



## Cultivating ORCID

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The ORCID identifier (ORCID iD) was born out of the need to uniquely identify academic authors in a variety of research contexts. When searching for journal articles by author it can be difficult to know if you have identified the right person. My own surname, for example, is extremely common in the United Kingdom and it is all too easy to retrieve the wrong results in online systems. The problem is particularly acute in China, a country with a rapidly growing research output and where a very large proportion of the population shares a relatively small number of family names. ORCID's prototype identifier built on an earlier attempt to solve the name problem—Thomson Reuters' ResearcherID system—but ORCID is an independent, not-for-profit organisation governed and financially supported by a large number of stakeholder organisations (including the Royal Society).

But the potential of ORCID goes well beyond name disambiguation. At a conference we held at the Royal Society last year on the future of scholarly scientific communication, the ORCID iD was mentioned again and again in a variety of contexts as an increasingly important part of the future and as a tool for building the reputations of researchers by bringing all their contributions together under a single, unique identifier. It links all their research activities and outputs together across a wide variety of platforms, effectively providing a "single sign-on" for a number of research systems (such as grant applications, literature searches, and journal article submissions). It helps researchers to gain credit for the many contributions they make to their subject (aside from just the articles they publish). ORCID iDs can be used to tag and track an individual's deposit of preprints, images, or

datasets in repositories, or the peer review work they do for journals.

At the time of writing, the number of researchers who have registered an ORCID iD has just broken the two million barrier and is growing fast. As adoption increases amongst scholars, the ecosystem around ORCID is developing too. It is used by [Europe PMC](#) and increasingly by journals as an additional identifier in the article byline. Funders are also embracing ORCID. Many funders have integrated the capture of ORCID iDs into their grant application systems and in 2015, the Wellcome Trust, the United Kingdom's National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), and the European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO) made it mandatory for funding applicants to have an ORCID iD and it is likely that the UK research councils (RCUK) will follow. The recent report from the Higher Education Funding Council for England on the use of metrics in research, *The Metric Tide*, recommended:

The UK research system should take full advantage of ORCID as its preferred system of unique identifiers. ORCID iDs should be mandatory for all researchers in the next [research quality assessment]. Funders and [higher education institutions] should utilise ORCID for grant applications, management and reporting platforms, and the benefits of ORCID need to be better communicated to researchers.

At the Royal Society we believe that the full benefits of ORCID to the research system will only be felt when adoption is widespread. It is for this reason that on January 1st 2016 we introduced a requirement that all submitting authors must provide an ORCID iD as part of the manuscript submission process. A number of other publishers have joined us and our [joint statement](#)

is published on the ORCID website. Given the importance of journal publication to researchers, we believe that the introduction of mandates by publishers is a very effective way to drive the adoption of ORCID. After all, it only takes a minute to register for one and it only has to be done once. For most researchers it's probably just something they either haven't heard about yet, or simply something they haven't got around to doing. We already had ORCID compatibility built into our submission system (ScholarOne Manuscripts) and were displaying ORCID iDs in published articles (when provided by authors). So there was really not much to be done at our end other than to announce the requirement via our online [author instructions](#). At the point of creating an account in our submission system, the author is given the choice of either associating an existing iD with their account or registering for a new iD (via a new browser window to the ORCID website) and associating that. The ORCID API validates the iD automatically and the author is then asked to authorise the system to access their ORCID record allowing it to read any relevant information

required for the submission. It is important to point out that the ORCID system allows users full control of the information in their record and they can customise all privacy options as they wish.

One of the things that may have put some people off the ORCID iD system in the past was that they had to manually update their record each time they published something. But in October last year, a new auto-update feature was launched in collaboration with Crossref and DataCite which allows a researcher's ORCID record to be automatically updated with his/her new publication as soon as it's published (in some cases, as soon as it's accepted). This also works with datasets deposited to DataCite (once again the researcher has to give explicit permission to ORCID to switch the auto-updates on).

We believe that ORCID represents a major step forward in the research communication infrastructure and as more and more researchers sign up and as ORCID integration is built into more and more research systems, the benefits to the researcher, reader, institution, and funder will be fully realised.

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