A Web Presence for Academics

BACKGROUND
Research – the creation of knowledge, the deepening of understanding and the discovery of truth – needs to be shared to contribute to the wellbeing of humankind. Sharing knowledge can take many forms, but commonly involves publishing peer reviewed outcomes in journal articles, conference proceedings, book chapters or books. These publications are vital for the success of an academic and contribute to the academic’s scholarly profile.

Thirty years ago there was little else that one could do to spread and share one’s research findings. The same is not true today! The phenomenon of the World Wide Web (the Web) provides a wonderful opportunity for knowledge transfer, the sharing of research findings and the catalysis of academic impact. It is well understood, though, that the social media can enhance academic impact, but can seldom replace the need to publish peer reviewed scholarly work.

PROGRESS TO DATE
Most scholars have recognised the power of the Web, but not all have fully embraced its benefits and created a Web presence. However, the ubiquity of digital data means that it is almost impossible not to have a Web presence. A simple test of this hypothesis is to Google one’s own name and to investigate the returns of the search. The results can be surprising. One danger of the Web is that a Web-shadow develops around passive participants over which they have little control. More shocking is that it may not be an ideal representation of their true profile. Thus it is encouraged that people engage actively with the Web to create an accurate and true representation of their own profile, a Web-footprint.

The question then arises how best should one develop an active presence on the Web that reflects their true impact?

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT …
Four simple steps are sufficient to address this question. Much more can be done, but this is time consuming and achieves diminishing returns. The steps include, in order of priority:

1. Create a Google Scholar Profile (https://scholar.google.co.za/)
The power of Google to find all of one’s digital publications is immense (and a little frightening). But it is far better to use this power for your own benefit than to shy away from it in the hope that it will not find you. It is increasingly common to use Google Scholar to find a person’s academic record, so there is direct advantage to create an accurate academic profile using Google Scholar, an online ‘academic CV’.

2. Use an academic focused social-media website
Two academic focused social-media platforms come to mind immediately, namely ResearchGate (https://www.researchgate.net/home) and Academia.edu (https://www.academia.edu/). These
websites have been developed especially for the benefit of academics and fulfil equivalent roles to that of what Facebook does for family and friends and LinkedIn does for professionals. It is recommend that people choose one and use it for their academic communication with members of their knowledge field across the globe.

3. **Establish an ORCID** ([http://orcid.org/](http://orcid.org/))

ORCID is a not for profit organisation established by academics to create a unique identifier that will pull together all the research publications written by an individual. It overcomes the confusion created by unintended aliases, for example R Drennan, RL Drennan, Rob Drennan, Robin Drennan, etc., that can lead to an incomplete search for an author’s publication record.

ORCID is not linked to any publisher or information/index company and therefore is less likely to be used for creating profit and is more likely to stay focused on its founding objectives of enabling scholarly activity.

4. **Use the Wits Library's repository** ([http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/](http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/))

The WiReDSpace repository is a great place to lodge all your publications even if they are already in Open Source journals on the Web. This is because the Library offers a meta-data service which will go a long way to help creating a positive Web-presence associated with your publications.

**WHAT DO I DO NEXT?**

It is important to do all four of these activities to truly make an impact.

The good news is that user guides have been prepared to guide you through the processes.

Creating a Google Account

Creating a Google Scholar Profile

Creating a ResearchGate profile

Using WiReDSpace [http://libguides.wits.ac.za/WIREDSPACE](http://libguides.wits.ac.za/WIREDSPACE)

Remember to keep these up-to-date and then watch your citations grow

Good luck

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