LEARNING AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Social Media for Researchers

The effective use of social media can change the way in which you undertake research and can open up new forms of communication and dissemination (Research Information Network, 2011). Social media tools can also enable you to manage your online presence, develop your reputation, maximise your impact and build networks. Below are some suggested tools you can use to improve your online visibility, keep up to date with new information, collaborate and network with others.

Raising your online profile

There are various social media websites that can be used to raise your online presence. Some of the most popular and effective ones are listed below.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social networking website for people in professional occupations. Your LinkedIn profile could be one of the top items on a Google search using your name and therefore, widely used by professionals to maximise their online identities.

Twitter

Twitter is becoming increasingly popular among researchers and academics as a place to share opinions and recent publications, with instant feedback possible from colleagues around the world. By signing up for a Twitter account you can connect with colleagues, researchers, publishers, universities, and other groups already on Twitter.

Academia.edu

Academia.edu is a social networking website for academics. This platform can be used to share papers, monitor their impact, and follow the research in a particular field.

Google Scholar

Google Scholar has some key benefits for researchers. These include literature searching - particularly useful for finding PDFs from repositories and other free sources. You can promote your research with a public profile linked from Google Scholar results.   **Google Scholar Citations** provide a simple way for authors to keep track of citations to their articles. You can check who is citing your publications, graph citations over time, and compute several citation metrics. You can also make your profile public, so that it may appear in Google Scholar results when people search for your name.

Keeping up-to-date with new information

There are many social media tools that enable you to keep up-to-date with new literature, trends and information.

Journal alerts

Many journals offer TOC (table of contents) RSS feeds directly from their websites. Alternatively you can subscribe to several TOCs at once via a service such as **ZETOC** or **JournalTOCs.**

Database alerts

You can set up search alerts from many databases, such as Web of Science, OvidSP (for Medline, PsycInfo etc), so that you are alerted via RSS or email whenever new articles matching your research interests are published. You can browse databases by subject in the Library Catalogue.

Web alerts

Services such as ChangeDetection.com notify you when a change is made to a webpage you have registered interest in. Search-engine alerts like Google Alerts tell you about sites matching your interests that you may not know about.

RSS feeds

If you wish to monitor a wide range of sources you may prefer to subscribe to RSS feeds instead. To subscribe to RSS feeds you need to set up an account with an online RSS aggregator service such as Feedly. You can then monitor all the feeds which interest you, without needing to visit the individual websites.

Using collaborative tools and working with others

Below are a selection of social media tools that can used to collaborate online with others.

Google Drive

Google Drive is a file storage and synchronization service provided by Google, which enables user cloud storage, file sharing and collaborative editing.

Wikis

A wiki is a web application which allows people to add, modify, or delete content in collaboration with others and can be used for managing virtual teamwork. PBWorks and Wikispaces are online team collaboration tools that allow you to share files, and manage projects.

Mendeley

Mendeley is a free reference manager and academic social network that can help you organize your research, collaborate with others online, and discover the latest research. Mendeley allows you to automatically generate bibliographies, collaborate easily with other researchers online, find relevant papers based on what you're reading and access your papers from anywhere online.

Networking with others and making professional connections

Below are some suggested social media tools that can be used to connect with other researchers and professionals in your field.

Academia.edu

Academia.edu is a social networking website for academics. This platform can be used to share papers, monitor their impact, and follow the research in a particular field.

ResearchGate

ResearchGate is a scientific online network, currently gathering around 1.4 million researchers. Your profile can also be linked to both your Facebook and LinkedIn profiles. ResearchGate allows a user to share and access publications, and publish your data. Connect and collaborate with colleagues, peers, co-authors, and specialists in your field. Get stats about views, downloads, and citations of your research and find the right job using their research-focused job board.

Google+

Google+ Is a social networking service which is also an authorship tool that associates web-content directly with its owner/author.

Facebook

Facebook remains one of the largest social network services. It is useful for creating an online presence, making connections and following conferences, events and specific interests.

Methodspace

Methodspace is an online network for the community of researchers, from students to professors, engaged in research methods. Sponsored by SAGE, the site is created for students and researchers to network and share research, resources and debates. Methodspace users have free access to selected journal articles, book chapters, etc. which highlight emerging topics in the field.

References

Research Information Network (RIN) (2011) *Social media: A guide for researchers* [online]. London: RIN. [Accessed 20 April 2014]. Available at: < http://www.rin.ac.uk/our-work/communicating-and-disseminating-research/social-media-guide-researchers >.

Further reading

Minocha, S. and Petre, M. (2012) *Vitae Innovate - Handbook of social media for researchers and supervisors - digital technologies for research dialogues* [online]. Milton Keynes: The Open University. Available at:< http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/567271/Handbook-of-social-media-for-researchers-and-supervisors.html >.