



Description

The battle between ResearchGate and academic publishers regarding copyright infringement could be heading for a resolution. In May 2018, a lawsuit meant that ResearchGate had to [remove access](#) to 1.7 million articles on their academic platform where researchers “share and discover research.” However, ResearchGate did not give up. Instead, they approached the giant academic publishers to find a solution. In fact, recently, one of the academic publishers, Springer Nature and ResearchGate have [announced their agreement](#) to test a collaboration strategy. According to the collaboration, a small number of academic journal articles can be legally shared on ResearchGate.

Are Authors Allowed to Share Their Papers?

ResearchGate is an academic networking platform for researchers where they share their articles and discuss research. Great idea! Firstly, researchers get more exposure from their publications. Moreover, this would mean more networking opportunities and receive a higher number of citations. However, the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical (STM) Publishers claim this sharing of publications [infringes on copyright](#).

As an author of a publication, you transfer copyright to the publisher. If the journal is subscription-based, you are given limited rights to share your article. Therefore, sharing your article on a platform such as ResearchGate is not permitted. Although well-meaning and in the best interests of promoting scientific research, ResearchGate has inadvertently made subscription articles “open-source.” This means the publishers lose out on their subscriptions. As a result, this [culminated in legal action](#) against ResearchGate by publishers.

“We feel that [ResearchGate] should take responsibility for what they upload and what they allow users to upload. Their view is, I believe, that they feel that they are just a platform and they have no responsibilities in that context. That’s something that we disagree with.” – James Milnes, the spokesperson for the Coalition for Responsible Sharing.

Article Sharing Trial with ResearchGate

Springer Nature and ResearchGate recently announced a [collaborative article-sharing pilot study](#). They

will make a select number of subscription-based articles available on the latter for three months. Their overall aim is for everyone to benefit by sharing research responsibly.

Their goals are to work with academic publishers to:

1. Educate users about copyrights and how they can legally share their research.
2. Remove copyright-infringing content from ResearchGate when alerted by publishers.
3. Give publishers greater visibility on ResearchGate.

Both parties have expressed their excitement at this venture:

"[ResearchGate is] looking forward to working with more industry partners with complementary capabilities and strengths like Springer Nature in the future to create the conditions in which scientific collaborations can flourish." – Ijad Madisch, ResearchGate's CEO.

"Springer Nature's view is that ResearchGate is a legitimate platform and a platform we want to work with," – Steven Inchcoombe, Springer Nature's Chief Publishing Officer.

Can This Model Work?

During this trial period, all parties will be monitoring the effects of this study. ResearchGate will undoubtedly benefit from increased traffic on their platform. Researchers will benefit from the free and easy access to research, leading to increased exposure and all the positive attributes that come with that.

The question is, how will Springer Nature benefit?

As mentioned, they [benefit from the increased visibility](#) on this platform. However, they stand to lose out on subscriptions. Have they recognized the need to join the increasing open-access move? With initiatives such as Plan S – where funders insist that the research they finance is made freely available – the future of subscription-based academic publishers could be threatened. The [academic publishing](#) world is evolving and perhaps Springer Nature is being proactive in this regard.

It will be interesting to watch this play out and see where it goes. The publishing community is clearly testing out a future business model which could ensure their survival in the publishing world. How do you think they could benefit from this partnership? Please let us know in the comments section below.

Category

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