

Imperial College London

A guide to using ResearchGate and other academic social network sites



Imperial College
London

Spiral

[Spiral](#) is Imperial College's institutional repository for research outputs – it contains full-text documents only and aims to be a showcase for Imperial research.

You may be considering uploading your paper to academic social networking sites but...

ResearchGate or Academia.edu might first come to your mind to deposit a paper immediately upon publication. But, be careful, popularity doesn't necessarily make academic social networking sites the best place for your research to be discovered and shared.

In this brief guide, you will find out what ResearchGate (RG) is and is not, why you should use Spiral, and how you can use academic social networking sites more effectively without breaching copyright rules.

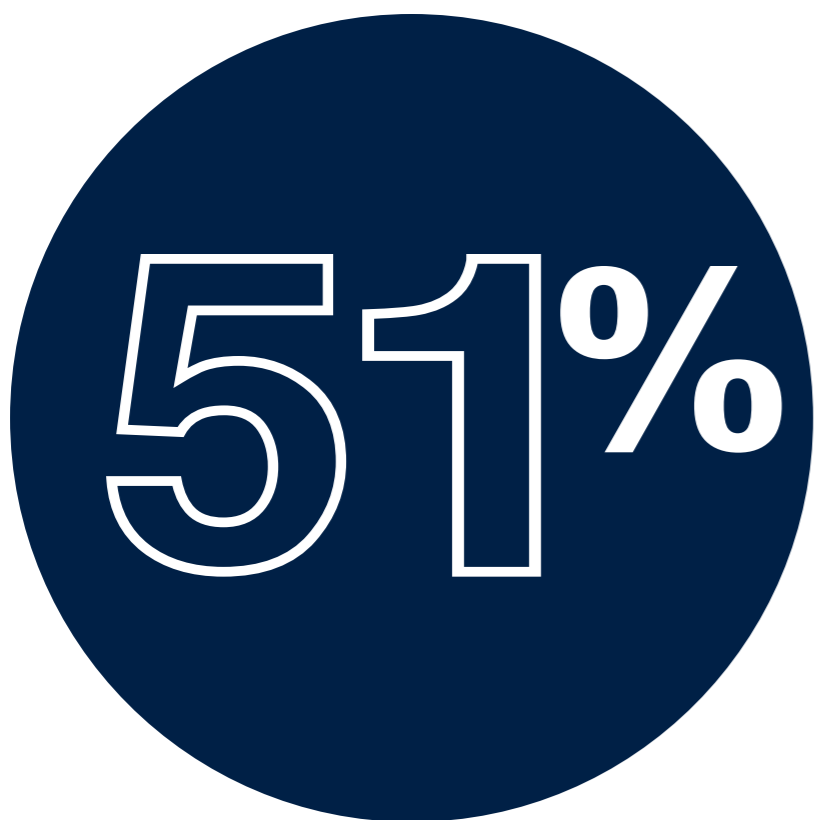


Did you know?

A [study](#)* showed more than 51% (201 out of 392 selected) non-OA articles deposited to ResearchGate infringed publishers' copyright.

The majority of infringements occurred because the wrong version was deposited.

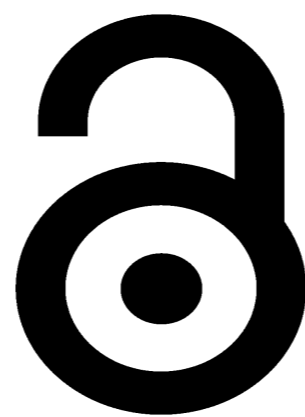
*Jamali, Hamid R. "Copyright compliance and infringement in ResearchGate full-text journal articles." *Scientometrics* 112, no. 1 (2017): pp. 241-254. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-017-2291-4>



Spiral vs. Platforms

Institutional Repository

Spiral is an officially recognised institutional repository. Depositing your paper to Spiral will ensure compliance with the REF, funder OA policies and [Plan S](#)*.



Social media

ResearchGate and its equivalents are social media networking sites and not considered to be institutional repositories. Uploading the full text may make your paper publicly available on these platforms, but OA mandates are not guaranteed by doing so.

*[What is Plan S?](#) With effect from 2021, all scholarly funded publications must be made open access, either by Gold or Green route. <https://www.coalition-s.org/principles-and-implementation/>

Low risk of copyright infringement

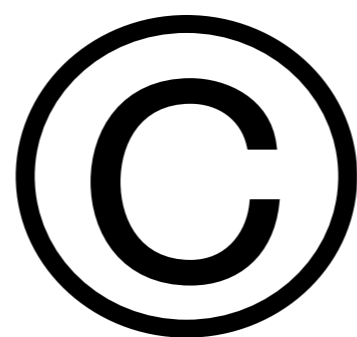
Institutional repositories are usually managed by a library team (such as the [Imperial OA Team](#)). They always check the legal version to be uploaded. So, the likelihood of copyright infringement is very low.

Long-term preservation

Institutional repositories, such as Spiral, are a permanent archive for collecting, preserving, and disseminating digital copies of the intellectual output of an institution. This means that research outputs kept in repositories will be preserved and accessible to the public for the long term.

No personal details requested or stored

Users can view and download content from institutional repositories without a subscription or log-in. And many have the request-a-copy functionality which goes direct to authors. Repositories do not ask for or use data for marketing or selling to third parties.



High risk of copyright infringement

- Unlike institutional repositories, no one in academic social networking sites checks for copyright policies of publishers. It is the authors' responsibility to check. To outline how serious this is, publishers have issued [7 million take down notices](#) for unauthorized content.



Services may discontinue

- Social networking sites are commercial platforms and are inherently vulnerable to change. For a number of reasons, their services may discontinue, shut down, or change to preserve profits. So, long term preservation and access to academic materials might not always be ensured.



Use personal details

- A subscription is necessary to be able to upload and download papers in academic social network sites. This also means that your personal data may be used in a direct (email notifications) or indirect (selling data) way.

Non-commercial

Institutional repositories are non profit and free to use from research libraries. Their only aim is to make research outputs freely accessible online to read and use.



Commercial

ResearchGate and similar websites are commercial platforms. They make an indirect profit from your research outputs (by selling data, advertising jobs or providing premium services).

So, our advice to researchers

use




Spiral

- Always deposit your paper in Spiral via Symplectic. Spiral will provide you with a permanent link (such as <https://hdl.handle.net/10044/1/73113>) that you can post anywhere including academic social networking sites
- Always check what your publisher allows you to do with your published output via SHERPARoMEO (<http://sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/index.php>). Most publishers don't permit deposit to ResearchGate

- Do NOT forget that embargo policies may apply even if you're permitted to deposit your paper to ResearchGate
- Bear in mind with respect to copyright infringement that no one checks academic social networking sites but we always check Spiral.

Contact us:

 openaccess@imperial.ac.uk

 +44 (0)20 7594 2608

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