

# Researcher Identifiers

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## What is it?

Researcher IDs (or author identifiers) are solutions to the problem of author ambiguity in digital research environments. They permit differentiation between authors with similar or the same names and are also used by researchers to collocate published research and manage their author identity, which is useful in the case of name changes or institutional affiliation disambiguation.

IDs may take the form of a profile, as in the case of Google Scholar, or they may take the form of a persistent alphanumeric digital name, such as that used by ORCID and some proprietary IDs. The most well-known author identifiers and profiles are:

- ORCID
- Google Scholar profile
- ResearcherID (Web of Science)
- Scopus ID

Identifiers embedded within databases will generate publication metrics based on publication and citation data available within that system; however, ORCID--which is not limited by publisher--does not provide metrics.

Many granting agencies are integrating ORCID into application workflows and some publishers may ask for your ORCID upon article submission. Some institutional repositories have also integrated ORCID.

## How does it work?

[ORCID](#) facilitates the creation of an online curriculum vitae, covering any type of scholarly work, and permits various organizations, such as universities and granting agencies, to mine data. The data travels with researchers as they change affiliations or email addresses and allows users to set privacy levels. ORCID works best in conjunction with other profile tools because it allows for the import and curation of publication data from other systems.

Scopus automatically assigns an author identifier and permits authors to add articles contained within [Scopus](#) to their profile using the [Author Feedback Wizard](#) (only articles contained in Scopus can be added). [ResearcherID](#), available without a subscription to Web of Science, allows users to manage profiles and to add articles that are not in Web of Science. Similarly, Google Scholar profile, a very broad interdisciplinary tool that can include publication information from a wide array of sources, permits the creation of a profile. Data from all three systems can to be exported to ORCID.

## Who's doing it?

Over one hundred journals and a number of funding agencies are now using ORCID as part of manuscript submission or grant applications. The biggest users of ORCID today are universities, who use ORCID to track researcher output, calculate total funding, and for internal assessment purposes. With the wide adoption of ORCID, it is likely that some other profile IDs may disappear.

## Why is it significant?

The changing landscape of scholarly communication has made author identification and disambiguation a requirement. The following factors are especially important:

- The increase in co-authorship (average five authors per paper)
- The increase in author and research from the developing world
- A shift from monograph to journal publication
- An increase in the creation of new journals
- An increase in citable scholarly outputs
- An increase in repositories that contain grey literature, working papers, and other unpublished document.

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## Further Reading

Meadows, A. (2016). [Everything you ever wanted to know about ORCID... but were afraid to ask](#). *College & Research Libraries News*, 77(1), 23.

Reimer, T. (2015). Your name is not good enough: [Introducing the ORCID researcher identifier at Imperial College London](#). *Insights*, 28(3), 76.

Rosenzweig, M., & Schnitzer, A. E. (2015). [An initiative to address name ambiguity: Implementing ORCID at a large academic institution](#). *College & Research Libraries News*, 76(5), 260.

Smith-Yoshimura, K. et al. (2014). [Registering Researchers in Authority Files](#). Dublin, Ohio: OCLC Research .

Thomas, W. J., Chen, B., & Clement, G. (2015). [ORCID identifiers: Planned and potential uses by associations, publishers, and librarians](#). *The Serials Librarian*, 68(1-4), 332.

Tran, C.Y., & Lyon, J.A. (2017). [Faculty use of author identifiers and researcher networking tools](#). *College & Research Libraries*, 78(2), 171.

Walker, L. A., & Armstrong, M. (2014). ["I cannot tell what the dickens his name is": Name disambiguation in institutional repositories](#). *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, 2(2), p.eP1095.

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## What are the challenges?

Early challenges in the researcher identifier landscape included uptake and adoption. Education and advocacy on the value of using researcher identifiers will help researchers understand their importance rather than seeing them as "just another profile" tool. Institutional engagement is required to ensure that IDs created by member API processes do not remain incomplete. For example, 'empty' and duplicate ORCIDs can present challenges when author affiliation is not included. Future challenges will emerge as academic institutions work towards integrating ORCID within their internal and external systems landscapes.

## Where is it going?

As researchers and institutions learn the value in showcasing their scholarly output, the need to register researchers in an authority file or identifier system becomes increasingly critical. There is widespread global adoption of ORCID, which in terms of the researcher identifier landscape, is emerging as the standard researcher identification infrastructure. All major scholarly publishers support ORCIDs and many now require them. Moreover, most major funders either support or require ORCIDs. Universities, publishers and granting agencies are all making use of ORCID APIs to integrate and automate researcher identifiers into research workflows and lifecycles. In November 2016 Wiley was the first major publisher to require ORCIDs for submitting authors. A growing number of institutions are integrating ORCID into campus processes and systems that span the publication lifecycle including researcher profiling systems, institutional repositories, data management platforms, campus identity management systems and research information systems.

## What are the implications for libraries?

An increasing focus on and efficiency in tracking university research outputs afforded by researcher identifiers presents multiple opportunities for libraries. Examples of these include expanded library services in the area of research support (ie. bibliometrics and researcher profiles) and enhanced partnerships with offices of research. Libraries also have an advocacy role to play: best practices recommendations in this area include educating researchers on the value of identifiers and assigning persistent IDs to works deposited in institutional repositories if the authors don't already have IDs. National ORCID member consortiums are emerging, with libraries and library consortia acting as major partners, including a CRKN-established [ORCID-CA consortium](#) in Canada.