Can LinkedIn and Academia.edu enhance access to open repositories?

by Blog Admin   August 23, 2012

Now that research is developing an online presence, thoughts are turning to how to maximise this. Brian Kelly investigates linking strategies; from Google Scholar Citations, Academia.edu and Mendeley to a researcher's online publications, as a way of increasing researcher visibility among their digitally-literate peers.

I'm pleased to say that a paper by myself and Jenny Delasalle, Academic Services Manager (Research) at the University of Warwick, which asked "Can LinkedIn and Academia.edu Enhance Access to Open Repositories?" was presented recently as a poster presentation at the Open Repositories conference. This paper, which is available from the University of Bath institutional repository, is based on work initially published on my blog.

A blog post entitled "How Researchers Can Use Inbound Linking Strategies to Enhance Access to Their Papers" published earlier this year described an Inbound linking strategy to get to the top listing on google fast. It occurred to me that my willingness to make use of researcher profiling services such as Academia.edu, ResearcherID, Scopus, Researchergate, Mendeley, Microsoft Academic Search and Google Scholar Citations may have helped to enhance the visibility of my research papers which are hosted in the University of Bath repository. The blog post went on to describe how I found that I was author of 15 of the most downloaded papers in the repository from my department.

More recent investigations reveal that, as illustrated, I have the largest number of downloads of any author at the University of Bath! This was recently brought to the attention of the PVC for Research who, in a departmental meeting, informed me that a University of Bath Research Group had discussed these figures and asked me to share the approaches with other researchers at Bath. In response I mentioned that the approaches I'd taken, the evidence I'd gathered, the hypothesis I had proposed for explaining the evidence, possible alternative hypotheses, the limitations of the approaches, the implications of the findings and areas for further work had been submitted to the Open Repositories 2012 conference – and if the paper was accepted the findings would be available to all, and not just researchers at my host institution.

The paper explores other possible reasons for the high visibility of these papers – and one possibility worthy of further investigation is the provision of many papers in HTML formats and not just PDF and MS Word. However the use of popular researcher profiling services such as LinkedIn and Academia.edu are felt to be worth recommending to researchers in order (a) to ensure that their research papers can be more easily found by their peers on these services and (b) so that links to the paper on their institutional repository can enhance the visibility to Google of the papers as well as enhancing the Google ranking of the repository itself.

Of course it probably needs to be said that that the number of downloads is not necessarily an indicator of quality. However the converse is also true: just because a paper in a repository is seldom viewed does not indicate that it must be a great paper! I am quite happy to promote the use of such approaches since increased numbers of views, especially for the target communities, can help to both embed the ideas given in the papers by practitioners and increase the likelihood that the papers will be cited by other researchers. In my case I'm pleased that, according to Google Scholar Citations, my most cited papers have been cited 87, 67, 54 and 40 times.

My co-author Jenny Delasalle has been investigating use of researcher profiling service at the University of Warwick, her host institution. It was interesting that in Jenny's research she found that a number of

commercial publishers encourage their authors to use services such as LinkedIn and Academia.edu to link to their papers hosted behind the publishers paywalls – and yet we are not seeing institutional views of the benefits of coordinated use of such services by their researchers. Institutional repository managers, research support staff and librarians could be prompting their institutions to make the most of these externally provided services, to enhance the visibility of their researchers' work in institutional repositories.

Surely it is time for the research community to develop inbound linking strategies to their research work, especially as this can be done so simply. These ideas are summerised in this slide show.

Note: This article gives the views of the author(s), and not the position of the Impact of Social Sciences blog, nor of the London School of Economics.

This is an edited version of an article originally posted on Brian Kelly's personal blog, UK Web Focus.

About the author:

Brian Kelly
Brian Kelly works for the JISC-funded Innovation Support Centre at UKOLN, University of Bath. His job title is UK Web Focus. In this role he has responsibility for supporting innovative uses of the Web and sharing best practices. Brian's UK Web Focus blog was launched in 1996 and has a high profile in sharing thoughts on Web developments. The blog is an open notebook, averaging about 4 posts per week (1,090+ posts in total). This is complemented by Brian's @briankelly Twitter account which provides a tool for engagement and dissemination.

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