Cambridge University Press and ResearchGate

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You are likely aware that the last few years have seen academic publishers engaging with scholarly collaboration networks in various ways, trying to balance their popularity with authors and researchers against concerns over large-scale copyright infringement. Cambridge University Press, along with SpringerNature and Thieme, has just signed an agreement with ResearchGate to foster responsible sharing - see our joint statement here. Other publishers took part in the negotiations and are working to have a deal in place soon.

We attach some FAQs to explain the approach that we have taken. If you have any additional questions or thoughts, please do let your CUP editor know.

FAQs

What is ResearchGate?
ResearchGate is a scholarly collaboration site where researchers can share and discuss their work, follow research topics, and pose and answer questions. ResearchGate was founded in 2008 by the physicians Dr. Ijad Madisch and Dr. Sören Hofmayer, along with computer specialist Horst Fickenscher. They have completed four rounds of financing from Benchmark, Founders Fund, Bill Gates, Tenaya Capital, Wellcome Trust, Goldman Sachs Investment Partners, and Four Rivers Group.

Why has Cambridge joined with SpringerNature and others in signing a collaboration agreement with ResearchGate?
We support collaboration between researchers, including the sharing of articles. It is of course vital that any sharing is done responsibly and in compliance with copyright law and publisher policies – without this, the viability of many of our journals could be at risk.

Many of the papers on ResearchGate have been posted in breach of copyright and/or embargo. Most authors don’t realise that they should not post papers in this way: their goal is to disseminate their work and collaborate with other scholars. However, given the size of ResearchGate, this has the potential to undermine our subscription business and the sustainability of our society partners. 15 million researchers have made more than 215 million connections on the network. The Coalition for Responsible Sharing estimates that there are approximately 4 million infringing articles on the site, as of April 2018. We therefore want to work with ResearchGate to minimise the posting of copyright or embargoed papers and to provide authors with easy access to information about what they can legitimately post.

This agreement forms just one part of the Press’s approach, alongside the launch of Cambridge Core Share, a tool that enables authors and readers to easily generate a link to an online, read-only journal article, and our Green Open Access policies.
How will this agreement help authors to post articles on ResearchGate responsibly?

This agreement provides both more visibility for publishers into the content posted to ResearchGate and more guidance for users of ResearchGate about how to post within the limits of copyright law. CUP will for the first time be able to crawl the ResearchGate site to locate infringing content and will pass instructions on to ResearchGate, ultimately directing authors to a page on our own site with CUP-specific information. The intention is that a combination of monitoring infringing content and working with authors will lead to a culture of responsible sharing. In working with ResearchGate, CUP now has options about what to do once content has been flagged as infringing, including making it private or issuing a warning.

Why hasn’t Cambridge taken legal action against ResearchGate, like some other publishers?

We want to support open research and collaboration; we therefore prefer to work with rather than against organisations like ResearchGate that provide resources for open research and legitimate sharing. Scholarly collaboration networks also help make content more discoverable and can help with the dissemination of content.

What exactly does this agreement mean for my journal?

The agreement will give us better visibility into the amount of Cambridge-published versions of record (VORs) – the final, published article - on ResearchGate, so that we can decide on a journal-by-journal basis the best approach for that journal. It will also allow us to understand the extent to which authors in different areas are sharing content and therefore to develop future policies to facilitate this in a way that does not undermine the sustainability of journals.

Do you know how Cambridge content is being used on ResearchGate or how much has been posted? How will we know if this agreement has been successful?

The first steps after the signing of the agreement include setting up a technological solution that will enable us to analyse the proportion of Cambridge-published content currently on ResearchGate that are VORs, which was not been possible previously. This will allow us to set a baseline against which to measure future content.

How are you engaging with other scholarly collaboration networks?

We have joined other publishers in collaborating with ResearchGate as it is the largest (by site visits) of such networks. The year-long agreement will allow us to better understand the effectiveness of approaches to foster responsible posting of content and then potentially to seek ways of rolling out the best approaches further.

In what ways is Cambridge actively helping researchers to share their work responsibly?

This agreement forms just one part of the Press’s approach, alongside the launch of Cambridge Core Share, a tool that enables authors and readers to easily generate a link to an online, read-only journal article, and our Green Open Access policies.
What do I need to do if I want to share my work?

There are a number of ways in which you can share your work responsibly:

1. You can post a link to the final published version of your work.

2. Our Green Open Access policies allow you to post a version of your work in institutional repositories and other sites. Please see our full policies for journals, books and Elements. We don't normally allow final version PDFs of journal articles to be posted online or shared, and we encourage you to link to your work on Cambridge Core, which will allow us to track usage and provide you with more information about the impact of your work.

3. Use Cambridge Core Share, which allows you to create a link to a free-to-read version of your final published journal article.

What will happen when the agreement expires?

The year-long term gives us a chance to learn from the data and to revisit the agreement. The agreement may then be extended or re-negotiated.