STM Consultation on Sharing via Scholarly Collaboration Networks (SCNs)

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What are SCNs

- SCNs are **platforms that allow researchers to develop and maintain professional relationships.**

Some enable:

- Discussion or research and **information exchange**
- **Sharing of research results, articles and data.**

- Not typically used for group interactions and activities more akin to social networks (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook) or workplace tools (e.g., SharePoint, Google Docs)

- STM working group identified **40+ such networks**
SCNs are Growing in Popularity

• SCNs have grown substantially* in recent years, particularly in the “big” three – Academia.edu, ResearchGate, and Mendeley
  
  – **Registered users**: Academia.edu 15+ million users, ResearchGate 5+ million, Mendeley 3.5+ million
  
  – **Uploaded documents**: Mendeley reported that its users had uploaded 470+ million documents, and ResearchGate reported that 14 million are “accessible” via its platform.

*CCC/CLA Report on Scholarly Collaboration Platforms, M. Ware, November 27, 2014 (CCC/Outsell)
SCNs are Growing in Popularity

To put this in perspective...

**DropBox** is largest tool for the private sharing of documents—three years ago, it had 100M users sharing 1 billion files a day!—and Google Scholar holds a about 160M documents.
SCNs: The 21st Century Embodiment of a Standard Academic Practice

Scholars have shared various versions of their scholarly articles with their colleagues since the journal first appeared (1665).

Online versions and online distribution makes this process much easier.

- Good for scholars and for scholarship with the promotion of the publication to wider audiences.

Authors, readers, funding agencies, and publishers all share the same primary goal: to provide access to publications.
The Role of Scholarly Publishers

Scholarly publishers handle all aspects of the publication process (editorial/peer review management, composition/tagging, online distribution and archiving). These activities require income.

• Given that subscription income is still the dominant business model for scholarly publications, unfettered access to the highest value version (publisher’s version of record) can cause economic harm.

• Clearly, the open access model is one means of providing wide access.
The Role of Scholarly Publishers

The present situation with distribution and access to licensed (subscription) content on such networks is ambiguous and needs to be simplified for all parties.

Publishers want to encourage use of such networks without endangering their ability to provide and maintain valuable publications.
STM assembled a working group in Sept. 2014 to examine the current landscape of article sharing via SCNs and publishers’ role. Ten publishers, both for profit and not-for-profit, and some of whom owned or interacted with SCNs, took part.

They produced the draft set of ‘voluntary principles for article sharing on scholarly collaboration networks’ and posted it for a two month STM Open Consultation in early 2015, and invited wide participation among all stakeholder groups.
Voluntary Principles for Article Sharing on SCNs

The principles are meant to:

• **clarify** how, where, and what content should be shared using these networks and sites,

• **improve** the experience for all stakeholders

• **encourage** publishers and SCN’s to work together to facilitate sharing, which benefits researchers, institutions, and society as a whole.

• All comments and a summary posted on the STM website

• Key recommendation: Principles should be: **clear, simple, uniform**
Response to STM’s Open Consultation

• Based on the community’s constructive feedback, the working group posted a revised set of principles August 28.


• Posting includes an explanation of the changes made to the principles as a result.
Voluntary Principles: Key Points

• Publishers commit to facilitate the dissemination and discovery of their authors’ scholarly articles.

• Sharing should be allowed within a research collaboration group (to be defined by the group)
  - Allow article sharing **between subscribers and non-subscribers** within the group
  - Include **commercial researchers**, subject to publisher policy or appropriate licensing
  - Include members of the **wider public** participating with the group
Voluntary Principles: Key Points

• Publishers and libraries should extend their collective use of standards such as COUNTER to quantify article use on networks.

• Publishers and standards organizations should continue to work together on tools that facilitate sharing (article versioning and access rights metadata).

• Publisher policies on research collaboration group sharing and public posting of articles should be clear and easily discoverable.
Next Steps for SCN Working Group

Publisher posting policy - Several publishers (e.g. NPG, Wiley, Elsevier) have issued, or are in the process of issuing, policies that address posting via SCNs.

Article tagging project - To support implementation a sub-working group is tasked with demonstrating a technical solution based on tagging XML metadata in scholarly articles.

The SCN working group continues to reach out for wider involvement, including non-publisher owned networks

- Comments/updates on progress, email scnproject@stm-assoc.org
- Updates will continually be posted on: www.stm-assoc.org/stm-consultations/scn-consultation-2015/
References

STM Association’s voluntary principles statement and consultation on article sharing networks:  

doi:10.1038/512126a.

CCC/CLA Report Scholarly Collaboration Platforms,  
M.Ware, Outsell, Nov., 2014

F. Dylla interview with Scholarly Kitchen, Feb. 24, 2015
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STM member organizations participating in the SCN working group:


STM Association: Michael Mabe; Matt McKay