



# My problem with ResearchGate

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ResearchGate - wow, a social network for scientists and researchers you might think. But think again about the 'wow'. At least I am not so impressed. Here's why...

I once created a profile on ResearchGate out of curiosity. It initially seemed like a good idea, but I soon realised that this would just add to the list of profile pages I would have to update, sigh. But so far I have kept my profile for fear of missing out. What if others cannot find my publications if I am not on ResearchGate? And so on...

But updating my profile is just the tip of the iceberg. What I find far more problematic about the site is their keen attempts to create a walled garden community. Let me explain what I mean. Take this paper for example: [One-Bit Compressive Sensing of Dictionary-Sparse Signals](#) by Rich Baraniuk, Simon Foucart, Deanna Needell, Yaniv Plan, and Mary Wootters:

1. First of all, when you click the link to the paper above you cannot even see it without logging in on ResearchGate.  
"What's the problem?", you might think. "ResearchGate is free - just create an account and log in". But I would argue that open access is not open access if you have to register and log in to read the paper - even if it is free.
2. Once you log in and can finally see the paper, it turns out that you cannot read the actual paper. This appears to be because the author has not uploaded the full text and ResearchGate displays a button where you can "Request full-text" to ask the author to provide it.  
"Now what?!", you are thinking. "This is a great service to both readers and authors, making it easy to connect authors to their readers and enabling them to easily give the authors what they are looking for" - wrong! This is a hoax set up by ResearchGate to convince readers that they are a great benevolent provider of open access literature.

The problem is that the paper is already accessible here: [on arXiv](#) - where it should be. ResearchGate has just scraped the paper info from arXiv and are trying to persuade the author to upload it to ResearchGate as well to make it look like ResearchGate is the place to go to read this paper. They could have chosen to simply link to the paper on arXiv, making it easy for readers to find it straight away. But they will not do that, because they want readers to stay inside their walled garden, controlling the information flow to create a false impression that ResearchGate is the only solution.

As if this was not enough, there are yet other reasons to reconsider your membership. For example, they are contributing to journal impact factor abuse-like metric obsession with their ResearchGate score. The problem is that this score is [not transparent and not reproducible](#) contributing only to an obsession with numbers driving "shiny" research and encouraging gaming of metrics.

I don't know about you, but I have had enough - I quit!

...The clever reader has checked and noticed that I have not deleted my **ResearchGate** profile. Why? Am I just another hypocrite? Look closer - you will notice that the only publication on my profile is a note explaining why I do not wish to use ResearchGate. I think it is better to actively inform about my choice and attack the problem from the inside rather than just stay silently away.