilson, 2016; Zahedi *et al.*, 2014). In another study, Thelwall (2017b) listed reasons why

articles are extensively read in Mendeley.com but rarely cited in Scopus-indexed publications and vice versa.

Institutional repositories

Many universities and research institutions own repositories where all their members can deposit their research papers. This enables researchers from that institution to view each other's work and gives anyone interested a broad view of all works being conducted in that institution. Institutional repositories make articles visible and increase the chances for use by other scholars and exchange ideas among similar disciplines (Ngah, 2010). Commonly cited benefits of using an institutional repository are to increase the visibility and citation impact of the institution's scholarship (Tate, 2010). The open access movement, followed by institutional repositories is a medium to publish articles, created optimism for the future of scholarly publishing.

Summary

Self-archiving options such as Kudos, Mendeley.com to enable lead to an increased visibility of the author and possible citation of the work and chances of collaboration with international colleagues for research projects. Factors such as increased exposure to previously published work (e.g post-print), which broadens the dissemination of academic research generally and increases institutions' visibility, were among the options the academic librarians indicated as very important factors that motivate them to contribute their scholarly output to self-archiving options. In order to not violate publishers' copyright agreement, authors are advised to check the publishers' copyright policy before uploading full-text article published in journals to self-archiving platforms.

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