



I put my papers in ResearchGate or Academia, is that enough for the open access policy at TU Delft?

These and similar questions have been common at open access events and presentations nowadays. Authors want to better understand the differences between these platforms and when they should use one, the other, or some combination. First, in short what each service has to offer:

ResearchGate and Academia.edu

ResearchGate and Academia.edu are social networking platforms whose primary aim is to connect researchers with common interests. Users create profiles on these services, and are then encouraged to list their publications and other scholarly activities, upload copies of manuscripts they’ve authored, and build connections with scholars they work or co-author with. Essentially these services provide a Facebook or LinkedIn experience for the research community.

Both services are commercial companies. Although Academia.edu has a “.edu” URL, it isn’t run by a higher education institution.

Comparison between Academia/Research Gate vs TU Delft Repository

	Repository TU Delft	Academia.edu	ResearchGate
Long term preservation	Yes	No	No
Business model	Non for profit	Commercial	Commercial
Sends e-mails	NO	Yes	Yes
Wants adress book	NO	Yes	Yes
Possible infringement copyrights	NO	YES	YES
Fulfills requirements TU Delft policy on open access	YES	No	No
Fulfills funder requirements as NWO and Horizon 2020 on open access	YES	NO	NO
Author profiles	NO	Yes. List skills and expertise	Yes, via job board. Can upload CV
Share files	Papers, data, patents, books, reports	Papers, data, Github	Papers, data, patents

Openness and interoperability

TU Delft Library is often asked by researchers and PhD's already using ResearchGate or Academia why they should use the TU Delft repository instead (or as well). 'Why can't the library just take my information from ResearchGate or Academia and use that to populate the institutional repository?' The simple answer is: these platforms do not permit their users to take their own data and reuse it elsewhere, nor do their terms of service permit the library to extract that data on the authors' behalf.

Interestingly, ResearchGate permits you to import publications from other applications, but provides no method for getting that same data out of the ResearchGate ecosystem. Similarly, Academia makes it impossible to bring data in or out of their system. Institutional repositories, on the other hand, are largely committed to complete openness and re-use of data. They make their metadata – the information about what's in the repository – interoperable and open by using standards like [OAI-PMH](#), [PubMedCentral](#), [ArXiv](#), are all OAI-PMH providers. These kinds of activities make open access repositories good places for publications you want people to be able to find.

Copyrights and open access policies of funders

A frequent asked question is: "Is it allowed to share the full text of my paper on networks as Research Gate?" Uploading the full text, being the authors version or the publishers version, is considered as making it public. If you have published your paper in a journal you should check the publisher's conditions for reuse. The best place to do so is the [SHERPA/RoMEO database](#). ResearchGate attempts to do an automatic check on this database but if you want to be sure better check yourself. Many of the publications that are available through ResearchGate are actually uploaded illegally in terms of publisher open access policy. By the end of 2017 a lot of papers were removed from ResearchGate because of copyright infringement. In contrast to these regulations some publishers want to cooperate. [Springer Nature and ResearchGate have announced](#) that "full-text articles published in select Nature journals since November 2017 will be rolled out to researchers' ResearchGate profiles making it easier to read or download research on or off campus from that moment on."

Putting a copy of your paper on ResearchGate will not mean that you are compliant with the [Open Access policy of TU Delft](#) or funder policies as designed by Horizon2020 or NWO. On the contrary, you may be in breach of publisher policy which means that you still need to [upload a copy of your paper](#) to TU Delft Repository.

Long-term preservation and access

Open access repositories are managed by universities. This university affiliation (with a public service mission) means that repositories as TU Delft Repository are likely to be sustainable. TU Delft employs librarians and data specialists who specialize in ensuring long term archiving. Academia and ResearchGate are independent for-profit companies that could theoretically close up shop at any time. Both sites disavow any duty to warn users if they shut down:

- [Academia.edu](#) "reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to discontinue or terminate the Site and Services and to terminate these Terms, at any time and without prior notice."
- [ResearchGate](#) "reserves the right to change, reduce, interrupt or discontinue the Service or parts of it at any time."

Use of your contacts and personal data

ResearchGate and Academia don't have a lot in common with open access repositories, but they do have a lot in common with other social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. They even encourage users to connect those and other services and contacts to their accounts – sometimes aggressively.

Both sites have a long list of possible types of email notifications, all of which can be turned off, and all of which appear to be turned on as a default.

Open access repositories are not social networking sites. Users can search for work by a particular author, but authors can't build a friend or collaborator list, and usually can't manage a profile page. The success of ResearchGate and Academia demonstrate that this is a functionality that scholars find valuable.

The fine print

Whenever you sign up for a service, it's a good idea to read the Terms of Use. [Academia.edu's terms](#) give the company a license to make derivative works (like translations?) based on articles users upload to the site "in connection with operating and providing the Services and Content to you and to other Members." [ResearchGate's](#) terms include an agreement to have the user's relationship with the company be governed by German law. And both sites have an indemnification clause, asserting that if the site faces any legal claims arising from things users upload to the site, the user will bear the cost.

Ok, great. But really: what should I use?

In the end, both types of services have unique offerings, and both likely hold some value for researchers. Academic social networking sites, such as ResearchGate or Academia, might be valuable when trying to find others in your field conducting related research, or for providing access to your papers to those people you know use the site.

The value provided by the institutional repository, however — particularly the long-term preservation and commitment to open access, should be emphasized. It should not be assumed that the other services provide this, and they will definitely not be considered open access repositories that meet the requirements of participating in [TU Delft open access policies](#).

If your colleagues find a social networking site useful and you can manage the email notification settings, that site might be worth your time. If the typical behaviour of commercial social networking sites bothers you — gathering users' information for their own purposes — be as wary of those that target academics as you are of those with a more general audience. Whether or not you decide these social networking sites are right for you, remember that institutional repositories enable you to share your research widely without trying to mine your address book. If you're not already using [TU Delft repository](#), take a few minutes to check out the services available to you who offer similar tools for broadening access to your publications, but who have no interest in making a profit from your work.

References:

University of California,

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University Exeter

<https://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/openresearchexeter/tag/ore/>

Scholarly Kitchen

<https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2019/03/01/springer-nature-syndicates-content-to-researchgate/>

SpringerNature

<https://group.springernature.com/it/group/media/press-releases/springer-nature-and-researchgate-announce-new-cooperation/15705990>