

ACADEMIC SOCIAL NETWORKS



OFFICE OF SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION

What are they?



Social media has become ingrained in our daily lives from catching up with old friends to making new ones. As the popularity of these sites has grown, a number have appeared which are specifically targeted at the research community. Many operate on similar terms to average social media sites by offering researchers a chance to create public profiles to promote themselves and their work also allowing them to connect with others in their field and beyond. The sites have increased in popularity in recent years as researchers seek to embrace the world of social media for promotion and connection.

Benefits and pitfalls

Publishing an output such as a book or a paper is no longer the end of the project for a researcher. They must now work to ensure that as many people read their research as possible by promoting it to an audience both within and outside academia. Academic social networks are one way to do this simply and ensure maximum exposure. Researchers are able to share their affiliations, career history, research interests and in some cases their outputs. Although they are able to do this via other avenues such as an institution website, social media sites offer them the chance to customise the experience and are arguably easier to use. The social component allows researchers to connect with potential collaborators they may not otherwise have met.



However there are some reasons to be cautious. Many of these sites enable researchers to upload and share copies of their work as part of their profile. This often infringes copyright - something publishers monitor carefully. The best practice is to link to a legitimate online source of the output and only enter the metadata on the social network. Many researchers also confuse making something open with making it Open Access. Uploading papers to these social networks does not guarantee preservation and is not compliant with Open Access mandates.

ACADEMIA.EDU



One of the original academic networks, this site allows users to create a short profile and share past and current projects as well as their research interests. Other members can connect with researchers or follow their work. The site encourages both links to online versions and uploads of full-text to a profile which may breach copyright. Academia.edu has begun to charge for membership which restricts access and search capabilities.

GOOGLE SCHOLAR



Once registered, this site will trawl the internet for content authored by the researcher. It compiles a list of publications from legitimate sources such as publisher's websites and repositories and provides simple metrics. Not all of these outputs will be accessible by those looking at a profile, depending on their usual level of access. The results are well indexed in Google searches.

LINKEDIN



Often referred to as 'Facebook for professionals', LinkedIn allows members to create an online profile similar to an interactive CV. This can include details of employment, education and research projects as well as any voluntary positions. Members can also join various special interest groups and employer forums to discuss a range of issues. LinkedIn is used in many industries as a recruitment tool and ranks highly in online searches which make it a useful tool to enhance visibility.

ORCID



Offering a slightly different experience, an Open Researcher and Contributor ID offers a persistent digital identifier for researchers to distinguish them from others with the same or similar names. Members can add details of their employment, education and research interests in addition to setting up automated searches to populate their profile with their outputs. Many other websites allow researchers to use an ORCID as a sign-in mechanism.



RESEARCHGATE

In a similar model to Academia.edu this site allows researchers to create a profile, find collaborators and share their outputs. It also offers a facility for members to ask and answer questions on research projects. Although it was originally targeted at scientists it now includes members from a range of disciplines. As with other sites, uploads of full-text are encouraged although this should be treated with caution as there is a potential breach of copyright.



TWITTER

Although a traditional social network which is not aimed specifically at researchers, Twitter can be a very useful tool for promotion. The site allows users to post short updates of 240 characters (known as tweets) as well as having a mini-profile. Researchers can share updates about their research, links to their work or information from a conference they are attending. It can also be used as an effective networking tool, connecting researchers from around the world based on their research interests. As it is accessible to non-members Twitter provides a great way to broaden the reach of research outside academia.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit our webpages: <http://www.osc.cam.ac.uk>

Read the further guidance on choosing a publisher here:
http://bit.ly/OSC_OnlinePresence

