Description

It has been said that the supplementary section of a paper is where data goes to die. This information is not with the main paper, isn't subject to peer review, and tends to not contain links back to the associated research article. This is problematic since the trend in the research community is towards the analysis of increasingly large data sets which cannot be contained in a typical research article. Supplementary data, therefore, is of paramount importance and should be easy to access, discover, and cite. Springer Nature agrees to this and has established a working relationship with Figshare to do just that.

Figshare is an online repository for all forms of research data output. The platform accepts all file formats and users can choose to keep their data private, share it with specific colleagues, or make it freely accessible. When the data is published on Figshare, it is assigned a digital object identifier (DOI). The right to the dataset remains with the author but it is now easier to access. This information can include dark data which would traditionally not be made publicly available. (Dark data includes negative results and the results of replication studies, to give a few examples). This information is necessary for the research community to build on the work of others while avoiding experiments that have already been shown to fail.

At the moment, more than 450 BioMed Central and SpringerOpen journals are using the Figshare integration. This means that over 19,000 articles now have supplementary material that can be previewed within the main article. Authors upload their supplementary materials to Figshare and readers can then view this citable data via a widget embedded in the article or on Figshare itself. This means that you don't need to download the file or have special software in order to interact with the supplementary data. This integration of Figshare into Springer Nature's journals highlights their commitment to making research data easier to discover, access, and reuse. It will also help authors who publish in these journals track metrics about how these supplementary files are being accessed and reused.

This move towards open data is part of an ongoing trend. A survey of 2,000 researchers found that 75% had made their research data freely available. The majority of those who took the survey (70% of researchers) placed equal value on having their data cited as having their paper cited. Data sharing is not always straightforward, especially when it was obtained from human subjects whose privacy must be protected. Professor Brian Nosek of the University of Virginia believes that the issue of how (and if) we should share sensitive data should be addressed by implementing good data sharing standards. The approach to open data is also influenced by the culture of each discipline. Climate scientists may be more reluctant to share their data than economists, for example. Despite this, Andrea Taroni, chief editor of *Nature Physics*, is of the opinion that open data will eventually thrive in academic research.

Category

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